

**Missouri party struggles in the civil war period.**

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Washington, 1901.

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MISSOURI PARTY STRUGGLES IN THE  
CIVIL WAR PERIOD.

BY

PROF. SAMUEL B. HARDING,  
UNIVERSITY OF INDIANA.

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(From the Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1900,  
Vol. I, pages 85-103.)

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## MISSOURI PARTY STRUGGLES IN THE CIVIL WAR PERIOD.

By Prof. SAMUEL B. HARDING, University of Indiana.

In his reply to a delegation of Missouri Radicals in 1863, President Lincoln shrewdly analyzed the political differences which had distracted Missouri since the beginning of the Rebellion. "We are in civil war. In such cases," he said, "there always is a main question; but in this case that question is a perplexing compound—Union and Slavery. It thus becomes a question not of two sides merely, but of at least four sides, even among those who are for the Union, saying nothing of those who are against it. Thus, those who are for the Union with, but not without, slavery—those for it without, but not with—those for it with or without, but prefer it with—and those for it with or without, but prefer it without. Among these again is a subdivision of those who are for gradual but not for immediate, and those who are for immediate but not for gradual extinction of slavery. It is easy to conceive," he adds, "that all these shades of opinion, and even more, may be sincerely entertained by honest and truthful men. Yet, all being for the Union, by reason of these differences each will prefer a different way of sustaining the Union."<sup>1</sup>

Accepting this statement as the basis for a study of the political movements of the time, we find the history of the period falling into two chronological divisions. In the first, which extends to the end of August, 1861, the question at issue was primarily that of Union or disunion, slavery entering into the discussions only incidentally. In the second, from August 31, 1861, to January 11, 1865, slavery itself is the paramount issue, though differences continue, even among

<sup>1</sup> Nicolay and Hay, Abraham Lincoln, VIII, p. 221.



the loyalists of the State, with reference to degrees of devotion to the Union. In the five years which follow the close of this second division, the echoes of the strife of the civil war linger in the controversies over disqualification and disfranchisement of rebel sympathizers, and enfranchisement of the negro, but with this period we shall not here concern ourselves.

Taking the vote cast at the Presidential election of 1860 as the starting point of our study, there is a certain significance in the figures. Missouri was the only State completely carried for Douglas, and his plurality over the Bell-Everett ticket was small. Of the 165,000 votes cast at this election the bulk was almost equally divided (58,801 and 58,372, respectively) between these two tickets; while Breckinridge received but 31,317 and Lincoln 17,028.<sup>1</sup> The one thing that this election made absolutely certain was that as matters then stood Missouri was overwhelmingly against both the extreme Northern and the extreme Southern positions. But when the crisis actually came, in the winter and spring of 1860-61, the magnitude of the issues involved and the feeling of kinship to and identity of institutions with the South, led many who had voted against Breckinridge to hesitate, and to incline more to the Southern view. In the effort to recall the seceding States to the Union, full—even exaggerated—recognition was given to the Southern causes of complaint; but the unconstitutionality of secession was proclaimed, and a peaceful and permanent accommodation of differences was urged, with earnest iteration.<sup>2</sup> The result, however, was different from what the authors of this policy expected. The conflict was indeed “irrepressible;” and their moderation only encouraged the secessionists of the State to redoubled exertions to carry Missouri out of the Union.

The leader in the latter movement was the newly inaugurated governor, Claiborne F. Jackson, the putative father of the famous “Jackson resolutions” of 1849, which had disrupted the Democratic party and put an end to Benton’s sen-

<sup>1</sup> Switzler, *History of Missouri*, p. 297.

<sup>2</sup> See, e. g., letter of James S. Rollins to R. E. Dunn, Feb. 2, 1861, in *Memoir of Rollins* (privately printed N. Y., 1891). Rollins had been a leading Whig, and in 1857, as the candidate of the Whigs, Americans, and Benton Democrats, came within 334 votes of defeating Stewart for the governorship. Although one of the largest slave owners in the State, he had privately opposed the proslavery colonization of Kansas.



atorial career. His predecessor, Governor Stewart, on laying down his office, January 3, 1861, had declared:

As matters are at present Missouri will stand by her lot, and hold to the Union as long as it is worth an effort to preserve it. \* \* \* She can not be frightened from her propriety by the past unfriendly legislation of the North, nor be dragooned into secession by the extreme South. \* \* \* She will rather take the high position of armed neutrality. She is able to take care of herself, and will be neither forced nor flattered, driven nor coaxed, into a course of action that must end in her own destruction.<sup>1</sup>

To this utterance, Jackson, in his inaugural address on the evening of the same day, opposed the following, which was patently in the interests of secession:

The destiny of the slave-holding States of this Union is one and the same. \* \* \* If the Northern States have determined to put the slave-holding States on a footing of inequality \* \* \* then they have themselves practically abandoned the Union and will not expect our submission to a government on terms of inequality and subordination. \* \* \* I am not without hope that an adjustment alike honorable to both sections can be effected, \* \* \* but in the present unfavorable aspect of public affairs it is our duty to prepare for the worst. We can not avoid danger by closing our eyes to it. The magnitude of the interests now in jeopardy demands a prompt but deliberate consideration; and in order that the will of the people may be ascertained and effectuated a State convention should, in my view, be immediately called. \* \* \* In this way the whole subject will be brought directly before the people at large, who will determine for themselves what is to be the ultimate action of the State.<sup>2</sup>

In close alliance with Jackson in this endeavor acted Lieutenant-Governor Reynolds (who as president of the senate lent effective aid), the speaker of the house of representatives, the more important State officers, and both United States Senators, while a majority of the members of both houses of the general assembly, as shown by their votes and actions both before and after armed conflict had actually begun, were not seriously averse to secession.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> House Journal, 1861, p. 18-26; Snead, *Fight for Missouri*, p. 15-16.

<sup>2</sup> House Journal, 1861; Snead, *Fight for Missouri*, pp. 18-25. In a private letter to the president of the Arkansas convention, dated April 19, 1861, Jackson makes a more explicit avowal of his position: "From the beginning," he writes, "my own conviction has been that the interest, duty, and honor of every slave-holding State demands their separation from the Northern or nonslave-holding States."—(Convention Journal, July, 1861, p. 28; Appleton's Annual Cyclopaedia, 1861, under "Missouri.") Yet Jackson had been elected as an avowed Union man, and in his inaugural professed "an honest devotion to \* \* \* that Union which the Constitution was designed to perpetuate."—(House Journal, 1861, p. 45). This only makes evident the different degrees in which "Union and slavery" were confounded in the political principles of Missouri statesmen.

<sup>3</sup> Snead, pp. 53-54.



At first, however, the assembly showed a disposition to moderation which its subsequent action belied. An act for the calling of a State convention, it is true, was passed within a fortnight after Jackson's recommendation, by a vote of 105 to 18 in the house and 30 to 2 in the senate. But in that act, by a vote of 17 to 15 in the senate and 81 to 40 in the house, a drag was attached to the wheels of secession in the shape of a provision declaring that "no act, ordinance, or resolution of said convention shall be deemed to be valid to change or dissolve the political relations of this State to the Government of the United States, or to any other State, until a majority of the qualified voters of this State, voting upon the question, shall ratify the same."<sup>1</sup> Various considerations doubtless contributed to the insertion of this provision. Among these may be named: First, a spirit of hesitation on the part of many members, and an indisposition to take the irrevocable step while there yet remained a plausible hope of securing a peaceful redress of grievances; and, secondly, a mistaken belief that the people were prepared to back the State administration in whatever steps it might deem needful to be taken.

After the election for delegates to the convention, which took place February 18, the latter belief could no longer be entertained. Parties as they had shaped themselves in Missouri by this time may roughly be divided into three, each, however, shading into the next by such insensible gradations of opinion as to render it difficult to draw the line of demarcation with any degree of exactitude. At the one extreme were the secessionists, the followers of Jackson; at the other the unconditional Union men, mainly of Free-Soil and Republican affiliations; while between lay the large body of citizens who hoped and expected to see the Union preserved, but would give their continued allegiance to it only on *condition* that the grievances of the South be redressed, preferably on some such lines as those indicated in the Crittenden compromise.<sup>2</sup> Of the three the unconditional Union men showed by far the greater energy, skill, and address. Under the moderate counsel of Frank Blair and the persuasive eloquence of

<sup>1</sup>Journals, House and Senate, 1861, passim. The act calling the convention may be found prefixed to the Journal and Proceedings of the Convention, etc., March, 1861.

<sup>2</sup>For an analysis of party grouping at this time see Snead, ch. 3.



James S. Rollins, the German Republicans of St. Louis, who constituted the nucleus of the party, were brought into cooperation with those adherents of Douglas, Bell, and Breckinridge who were willing to declare themselves unconditionally for the Union.<sup>1</sup> The result of this combination was an overwhelming verdict at the polls against secession. In St. Louis County the Unconditional Union ticket was elected by 5,000 votes. For the State as a whole it was estimated that the Unionists' majority amounted to 80,000 votes, a majority equal to nearly one-half the total vote cast at the preceding Presidential election. Not one open and avowed secessionist, it may confidently be asserted, was elected to the convention; but, it must be confessed, many of its members were separated in sentiments by a wide range from the Unconditional Union delegates of St. Louis.

The object of the convention, as defined in its call, was "to consider the then existing relations between the Government of the United States, the people and governments of the different States, and the government and people of the State of Missouri; and to adopt such measures for vindicating the sovereignty of the State and the protection of its institutions as shall appear to them to be demanded." When it met, on February 28, 1861, its first act, after effecting a permanent organization, was to remove its sessions from the hostile atmosphere of Jefferson City to the more congenial air of St. Louis. There its work was carried on to the completion of the session. In due course its committee on Federal relations presented what a supporter characterized as eminently "a 'Union report,' presenting no ultimatum, uttering no threat, seeking to maintain the dignity of Missouri in an attitude of peace."<sup>2</sup> It was far, however, from being an antislavery document in any sense of the word. The report, as distinguished from the resolutions which it introduced, recognized that the "people of the South [had] well-grounded complaints against many of their fellow-citizens of the North," and instanced in this connection "the incessant abuse poured upon their institutions by the press, the pulpit, and many of the people of

<sup>1</sup> "I don't believe," one rigid partisan is reported as saying in opposition to the proposal of a joint ticket, "in breaking up the Republican party just to please those tender-footed Unionists. I believe in sticking to the party." "Let us have a *country* first," responded Blair, "and then we can talk about parties." (Carr, Missouri, p. 284.)

<sup>2</sup> Convention Proceedings (March, 1861), p. 161.



the North," and the State legislation and mob violence which prevented the execution of the fugitive-slave law. Nevertheless, the resolutions themselves declared unequivocally: First, that "at present there [was] no adequate cause to impel Missouri to dissolve her connection with the Federal Union;" second, that the people of the State were "devotedly attached to the institutions of [their] country;" and, third, that they deemed "the amendments to the Constitution of the United States proposed by the Hon. John J. Crittenden, of Kentucky, with the extension of the same to the territory hereafter to be acquired, by treaty or otherwise, a basis of adjustment which [would] successfully remove the causes of difference forever from the arena of national politics." In the fifth resolution, it should be added, the convention earnestly entreated "as well the Federal Government as the seceding States, to withhold and stay the arm of military power, and on no pretense whatever bring upon the nation the horrors of civil war."<sup>1</sup>

On the adoption of the first resolution—that there was no adequate cause for secession—there was but one dissenting vote;<sup>2</sup> and the second, vowing devoted attachment to the institutions of the country, was carried unanimously. The struggle came on the third and fifth resolutions, which declared for the Crittenden compromise and entreated both sides to refrain from warlike operations. To the latter an amendment was added, by a vote of 51 to 44, recommending "the policy of withdrawing the Federal troops from the forts within the borders of the seceding States where there is danger of collision between the State and Federal troops."<sup>3</sup> To the former an addition was earnestly urged pledging Missouri "to take a firm and decided stand in favor of her sister slave States" in case the North refused a settlement on the basis of the Crittenden proposition and the other border States (Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Kentucky) should all secede. Ultimately this amendment was rejected by a vote of 70 to 23, the more thoroughgoing Unionists putting their votes largely on the ground of a preference for the Douglas, the Corwin-Adams, or the Franklin propo-

<sup>1</sup> Convention Proceedings (March, 1861), pp. 55-58.

<sup>2</sup> Proceedings (March, 1861), p. 216.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246. The phraseology is that later adopted by common consent. See p. 258.



sitions, and an unwillingness to assent to anything partaking of the nature of a threat or an ultimatum.<sup>1</sup>

Before dismissing this session of the convention from our consideration, we may well look for a moment more closely at the views expressed by members of that body in debate. Secession was almost universally conceded, even by the most ardent sympathizers with the South, to be an unconstitutional and revolutionary act.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the wrongs of the South received equally universal recognition. Not one member of the convention at this session avowed the slightest hostility to slavery as an institution, or a desire to see it done away with. No man in that convention was more stalwart in his Unionism, or took a more active part when war came, in supporting the Federal Government than did James O. Broadhead, of St. Louis. Yet his position on this subject, as publicly avowed, is summed up in these words: "I am willing to go as far as any living man to protect the institution of slavery in the State of Missouri. I have no prejudice against the institution. I have been raised with the institution, and I know something of it. I am a slave owner myself; but I am not willing to sacrifice other interests to the slave interest, or say that it is the peculiar institution of Missouri, when we know that it is not true."<sup>3</sup> So, too, there was but one member of the convention willing to pledge himself explicitly, in case war came, to the defense of the Union, and he was a German, a native of Austria, Isidor Bush, of St. Louis. In the one speech that he made during the session, he declared: "While you, Mr. President, and all the members of this convention, I believe, only imagine the horrors of war, and fancy the evils of revolution, I *know* them. My eyes have seen what you can not imagine, what I can not describe—the terrors of civil war, of bloodshed, and revolution. \* \* \* [Yet]

<sup>1</sup> Proceedings (March, 1861), pp. 217-230. It is to be noted as significant that out of the 23 members voting "no" on this question, 16 voted later against the crowning action of the convention in deposing Governor Jackson, while of the 70 "ayes," 56 recorded their votes in favor of that step. (Convention Journal, July, 1861, p. 20.)

<sup>2</sup> See, e. g., Proceedings (March, 1861), p. 165.

<sup>3</sup> Proceedings (March, 1861), p. 122. The nearest approach to an avowal of hostility to slavery is that of Linton, on p. 168: "Southern orators say that, like a scorpion girt by fire, slavery will sting itself to death if bounded. \* \* \* If it is the scorpion it appears to be, we had better get rid of it in Africa than extend it through our Territories. At any rate we can not blame the people for being afraid of the scorpion. For myself, I want nothing better than the Corwin compromise reported by the committee of thirty-three."



should a conflict be inevitable, I pledge myself that your German fellow-citizens will stand by the Government and the Union. They love peace. \* \* \* [But] the history of their own thirty-four confederated states of distracted Germany teaches them that there is no peace and no liberty without union."<sup>1</sup>

On the whole, the convention was moderate and conservative in word and action, and its equal loyalty to the Union and to slavery undoubtedly reflects the dominant opinion of the State at this time. Its refusal to follow in the line marked out by Governor Jackson, however, was inexpressibly galling to the secessionists. To the action of this "sovereign" convention, which they themselves had called, a member replied from the floor of that assembly: "I defy the convention. They are political cheats, jugglers, and charlatans, who foisted themselves upon the people by ditties and music and striped flags. They do not represent Missouri. They have 'crooked the pliant hinges of the knee that thrift might follow fawning.' As for myself \* \* \* I will never, *never*, NEVER submit to Northern rule and dictation."<sup>2</sup> The same acceptance of the views of the secessionist minority, despite the evidence, as the views of the people, and a determination to persist in secession projects, is seen in Governor Jackson's reply to the President's requisition for troops to repossess the forts and places seized from the Union. "Your requisition, in my judgment," telegraphed Jackson, "is illegal, unconstitutional, and revolutionary in its objects, inhuman and diabolical, and can not be complied with. Not one man will the State of Missouri furnish to carry on any such unholy crusade."<sup>3</sup>

It was evident then, and it is still more evident now, that Jackson and his adherents were bent on carrying Missouri out of the Union, with or without the concurrence of the majority of her citizens. To them democracy meant the rule of their faction. Into the details of the struggle which ensued we can not now enter. Jackson's efforts to secure mortars and siege guns to attack the arsenal at St. Louis, the assembling of State troops at Camp Jackson, and the hostile

<sup>1</sup> Proceedings (March, 1861), p. 244.

<sup>2</sup> Sneed, *Fight for Missouri*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>3</sup> War of the Rebellion: Official Records, Series III, Vol. X, p. 83.



legislation of the General Assembly must all be passed over, equally with the counter efforts of the committee of safety, the enrollment of Blair's "Home Guards," and the dogged and unwearying patriotism with which Capt. Nathaniel Lyon overcame what seemed to him to be the "imbecility \* \* \* or villainy" of his immediate superiors. Suffice it to say that the schemes of the secessionists were frustrated. On May 10 Camp Jackson was captured by Lyon. Pause for a time was given to the progress of events by the Price-Harney agreement of May 21. But on June 12, Lyon, now at last at the head of the military Department, closed an interview with Governor Jackson at St. Louis in words that admitted of no misinterpretation. "Rather," said he (he was still seated and spoke deliberately, slowly, and with a peculiar emphasis)—all this on the authority of an eyewitness, a member of the governor's staff—"rather than concede to the State of Missouri the right to demand that my Government shall not enlist troops within her limits, or bring troops into the State whenever it pleases, or move its troops at its own will into, out of, or through the State; rather than concede to the State of Missouri for one single instant the right to dictate to my Government in any matter, however unimportant, I would" (rising, as he said this, and pointing in turn to everyone in the room) "see you, and you, and you, and you, and you, and every man, woman, and child in the State dead and buried." Then, turning to the governor, he said: "This means war. In an hour one of my officers will call for you and conduct you out of my lines." And then, without another word, without an inclination of the head, without even a look, he turned upon his heel and strode out of the room.<sup>1</sup>

The next day appeared Governor Jackson's proclamation calling for 50,000 men to drive the Federal troops from the State, and the war began.

The effect which these events had in producing a new crystallization of opinion with reference to the Union was no doubt great. Judged in the light of subsequent events, Lyon's attack on Camp Jackson was politically a mistake. War doubtless would have come in any event; but coming as it did, the result was to drive many hitherto Union men into

<sup>1</sup> Snead, *Fight for Missouri*, pp. 199-200.



the Confederate camp. Harney, whose loyalty is now clearly established, was probably a fitter guide politically in these troublous times than either Blair or Lyon. At all events the policy of "Thorough," anticipating attacks and overriding nice distinctions of law and constitutionality, had for its effects the conversion to secession of men like Sterling Price—the president of the convention, and one of the best and most popular men in Missouri—and the complete surrender of the legislature to Governor Jackson's designs.

The changes produced in opinions by these events became evident when the convention reassembled July 22, 1861, on call of a committee intrusted with this power. The object of its session was to consider the situation produced by the flight from Jefferson City of the State government before the advance of the Union troops. Out of a membership of ninety-nine some sixteen, including the president of the body, failed to appear at any time, the inference being that they sided with the governor and against the convention. The debates, too, as recorded in the proceedings of the convention, show a distinct change in tone. In the former session the shading of opinions from extreme unionism, through moderate unionism to mild secessionism, was gradual and progressive. In this session opinion is seen crystallized into two sharply contrasting parties. On the one side are those who demand the vacation of the offices held by the governor, lieutenant-governor, secretary of state, and the members of both houses of the legislature. On the other side are those who, whether from sympathy with the governor's course, constitutional scruples, or fear of military rule and abolitionism, oppose such a course. The spirit of conciliation, which had marked the former session of the convention, has now disappeared. In its place is revealed the bitterness and animosity of party strife, the reflex in the council chamber of the armed conflict and guerilla warfare of the State at large.

In this conflict the victory was with the party of action. By a vote of 56 to 25 Jackson was deposed; and by similar votes the other offices in question were declared vacant, and certain "odious laws" passed by the legislature in the interests of secession were abrogated.<sup>1</sup> This done, the convention pro-

<sup>1</sup> Convention Journal (July, 1861), pp. 20-22.



ceeded to fill the vacancy in the governorship by the election of one of its members, Judge Hamilton R. Gamble, of St. Louis, to that position. Then, on July 31, having adopted an address to the people in justification of their course, the convention adjourned, again subject to call.

Soon after this date (August 10) came the disastrous battle of Wilson Creek, in which Lyon lost his life; and this was followed (August 30) by the proclamation of martial law. With these events the political struggle against secession may be considered as coming to an end. Thenceforth secession is a matter to be dealt with by the military power, whether found armed in the field or passive in the market or workshop. Thenceforth, through military control of the polls, through compulsory oaths of allegiance, through the levying of assessments on the property of disloyalists, and finally through disfranchising laws and constitutions, the political control of the State is for eight years in the hands of Union men exclusively.

So one chapter is closed; but a new one is forthwith opened. The difficulty is again exemplified of stopping a revolution halfway. The question of the Union once settled by the elimination politically of the disunionists, the question of slavery began to loom large before men's eyes. As early as 1857 Gratz Brown had made a speech in the Missouri house of representatives advocating and prophesying the abolition of slavery in Missouri, on grounds of the State's material interests.<sup>1</sup> And although the St. Louis Intelligencer

<sup>1</sup> Although "framed principally," as its author told a correspondent, "to suit [his] own meridian [St. Louis]," where there was a strong German element; and although "it was a startling speech to the house, in some respects," (Brown to G. R. Smith, Mar. 3, 1857, MS.), yet when judged by Northern standards it seems a comparatively innocent performance. The circumstance which called it forth was the introduction in the house of a senate joint resolution declaring that "the emancipation of the slaves held as property in this State would be not only impracticable, but that any movement having such an object in view would be inexpedient, impolitic, unwise, and unjust, and should, in the opinion of this general assembly, be discountenanced by the people of the State."

This resolution, Brown declared, had removed all restraints upon the opponents of slavery from discussing the subject, and had "made emancipation henceforth and forever an open question in Missouri." Slavery would be abolished there, he maintained; but out of regard for the poor white laborer, and not as an act of humanity to the slaves. "It will be here," he said, "as elsewhere, a conflict of race; and I do say that the increase of free white population, together with the white emigration from the other States coming to Missouri will, whenever and wherever the labor of the white man meets the labor of the slave, beside the same plowshares, in the same harvest field, face to face, not only be entitled to demand, but will receive, the preference; and that the labor of the white man will force the labor of the slave to give place and take itself off." By reference to statistics he showed that "the extinction of slavery as a system in our midst



had styled the existence of an emancipation party in Missouri, "an impossibility, an impertinence, a nuisance, and a humbug,"<sup>1</sup> this was mere whistling to keep up one's courage. The elements for the formation of such a party did exist, and were bound with the development of the State to grow more numerous. "Every emigrant from the East or Europe," said Brown editorially in the *Missouri Democrat*, in answer to the foregoing stricture, "every mile of railroad constructed in the State, and every mine opened, is the auxiliary of that party. It will summon its recruits from the factory, the workshop, and the field; and so far from being a political and economic blunder, \* \* \* it is the organization which of all others conforms most strictly to the principles of political and economic science."<sup>2</sup>

Under the operation of a solicitude to avert the threatened dissolution of the Union, antislavery opinions lost ground in the early months of 1861. But when war came, in its heat and glare, radical opinions developed rapidly. The policy embodied in Fremont's famous proclamation of August 31, 1861, declaring freed the slaves of Missourians taking arms against the United States, became the point of departure for a new antislavery agitation and a new political division. Before the close of 1861 the Union party was separating into two wings, styled respectively the Radicals and Conservatives. "We must give up slavery or we must give up the Union," was the position assumed by the former; and they demanded that the policy laid down in Fremont's proclamation, which had been overruled by the President, should be carried out. "If a man is right," replied one of their number to a criticism from Governor Gamble, "he can not be too radical; and if he is wrong, he can not be too conservative." These words aptly characterize the whole position of the Radical party.

is at this moment in the course of rapid accomplishment." "Missouri must, ere long, from the operation of natural causes, rid herself of the institution. \* \* \* In all our domestic relations, as well as in our relations as a State of this confederacy, Missouri would be benefited by the liberation and riddance of every slave within her borders." He warned his fellow-representatives that while they were "higgling \* \* \* for the indorsement of an effete system of slavery, the empire of the world" was gliding from their grasp, and passing to the free States on their borders. And as for the sentimental ties which, it was often urged, should bind them to the other slave-holding States, "Missouri," he exclaimed, "has nothing in common with the South, either in national or home concerns. Nor does she owe any debt of gratitude" to that section. (See speech in full in *Missouri Democrat*, February —, 1857.)

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by *Missouri Democrat*, Feb. 27, 1857.

<sup>2</sup> *Missouri Democrat*, Feb. 27, 1857.



Right and wrong, were, in their eyes, sharply opposed. They were sure of the rectitude of their own views and they would tolerate no compromise.<sup>1</sup>

The slow progress of the war, the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia (April 16, 1862), and the offer by Congress of financial aid to the loyal States adopting a policy of compensated emancipation, greatly strengthened the anti-slavery element in Missouri. By the close of 1862 the leaders of the Conservatives were united with the Radicals in the conviction that slavery must go; and Governor Gamble embodied this view in his message of December, 1862, to the legislature. The only difference between the two parties in this matter was as to ways and means. The Conservatives in the legislature, acting on the recommendation of the governor, wished to reconvene the existing convention to initiate emancipation, while the Radicals sought to secure the election of an entirely new convention. It was the Conservative policy which triumphed; and the majority of the convention, when it met, dealt with the subject in an eminently conservative way. "They indeed devised and adopted a scheme of emancipation," says a recent writer, "but it was one which, in the new condition of public opinion, seemed vitiated with a spirit of selfishness and an afterthought of evasion. \* \* \*

The institution of slavery in Missouri would have remained untouched for the period of seven years, with, of course, the contingent possibility of a change of public sentiment and a repeal of the ordinance before any right to freedom could accrue. \* \* \*

It was not to be expected that such a dilatory and half-hearted measure as this would receive popular acceptance."<sup>2</sup>

The measure did not, in fact, prove generally acceptable. The Radical agitation for emancipation went on more vigorously than ever;<sup>3</sup> and it now received the form of an organ-

<sup>1</sup> Governor Gamble's attitude is indicated in the statement of the Missouri Democrat, editorially, on November 27, 1861, that he "was in the first place a conditional Union man, afterwards an 'armed-neutrality' man, and now is, as always, a 'conservative' citizen."

<sup>2</sup> Nicolay and Hay, Lincoln, VIII, p. 209.

<sup>3</sup> The Radical position on slavery, by September, 1863, is exemplified in the remark of that Radical, George R. Smith, himself a slaveholder, whose epigrammatic reply to Governor Gamble has before been quoted. He "didn't care," he is reported as saying in a public speech, "if the Copperheads lost all their slaves, and he had got to that point where he didn't care much if his Union friends lost theirs also." (St. Louis Republican, September 2, 1863.)



ized protest against the whole Conservative rule of the State and the Federal policy which supported it. To embody this protest, a mass convention was called to meet at Jefferson City September 2. From the standpoint of the Radical organ of St. Louis, the meeting was "the most successful and most important political convention ever held in the State." "The convention derives its importance," it said in another issue, "from the position which it has taken upon the questions of the day. The ground which it has seen fit to occupy will command at once the national attention and respect. For the first time in the history of the nation a great party has adopted a platform of unconditional freedom as the basis of a thorough State organization in a slave State. The party which has done this holds the destinies of Missouri in its hands."<sup>1</sup> The Conservative organ, on the other hand, characterized the convention as a "meeting of conspirators against the peace of this State; of those who propose to put out of office, by force, the present State government and to improvise a new State government on its ruins; of those who are not satisfied with the ordinance of emancipation, or rather with that amendment of the Constitution which wipes out slavery in this State in less time than it was ever accomplished in any other State of the Union; of that class who propose radical changes in this military department, and, failing that, to denounce the President and his Cabinet for refusing to carry out their insane and treasonable projects."<sup>2</sup>

The root of the matter was that Governor Gamble's administration, while it had reflected the consensus of Union opinion in July, 1861, was too lukewarm for the Radical Union opinion which had since developed. The fifth resolution adopted by the convention arraigns the provisional government as "untrue to the people" of the State, the following being the chief counts in the indictment: the use of the forces of the State to maintain slavery; the disarmament of loyalists and the establishment of the "enrolled militia," many of whom are characterized as "known and avowed disloyalists;" and a refusal to cooperate with the General Government, particularly in the execution of orders levying assessments against disloyalists. The most efficacious way of securing a redress of their griev-

<sup>1</sup> Missouri Democrat, Sept. 3 and 4, 1863.

<sup>2</sup> St. Louis Republican, September 1, 1863.



ances, in the view of the convention, lay in the sending to Washington of a committee so large that it could not be charged, as had formerly been the case, with being the representative of a mere faction. A committee of one from each county—seventy in all—was accordingly appointed to lay their grievances before the President.<sup>1</sup> In due time the committee made the trip and was received by Lincoln. The mingled tact and firmness with which the latter handled the matter of these party differences in Missouri is worthy of the highest praise. It was in his formal reply to this delegation that Lincoln used the language with which this paper begins. He was obliged to refuse the more important demands of the committee, and to let them know that the reins of mastery lay in his hands. "It is my duty to hear all," he said; "but at last I must, within my sphere, judge what to do and what to forbear."<sup>2</sup> His own sympathies, however, were with the Radicals, because of the integrity and sincerity of their political views. "I believe, after all," he remarked to his secretary, Mr. Hay, some weeks later, "those Missouri Radicals will carry their State, and I do not object to it. They are nearer to me than the other side in thought and sentiment, though bitterly hostile personally. They are the unhandiest fellows in the world to deal with; but, after all, their faces are set Zionwards."<sup>3</sup>

President Lincoln's forecast of results in Missouri proved to be correct. At the election held November 3, 1863, the Radicals made some gains and won a slight victory, the soldiers' vote being cast almost unanimously for their ticket. In January, 1864, occurred the death of Governor Gamble, the most conspicuous leader of the Conservatives. This materially weakened the party, and as the Presidential election of that year came on the Conservatives as an organization practically went to pieces. The voters of Democratic antecedents returned to the Democratic fold and supported McClellan on the Chicago platform, which declared the war a failure, while those of Whig and "American" origin little by little fused with the Radicals. The hostility of the latter proved to be more a matter which concerned the leaders than

<sup>1</sup> The resolutions of the convention may be found in the St. Louis papers for September 3, and in a condensed form in Appleton's Annual Cyclopaedia for 1863.

<sup>2</sup> Nicolay and Hay, VIII, p. 223.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 220.



the rank and file, and despite the opposition of some German Fremonters, Lincoln carried the State in November by 40,000 majority. For the first time since the beginning of the war State officers were chosen at this election, and the entire Radical ticket, with Governor Fletcher at its head, was elected by a similar majority. In the elections to the general assembly the Radicals secured a majority of the senate and three-fourths of the lower house. Finally, at this election it was decided that a new constitutional convention be called, whose first duty, it was well understood, would be to pass an immediate emancipation ordinance, and of the delegates chosen to this body three-fourths were taken from the Radical party.

The work of the convention of 1865 was of great political importance, but it may only detain us now for a moment. By a decree of January 11 slavery was abolished, immediately and without compensation; and so was closed the second chapter in the history of the contest. But, as in the former case, a new chapter was forthwith opened by the insertion, in the constitution adopted by the convention, of the most radical disfranchising provisions. No person was to be allowed to vote at any election in the State who had "ever given aid, comfort, countenance, or support to any persons engaged in" hostilities to the United States, or had ever "*by word or deed* manifested his adherence to the cause of such enemies, or his desire for their triumph over the arms of the United States, or his sympathy with those engaged in exciting or carrying on rebellion." In the vote on the ratification of the constitution itself these provisions were by anticipation to apply; but even so, its adoption was procured by a majority of less than 2,000 votes.<sup>1</sup>

With the adoption of this constitution Missouri's political history in the civil war period comes to an end. From an overwhelming majority in support of the Union in February, 1861, there had followed a dropping off of the more extreme Southern sympathizers after the assault on Camp Jackson and the violation of the Price-Harney agreement. When the question of slavery pressed to the front, division had resulted even among those who remained loyal to the Union, and so had arisen the Radical and Conservative parties. Finally,

<sup>1</sup>Annual Cyclopaedia, 1865, under "Missouri."



through a policy of disfranchisement, we have seen the Radical faction triumph over their opponents. "Union and slavery"—the question was truly, in Lincoln's phrase, "a perplexing compound," and one presenting many sides and many phases. But when once the Union was definitely assured by the suppression of the rebellion, and slavery was wholly and immediately abolished, political grouping in the State becomes simpler. Staunch Union and antislavery men, like Blair and Brown, found it impossible to support the policy of retaliation and disfranchisement to which their Radical colleagues were pledged. A split in the Radical, or Republican, ranks appears and grows wider. The Democrats, thereupon, adopt a policy of alliance with the Liberal Republicans, and this combination triumphs in 1870 in the election of Gratz Brown as governor and the repeal of the disfranchising clauses of the constitution of 1865. With this event the reign of Radical Republicanism definitely closes in Missouri, and there begins the reaction of triumphant Democracy.











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