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INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

The Ring of True Metal.

BELOW WE PUBLISH THE INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF GOV. VANCE, DELIVERED IN TUCKER HALL ON MONDAY THE FIRST DAY OF JANUARY, 1877.

LADIES AND FELLOW CITIZENS:

There is retribution in history. For all the wrongs and inequalities of individual and national life there is compensation provided if we do but patiently await its coming. Twice before this, I took the oaths of office for Governor of North Carolina; the first time on the 8th of September, 1862, the second time on the 1st day of January, 1864. I was not permitted to serve out my last allotted term. War was then raging in the land and the star of the Confederacy was already paling towards its final obscuration. In April, 1865, the second and last remaining great army of the Confederate States surrendered at Greensboro and the hardly contested struggle of the Southern people was ended. We then found ourselves in a peculiar condition, attributable in a great measure to the complex nature of the Government under which we live. That struggle was the result of the opinion of the Southern people of their right to withdraw from the Union by State action; it was inaugurated by ordinances of secession and was maintained by arms. It was throughout an attempt to escape from the American Union as established by the Constitution. When that escape was prevented by the adverse results of the war we naturally supposed we were still in the Union and subject to the Constitution. True, according to the theory of our adversaries, individuals engaged in the so-called rebellion had incurred the penalties of treason, but it had occurred to no lawyer to suppose that the States composing the Confederacy had forfeited their position as members of the Union, or that they had acquired by defeat the very object they had sought to attain by success. It was therefore admitted by the undisputed logic of all parties, that the insurgent States were still at the close, as at the beginning of the war, in the Union, controlled by the Constitution, bound by all its obligations, and entitled to all its protections. In fact we were termed traitors by reason of, and only by reason of, the provisions of that instrument; and but for the fact, that as was said, we owed an obedience to it, which we could in nowise avoid by secession, no one could have had the hardihood to venture on the use of such a term toward us. But when the war ended successfully for the North, the situation became embarrassing to our adversaries. The Union and the Constitution which had furnished such excellent battle cries in the day of strife, were now decidedly in the way. The Constitution said, "These States are members of the Union; they did not get out, and indeed could not, whilst my provisions were observed; and being where they always were, they are entitled immediately to reform their own governments and to send Senators and Representatives to the National Congress." But the necessities of the Republican party spoke thus: "If these States are treated as being in the Union, and if their Senators and Representatives are admitted into Congress from governments of their own formation, they will add so much strength to the Democratic party that there is danger of their seizing the Government and ousting us from power." Thus the organic law of the land and the necessities of a party were at war. Without hesitation party good was preferred, and the Constitution went down. We were treated as outside of the Union. Our State Government was overturned; every civil officer from the Chief Magistrate to the humblest conservator of the peace was deposed, and for many months we were absolutely without law—for the absurd term "martial law" means only the will of the commander of troops. Test-oaths defeated our free representation in Congress, and many penalties attached to treason were visited upon us without the forms of a trial and conviction, which indeed might have been a hazardous proceeding as the Supreme Court was still somewhat sensitive to the legal opinions of the world. In the name of the Union we were thrust out of the Union; in the name of the Constitution we were denied all protection of the Constitution. In this manner we existed until it pleased the President of the United States to restore us to the Union, desicated of many of our rights, and stripped of much of our legal power. But even this poor contrivance of a poorer statesmanship was not sufficient for our adversaries, inasmuch as it gave us a semblance of constitutional protection and left our State Government still in the hands of our legal and native born citizens who stubbornly refused to affiliate with the dominant party. After due consideration the Republican party in Congress undertook a second reconstruction, on its own terms—certain amendments to the Constitution having been first adopted by the aid of the States to be reconstructed, then were enacted the series of "Reconstruction Acts" acknowledged by their principal advocates to be outside of the Constitution; again was the Union dissolved; a second time were we thrust out; once more were we subjected to the government of the bayonet; new qualifications of suffrage were established, new rules of disfranchisement were imposed; and the extraordinary spectacle was exhibited to the world of a Constitution being foisted upon a free people of one of the free American States by the illegal suffrage of some, aided by the illegal disfranchisement of others, and all superintended and controlled by the bayonets of strangers! By this burlesque upon law and free government, the political character of the Southern States was made to accord, perforce, with that of the dominant party; and holding the check of political disabilities upon the leading men of their opponents in their own hands, they fancied they had secured to themselves a long lease of power. The danger being thus happily averted from their party, and the State Governments of the South having been placed in the hands of their own creatures, some of whom were even provided with self-perpetuating powers called "Returning Boards," it was thought safe to re-admit these States to the American Union, on terms of so-called perfect and absolute equality.

All of this we submitted to after unavailing protest, and by all of these things we have solemnly agreed to abide in good faith, for the sake of peace in order that the land may have rest. We were not too, without a reasonable hope, that having done all which was required of us, and concurred in amending the fundamental law in such a manner as the victors thought necessary to secure all the results of the war, we might have a return to strict and exact constitutional government, and putting behind us—as we certainly were disposed to do—the irregularities and bitter memories of the past, look forward to better times in the future. Bitterly were we deceived in that fond hope. From that day to the present, the armed hand of the Federal Government has never ceased to interfere, or threaten to interfere, in the domestic concerns of the Southren States, whenever the supremacy of the Republican party was thought to be in danger. The excuse for this unconstitutional action is the miserable pretence of preserving the public peace.

It is a matter of decision by the Supreme Court that the National Government cannot exercise mere police powers in the States, it is a matter of history that there has been no considerable breach of the peace in any part of the country except in that which was ruled by the execrable creatures who were placed in power there by the aid of the Federal Government; that when-ever the reconstructed States have thrown off this alien control there is not the shadow of violence or discord; that the only semblance of pretended discord existing in any of them, on which is founded the President's excuse for the use of soldiery, is in those three States which alone remains governed by reconstruction-carpet-baggers, and whose electoral votes happen to be necessary to secure the supremacy of the Republican party once more. Within the last thirty days, the world has seen with wonder and disgust, the Legislature of a sister State assembled to find its Capitol filled with United States soldiers, and sentinels with fixed bayonets guarding the doors of its halls, whilst a sergeant decided upon the qualifications and election of members, refusing admission to those who were declared duly elected by the supreme judicial tribunal of that State! Nor was this the first time that this great outrage upon liberty and law had been committed. This *may be* preserving the public peace, but it looks vastly more like a deliberate attempt to goad brave men to desperation in order to shed their blood, as well as to rob them of their liberties. The real disturbers of the peace in South Carolina are the President and his advisers; the real preservers of the peace are the noble and chivalrous Hampton and his long suffering and admiring countrymen.

There is not an honest man in America to-day but believes this.

Such are the results which have flowed naturally from predetermined violations of the Constitution, and the unwarranted assumption of power by the military arm. Nor have these been the only, if the worst, fruits of these departures from the legal paths. By this unnatural process and schemes of reconstruction, North Carolina was placed in the hands of the designing and ignorant of our people, organized and led on by unscrupulous and disreputable adventurers from the slums of Northern politics; a base and cormorant tribe of reptiles, which seem to spring like fungi from the rottenness and corruption of revolutionary times. The story of their short lived but evil reign, of how they bankrupted the State in character and means, of how they overturned our time-honored institutions, persecuted decency, outlawed honor and honesty, and established fraud as a thing to be worshipped in their stead, and how they rioted in the trampling down of the most revered traditions of our people, is one too well known to be repeated here. Thank God, it is ended at last! So far as North Carolina is concerned, that rule of corruption and calamity is numbered with the past, the lost and the damned! At first the column of true men which assaulted it was a small and dispirited one. Not only were the enemy strongly entrenched behind the Constitution and laws of their own making and interpreting, but the gigantic shadow of federal power stood between them and the righteous wrath of an oppressed people. By a dishonest use of the sacred name of the American Union, and by skillful appeals to the prejudices excited by war, they secured a large and respectable following of many who were not privy to their wicked designs; numerous others were tempted to join their ranks by the blandishments of office and public money, which was modestly designated "Accepting the situation." But there was a remnant who bowed not the knee to Baal; there were a few names left in Sardis who did not defile their garments. Incessantly and courageously they charged upon the enemy. On every assault their numbers and their spirits increased. One by one, corrupt leaders fell or fled; one by one, abuses were exposed and remedied; one by one, the different branches of the government were torn from their control; now it was the Legislature; now it was the representation in Congress; now a portion of the Judiciary; whilst ever and anon a corrupt county government would be seized and overturned. To show how the cause of right and justice grew, in 1868 we could give to our candidate for Governor, Thomas S. Ashe, one of our best and purest men, but 73,594 votes; in 1872 we gave Judge Merrimon 96,799 votes. Finally the day of great and decisive battle came. And I confess that the proudest day in the history of my life was the one on which I was almost unanimously chosen as the leader of the people of my native State in that great fight. A majestic spectacle was presented in the making ready. The mighty host in battle array, stretched from where the restless waves of the eastern sea beat their everlasting refrain upon the white-sanded shore of Hatteras westward to where the rugged Alpine peaks of the grand old Alleghanies look down into the chambers of the setting sun. Under the pines of the eastern plains, beneath the oaks of the rolling midlands, across the hills of the Dan, in the valleys of the Yadkin, Catawba, Broad and Cape Fear, on the sides and summits of the mountains and upon all their highland passes, they stood. Like our German ancestors, the whole people went out to battle—the women and the children as the wives and maidens of the Cherusci, standing behind our array to drive forward the laggard and encourage the timid, ready both to rejoice in our triumph and to inspire hope in our despair. In those ranks stood white haired age, sturdy manhood and lusty youth, the wisest, best and bravest out of a million people. How could manhood go backwards in such a presence? No campaign, perhaps, in our political annals was fought with such ardent and universal enthusiasm. The zeal of the people mounted up to a holy sublimity. The stake was public honesty and constitutional liberty. That banner which by your command, my countrymen, inscribed with these sacred emblems, I bore in front of that host, sustained by my able and gallant colleagues, has been blessed by the most signal victory ever achieved in our State. The average vote for our ticket is about 123,500; so rapidly have the friends of right increased. I will not affect to deny that I am personally gratified in an especial manner by the result, to which I may be pardoned for alluding. For nearly three years I was your Governor in the midst of the civil war. In that capacity in such times, duty compelled me to the performance of many ungracious and unpleasant things. Some of them were, no doubt, fairly open to hostile criticism, especially when looked at in the light of subsequent history. But I was not only assailed with extraordinary harshness and injustice for what I did, but bitterly and falsely for what I did not. The prolific sources of malevolence and slander were exhausted in defaming me. In response thereto the people of the State, whose cause I served and whose honor I upheld, have said by twenty-seven thousand more votes than was ever before that time cast for any man in our political history—not that everything I did was right, but that in all things I faithfully performed and endeavored to perform the duties which they had imposed upon me. I hope my enemies are satisfied with the verdict. Quite certain it is that I am. For the victory is not only great, but was won by one of the fairest, best matured and most peaceful elections ever held in our State or any other State. And now cheered by this magnificent endorsement, I for the third time enter upon the high duties assigned by the Constitution and laws of North Carolina to her Chief Magistrate.

In assuming once more the government of our native State, we are reminded that with power there comes responsibility. The deep wounds which the last fifteen years of war and misgovernment have inflicted upon us still gape unhealed. Our public credit has been almost entirely destroyed; our wealth has been swept away; our educational fund has been lost; unpatriotic partisan statesmanship has increased and embittered sectional feeling; and worse, perhaps, than all, the races composing our people have been set at enmity against each other. Though it is almost twelve years since the war closed, little has been done by the dominant party to heal the jealousies of late enemies, or to reconcile the antagonism of the white and the black races. Much indeed, on the contrary, has been done to aggravate both. WHERE FURTHER as in us lies it is our duty to remedy these evils. Let us carefully husband our public credit, to husband our wealth, to educate the children of the State, to mitigate sectional and race animosities. In an especial manner should it be our duty to disabuse the minds of our black citizens of the false impressions which unscrupulous demagogues have instilled into them that we intend, in any way, to interfere with their chartered rights. Let us convince them by liberal legislation and kind treatment, that we not only intend them no wrong, but that we earnestly desire their prosperity and happiness that we constitute the party in this government which, par excellence, maintains and observes the Constitution upon which their rights depend; that their former owners are, and naturally should be, their best friends; that as men of christian affection we never can forget the kindly friendships which were formed between master and servant, between jealous protection and faithful service, and finally that as men of chivalry and honor we scorn to deceive or oppress them because they are weaker in numbers and intelligence than we are. Their instrumentality in our oppression has not been so much their fault as the fault of those who controlled and direct-on them. Let this fact never be forgotten: that they served us, they served our fathers and grandfathers, with fidelity and patience always, and, for the most part, not as unwilling slaves serve hated task-masters, but as humble friends and dependents serve those whom they love. When war was rampant over the land and nearly all our able-bodied men were absent in the army, within hearing the very guns which were roaring to set them free, the great body of them remained quietly at home, laboring in our fields, supporting and caring for our women, childred and non-combatants, with an affectionate zeal rarely surpassed by any race. So, too, since their emancipation, nine out of ten of the misdeeds committed by the blacks against the whites can, in my opinion, be traced to the instigation of scoundrels of of our own color. They have mostly done evil because they were in evil hands. I firmly believe that every semblance of personal hostility toward the negro will pass away when his almost unanimous political hostility toward the whites shall have passed away. A wise statesmanship already recognizes in him, under favorable circumstances, an element not only of public wealth but of conservative power in politics which may become a cherished bulwark of the South. Labor, though it be never so ignorant, if it be closly allied to capital, is not unfrequently the real strength of society. It also becomes our especial duty to look after the rights and liberties of the people, without, which all material interests are as the small dust in the balance. Poor as we are we would be poorer still if we had more wealth and less of liberty. The freedom and integrity of elections constitute the very corner-stone of our representative government. When they cease to be perfectly fair and unforced, bloodshed and anarchy are near at hand. We are now approaching a crisis in the fate of this country which all honest men should honestly face.

No one, I presume, doubts the maxim that to preserve the blessings of liberty we should have frequent recurrence to the first principles of our Constitution. They are the embodiment of the wisdom of our ancestors eliminated, tested and approved by their experience of many hundreds of years. So well have they become established as the organic law of politics and so perfectly do they indicate the normal condition of a free State, that any departure therefrom is followed, sooner or later, by results precisely similiar to those which follow violations of the laws of nature.

All corruption, civil convulsion and degeneracy, flow naturally from a failure on the part of a State to observe the laws of its being, just as heresies flow from a nonobservance of the text of the Scriptures. This is the certain source of all the confusion and threatened evils that now distract the land. There is no plainer or more important principle in our constitutional policy than that of the right of the State, to control and regulate their own domestic affairs within their own borders: and this principle has been selected for the most repeated and persistent attack, because it is the great and almost only barrier to centralization.

Its violation is also the parent of nearly every danger which threatens the individual liberties of the citizen. For be it remembered that no power in this Union has ever successfully defied the law and the courts except Federal power; and no power has ever atempted it except when incited thereto and upheld by Federal power. So long, and only so long, as the States are left in the undisturbed exercise of this domestic sovereignty can the public peace and public freedom be preserved. The governments of the three States of South Carolina, Florida and Lousiana, are now in poessession of men who were placed there by the unwaranted interference of the Central government; they have been kept in power by the same hand, in defiance of the will of the citizens; they consider themselves responsible, not to the people over whom they rule, but to the real authors of their power at Washington. In every difficulty they appeal not to their constituents as in representative governments, but to a distant and alien tribunal. They are mostly men of evil reputation, and honest people everywhere look at their best deeds with justifiable suspicion. Now it so happens, that upon the electoral votes of these three States depends the choice of a chief magistrate for forty millions of people; *prima facie*, very decided majority for the electors of Samul J. Tilden and Thomas A. Hendricks has been given in Florida, and a large majority of many thousands in Louisiana. The returning boards of these disputed States are the creatures of these Federal-appointed State governments. They owed fealty not to the people, but to the powers at Washington. Their duty was to return the Republican electors as duly elected. Many of them were themselves candidates on the same ticket, but they properly concluded that modesty should not restrain them if honesty did not. By throwing out votes on the pretence of fraud and intimidation, they created a majority for their party electors and *themselves*. In South Carolina, while there is strong reason to believe that at least a part of the Democratic electors have been chosen, and such was loudly claimed to be the fact, an attempt to investigate the matter by a judicial inquiry was smothered by Federal bayonets. The returning board refusing to obey the mandate of the Supreme Court, its members were imprisoned for contempt and a heavy fine imposed upon them. Immediately a partisan Federal judge appears upon the scene and releases these culprits, whilst some invisable hand furnishes the money to pay their fines. Grave charges of corruption and fraud are made against all these returning boards, and it is safe to say that the honest men of the nation are not satisfied that the thing was fairly done. Universal discontent prevails, and the peace of the country is endangered. The question simply comes to this; If Mr. Tilden and Mr. Hendricks are fairly and honestly elected, shall the will of the majority prevail, or shall Federal interference prevail? Shall the Constitution and the laws rule, or shall the Republican party rule? Shall the people elect a *President*, or shall the *Praetorian cohorts* appoint *an Emperor*? For if our votes are thrown out of the ballot boxes by interested partisan re-returning boards, incited and sustained by Federal soldiers *this time*, who shall say it will not be done *next* time, and for *all* time? If so, why go to the polls at all? Why mock the hopes of freedom by swearing our officers to support an instrument which is in fact dead or obsolete? I have said this much in regard to this matter, because I conceive our situation to be critical in the extreme. Our only reliance now is upon the moderation and patriotism of Congress. If the representatives of the people and of the State, shall not be able to find a peaceful and constitutional solution of the difficulty in which the country finds itself, one of two things will happen; either the majority of the American people will quietly *submit* to a *great* wrong involving the destruction of their Constitution, or there will be a resort to violence. Let us look things in the face.

The circumstances of North Carolina, as well as of the Southern States generally, imperatively demand that she should not be forward in this matter. More than all things else, except good government, we need peace. In common with the constitutional party in the North, we think we have fairly elected our candidate for President. Upon that party and not upon ourselves devolves the propriety and the duty of taking the needed steps toward securing the rights of the majority. But let it not be supposed that we are indifferent to their action, or decline to come to the front because less entitled to do so than others.

Blasted as we have been by the desolation of war; purged of rashness by the fires of revolution, and sobered both by public calamity and private sorrow as we have been, we yet cherrish the love of liberty in our hearts. As the mouthpiece of more than a million people, I believe I can with propriety say for them that North Carolina may confidently be relied upon to sustain that portion of the people of the United States which shall convince us that it is struggling for the Constitution, the laws, and public justice, which are the life and the soul of the American Union. On the one hand we do not wish it to be understood that we are ready or willing to embark in revolution; nor on the other that we are willing to quietly submit to any outrage that physical force dissected by party zeal may see fit to impose: the one course tending to provoke violence and the other to invite oppression. We do wish it understood that we will follow the lead of the constitutional men of the North. Show us the law and it sufficeth us. Law is, and in all ages has been, the shield of the weak, the refuge of the oppressed, the parent of liberty, and national life. We earnestly desire to stand by it. Truly the Constitution of our country is the ark of the covenant of our liberties, which our fathers made for themselves and their children. When it is properly enthroned in the hearts of our people its presence is a blessing and a protection; when dishonored and put away calamity and confusion inevitably ensue. Our only possible safety is to bring it back among us and re-establish its altars. When the ark of the covenant of the Lord was taken captive from Israel into strange lands, it overthrew the image of the false god in whose temple it was placed, and smote his worshippers round about with a terrible slaughter. The Priest of Dagon, to escape its vengeance sent it away upon a new cart, drawn by kine upon whose neck no yoke had come, which without any but the guidance of the God whose covenant they bore, took the way of Beth-Shemith, lowing as they went, and turning neither to the right hand nor the left. The harvesters in the valleys of Judah, pausing amidst their golden sheaves, lifted up their eyes and rejoiced to see the approach of that symbol of the presence and favor of their God. And though it journeyed in triumph through the land whose people received it with hosannas, yet did many perish who dared to lay rash and profane hands upon it.

With us in North Carolina, though the national trouble is beyond our means of control, we can at least see that the ark is kept at home and duly honored. In 1870 liberty was assailed in North Carolina, and the ark was carried away captive. Each branch of the State government was consenting thereto; the legislative and the executive by direct and overt action, and the judicial by non-action. But in due time Dagon was overturned, the people rose as the waves of the sea rise before the tempest, and brought back their ark with triumph and rejoicing. Law once more reigned in North Carolina, and only the stump of Dagon was left unto him. And whither should the kine draw the ark of the people's liberties if not into the borders of N. Carolina, "a fortress formed for freedoms' hands." Where should the genius of liberty guide them if not here? It was on the soil of North Carolina that the foot of the first English colonist was planted in America, and the solitudes of her forests first of all heard the glorious tongue of Shakespeare and of Milton: it was in North Carolina that the first blood was shed in behalf of American liberty; it was in North Carolina that the first Declaration of Independence was promulgated against the power of the British Empire; North Carolina's provincial congress, first of all, instructed her delegates to unite in a national Declaration of Independence; it was North Carolina who, with one other State to assist her refused to agree to a provision in the American Constitution permitting Congress in any emergency to suspend the privileges of the great writ of human liberty; it was in North Carolina, and I believe only in North Carolina, that in the midst of the greatt civil war of modern times, when forty millions of people were engaged in desperate strife, amid the gleaming of bayonets, the roaring of canon, the thunder of charging squadrons and the light of burning cities, the civil power maintained its supremacy over the military, the judge was obeyed. *Inter arma audiebantur leges.*

North Carolina of to-day is the lineal descendant of the North Carolina of the past. Her sons and daughters are the legitimate heirs of this glorious heritage.

With such a record I think all who struggle for liberty and law throughout the American Union may rest well assured of the sympathy and support of North Carolina.

Having briefly glanced at the political condition of our State and her relations to the federal government—which at present have such an absorbing interest for us all—I will defer speaking of our material home interest and the many suggestions I shall desire to make concerning our domestic welfare, until I shall have the honor of officially communicating with the General Assembly.

In conclusion, my countrymen, permit me to express how heartily I participate in the general joy which this auspicious occasion inspires. I humbly trust in God that this day, which is so proud a one for us all, may prove the beginning of a happier and a better one for our people. Thanking Him sincerely for His mercies towards us, let us take courage to work out the fruition of our pleasing hopes.

Let us remember that good government confers not of itself wealth, prosperity and happiness, but only places them within our reach, and renders it possible for them to be acquired by those who seek them with energy, industry and integrity. These when properly protected will build up again the walls of our political Zion. Above all, let us learn to use our great victory with moderation and justice, and strive to wield the power which is this day given us, as those who must render an account, both here and hereafter.

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