

Mayville N.Y.

Sept. 25th 1884-

My dear Sir: I always feel like congratulating the country and condoling with the individual when I hear of one leaving the inclinations your letter discloses, being sent to congress. It is a hard uncertain fate - a field for worthy ambition in which short-sighted self-seeking is apt to get the better both of manhood and worthy ambition. I trust you may see far enough into the future to guide your feet in the way of success as well as right; for I recognize much

clearly the fact that the man who
is right and unsuccessful
might, for practical purposes, al-
most as well be wrong. Of
course, the measure of success is
not always re-election. In
fact, I think it seldom is. I annal
myself over in making up a list
of men who in one term had
seemed to own the souls of future
success and comparing it with
a list of those who succeeded
themselves continuously. I re-
member I was surprised at the
showing - a great majority of
the really strong men being

given a question after a time
or two. It may not be a fact
— it is always dangerous to draw
a conclusion from one obser-
vation — but it seemed as if
the strong man, fresh from the
people and his own sentiment
was apt to have some idea of
the popular need, which outran the
average thought and required
some time to justify in the
general mind and conscience.

However, this may be, I am
glad to extend greeting to a
man who goes to Washington
with the idea of ~~to~~ working

his passage and winning his
way by what he does on ~~trades~~
tools, instead of relying solely on
humblying his constituents or keep=
ing the cross=~~roads~~ politi=
cians in order.

You are undoubtedly correct
in your forecast as to the question
of race and caste. It is now
twenty years since I woke to the
fact that it was an infinitely
graver and more delicate ques=
tion than slavery. The vials of
great men's wrath were poured
upon my head for intimating
such a thing. Wendell Phillips scolded
me for an hour for having

opposed the disbandment of the Anti-Slavery Society. Charles Sumner insisted that I was frightened like a shadow, because I insisted that the XIVth and XVth Amendments were insufficient and totally inadequate as remedial measures. I think this most visionary of statesmen went as far as to assert that I was not "practical" simply because I urged a lawyer's views of a statute against his indefinite yearnings.

Not to be reminiscent out of the vagueness of his ideas and their adoption as the fundamental law, spring your question, our present difficulty

and future danger. Strange enough, Thaddeus Stevens was the only man of that time who seemed to foresee the present and his intense practicality led him to forewarn measures which a boy can now see would have saved the humiliation of the past and avoided the peril of the future. Not all of his ideas reached the "bill" stage, or even became generally mooted questions. They were wise, however, beyond anything I have ever known in any man. I did not realize or fully accept them at that

but every day adds to their ~~own~~
now self-evident wisdom.

Take a few of his fundamental
ideas — the ideas on which he
would have based reconstruction —
if he could:

- 1- The breaking up of all existing
state boundaries — and the es-
tablishment of territorial govern-
ments, with suffrage to the Negroes₂
who could read and write or
had earned in the money.
- 2- The provision of a homestead for the
negro. His ideas upon this were not fully
elaborated but his conclusion was
based upon the assumption that the
race had earned a home and
had the right to demand security
against individual dependence
and oppression.
- 3- That the government should
settle the debts of the old states

assuming what was just and dis= cursing the Confederate debt and all its resultants.

4 - He would also have punished a number of the leading rebels. He was not bloodthirsty, but he insisted that "mercy to a con= spirator against the peace of a Re= public, is cruelty to the citizen." He used to insist, too, that im= munity offered to traitors was but a reward offered for future rebellion.

I have never been able to admit the necessity of wasting good hemp on a poor citizen and so have never been able to assent to the last proposition, though I must confess it has gains very

strong probability of being verified. He thought we would be in a worse condition in 1895, than we were in 1865, and it is by no means certain that he was not correct.

But what can be done by Congress?

Candidly, I think very little at present. It would seem to be a fact that matters must grow worse before they can grow better. Two things are possible: neither I think probable.

- 1- An educational measure on the plan proposed in "An Appeal to Caesar."

I think the sentimental, beggar principle of the Blair Bill; the putting the found in yaws, into

the hands of the states, a most foolish
and perilous thing. The money
that was distributed to the states in
1837-8 in many cases went to
equip troops for the rebellion. If
the nation promotes education, as
it unquestionably should by di-
rect appropriation, let it pay the
money directly into the hands
of teachers or builders (if it chooses
to build school-houses.) and not
give it to the states to handle or mis-
de men, squander, steal or use
to make stronger the hands that
bind the negro.

The idea of making a state
responsible for its use on

misuse is a folly to be avoided
for, to be ~~contemplated~~
with seriousness.

The government should pay
direct to each township in which
schools sufficient for all are
kept open not less than six
months in the year a sum
certain for each illiterate
resident in the town.

Where there are white
and black schools, pay
to the support of the white
schools the same due by
reason of white, illiter-

acy and to the ^{support of the} black schools
the same due by reason of black
illiteracy. Let the States run
the schools: if they will not
let the citizens have the money
if they will support free schools.

This is the first and most
important thing to be done.

2- It is possible under the
Amendments for the Nation to
to take charge of national
elections. Such a law
should be universal -
It should provide that
no state, county or town

municipal election be held
within four months before or
one month after the national
election, which should be held
by national officials acting un-
der national laws, except as
to - (1) Qualifications of voters and
(2) The regulation of districts.

You will perhaps be surprised at
these exceptions and ask what
use the law would be.

I make the exceptions because
I do not think the constitu-
tion gives legal warrant
for going further.

The law will have these good effects:

- 1 - It will give the government full information as to what is done at an election.
- 2 - It will give the U.S. Courts jurisdiction in all matters touching these elections.
- 3 - It will be an object-lesson in national power to those who hardly realize its extent now.
- 4 - It will not cure the evil at once. Nothing will. It is the best remedial measure of

unquestionable reality, I
can think of one that has
yet been devised.

We ought to have learned
by this time that paper-words
do not cure political diseases.
If the amendments had been
drawn with some knowledge
of actual conditions and
not with the idea that a
stamp-speech in the belly of a
statute was a reliable spe-
cific for national cramps,
we might, at least, have
been saved from the hu-

inhibition of having the people
suppose we have law enough
if it were enforced when
in fact we have no
law that is enforceable by
any branch of the government.

Every Southern state may
~~lawfully do~~ by law disfran-
chise every negro in her
borders tomorrow, and there
is no remedy unless Congress
chooses to exclude a part
of her representation. And
this there is no prospect of a

sufficient majority to do,
so long as the South can
offer a solid 70 per cent
of an electoral majority
as a reward for supporting
her in her usurpation. I
don't blame the South. It
is their right to take responsi-
bility of a folly or child-
like as to be phenomenal
in the annals of legislation.

Yours very truly

Alben W. Tourgee.

P.S. Of course, you will not print
this without my consent. If you
have "A Fool's Errand" at hand
and will turn to Chapter XXXIV—
"Love me, love my dog," you will
find a letter to Comfort Source
and his reply "To A. B. & others."
These are copies of a letter, ^{sent} to
a committee of the Board of Guilford Co. N.C.,
one by, and of my reply, taken verbatim
except names, from my letter =
book. The cause of this, and of
great peril and anxiety to my
self and family was the
unauthorized publication in the New

York Tribune, of a letter of
mine sent to a ^{member of} ~~Congress~~ ^{Congress} &
Congress. He did not mean
to do any harm, but he
could not resist the tempt-
ation to be even god =
father to a sensation. Since
that, I always make it a rule
to put up a sign board, when
I write to a Congressman &

A. W. T.