OPENING OF THE
PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN,
IN VIRGINIA.

SPEECH OF
COL. ROBERT W. HUGHES,
DELIVERED AT ABINGDON, VA.,
WEDNESDAY EVENING, MAY 29th, 1872.

At a large and enthusiastic meeting of Republicans from all parts of South-west Virginia, held in the Court House, at Abingdon, on the 29th of May, 1872, R. W. Hughes, Esq., was requested by resolution, to address the meeting on the questions of the day. Mr. Hughes accordingly appeared before the meeting, and spoke for an hour and three-quarters, in defence of the principles of the Republican party, and in refuting the pretensions of Mr. Greeley, to the support of any class of Southern men.

After congratulating the white voters present on the fact that they would soon, for the first time in twelve years, enjoy the privilege of voting for a President of the United States, the chief officer of the Government, against which they were lately engaged in a destructive war; and after congratulating the colored people on the fact that they now, for the first time in their lives, and in history, were to vote for the Chief Officer of the Government, under which they lived; and commending the magnanimity of the Government, went on to speak, substantially as follows:

THE LOGIC OF EVENTS.

Citizens,—Though the times change, and men change with them, history continues to repeat itself. Mr. Jefferson could say after the bitter party strife of his day had ended in the triumph of Republican principles, "we are all federalists; we are all Republicans." And so likewise the Cincinnati Convention, in nominating an extreme Radical, and in laying the Democratic party on the shelf, has enabled us also to say, after a bloody war of arms and a fiercer war of words—"we are all Federalists, we are all Republicans."

WHAT PARTY NECESSITY CAN DO.

The nomination at Cincinnati settles the sectional controversy, and gives peace to the country on sectional issues. But, in setting up the caricature of a man for the presidency, it has placed his Southern supporters in a ludicrous position. The Southern "Conservatives" have certainly a very different idol of adoration from those which they have been wont to worship. The logic of events and the drill of party, never performed such a feat before as to have brought the admirers of Mr. Davis and Gen. Lee to do homage at the shrine of Horace Greeley. The wound of party has exercised a lifetime antipathy, and the arch enemy and professional reviler of the South, becomes the leader of our cavalry. If the men who died in the Southern cause could rise in their graves, it is difficult to say whether they would weep or laugh at the spectacle presented them. A Sir Hadime, in the form of Horace Greeley, at the head of our Southern
The melancholy and ludicrous aspects of this situation are relieved, however, by one consideration. It is revealed in one light with unmixed satisfaction. The acceptance by the Southern Conservatives of a veteran abolitionist and extreme Radical politician of the North, as their Presidential candidate, has brought both parties together upon the same platform. That of a narrow and intolerant sectionalism is discarded, and the broad platform of Nationalism, Americanism, Republicanism, is accepted by all. This result is a great gain.

For seven years, those natives of the South who accepted in good faith the situation of affairs established by the war, and who swore to support the constitution and government of the Union, have been subjected to refined persecutions, social, political and commercial, for standing to their own true spirit. This unhappy proscription has of necessity come to an end with the nomination of Mr. Gleeley; for some in the South who support such a man as Mr. Gleeley, by that fact renounce their embittered sectionalism and consent to be national. For this reason, I rejoice at this nomination. It brings both parties to the South upon the platform of the Union. It withdraws from the political canvass all the old exasperating questions of section. It settles the angry issues which first alienated the sections, then culminated in civil war, and remained after the conflict, as smouldering wounds to keep its camps alive. It brings us all to an era of good feeling on sectional questions, to which the country has been a stranger for fifty years. It does all this, because, in a choice between two men of the same nature, two Republicans of the same faith, two candidates of the same politics, it is impossible for men, or parties, or sections, to be for one other at the choice which either may make. It is fortunate, too, that the candidate adopted by the Conservatives of the South is an extreme Radical Republican. Mr. Gleeley's nomination virtually converts his Southern supporters into Radicals, and transfers the supporters of Gen. Grant to the category of moderate Republicans.

O P I N I O N  I S  N O W  F R E E.

Since this nomination, therefore, I feel that at last opinion is free in the South, and that a Southern born man may invoke his fellow citizens on the support of the Constitution, the Union and its laws, without subjecting his family to insult, his business to ruin, his name to calumny. I feel that the struggle is finally ended; that the South is no longer held to the obsolete and unenlightened views of the old Sectional party, and that it is ruled by the noble man who was his wife, that unwilling to survive him, and as a means of elevating him to the highest and most exalted position of his dignity and honor. And so let me assure those Conservative who have in their hearts approved my course, but have not dared to imitate or defend it, that it is certain to avert the worst calamities that threaten all. I do assure them that it will hurt no honest man to be a Republican. An approving conscience supports him in the times of trial, and the example of the good and patriotic comes in a few years—in not more than seven years—to vindicate and commend him.


It is a most gratifying fact, that in all parties at the South and in the Union, are agreed to support Republicans as their Presidential Candidates. And it is a significant fact that the Convention of true and worthy politicians who met at Cincinnati, found it necessary in their nomination to propitiate the national sentiment of the country at the expense of the sectional, by elevating Democracy and Invoking Republicanism to their aid. It is, also, a long stride towards universal loyalty in the South for our Conservatives to have accepted so extreme a Radical as Mr. Gleeley as their candidate. The significance of these events is not effected by the questions, the election of Mr. Gleeley was composed of磁ized men, whether its nomination was honestly effected and whether the acceptance of it by the Southern Conservatives are at last on a national platform, I deny that their candidate is worthy of trust, that he was honestly nominated and that the leaders of them are honestly supporting him.

C O N F I N M E N T  O F  T H E  C I N C I N N A T I  C O N V E N T I O N.

The country is told that the Cincinnati Convention was a spontaneous assembly of patriotic men drawn together by honest motives, for honest public purposes. But Mr. Franklin Stearns was with them one day, and who went to Cincinnati with that idea, came away with a different one. He broke off from them in disgust, complaining that it was a mere convention of the leaders of ex-officeholders and their friends. And this was indeed the real fact of the case.


Nor was the nomination of Mr. Gleeley any more spontaneous than the gathering of the convention itself. It was effected in the New York fashion, by diligent piping day after day, and by a resort to all the approved tactics of the New York politician. It was secured by busy intrigue and by open and secret purchase. The newspaper freemasonry of the country know very well that nearly a year ago, the plan was adopted of buying up the Republican press of the country in the interest of Gleeley in an ingenious and artful way. Each Republican editor was approached, and his disposition sounded on the subject of a second term for Mr. Lincoln. Fortunately for Grant, an advertisement of the Tribune newspaper was offered, to be paid for at any price the editor might ask. On the contrary to be favorable to General Grant, the editor got no advertisement and no pay.

Before Congress met last Fall, a still
bolder programme was arranged. At the regular Republican convention, Mr. Greeley did not hesitate to declare that leading Republican Senators had agreed to make a formidable assault on the President, by speeches and by investigations, with a view to preventing his nomination for the second term. And it was boasted that, if Grant should be frightened off the field, Mr. Greeley would be the Republican candidate. Sane enough, these outcries came to be realized. Certain Senators did make a formidable attack. The promised speeches were made, the contemplated investigations were ordered, and General Grant had to fight battles worse than those of the Wilderness. But he got through them safe and unharmed; he was not driven from the field, and he proposes to fight it out on the same line, to victory, “if it takes all summer.”

So Mr. Greeley’s first scheme failed. The old man was, therefore, driven to another expedient. Failing to secure the regular Republican nomination, he was induced to throw his hat in for the more liberal “Whig” candidate, which was called for Cincinnati. Before it came off, he went smartly across the Atlantic interests of the Union to secure as large an attendance of Republicans at Cincinnati as possible. He thus packed that body in advance with his own creatures. He was also present to take care of the army for Adams. Russell or Davis. The Old New York politician had beaten them the battle before off. Careful measures were also taken to subsidize the press in advance, that it might be ready to give a facetious cat to the nomination as soon as it was made, and by means of the enthusiasm of the press in the doubtful and laggard of the opposition party.

In all the measures thus taken to secure the nomination of Mr. Greeley, there was no disheartenedness that Wells and Walker in their avowals of principle in the canvass of 1880; but the old Whigs first whipped the old Democrats into their cage; and then, it was as much a poor Wells man’s character, peace of mind, standing in society, and even his life and fortune, to be a party. The effort to make Wells the ticket. To go for Walker was to be a patriot and a gentleman; to go for Wells was to be a villain and scalawag.

Some of the same leaders have now picked up another New York politician, to force him upon the people of Virginia, as the candidate of the “respectables.” Mr. Greeley is now said to be too young and too full of spirit to do so, but he is now managed by the boldest gang of rogues that ever New York produced. The most dangerous of all public officers are those upon whose personages in public estimation, are yet hedged in and controlled by Ring of Rogues. Mr. Greeley is not a political leader in spite of himself; and it is this old blase politician, so managed and so surrounded, who bought and bargained his nomination at Cincinnati, that the Conservative managers and their friends must fight their way in the man to be supported by their followers.

The old Whigs of Virginia have had the Democrats of Virginia under thumb ever since the war, and have steadily been gaining in the instrument they used on that occasion; as they are not at all choice, now. When a politician is wanted to do a trade, it is not the result expected that will come from the sinews of war. They whipped the Democrats into the movement of 1880; but they paid them the derision of putting up a Demo- cratic Governor in the person of Walter. They manipulated the Democrats so easily on that occasion, and found them so thoroughly demoralized and cowed, that they ventured now upon a new experiment on the occasion, they commit an act of defiance and contempt towards the old Democrats. They put up Horace Greeley, an old highbrow and man of old age, the Know-Nothing, an old politician against the Free-Masons, against the Catholics, against slavery, against every thing which the Democrats ever defended, and call upon the followers of Andrew Jackson, Thomas Rich- hie, Jno. C. Calhoun, Wise, Floyd, Hunter, Mason, Davis, and Lee, to vote for him and recognize their lifetime enemy as their master. Very soon, all the machinery of the press, and all the eloquence of their stump orators, and all the tricks of the political activity, compelled the freemen of this State to bow down to the moon-calf which the Conserva- tive managers have selected for adornment.

The old Democrats won’t be sold or driven.

But these bold Whig managers, calling themselves Conservatives, will find their machinery of terrorism impotent to the perishing of the great body of intelligent Democrats of the old persuasion, in Virginia, to accept their candidate. Who can ever tell the limits of the facility of the hapless old party is too bold to succeed. When Zenith and Nadir come together, and then not till then, may one look for the old Democratic party of this coun- try, to support Horace Greeley, for the Presidency. The class of men, who take their opinions at second hand; whose study is what the newspapers tell them to do, but how they shall herd; who sink themselves into animals to obey ring-masters and herdma- nes; this class of men can be carried by passion, terror. It is the prescription of which we are the victims, betraying the cause to which we are martyrs, there is no word in the language, not even the hateful word traitor, that can express the indignation, contempt and resentment which we feel for such men.
The treason of Mr. Greeley has in it, moreover, an exaggerated degree of meanness. We have had in the South a hard struggle over the questions of liberty, citizenship and equal rights for the colored race. We have fought those questions, loaded with a mountain of prejudice, to a victory against the anachronisms of the men of whom Mr. Greeley is now the leader and patron. His treachery to our cause is base, because he has forsaken the poor, humble and lowly class amongst us, to take up the rich and arrogant and proscriptive. We are the prescribed and oppressed class here. And he, pharisaically denouncing persecution and hypocritically preaching liberality, colludes with our oppressors and persecutors. He is accepted as their leader by the powerful and transcendent, on the avowed ground that he is liberal to them. All the world over, all history through, human experience teaches that liberality to the oppressor is persecution. Away with this shallow plea of liberality, in favor of a party whose administration of affairs in Virginia, for the two years of their power, has produced every judicial and political crime that could be committed in the spirit of a shameless and ruthless proscription of national men.

He is a man of crookedness and lies.

I repeat that poor opinion as I have of the managers of the party in Virginia who have accepted Mr. Greeley as their leader, I have more faith in their sincerity than in his. If there is a man on this earth whose opinions are unreliable on every subject, and whose career has been marked by continual chicanery, it is Horace Greeley. There is no so-called that was ever hatched in the brain of a fanatic, which he has not countenanced, if he has not espoused and advocated. He is the walking encyclopedia of all the trashy impositions that have been born of this speculative age. He is the living embodiment of the whole swarm of politicians and journalists of them, the pernicious, most of them repudiated, many of them putrid.

He is not the type of the American man.

Our country is new, young, vigorous, progressive, powerful, great and growing; it is all this, because the genius of our people is practical and matter-of-fact. And yet, it is gravely proposed to take this fantastic bundle of nuts, this shambling theory, this paragraph-writing sciolist, this ignoingly scare-crow statement, this doted old woman politician, who has outlived her day and generation, and to set him up as the type of the bold, daring American man, and to make him the president of the foremost nation of the earth, empowered to administer its government, to command its armies, to direct its navies, to conduct its foreign relations, to impress the world by his own qualities with its vigor, its power and its prestige. It is not possible that an act of such caprice, of such folly, so ridiculously incongruous with all that is just and appropriate, will ever be committed, as the making of such a man as Horace Greeley the President of our great country.

It is almost true to say, that Horace Greeley has attacked everything that was good, and upheld everything that was bad, in morals and politics, for the last fifty years. Yet he, the opposite of George Washington, in his history, his mind, his character and his principles. He set up a scheme of scheming politicians, as the fittest man in the living age to occupy the office to which Washington gave honor and dignity.

Horace Greeley began his public life as a bitter anti-mason; preaching a crusade against that ancient and benevolent brotherhood. He was a socialist in the faith of Fourier and Owen. He has had much to do, with woman's rights and free love, pretending sometimes to combat them, but always giving them the semblance of countenance. Though a professor of vegetarianism, eating no meat; and a boasting temperance man, eschewing whiskey. He is a liberal spiritualist, the selected host of spirit-wrappers and clairvoyants. He has been esteemed a free-thinker in religion, and a kind of nothing in politics, and was both, if a man is to be judged by the company he has kept. In short, his name is a synonym of unsoundness, turbidity and craziness on all social and political questions.

Always a narrow politician—never a liberal statesman.

But it is more directly with his views as a politician that we have to do. His career as a partizan has been such as must preclude from supporting him every man of self-respect, who now professes the National Republican faith, or who was ever a Democrat of the old Andrew Jackson persuasion.

The leading idea of the day in which we live, is the greatness and glory of the American Union. To this absorbing idea all policies must henceforth bend, and all candidates for popular favor must bow and accommodate. There is that in the expanding destiny of America, which can solace the Southern man for the failure of his confederacy, and in contemplating what is before us, in the finding of education, redemption from slavery and the temporary subjugation of his country. But if there is anything that can quicken the gratification inspired by the thought of it, it is the appearance of schemes for the Presidency, and that was the affectionate fidelity to the amiable and incorruptible race of people whom Horace Greeley endeavored to convert into demons.

What drove him southward in 1865.

I refrain from dwelling on this black chapter of his history. Not I, nor you are his chief accuser for these attempts against the peace of the South, and upon the fidelity of the colored people. It is his own conscience. It was his remorse at the brutal wrongs he had done us, that brought him to Richmond at the close of the war as a suppliant for mercy. His subscription to blast-bonds and his professed anxiety were expedients by which he vainly sought to purchase of an outraged people, forgiveness and oblivion. If I had been Jefferson Davis, I would have seen the heavens rolled away and the earth crumbled under foot, before I would have suffered that name to be subscribed to any bond for my liberation.

Who, but Horace Greeley, was the chief promoter of the civil wars of 1856 to '60, in the territories, in which Shury's rifles were shipped by thousands, and emigrant aid societies marshalled by regiments, were employed to achieve, by bloodshed and violence, in Kansas a result that was unfillable under the peaceful flow of an honest and patriotic emigration?

John Brown was a saint in comparison.

In contemplating the record of Horace Greeley as a cold blooded, wanton insurrectionist, urging from a safe place, others into danger, I can look with reverence and deep emotion, on the memory of that old man's object and scheme was the liberation of the slave, and furnishing him a safe escort to freedom. Violence and bloody excesses of any society are not justifications. It was not harm to the white man that he sought to effect, but liberation to the slave. He was his only weapon; arms of defence, not arms of assault. He placed himself in the fore-front of danger, and when arrested and tried, he met his
death like a hero, in the spirit of genuine martyrdom, upholding no one, and ex- 
piring with a conscience at peace with God, with his Father, and with himself. If he 
had survived the war, his conscience 
would not have driven him to Richmond. 
He would have had no need to assume the 
role of a traitor to his country, or to trans- 
fer a cajolery, and the Conservative leaders 
already feel that the amnesty pretense is 
flat, stale, and unprofitable.

HE ALWAYS OPPOSED PROGRESS AND EXPAN- 
SION.

Horace Greeley in no sense represents 
an expansive statesmanship or liberal poli- 

cy. He has set himself in his day, against 
every measure that looked to the extension 
of the Union. When the diplomatic con- 
test arose between our own and the British 
Government, over the title to Oregon, he 
was on the side of England; and lent all 
his influence to the curtailing of our ter- 
ritories on the Pacific. We failed to 
secure our title up to the line of 54° 
because the party of his paper was the organ 
that had not the pluck to fight the fight. 
We were driven down to the line of 49° 
and lost the most valuable islands on that 
scindboard.

When Texas came to be annexed, Mr. 
Greeley opposed the measure with unre- 
lenting fury, on the ground that, though it 
would expand the Union, yet it would ag- 
grandize the South; exhibiting a meager 
spirit than that of the dog in the manger. 
He opposed our own Government in the 
war with Mexico, which was strong and sil- 
country began under the instigations of 
Horace Greeley’s party; and, like Thomas 
Corwin, he called upon the Mexicans to 
withdraw from the war with bloody hands 
hospitable graves.

When peace was conquered of Mexico, 
Horace Greeley opposed the exaction of 
indemnity for the past and security for the 
future, in the form of the peaceless territo- 
ry on the Pacific, which we did secure, and 
which has made our country the wealthiest 
and strongest in the future, and made us 
the most prosperous. Who can estimate 
the value to this Union of California; who 
with that beautiful name, every letter in 
which is a lunging shot at the haughtiness 
and narrowness of Horace Greeley’s statesmanship.

J udging from his course on these ques- 
tions, if this memorable old scold had been 
living at the time, he would have denounc- 
ed Thomas Jefferson as a pirate, for add- 
ing to the Union the vast country spreading 
out indefinitely west of the Mississippi, 
then called Louisiana; and he would have 
berated Mr. Adams as a bungler for pur- 
chasing Florida of Spain. And this cold 
hearty optimism was for a vegetarian, who 
has on all occasions opposed the extension 
of our own imperial Union, to be com- 
manded as a statesman single on the ground 
of the provisions of his Constitution and 
of his private Presidential capital, instead of long ago causing it to be enact- 
ed as a law of the land.

Horace Greeley, warmed of heart, of 
liberty, are ideas that take the ague at 
the mention of Greeley’s name! It so hap- 
pened that in the lifetime of Edgar A. Poe, 
Mr. Greeley sold the child of fancy and 
sport of destitute, a sum of money. Not 
long ago a lady wrote to Horace Greeley 
at a venture, asking, if he should chance 
to have one, an autograph of the poet. 
This heartless old man put a paragraph in 
the Tribune, to say, in answer, that he had 
an autograph of Poe that had cost him 
fifty dollars, which he would sell at a less 
price. Our chivalrous candidate for the 
Presidency could thus insult the memory 
of one of our greatest poets and send 
fund a lady, either for mere coarseness of 
nature, or else to stimulate bids for the 
poor dead poet’s due bill.

HE IS TO BE OUR DELIVERER FROM OPPRES- 
SION!

Such is the man whom the sore-head Re- 
publicans of the North have given the 
grumbling Conservatives of the South as 
their deliverer from the oppression which 
the claim in behalf of the colored man at 
Sheridan in the administration of 
General Grant and control of the “Radici- 
ental party.” “Deliverance,” “oppression,” 
gatherings of a downtrodden people; these 
are the cries of the hour and Horace 
Greeley comes as saviour, redeemer, me- 
diator, for brow-beaten and friendless peo- 
ple. I sometimes ask these chronic grumml- 
ers to specify wherein they are oppressed, 
and in what respect this great and benig- 
nant Government of ours is trampling upon 
them, where have asserted that the treatment 
we have received from its hands has been 
the most lenient and generous ever accord- 
ed to a race in the tide of time. I have maintained that we are now 
the freest people on this round globe; the 
proof of the fact being furnished by the 
grumbling gathering themselves in their 
own unainted and unpunished vituperation 
of a Government which, although losing 
half a million of lives in subduing them, 
and giving them the right to bodily—even the li- 

cence of abuse and sedition, has hung not 
single one of them as a traitor, nor ex- 
acted a single dollar of property as the 
forfeit of treason. A Government which 
would be instrumental in making the popu- 
lar and accord to a million of men lately marshalled 
in armies for its destruction, the right to 
vote for its own officers, and to participate of 
its advantages, in petition for redemp- 
tion! How unnaturally, how ungenerously, 
how unworthily of the boasted chivalry of 
our people, in this eye of the crocodiles 
and scolds who set themselves up as mouth- 
pieces of the South.

WHAT OPPRESSION DO WE SUFFER?

Pin them down to specifications—demand 
of them instances of oppression, and what 
do they say? They cannot lay their finger 
upon an instance of such a thing as home. 
They are compelled to refer to North and 
South Carolina, and instance the convic- 
tions which have been had in the courts 
held under the Ku-Klux Act of Congress. 
The men convicted and who elicit so much 
of the demonstrations of the Southerners 
by themselves disguise; who performed 
their work in the darkness of night; who 
took women out of their beds, stripped 
them naked, and gave them a naked execu- 
tion, if not to death; who burnt houses 
over the heads of sleeping families, and stood 
ready with guns and swords to put men to 
dead as they moved from the place of execu- 
tion to inflict upon woman death or a worse fate 
than death. The putting an end to such 
infamies was necessary to the reputation 
of the South; and this was the occasion of 
the oppression over which so many croca- 
dile tears are shed! The Ku-Klux Act of Congress has been a blessing to the South; it 
has relieved us from these cowardly ex- 
ettitudes of the Kians, and it has established 
peace and security where brutality and out-

lary had reigned supreme.

THE XU-KLUX ACT WAS GREELEY’S LAW NOT GRANTS.

But General Grant deserves no credit 
for the passage of the law, nor for its enforce- 
ment. The credit of its enactment is more 
largely due to the exertions of Horace 
Greeley than of any other man out of Con- 
gress. He was most conspicuous in the Trib- 
une for its passage; and still more clamorous 
for its enforcement, after passage, by the 
courts. Congress passed the law; the 
United States Circuit courts, and the State 
tried the persons accused under it; and 
the President had as little agency in the 
business as the shallow politicians amongst 
us, who complain of its oppression, 
and look to Horace Greeley for deliverance.
HE WAS A GENEROUS CONQUEROR.

At Appomattox, General Grant refused to accept the sword of General Lee; he therefore does not now hang as a trophy among the curiosities of Washington patent-office. When our commander told him of the destitution, who were careless, and their want of horses with which to put in their crops; he directed that our soldiers should take home their horses, and little properties and arms. After the contest of the Confederacy, General Grant did not, like General Sherman, celebrate his triumph in Richmond and Washington; but remained in his quarters busy with the task of liberating our prisoners and returning them to the bosoms of their families. With a delicate and noble consideration for the feelings of the countrymen whom he had beaten in honorable warfare, he refused to be a party in any of the pageantries of rejoicing and triumph. The letters of our mothers, wives and sisters, written after the surrender, to Andrew Johnson, Edwin Stanton and other men in authority, pleading for the liberation of prisoners, received no attention.

Those words which he transmitted to General Grant commanded a prompt response in every instance; no letters, indeed, came by return mail, but something more welcome than letters arrived.s the mails; in the persons of the very prisoners whose presence was longed for at home.

HE IS A LIBERAL STATESMAN.

In every public message, and by every official method at his command, General Grant has urged upon Congress a free and general amnesty, and a policy of magnanimity to the South. By a special message concerning Virginia, in May, 1869, he procured the passage of the act authorizing the submission of our Constitution to popular vote, divested of its original clauses of disfranchisement. It was by his personal order that our people were allowed the privilege of voting down those clauses. Congress, at the instigation chiefly of Mr. Gruelley and the Tribune, passed the act designated by Mr. Ku-Klux Klux, and giving to the President the power to suspend the writ of habeas corpus in every State and County of the South. With a moderation like his honor, he has exercised that authority in but one single State.

These are but a few of the facts that show the Conservative character of the great and good man who is so fortunately the President of our country. The history of the world does not afford the example of a conqueror more generous, a ruler more free from the spirit of usurpation, or a statesman more liberal and considerate, than Gen. Grant.