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National Museum of African American History and Culture

Extension of the Ku Klux Act

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one moment, I will suggest that I believe the rank and file of the Republican party in South Carolina, as I believe the rank and file of every other political party in this country, is honest there as elsewhere; and that while vicious, wicked, corrupt men have come to be at the helm in certain State affairs there, the corruption has not been any more marked in the present State government among the Republicans than among those Democrats who have affiliated themselves with them.

Mr. BLAIR. I am very glad to be able to say that the expression which I used, which I took occasion to modify immediately and disclaim, was not intended to apply to either of the Senators; indeed it was not intended to apply to any except those who have been from time to time in the management of the affairs of South Carolina who have been utterly corrupt and dishonest, who are not only a discredit to the Republican party, but a discredit to the human race; and I am very glad that the Senator has reminded me of what I and everybody else ought to know, that the great body and mass of this country of all parties are honest. They have no interest in being otherwise, and specially in reference to matters of Government.

I have to confess my obligations to the Senator from South Carolina also for his characterization of those who have controlled the affairs of that State, although they may happen to be of his own party. They are the vilest perhaps of all the vile men who have obtained power in the South since our unfortunate and deplorable war, and who have fastened upon the States of the South an immense debt under which future generations will groan. They have been guilty of crimes, not only against those who have offended by rebelling against this Government, they have been guilty of crimes against unborn generations; they have been guilty of crimes against both races, in comparison with which Klu Kluxism is a mere blot, though a foul blot. They have perverted the public sentiment, and they have loaded with a burden which will perhaps last forever the unfortunate people of that portion of our country.

Senators who defend the President's action admit the enormous corruption, the profligacy, the vile and scandalous bribery which has characterized those governments. They excuse it by declaring that they were an ignorant people, and had to be called to the exercise of functions to which they were totally unfitted and unfamiliar, but that it was necessary for the safety of those people. I do not see how any Senator can make such an assertion in the face of the country. It is not for their safety that any people are put under the control of ignorant and vicious men. It is not for the good or for the safety of any people that the power of a State should be

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placed in the hands of the most ignorant of its population. It had a different purpose, a purpose well known. The purpose was to get the electoral vote of those States, to keep the Radical party in power. If they had no other purpose than the safety of the ignorant people, if they had been convinced that they were unsafe in the hands of the white people of the South, they were equally unsafe in the hands of those who in their ignorance they would elevate, if allowed to vote, to public position. The only way to have acted, if that was the conviction that animated Senators and members of Congress, was to govern those States by men appointed by the President of the United States, or under the authority of Congress. But that would not have given those States votes to be cast at the presidential election. That would not have sent a subservient Congress here to vote in the interest, not of their own people, but in a hostile interest. That was palpably the purpose of the reconstruction, of giving the vote to the negroes and depriving the white men of the control of affairs in the South. It was not the apprehension that the white men of the South would inflict injury upon them, because if that had been the conviction the only safe course, the only way of safety to the negro himself, had Congress could have acted upon would have been to restore the power in the General Government to govern them as conquered provinces.

Mr. President, I find it impossible, in any reasonable length of time, to quote even a fifth of the evidence to show the deplorable condition of affairs in South Carolina which led to these conclusions. The most condensed statement of those which I find is that of Judge Carpenter, the Federal judge for Greenville in 1870, found on page 187. He says:

"Greenville, South Carolina, in the present condition of the State of South Carolina, is to be regarded as a province of this country, and requiring thereby if there are thousands of miles of land, and the people, give them more of them as well as money, which is not yet fully paid."

There, I think there is a great deal of money sent to the State. There has been more money sent than at the present time. There have been thousands of miles of land, and the people, give them more of them as well as money, which is not yet fully paid."

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Mr. President, I find it impossible, in any reasonable length of time, to quote even a tithe of the evidence to show the deplorable condition of affairs in South Carolina which led to these disturbances. The most condensed statement of them which I find is that of Judge Carpenter, the Reform candidate for Governor in 1870, found on page 387. He says:

"Question. State now what is the general condition of the State of South Carolina, as far as regards the protection of life, liberty, and property therein; if there are discontents or outbreaks among the people, give the causes of them as well as you can, without being specifically questioned. Give the present condition of the State and the causes that have led to that condition.

"Answer. I think there is a great deal of discontent in the State. There has been more perhaps than at the present time. There have unquestionably been many cases of violence. I have no doubt of the existence, in eight of ten counties, of some secret organization, whose name even I do not know; of course I never belonged to it and know nothing of its workings, except what every one knows who lives in the country.

"Question. I would suggest to you just here that our rule has been for a witness to speak of what he knows from such information as he relied upon, though he may not have personal knowledge himself of the facts. Therefore you will have the privilege of so speaking.

"Answer. Such information as morally convinces me of the truth?

"Question. Yes, sir; we have been taking testimony to that extent.

"Answer. Well, I believe such an organization has existed in several counties of the State, perhaps eight or ten; I do not think has been more widely

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