

The Educational Bill of 1856.

It was very fortunate for the people of the South that this measure did not become a law. It was ~~frankly~~ ^{no doubt} and honestly intended by its Northern promoters for the elevation of the negro. From their point of view it was a most proper and beneficent act. If we accept the Northern idea of the negro and consider the relations of the Northern people to his emancipation and enfranchisement, it is impossible to question the policy and propriety of this measure. If the colored people were to be permitted ^{at} in any near period of the future to hold and exercise equality of power with the white man in the government of the South, it was, of course, not only proper but absolutely necessary, that

he should as rapidly as possible, be raised to a parity of intelligence. This was the Northern idea of the situation. They not only considered this as practicable but also desirable. If it was to be done at all, it was also proper that it should be done ~~by national~~ in the main at the expense of the whole country.

¶

Slavery ~~was~~ was abolished by national power, not because it was wrong, nor as a punishment for the crime of rebellion, even if it is admitted

that the movement of Feb 1861, was a rebellion, in any proper sense. Such purpose was it is true declared by some of those enthusiasts to whom the evil of slavery over bore every other consideration, but every branch of the government, from first to last has persistently and consistently declared that the emancipation of the slave was neither a philanthropic nor a punitive measure. The Federal govern-

went, in every manner possible, for
twenty-four years committed itself to
the avowment that slavery was not abol-
ished for the sake of the slave nor
to punish the rebel, but simply and
solely to strengthen the Federal gov-
ernment and weaken the confederacy.

The object was merely to stampede the
negro, induce him to come within
the federal lines and bear a
musket if he could and would

and at all events, to lead him to
abandon the service ^{of his master}, and thereby
weaken the power of the Confederacy.

As a result of this exercise of
a natural and universal power in-
hering in all nationalities, the South
was deprived of one-half of its accumulations
by the stroke of a pen. Her people were impover-
ished beyond any nation of modern times.
They had no reason to complain as
many of them did, at this. It was
simply a legitimate act of warfare

which every nation has an ^{undoubted} absolute right
to perform in order to weaken its enemy.

The offer of freedom to the slaves of a belligerent power was one of the most frequent forms of depleting an enemy's resources in ancient times and has been practiced in almost all countries.

Having by this act, performed for the advantage of the nation, made the colored people their allies and having availed themselves of the services of two hundred and twenty-five thousand of them as

soldiers of the Republic, it was by no means
unreasonable that they should seek to exalt
them to the rank of ~~and~~ citizens and make
them a co-equal factor with the whites in
the exercise of the sovereign power of the
states and in the control of the general
government. It is entirely creditable to the
sincerity and patriotism of the people of the
North, that they should have insisted upon
these things as a logical result of the fail-
ure of the ² war for ² separation. Very few of our
people looked upon it in that light at the

time and I must confess that it was not until a score of years afterwards, fully half of which had been devoted especially to the study of the facts and principles involved in that conflict that I came to fully understand the views of the Northern people and to appreciate the liberality and sincerity of the policy pursued toward the freedmen, up to this point. If their hypothesis in regard to the negro's capacity for the immediate exercise of the privileges of the citizen, was correct they could not certainly have done less for a people to whom they had expressly

appealed for aid when the very existence
of the Republic was imperiled and without
the help of which it is a matter of grave
doubt whether they would ever have
succeeded in overthrowing the power of
the Confederacy.

So too, they cannot be blamed for
proposing to enlighten the ignorance of the
negro so as to make him capable of in-
telligently performing the duties of the citizen
if we accept the hypothesis on which they
proposed to act and which there is no

reason to doubt that a vast proportion of those who advocated the measure sincerely believed, to wit: that education

alone was necessary to enable the blacks to stand upon the same level with the whites of the South and that they were at that time prepared to receive such education. Of course there were some who advocated this measure most vigorously who were animated by no higher motive than personal or political advantage. Who they were it is unnecessary

any now to specify. History will excuse their
act and no doubt ~~will~~ overlook their
motives. It is well that time is not always
rigorously just. Were it otherwise who could
hope to escape condemnation either for his acts
or their inspiration. ~~Unworthy~~ In every
great movement are to be found men who
unworthily espouse the right for the mere sake
of personal advantage. From the standpoint
of the most enlightened northern thought, how-
ever, the project of national aid in the edu-
cation of the negro must be regarded
as one of the wisest and noblest acts of

of statermanship that the world has ever known. That the same measure proposed a like appropriation to enlighten the white and make the illiteracy of the South, which unfortunately has always been very great, stamps it as a project so ^{broad and} liberal in purpose as to affect one even now with regret that it was not as ^{practical} as it was beautiful and beneficent in theory.

The only objection that can properly be urged against its originators and promoters, the Republican Party of the North,

if we acknowledge the ~~correctness~~ ^{correctness} of the theory on which they professed to act, is ~~more than~~ ^{for twenty years} that they waited ~~a quarter of a century~~ ^{and until they had been dispossessed} of power, before actually undertaking to do anything in this direction. Its necessity and desirability were as evident on the day of the surrender of at Appomattox, as they were when ^{nineteen} ~~twenty~~ years afterwards, it was first earnestly pressed as a party measure, in the Congress of the United States. During the latter years of the ~~war~~ ^{war} for secession, and for a few years after-

words, certain educational advantages
were provided for the negroes of the South
under the guise of what was known as
the Freedmen's Bureau. Had the same
liberal policy toward the illiterate of both
races, which ^{was} afterwards displayed in the
Educational Bill, been then adopted and
wisely administered, it is impossible to de-
clare what might have been its effects
upon the future. It is even possible that
it would have so affected the tone spirit

and temper of the Southern people as to have rendered the crisis of 1889, impossible unnecessary or even impossible. With regard to this it is unnecessary to indulge in speculation. The fate which controls the destiny of nations decreed that it should be otherwise and the inexcusable neglect of the Republican party not only left them open to the reasonable imputation of ^{an attempt} ~~being~~ from a desire to regain power what they would not do from a sense of justice or from a conviction of its wisdom and

policy. By this ~~long~~ long neglect of what ac-
cording to their own theory of government
and express declarations a score of years
afterwards they refused the order for self-
improvement which inspired the freedman to
really heroic exertion when he first came
into the estate of freedom, and utterly destroy-
ed his confidence in the justice and sincerity
of any portion of the white race when act-
ing in reference to his interests. The hopeful,
patient awaiting for the full light of ^{their year of} the jubilee,
which characterized their early years of freedom,
gave way to a sullen despondency, which

was ~~itself~~ one of the worst elements of that
barbarism from which Northern philanthropy
professed to have lifted them, and which was
one of the most potent influences in deciding
~~in the minds~~ concerning even the most dubi-
ous among our Southern white people, that
the events of 1889, were an unavoidable neces-
sity. It is possible that if the negro had
manifested that degree of improvement
during the twenty years that succeeded the
collapse of the Confederacy which a liberal
educational appropriation might possibly have allowed
him to make some would have been less

willing to engage in that movement which
has already been justified by its
brought such peaceful and beneficent results.

¶ There were some of our people who were
at first very strongly in favor of this measure
from a mistaken belief in its efficacy as a
relief from the perils of African supremacy
and unnumbered unassimilable numbers. They
fondly hoped that even at the latest moment
it might prove effectual in modifying the
characteristics of the negro so as to make him,
even during the present generation a possible
co-efficient of our civilization and an actual
element the self-government which
must control the South. It was an error

which a man of Northern birth and training
might well be excused for making. It was in-
deed akin to all the mistakes on the part of the
government during the years immediately follow-
ing the ~~the~~ downfall of the Confederacy. They
only carried the folly a little further. Some
of our people thought the negro might make
himself fit for a place beside the white man
in government and our Northern only went
a little further and thought he would become
fit without a chance — would be able to
step at once from Slavery to the very fore-
most place in the grand army of self-de-

developed freemen.

There were others of our people — I do not care to estimate their number — who were in favor of this measure from a far less worthy motive. They knew how the price of the Smith had suffered from impoverishment and thought that the millions that would be distributed by this measure, should be looked upon as, in some sense, a recompense for the disasters that war had brought. Recognizing the justice and propriety of governmental action from the enlightenment of ignorance which had been made all the more dangerous

by the bestowal of power, they also looked upon it somewhat in the light of a retribution that the abounding wealth of the North should be made to bear a considerable portion of the burden its ignorant enthusiasm for universal liberty and formal equality of right and power had cast upon our poverty.

Fortunately, neither of these classes were able to accomplish their purpose. Such is the sense of honor among the one and such the force of greed with the other, that had the government of the United States invested in the cure of illiteracy at the South the sum of ten millions of dollars a year as

was proposed, the first of these classes would have felt bound in honor to remain. Having experienced such a striking proof of the national honor, to submit to a bounty so liberally and confidently and partaken so largely of a bounty freely given they would have scorned the imputation of ingratitude. There were many more who would have been affected by the same chivalrous feeling. I may confidently say that not a single knight of the Southern Cross, would have favored separation under these circumstances. Such liberality and confidence would have bound us irrevocably to the federal Union until some great convulsion came to rend it in twain.

and assign to each discovered part its separate
part
task in the great drama of human progress.

It would have forced us ~~to~~ as a matter of
honor, to submit to evils we would not
otherwise have peaceably borne in patient
hope of a cure we had little reason to
deem possible while we continued that relation.

I must admit too, that the other class to whom
"the old flag with an appropriation" had especial
attractions, would have been greatly strength-
ened by the prospect of a national
contribution to our available wealth
of something like half a dollar per cap =

- ita each year for a decade. As the bulk
of this would have been paid to teachers, it
would have been very evenly distributed
throughout the country, so that the measure
would have been a very welcome con-
tribution to our general wealth as well
as in its effect upon our educational
status. Perhaps no measure was ever more
sagaciously devised to reduce a long suf-
fering and impoverished people from
loyalty to ~~its~~ their predestinated ideal.

We were undoubtedly saved from the humiliation which this measure would have entailed and the cause of ^{constitutional} ~~civil~~ liberty very greatly advanced ~~tho~~ by the unintended action of the then President of the United States. This strangely compounded nature of this man will no doubt always remain in some sense an enigma — its very shallowness and transparency being so incredible as almost of necessity to baffle and deceive. Though his selfishness and stupidity may awaken our pity if not indeed our contempt, the people

of the South should not fail to remember with a feeling akin to gratitude that he was the chief although the unwitting instrument of her deliverance from a bondage age all the more irksome because unintended and even well-intended by her unscrupulous oppressors. The story of his relations to our triumph I shall give without bias or concealment. It is a lesson that may be of value to some future man or people of the future.