

A DIARY OF THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

GIDEON WELLES

II

[PRESIDENT JOHNSON, whose vindictive attitude toward the Southern States had at first alarmed even the radical leaders, reversed his position very early in his administration, and soon began to develop a policy of reconciliation substantially like that of Lincoln in theory though not in execution. Upon states lately in rebellion, the President, says Mr. Rhodes, imposed three conditions "which they must comply with before they should be entitled to representation in Congress. These were, the repeal of their ordinances of Secession, the abolition of slavery by their conventions and the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment by their legislatures, and the entire repudiation of their state debts incurred in the prosecution of the War."]

Saturday, August 19, 1865.

Sumner bewails the unanimity of the Cabinet; says there is unexampled unanimity in New England against the policy of the administration; thinks I ought to resign; says Wade and Fessenden are intending to make vigorous opposition against it, etc.

The proceedings of the political conventions in Maine and Pennsylvania leave no doubt in my mind, that extensive operations are on foot for an organization hostile to the administration in the Republican or Union party. The proceedings alluded to indicate the shape and character of this move-

ment. It is the old radical anti-Lincoln movement of Wade and Winter Davis, with recruits.

That Stanton has a full understanding with these men, styling themselves radicals, I have no doubt. It is understood that the Cabinet unanimously support the policy of the President. No opposition has manifested itself, that I am aware. At the beginning, Stanton declared himself in favor of Negro suffrage, — or rather in favor of allowing, by federal authority, the Negroes to vote in reorganizing the rebel states. This was a reversal of his opinion of 1863 under Mr. Lincoln. I have no recollection of any disavowal of the position he took last spring, although he has acquiesced in the President's policy, apparently; certainly he has submitted to it without objection or remonstrance. The radicals in the Pennsylvania convention have passed a special resolution indorsing Mr. Stanton by name, but no other member of the Cabinet. Were there no understanding on a point made so prominent by the radicals such a resolution would scarcely have been adopted or drafted. Convention resolutions, especially in Pennsylvania, I count of little importance. A few intriguing managers usually prepare them, they are passed under the strain of party excitement, and the very men who voted for them will very likely go against them in two weeks. At this time, however, unusual

activity has been shown by Forney, Kelly, and others, and the resolution has particular significance.

Tuesday, August 22, 1865.

The President said he had invited an interview with Chief Justice Chase as a matter of courtesy, not knowing but he might have some suggestion to make as to time, place of trial, etc.; but the learned Judge declined to hold conference on the subject, though not to advise on other grave and important questions when there was to be judicial action. I see the President detests the traits of the Judge. Cowardly and aspiring, shirking and presumptuous, forward and evasive, an indifferent lawyer, a poor judge, an ambitious politician, possessed of mental resources yet afraid to use them, irresolute as well as ambitious — intriguing, selfish, cold, grasping and unreliable when he fancies his personal advancement is concerned.

Tuesday, August 29, 1865.

The President sent for the Chief Justice a few days since with a view to confer with him as to the place, time, etc., of holding the court, but Chase put himself on his judicial reserve. Of course the President did not press the subject. Yesterday, Chase called voluntarily on the President and had some general conversation, and was, in the President's opinion, not disinclined to talk on the vast subject which he the other day declined; but he little understands the character of President Johnson if he supposes that gentleman will ever again introduce that subject to him.

[During the summer of 1865 Johnson did not call Congress together in extra session, but proceeded to execute his policy by executive decrees. That policy tended to bring the Southern States into alliance with the Demo-

cratic party of the North, and was hated and feared by the radicals as fraught with possibilities that the fruits of the Civil War might be lost.]

Wednesday, August 30, 1865.

There is an apparent determination among those who are ingrained abolitionists to compel the government to impose conditions on the rebel states that are wholly unwarranted. Prominent men are striving to establish a party on the basis of equality of races in the rebel states, for which the people are not prepared; perhaps they never will be, for these wary leaders do not believe in social equality, nor will they practice it. Mr. Sumner, who is an unmarried man, has striven to overcome what seems a natural repugnance. A Negro lawyer has been presented by him to practice in the Supreme Court, and extra demonstrations of that kind have been made by him and Chief Justice Chase. Sumner, I think, has become a devotee in this matter; it is his specialty; and not being a constitutionalist in politics, he is sincere I have no doubt in his schemes. I cannot say quite as much in favor of the Chief Justice. His work is connected more closely with political party aspirations. Sumner is not divested of them.

Thursday, October 12, 1865.

The radicals of Massachusetts are preparing to make war upon the President. This is obvious, and Sumner has been inclined to take the lead. But there is no intimacy between Banks and Sumner. They are unlike. Sumner is honest but imperious and impracticable. Banks is precisely the opposite. I shall not be surprised if Banks makes war upon the Navy Department; not that he has manifested any open hostility to myself, but there is deep-seated animosity between him and Admiral

Porter and other naval officers of his command who were on the Red River expedition.

Friday, October 13, 1865.

Met General Thomas of the Army of the Tennessee at the President's. He has a fine soldierly appearance, and my impressions are that he has, intellectually and as a civilian, as well as a military man, no superior in the service. What I saw of him to-day confirmed my previous ideas of the man. He has been no courtly, carpet officer, to dance attendance at Washington during the war, but has nobly done his duty.

Little was done at the Cabinet. Three of the assistants being present instead of the principals, there was a disinclination to bring forward measures or to interchange views freely. Stanton took occasion before the President came in to have a fling at my circular against party assessments, which seems to annoy him. I told him the principles and rule laid down in that circular were correct; that the idea, which he advocated, of a tax upon employees and office-holders, was pernicious and dangerous, would embitter party contests, and if permitted to go on would carry the country to the Devil. Stanton said he then wished to go to the Devil with it, that he believed in taxing office-holders for party purposes, compelling them to pay money to support the administration which appointed them. Weed and Raymond¹ are in this thing, and mad with me.

Saturday, October 21, 1865.

Wendell Phillips has made an onset on the administration and its friends, and also on the extremists, hitting Banks and Sumner as well as the Pre-

¹ Thurlow Weed, and Henry J. Raymond, editor of the *New York Times*, both warm friends of Seward and in general sympathy with his views.

sident. Censorious and impracticable, the man, though possessed of extraordinary gifts, is a useless member of society and deservedly without influence.

Secretary Seward has been holding forth at Auburn in a studied and long prepared speech, intended for the special laudation and glory of himself and Stanton. It has the artful shrewdness of the man and of his other half, Thurlow Weed, to whom it was shown, and whose suggestions I think I can see in the utterances. Each and all the Departments are shown up by him — each of the respective heads is mentioned, with the solitary exception of Mr. Bates, omitted by design.

The three dernier occupants of the Treasury are named with commendation, so of the three Secretaries of the Interior and the two Post-Masters General. The Secretary of the Navy has a bland compliment, and as there have not been changes in that Department its honors are divided between the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary. But Stanton is extolled as one of the lesser deities, is absolutely divine. His service covers the war and months preceding — sufficient to swallow Cameron, who is spoken of as honest and worthy. Speed, who is the only Attorney-General mentioned, is made an extraordinary man of extraordinary abilities and mind; for like Stanton he falls in with the Secretary of State.

It is not particularly pleasing to Seward that I, with whom he has had more controversy on important questions than with any man in the Cabinet (I, a Democrat who came in at the organization of Lincoln's Cabinet and have continued through without interruption, especially at the dark period of the assassination and the great change when he was helpless and of no avail), it is not pleasing to him that I should alone have gone straight through with my Department while there have

been changes in all others, and an interregnum in his own. Hence two heads to the Navy Department — my assistant's and mine. Had there been two or three changes as in the others, this remark would probably not have been made. Yet there is an artful design to stir up discord by creating ill blood or jealousy between myself and Fox, whom they do not love, which is quite as much in the vein of Weed as of Seward. I have no doubt the subject and points of this speech were talked over by the two. Indeed Seward always consults Weed when he strikes a blow.

His assumption of what he has done, and thought, and said, are characteristic by reason of their arrogance and error. He was no advocate for placing Johnson on the ticket as Vice-President as he asserts, but was for Hamlin, as was every member of the Cabinet but myself. Not that they were partisans, but for a good arrangement.

Sunday, December 3, 1865.

Told the President I disliked the proceedings of the Congressional caucus on Saturday evening. The resolution for a joint commission of fifteen, to whom the whole subject of admission of representatives from states which had been in rebellion [should be referred] without debate, was in conflict with the spirit and letter of the Constitution, which gives to each House the decision of election of its own members, etc. Then in appointing [Thaddeus] Stevens, an opponent of state rights, to prevent [action] if there was something bad [in prospect]. The whole was in fact revolutionary, a blow at our governmental system, and there had been evident preconcert to bring it about.

The President agreed with me, but said they would be knocked in the head at the start. There would be a representative from Tennessee who had

been a loyal member of the House since the war commenced, or during the war, who could present himself, and so state the case that he could not be controverted. I expressed my gratification if this could be accomplished, knowing he alluded to Maynard; but suggested a doubt whether the intrigue which was manifest by the resolution, the designation of Stevens, and Colfax's speech, had not gone too far.

Tuesday, December 5, 1865.

The organization of Congress was easily effected. There had been manifestly preliminary arrangements, made by some of the leading spirits. Stevens's resolution was passed by a strictly party vote. The new members, and others, weak in their understandings, were taken off their legs, as was designed, before they were aware of it.

In the hurry and intrigue no committee was appointed to call on the President. I am most thoroughly convinced there was design in this, in order to let the President know that he must wait the motion of Congress.

I think the message which went in this P. M. will prove an acceptable document. The views, sentiments, and doctrines are the President's, not Seward's. He may have suggested verbal emendations, nothing except what related to foreign affairs. But the President has vigorous common sense and on more than one occasion I have seen him correct Seward's dispatches.

I became satisfied subsequently that none of the Cabinet had any more than myself to do with it.¹

Wednesday, December 6, 1865.

Seward, apprehending a storm, wants a steamer to take him to Cuba. Wishes to be absent a fortnight or three weeks. Thinks he had better be away.

¹ The actual writing of this message was done by George Bancroft the historian.

[The most influential figures in the Senate during these troubled days were Fessenden of Maine, Trumbull of Illinois, and Sumner of Massachusetts. The cardinal doctrine of Sumner's political creed was that all civil rights, including the suffrage, be bestowed upon the Negroes throughout the Confederate States.]

Friday, December 8, 1865.

Friday, Sumner called on me with young Bright. We had quite a talk on the policy of the government, and his own views. Sumner's vanity and egotism are great. He assumes that the administration is wholly wrong, and that he is beyond peradventure right. That Congress has plenary powers, the Executive none, in establishing the Union.

He denounced the policy of the President on the question of organizing the rebel states, as the greatest and most criminal error ever committed by any government. Dwelt on what constitutes a republican government, says he has read everything on the subject from Plato to the last French pamphlet. Tells me that a general officer from Georgia had informed him within a week that the Negroes of that state were better qualified to establish and maintain a republican government than the whites. He says that Seward, McCulloch, and myself are the men who have involved the President in this transcendent error, — I, a New England man, New England's representative in the Cabinet, have misrepresented New England sentiment. McCulloch was imbued with the pernicious folly of Indiana, but Seward as well as myself was foully, fatally culpable in giving our countenance and support to the President in his policy.

I insisted it was correct, that the country aside from heated politics did not oppose it, and asked if he supposed there was any opposition to that policy in the Cabinet. He said he knew Stan-

ton was opposed to it, and when I said I was not aware of it, he seemed surprised. He asked if I had read his Worcester's speech. I told him I had, but did not indorse it. He replied, "Stanton does. Stanton," said he, "came to Boston at that time. The speech was thrown into the cars and he had read it before I (Sumner) met him. Stanton complimented the speech. I said it was pretty radical or had pretty strong views. Stanton said it was none too strong, that he approved of every sentiment — every opinion and word of it."

I told Sumner I did not understand Stanton's occupying that position, and I apprehended the President did not so understand him. I told him that I well recollected that on one occasion last spring, when I was in the War Department, he and Dawes and Gooch came in there. Sumner said "Yes, and Colfax was there." I recollect he was. "Stanton [said I] took out his project for organizing a government in North Carolina. I had heard it read on the last day of Mr. Lincoln's life, and had made a suggestion respecting it, and the project had been modified. Some discussion took place at the War Department on the question of Negro suffrage. Stanton said that he wanted to avoid that topic. You (Sumner) wanted to meet it. When that discussion opened I left, for I knew I could not agree with you."

Sumner said he well recollected that meeting. That he and Colfax had proposed modifications of the plan, and put it in an acceptable shape, but that we had upset it.

One other member of the Cabinet had written him a few days before he left home, expressing sympathy with him, and one other had spoken equally cordially to him since he arrived here. "You may have had a letter from Speed," I remarked. "No," said he,

"but Speed has had a conversation with me."

I think Harlan must be the man, yet my impressions were that Harlan held a different position. Perhaps Iowa has influenced him.

Our conversation, though earnest, was not in anger or with any acrimony. He is confident that he shall carry Stevens's resolution through the Senate, and be able to defeat the President in his policy.

Monday, December 11, 1865.

I gave the President a full relation of my interview with Sumner. He was much interested and maintains well his position. I think they will not shake him. Sumner sent me through the mail a newspaper containing a memorial for the impeachment of the President. He marked and underscored certain passages which he said, wrote on the margin, were answers to some of my questions put to him in our conversation. The attack upon the President is coarse and unworthy of a thought.

[General Grant had recently made a tour of the Southern States inquiring into conditions upon which a policy of reconstruction should be based. His report was favorable to the course laid down by the President, while the opinion of General Schurz, who had been dispatched on a more extended tour, was decidedly adverse to the Johnson plan.]

Thursday, December 14, 1865.

General Grant was in the council room at the Executive Mansion to-day, and stated the result of his observations and conclusions during his journey South. He says the people are more loyal and better disposed than he expected to find them, and that every consideration calls for the early re-establishment of the Union. His views are sensible, patriotic, and wise. I expressed a wish that he would make a

written report, and that he communicate also freely with the members of Congress.

Saturday, December 16, 1865.

Senator Sumner called again this evening. He is almost beside himself on the policy of the administration, which he denounces with great bitterness. The President had no business to move, he says, without the consent and direction of Congress. I asked him if the Southern States were to have no post-masters, no revenue officers, no marshals, etc. I said to him, "There are two lines of policy before us. One is harsh, cold, distant, defiant; the other, kind, conciliatory and inviting. Which," said I, "will soonest make us a united people?" He hesitated and gave me no direct answer, but said the President's course was putting everything back. This, I told him, was a general assertion; that conciliation, not persecution, was our policy, — and there we totally disagreed with him.

It was not right to accuse him, he said, of a persecuting spirit. He had advised clemency — had taken ground against the execution of Jefferson Davis, and asked if I was opposed to his being hung. I told him that I was not prepared to say that I was, but while he was so charitable towards Davis, he was very different toward all others South, though a large portion of the people were opposed to secession. I stated to him the views of General Grant, who had found the people disposed to acquiesce and become good citizens, — that he found those who had been most earnest and active in the rebellion were the most frank and thorough in their conversion.

Sumner closed with a violent denunciation of the Provisional Governors, — especially Perry and Parsons, — and said that a majority of Congress was determined to overturn the President's policy.

Monday, December 18, 1865.

On my way, returning to the Navy Department, I called and had an interview with the President. Told him of my conversation with Sumner, and that I was confirmed in the conviction that a deep and extensive intrigue was going on against him. He seemed aware of it, but not yet of its extent or of all the persons engaged in it. I remarked that the patronage of the Executive had, I believed, been used to defeat the policy of the Executive, and a summary removal of one or two mischievous men at the proper time would be effective and salutary. He said he should not hesitate one moment in taking off the heads of any of that class of busybodies. I showed him a copy of the *New Orleans Tribune* which Sumner had sent me, with passages underscored in a memorial for the impeachment of the President. He wished the copy and I gave it to him.

Called on Dennison¹ this evening and had a full and free interchange with him. He inquired if I had ever heard a distinct avowal from Seward on the question of Negro Suffrage or the provisional governments, or from Stanton explicitly in its favor. I replied that I had not, and he said he had not. He tells me that he hears from some of Stanton's intimates that he will probably soon resign. This is mere trash, unless he finds himself about being cornered, then he will make a merit of what cannot be avoided. Dennison ridicules the flagrant humbug which Seward and the papers have got up of Stanton's immense labors, which are really less than his own, McCulloch's, or mine. Grant, Meigs, and others discharge the labors for which S[anton] gets credit.

Wednesday, December 20, 1865.

Senator Sumner, by his impetuous violence, will contribute to put things

¹ William Dennison, Postmaster-General.

right beyond any other man. The President's message and General Grant's letter seem to have made him demented. Some who have acted with him and been indoctrinated in his extreme views are suddenly roused to consciousness.

Saturday, December 23, 1865.

Governor Pease left to-day. His brother John went three or four days since. Yesterday, when all the others had withdrawn from the Cabinet council but the President, Seward, and myself, and perhaps Chandler, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, who had been present, — Seward inquired if there was any truth in the report or rumor that Stanton had left, or was about to leave, the Cabinet. The President replied warmly, as it seemed to me, that he had not heard of any such rumor. Seward said it was so stated in some of the papers, but he had supposed there was nothing in it, for he and Stanton had an understanding to the effect that Stanton would remain as long as he did, or would give him notice if he changed. The President said he presumed it was only rumor, that he reckoned there was not much in it. He had heard nothing lately and we might as well keep on for the present without any fuss. Seward said he knew Stanton had talked this some time ago. "I reckon that is all," said the President.

Seward had an object in this talk. He knows Stanton's views and thoughts better than the President does. The enquiry was not therefore for information on that specific point. If it was to sound the President, or to draw out any expression from me, he wholly failed, for neither gave him an explicit reply.

Tuesday, December 26, 1865.

Have ordered Raphael Semmes² to be arrested. He was, I see by the papers, taken in Mobile, and will soon be

² The famous commander of the Alabama.

here. There are some nice points to be decided in his case, and I should have been glad had he absented himself from the country, though his case is one of the most aggravated and least excusable of the whole rebel host. He did not belong in the rebel region, and has not therefore the poor apology of those who shelter themselves under the action of their states. He was educated and supported by that government which he deserted in disregard of his obligations and his oath. He made it his business to rob and destroy the ships and property of his unarmed countrymen engaged in peaceful commerce. When he finally fought and was conquered, he practiced a fraud, and in violation of his surrender broke faith, and without ever being exchanged fought against the Union at Richmond. Escaping from that city, he claims to have been included in Johnston's surrender, and therefore not amenable for previous offences. Before taking this step, I twice brought the subject before the President and Cabinet, each and all of whom advised or concurred in the propriety of the arrest and trial of Semmes. It is a duty which I could not be justified in evading, yet I shall acquire no laurels in the movement. But when the actors of to-day have passed from the stage, and I with them, the proceedings against this man will be approved.

Monday, January 1, 1866.

Henry Winter Davis, a conspicuous member of the last Congress and a Maryland politician of notoriety, died on Saturday. He was eloquent, possessed genius, had acquirements, was eccentric, ambitious, unreliable, and greatly given to intrigue. In politics he was a centralist, regardless of constitutional limitations. I do not consider his death a great public loss. He was restless and active, but not useful. Still there will be a class of extreme

radicals who will deplore his death as a calamity and eulogize his memory.

When at the Executive Mansion the memory of the late President crowded upon my mind. He would have enjoyed the day, which was so much in contrast with all those he had experienced during his presidency.

[From the outset of the struggle with the President, tremendous party pressure was exercised to keep the Congressional majority in line against the Executive. The most powerful figure in the lower House was Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania, whose views represented the extremest radicalism. He proposed, says Rhodes, "the reduction of those [the Confederate] States to territories, no account therefore to be taken of their ratifications of the Thirteenth Amendment, three-fourths of the loyal States being sufficient; a constitutional amendment changing the basis of representation in the House from population to actual voters; measures to confer on the Negroes' homesteads, to 'hedge them around with protective laws,' and to give them the suffrage."]

Monday, January 8, 1866.

The Members of Congress since their return appear more disposed to avoid open war with the President, but yet are under the discipline of party, which is cunningly kept up with almost despotic power. I am confident that many of those who are claimed as Republicans, and who are such, are voting against their convictions, but they have not the courage and independence to shake off the tyranny of party and maintain what they know to be right. The President and the radical leaders are not yet in direct conflict, but I see not how it is to be avoided. When the encounter takes place there will be those who have voted with the radicals, that will then probably go with the Presi-

dent, or wish to do so. This the leaders understand, and it is their policy to get as many committed as possible, and to get them repeatedly committed by test votes. Williams of Pittsburg, a revolutionary and whiskey-drinking leader, introduced a resolution to-day, that the military should not be withdrawn, but retained until Congress, not the President, should order their discharge. This usurpation of the Executive prerogative by Congress is purposely offensive, known to be such, yet almost every Republican voted for it in the House; the Representatives who doubted and were opposed dare not vote against it. While thus infringing on the rights of the Executive, the radical leaders studiously claim that they are supporting the President, and actually have most of his appointees with them. Were the President to assert his power and to exercise it, many of those who now follow Sumner and Stevens would hesitate. The President will sooner or later have to meet this question squarely, and have a square and probably a fierce fight with these men. Seward expects but [shuns] it, and has fled to escape responsibility.

Saturday, January 13, 1866.

I had this P. M. quite an animated talk with Senator Sumner. He called on me in relation to Semmes. Wished him to be tried on various important points which would bring out the legal status, not only of the rebels, but their cause. He thinks that many of the important points which we have from time to time discussed, and on which we have generally agreed, might be passed upon by a commission. I am not, however, inclined to make the trial so broad.

Passing from this, we got on to the question of reconstruction. I was anxious to get an inside view of the movements and purposes of the radicals, and

in order to do this, it would not do to put questions direct to Sumner, for then he would put himself on his guard, and be close-mouthed. I therefore entered into a discussion, and soon got him much interested, not to call it excited. We went over the ground of the status of the states, their political condition. He, condemning unqualifiedly the policy of the President, said [that] while he would not denounce it as the greatest crime ever committed by a responsible ruler, he did proclaim and declare it the greatest mistake which history has ever recorded. The President, he said, was the greatest enemy of the South that she had ever had, worse than Jeff Davis; and the evil which he had inflicted upon the country was incalculable. All was to be done over again, and done right. Congress, he says, is becoming more firm and united every day. Only three of the Republican Senators, Doolittle, Dixon, and Cowan, had given way, and he understood only a like proportion in the House. Asked if I had read Harris's¹ speech which Foot and Fessenden indorsed. Understood Fessenden was as decided as Foot, but not being on speaking terms, had not himself heard Fessenden. All Congress was becoming of one mind, and while they would commence no war upon the President, he must change his course, abandon his policy. The President had violated the Constitution in appointing provisional governors, in putting rebels in office who could not take the test oath, in reëstablishing rebellion, odious, flagrant rebellion. Said he had three pages from one general in Arkansas, thanking him for his speech denouncing the President's "whitewashing" message.

I told him the Executive had rights and duties as well as Congress, and that they must not be overlooked or omitted.

¹ Senator Ira Harris of New York, a member of the Committee on Reconstruction.

ted. That the rebel states had an existence and would be recognized and sustained although their functions were for a time suspended by violence. That under military necessity, martial law existing and the President being Commander-in-Chief, provisional governors had been temporarily appointed, but the necessity which impelled their appointment was passing away, the states were resuming their position in the Union, and I did not see how, without abandoning our system of constitutional government, they were to be disorganized or unorganized and deprived of their local, civil government and the voice of the people suppressed.

He spoke of them as a "conquered people," subject to terms which it was our duty to impose. Were his assumption true, and they a foreign conquered people, instead of our own countrymen, still they had their rights, were amenable to our laws, and entitled to their protection. Modern civilization would not permit of their enslavement. Were we to conquer Canada and bring it within our jurisdiction, the people would retain their laws and usages when they were not inconsistent with our own until at least we should make a change. I thought our countrymen were entitled to as much consideration as the laws of nations and the practice of our own government had and did recognize as belonging to a conquered people who were aliens. This was the policy of the President. He had enjoined upon them, it was true, the necessity of making their constitutions and laws conform to the existing condition of affairs and the changes which war had brought about. They had done so, and were each exercising all the functions of a state; had their governors, legislatures, judges, local municipal authorities, etc. We were collecting taxes of them, appointing collectors, assessors, marshals, post-masters, etc.

I saw I had touched on some views that impressed him, and our interview and discussion became exceedingly animated.

"The President, in his great wrong," said Sumner, "is sustained by three of his Cabinet. Seward is as thick-and-thin a supporter of the whole monstrous error as you or McCulloch."

I asked him if he supposed the Cabinet was not a unit on the President's policy. He said he knew it was not. Three of the members concurred with him, Sumner, fully, entirely.

I expressed doubts. Why, said he, one of them has advised and urged me (Sumner) to prepare and bring in a bill which should control the action of the President and wipe out his policy. It has got to be done. Half of the Cabinet, as well as an overwhelming majority of the two houses of Congress, are for it, and the President must change his whole course. If he did not do it, Congress would.

Monday, January 15, 1866.

Was much disturbed by what Sumner said in regard to a member of the Cabinet who had urged him to bring in a bill adverse to the President's policy. Sumner is truthful, and therefore his statement is reliable. Although he is credulous, I cannot think he was deceived, nor is he practicing deception.

Tuesday, January 30, 1866.

I had another long talk with Senator Sumner, who called on me on Saturday. It was of much the same purport as heretofore. He is pleased with a speech of Secretary Harlan, made the preceding evening, which I had not then read, and said it came up to the full measure of his requirements. Then, said I, he probably is that member of the Cabinet who has been urging you to bring in a bill to counteract the President's

policy. "No," said Sumner, "it was not Harlan but another member. There are," continued he, "four members of the Cabinet who are with us and against the President." "Then," replied I, "you must include Seward." This he promptly disclaimed.

I told him he must not count Dennison. He was taken aback. "If you know from D[ennison]'s own mouth, have it from himself, I will not dispute the point," said Sumner. I told him I knew D[ennison]'s views; that last spring he had, at the first suggestion, expressed himself for Negro Suffrage, but that he had on reflection and examination come fully into the President's views. He replied that he had known D[ennison]'s original position and had supposed it remained unchanged.

Sumner told me he should make a very thorough speech this week on the great question, the treatment of the States and people of the South, but should avoid any attack on the President; would not be personal.

Wednesday, January 31, 1866.

The new shape of affairs shows itself in the social gatherings. At Mrs. Welles's reception to-day, a large number of the denizens of Washington who have not heretofore been visitors, and whose sympathies and former associations were with the rebels, called. So many who have been distant and reserved were present as to excite her suspicions, and lead her to ask if I was not conceding too much. There were some friends evidently aware of existing differences in the Administration. I noticed at the reception at the Executive Mansion last evening that there was a number in attendance as if by preconcert. This I attribute more to the insane folly of the radicals, who under Thad Stevens are making assaults

on the President, than to any encouragement which the President has given to rebel sympathizers. If professed friends prove false and attack him, he will not be likely to repel such friends as sustain him. I certainly will not.

Thursday, February 1, 1866.

Colonel Bolles and Eames have prepared an order for the President to sign for a mixed commission to try Semmes. I took it to the President this P. M. He expressed himself strongly against a military trial or military control. Wished the Navy to keep the case in its own hands. Said he wished to put no more in [Judge-Advocate-General] Holt's control than was absolutely necessary, that Holt was cruel and remorseless, made so perhaps by his employment and investigations; that his tendencies and conclusions were very bloody. The President said he had a large number of Holt's decisions now, pointing to the desk, which he disliked to take up, that all which came from that quarter partook of the traits of Nero and Draco. I have never heard him express himself so decidedly in regard to Holt, but have on one or two previous occasions perceived that his confidence in the Judge-Advocate-General was shaken.

I long since was aware that Holt was severe and unrelenting, and am further compelled to think that, with a good deal of mental vigor and strength as a writer, he has strange weakness. He is credulous and often the dupe of his own imaginings. Believes men guilty on shadowy suspicions, and is ready to condemn them without trial. Stanton has sometimes brought forward singular papers relating to conspiracies, and dark and murderous designs in which he had evident faith, and Holt has assured him in his suspicions.

(To be continued.)

OUR SUPERIORITY IN RELIGION

BY ERNEST CUSHING RICHARDSON

PROGRESS is a wonderful thing, and not the least wonderful thing about it is its inevitableness. The world evolves, we must progress. However much we deprecate the fact, we cannot help it; we are better than our forefathers. Compare King Edward's automobile with the chariot of Khaemhat, Togo's cannon with the bow of Rameses, the Dreadnought with a Roman galley, the Eiffel Tower with the Pyramids! Hammurabi never so much as heard of sociology, Homer of a literature seminar, Aristotle of Pragmatism, the Pompeians of chromo-lithography. Even "that wonderful thirteenth century" knew nothing of movable types, the Italian Renaissance nothing of the colored Sunday supplement, the Reformation nothing of steam or electricity. A million copies of a New York journal in a single day would have been inconceivable to Tacitus! We humbly anticipate being outstripped in turn by posterity, but we are, up to date, the best thing on record, towering as far above the mental stature of our nomad ancestors as a forty-four-story sky-scraper above their tents.

Nowhere, perhaps, is our superiority more marked than in the matter of religion. Three recent contributions have brought this out clearly. "An American Woman," in the *American Magazine* for last August, shows our astonishing progress in general; Dr. Williston Walker, in the *Congregationalist*, shows the leaps and bounds that we have taken in the last twenty-five years; and our hopes for the religion of the future have been

set forth by President Eliot in the October number of the *Harvard Theological Review*.

"An American Woman" points out that men have learned "in the last few centuries" that religion is born and waxes strong independent of churches; that they need no church; that religion, to be a living thing, must be accompanied by works; and many other things unknown to "oldtime religion." They have learned, it seems, that the oldtime religion was a "hard, cold, humorless, merciless, selfish thing . . . everybody absorbed in a rush for individual salvation; 'God save my soul and the Devil take the hindmost' . . . its motto." Having learned all this, we have quit the churches, not because we have got beyond religion, but simply because our religion has got beyond the churchgoers. There is, as "An American Woman" acutely says, "plenty of trouble with the churches, but no real trouble with the times. Men have deserted the churches but religion has not deserted men." — We have not got beyond religion; on the contrary, it would seem, we have progressed; pure religion, free from all the cold, hard, humorless, merciless, selfish elements of the oldtime religion, has come to take up its abode with us. We have "less of the fear of God" and more of the love of man.

Dr. Walker's article, in the *Congregationalist*, on our progress in the last twenty-five years, is, as might be expected, very different in its tone. He is scholarly, his statement of the doc-