

Andrew Johnson (By James G. Blaine)

TWENTY YEARS OF CONGRESS. P 4-8

P-8 Upon Johnson becoming President even the more conservative but not less loyal or less humane feared that from the personal antagonisms of his (Johnsons) stormy career he might be disposed to deal too harshly with the leaders of the conquered rebellion.

P-4 While Mr. Johnson had been during his entire political life a member of the Democratic party, and had attained complete control in his State, the Southern leaders always distrusted him. In the early part of his career as a representative in Congress, he warmly espoused, if indeed he did not originate, the homestead policy. In support of that policy he followed a line of argument and illustration absolutely and irreconcilably as antagonistic to the interests of the slave system as those interests were understood by the mass of Southern Democratic leaders.

P-5 Mr Johnson's mode of urging and defending the homestead policy was at all times offensive to the mass of his Democratic associates of the South, many of whom against their wishes were compelled to support the measure on its final passage, for fear of giving offense to their landless white constituents, and in the still more pressing fear, that if Johnson should be allowed to stand alone in upholding the measure, he would acquire a dangerous ascendancy over that large element in the Southern population. Johnson spoke with ill-disguised hatred of "an inflated and heartless landed aristocracy," not applying the phrase especially to the South, but making an argument which tended to sow dissension in that section. He declared that "the withholding of the use of the soil from the actual cultivator is violative of the principles essential to human existence," and that when "the violation reaches that point where it can no longer be borne, revolution begins." His argument startlingly outlined a condition such as has long existed in Ireland, and applied it with suggestive force to the possible fate of the South.

P-6 Such appeals for popular support subjected Johnson to the imputation of demagogism, and earned for him the growing hatred of that dangerous class of men in the South who placed

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the safety of the institution of slavery above the interest and the welfare of the white laborer.

P-7 Of the twenty-two senators from the eleven States that afterwards composed the Confederacy, Johnson was the only one who honorably maintained his oath to support the Constitution; the only one who did not lend aid and comfort to the enemies of the Union. He remained in his seat in the Senate, loyal to the Government, and resigned a year after the outbreak of the war (in March, 1862) upon Mr Lincoln's urgent request that he should accept the important post of Military Governor of Tennessee. His administration of that office and his firm discharge of every duty under circumstances of great exigency and oftentimes of great peril, gave to him an exceptional popularity in all the Loyal States, and led to his selection for the Vice-Presidency in 1864. The national calamity had now suddenly brought him to a larger field of duty, and devolved upon him the weightiest responsibility.