

THIRTY TWO CONTESTS

AND REPUBLICANS GETTING READY TO UNSEAT THE DEMOCRATS.

WOODARD-CHEATHAM CONTEST

The Evidence is all in Woodard's Favor and Nothing but Reckless Partisan Prejudice Can be Relied on to Accomplish Cheatham's Purpose to Unseat Him--Elections Committee Divided Into Three Parts and for the Purpose of Unseating Democrats.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 18.—(Special)—As foreshadowed in a previous letter, the amendment to the rules was yesterday adopted providing for three elections committees of 9 each. Cannon, of Illinois, led the debate, starting off with a statement of the necessity of having three committees, instead of one as heretofore, to handle the 32 contested cases to come up before the House. Cannon was replied to at length by Crisp, and sharply interrupted at one time by McMillan, of Tennessee. After the day had been nearly consumed by the debate on the amendment, it was finally passed, not, however, before amendments had been offered, and lost, respectively by Bailey, of Texas, to require a special oath from the appointees on the ground that they were judicial officers, and by Terry, of Arkansas, providing that there should be allowed six hours debate, if desired on each case. It was evident almost from the beginning from the tone and temper of Cannon's harangue that the Republicans had resolved to have done with the Democratic contestees as soon as possible.

The debate was followed by the reading of the President's message on the Venezuelan boundary question. This elicited much enthusiasm from every member.

The message is generally regarded as eminently satisfying, although the answer of spirited firmness which, perforce, was the only one left the President to give, consistently with the honor of the country. There was hardly anything else talked of yesterday afternoon, and while a few say it is a bid from Cleveland for re-nomination, yet the greater number say he has done well in every way in the utterance.

It is yet thought that Great Britain will get out of the dilemma by some diplomatic dodge. Certainly, it is asserted on all sides, America can take no back-step after such an utterance by Cleveland.

CHEATHAM-WOODARD CONTEST.

The partisans of ex-Congressman H. P. Cheatham, who is contesting Mr. Woodard's seat, have been actively endeavoring to create the impression that Cheatham has a good case and will be seated by the present House. The evidence in the case and the briefs of both parties have been published, and a careful perusal of the same will satisfy any unprejudiced mind that the claims of the contestant are not warranted by the facts.

Hon. H. P. Cheatham starts out in his contest by claiming that the second Congressional District contains 5,000 more colored than white voters, and that the colored vote may be relied on as Republican solid. It is upon these allegations that he bases his contest. If true, then there can be no doubt he was elected and is entitled to the seat. But the truth is, there is no ground for such claims and they are but bare assertions with no evidence to sustain them.

He claims that he received a plurality of 1,498 votes.

As to these allegations, what are the facts? The registration books of each county were put in evidence and they show a white registered majority of 1,539 voters. This is the official record and cannot be disputed. Ignorance would be inexcusable, and evidently the object is to foment public sentiment and create a forestall impression that he ought to be seated, because his color being in a larger majority in the district should have a representative of their own.

This district was formerly composed of a majority of negroes and was therefore known as the "black district." The Legislature of 1890 changed the district and detached Craven and Vance counties, which contained 1,118 colored majority and added Wayne county, which contained 1,500 white majority. This act of the Legislature, coupled with very large emigration of negroes from this section of the State within the last few years, has changed the complexion of the district and given the whites a registered majority of 1,579 votes, as shown by the registration books. It will thus be seen that the claim that the negroes are now in a majority in the district is absurd.

As to the second allegation, that the negro vote was solidly Republican, there is as little truth as that in regard to the claim that the negroes are in a majority in the district.

It is proved that there was great opposition among the colored voters all over the district to the contestant. This opposition is shown by many witnesses, arose principally from the fact that there had been a bitter contest for the Republican nomination for Congress between the contestant and G. H. White, a prominent and popular leader of his race, who had been elected Solicitor of the Judicial District composed of five of the same counties which are in the Second Congressional district. The convention was a very inharmonious and turbulent body, and broke up in great disorder, both Cheatham and White claiming to be nominated. White issued an address to the voters in which he denounced the contestant and made a strong appeal in his own behalf as the regular nominee of the Republican party. This contest was kept up for months and a very bitter feeling was excited between the partisans of the two aspirants. The National Republican Committee took the matter in hand and a committee was appointed to settle the difficulty. This committee decided in favor of Cheatham, and the followers of White to a large extent refused to acquiesce in that decision and fought the con-

stant throughout the campaign. White himself refusing to vote for the contestant. This is proved by Republican witnesses of prominence, and in all the counties where testimony was taken the serious opposition to the contestant among his own race was clearly proven.

In Edgecombe, one of the largest negro counties in the district, the opposition among the negroes to Cheatham was very decided as shown by many witnesses as well as by the result of the election.

Dred Wimberly, an intelligent and influential colored man, who had represented the county in the Legislature, both in the Senate and House, testified that "the opposition to Mr. Cheatham was general among the leaders and voters of the colored people throughout the county." He declared on oath: "The colored voters of the county did not support Cheatham."

Samuel Lawrence, another leading Republican of Edgecombe, testifies that after the Republican committee decided in favor of Cheatham, there was a great many Republicans who openly expressed their determination to oppose him.

In answer to a question, he testified as follows:

"I am intimate with pretty near all of them, and nearly every leader will fight Cheatham on account of White. Moses Chase, chairman of the Republican committee, J. W. Loyd, secretary, W. W. Watson, member of the committee, Ex-Senator Wimberly and Ex-Senator Frank Dancy—all three, and a good many others, opposed Cheatham."

Evidence of this kind as to Edgecombe could be multiplied, if necessary, and with none but Republican witnesses, to show the great opposition to Cheatham among the colored voters of this county, but the above is a fair sample of the evidence on this point, as found in the record of testimony taken in this contest.

Another conclusive fact to show that this county, with its large negro majority, did not give contestant any majority, is that the Republican candidates for the Legislature, who were avowed Cheatham men, were defeated. They made a contest before the Legislature, which was composed of a two-thirds majority against the Democrats. A committee was appointed, headed by Hon. H. G. Ewart, an Ex-Republican Congressman, and who was elected by the Legislature Judge of the Western Judicial District, which visited Edgecombe county, and after a full investigation of the conduct of the election in that county, reported unanimously that the sitting members were entitled to their seats, and that the election was conducted fairly and honestly in every respect. We have here the report of this committee, with only one Democrat on it, testifying that the election in Edgecombe county was fairly conducted, but the contestant claims, on the other hand, without any proof, in order to make out his case, that the election was fraudulent and corrupt; and in his brief proposes to Congress to give him a plurality in the county where he was 852 votes behind the contestee according to the official returns made by the sworn election officers, composed of both parties, and shown by the highest character of testimony, besides the evidence of the legislative committee, that they were men of good character, and had conducted the election fairly and honestly in every respect.

There is still another conclusive fact that the opposition to the contestant in this county was very extensive, as it is shown on the official returns from two precincts, where there were 103 colored votes, that Cheatham did not get a single vote, and he has not in his notice even contested either one of these two precincts, and does not offer any evidence at all to show that the election was, not fairly conducted. Yet he claims that the colored vote was solid for him.

Again, in Northampton county, where he makes the same absurd claim as in Edgecombe, without any reason or proof, we find the very same condition. Let us take, for example, Oconeechee township, which has a large negro majority. In this township there are 400 negro voters and Cheatham received only 22 votes. He claims he ought to have 160, as one of his partisans testified that he had given out to different voters that number of tickets. Suppose this absurd claim is admitted and he is allowed the 160 votes, we will have 240 of the 400 colored voters refusing to vote for him.

In this township, E. D. Jones, colored, and one of the judges of election, testifies:

"H. P. Cheatham was very unpopular and most of the colored Republicans and Populists electioneered and voted for Dr. Freeman."

Another leading Republican, W. M. Person, testified:

"H. P. Cheatham was unpopular in Oconeechee township with the Republicans. They wanted White, and most of them voted for Dr. Freeman, the Populist candidate."

Witness after witness testified to the same state of affairs, and none but Republican witnesses are necessary to prove the serious opposition to the contestant, and especially in the large negro counties. The testimony of Democratic judges of election of the highest character corroborates this unbroken and uniform evidence of Republican witnesses.

In the county of Wilson there are four precincts containing about 400 colored voters, and in these four precincts the contestee got only 35 votes, in two of the precincts only one vote in each—the negroes voting almost solidly for Dr. Freeman, who resides in this county. With this record before him, and claiming the solid negro vote of the district, the contestant does not dare to dispute the fairness of the election in these four precincts, and does not introduce a single particle of testimony in regard to them.

In this county, Hilliard Ellis, poll-holder, a leading and responsible colored citizen of Taylor's township, testifies as follows:

"I am a Republican. Have been since I have been a voter. I voted for Dr. Freeman. Every other colored man in the district voted for Freeman except Amos Daniel, who voted for Cheatham."

on this score. This letter would be too long. The above is only a small part of the evidence, all going to show the absurdity of Cheatham's claim about the solid negro vote. With the official record of registration, and the overwhelming evidence of a divided negro vote, there is no ground for the allegations made by contestant, and upon which he is asking for a seat in Congress.

The fallacy of the main ground upon which Cheatham began his contest, being exposed, he then places his reliance to work up a case by a general allegation of fraud on the part of the election officers of the district. In his attempt to establish this allegation, he encounters the same signal failure as in the other claims which the evidence proves to be entirely unfounded. Instead of fraudulent conduct at the elections, it is shown that they were conducted fairly and honestly not only by the testimony of the witnesses, but by a report made to the Legislature by a committee composed of a majority of contestant's friends. In the county of Edgecombe, where it is proposed to change the official vote so as to make out a plurality for contestant, all the evidence shows that the charges of fraud are entirely frivolous. The charge that ignorant and corrupt negro Republicans were appointed poll-holders is utterly gratuitous on the face of the report of the Legislative committee and the fact that these poll-holders were appointed on the recommendation of the Republican Executive Committee, and their character for intelligence and honesty is abundantly proved by all the witnesses examined.

In many of the townships where contestant received very few and in some instances no vote at all the fairness of the election is not questioned in his notice of contest, and no testimony offered to establish such charge.

As a specimen of the ground upon which it is claimed to reverse the returns of the sworn officers of election, I can only mention a few as a sample of the absurdity of these charges.

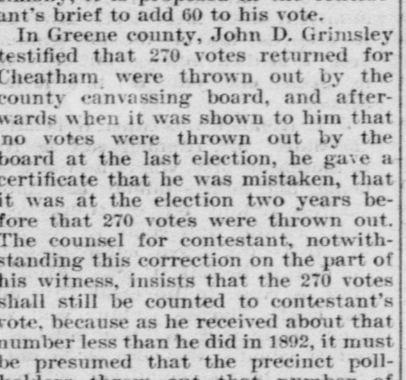
In the county of Warren two witnesses are examined who give their opinion that contestant is entitled to more votes in two precincts in that county than were returned for by the poll-holders. These two witnesses acknowledge they did not live in the two precincts referred to, and were not even present in the precincts on the day of election. Without any personal knowledge of the matter, they merely give an opinion, and it is seriously claimed that 300 votes upon such testimony as this should be added to the vote of contestant.

In Northampton county at Seaboard precinct only one witness was examined. M. F. Stancell, for contestant, who, in answer to the question, "How many colored men at this precinct, of your own knowledge, voted for Woodard?" replied, "I do not know of any. I did not stay but an hour on the day of election. I know that they said before the election that they intended to vote for Woodard. Whether they did or not I could not tell. I have heard David Doles say that he worked for him, also Nathan Calvert. With this testimony, all that was taken for this precinct, it is proposed to add to the vote of Cheatham 107 votes and in the same county, Roanoke township, without the production of a particle of testimony, it is proposed in the contestant's brief to add 60 to his vote.

In Greene county, John D. Grimsey testified that 270 votes returned for Cheatham were thrown out by the county canvassing board, and afterwards when it was shown to him that no votes were thrown out by the board at the last election, he gave a certificate that he was mistaken, that it was at the election two years before that 270 votes were thrown out. The counsel for contestant, notwithstanding this correction on the part of his witness, insists that the 270 votes shall still be counted to contestant's vote, because as he received about that number less than he did in 1892, it must be presumed that the precinct poll-holders threw out that number of votes that were cast for Cheatham.

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and actually adds 270 to contestant's vote in that county without the shadow of evidence. This is the character of testimony relied on to make out a plurality for contestant. And of such are the facts and evidence upon which Hon. H. P. Cheatham claims that he will be seated by the Fifty-Fourth Congress. Nothing but blind, reckless partisan prejudice could be relied on to accomplish his purpose, and it can not be presumed that the House of Representatives, with its 140 Republican majority, will discharge all the facts and testimony, and deprive a political opponent of his seat who was honestly elected by over 5,000 plurality.

Mr. P. H. Hanes, of Winston, went North this morning and will put his little daughter at school either in New York or at Vassar. The young lady accompanies her father, but will return for the holidays before going regularly to school.

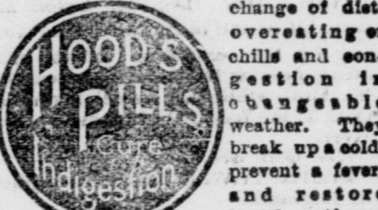
I learn from a reliable source that Reed will announce the committees Thursday, but that the Senate has refused to adjourn on that day.

Miss Ryder and Miss Wriston, of Charlotte, are registered at the Metropolitan.

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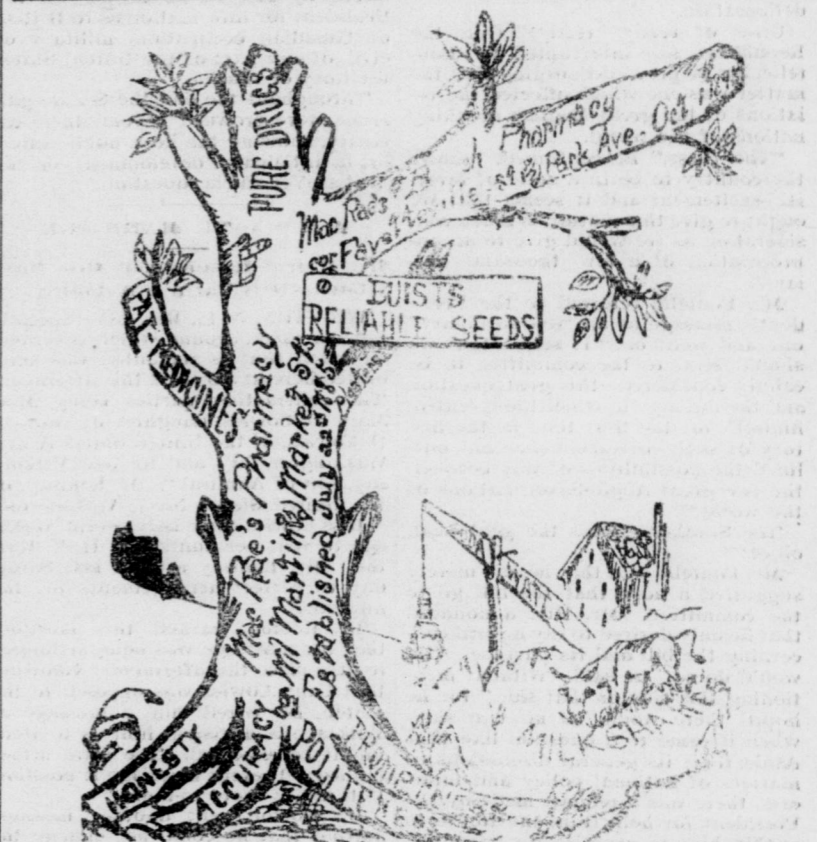
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