

The World's Famous Orations.

America: III (1861–1905)

Reasons for Being a Republican Ulysses Simpson Grant (1880)

Born in 1822, died in 1885; graduated from West Point in 1843; served in the Mexican War in 1846–48; a Colonel in the Civil War in June, 1861; a Brigadier-General in August, 1861; a Major-General of Volunteers in 1862; Commander of the Army of West Tennessee in 1862; made Lieutenant-General on March 2, 1864; Commander of all the Union armies, March 12, 1864; received Lee's surrender at Appomattox on April 9, 1865; made General, July 25, 1866; Secretary of War in 1867; elected President in 1868 and reelected in 1872; an unsuccessful candidate for renomination in 1880.

Note: One of the few speeches made by General Grant after he retired from public life. It was delivered at Warren, Ohio, on September 28, 1880. He was then presiding at a Republican mass-meeting, and made this speech before introducing the orator of the day, Roscoe Conkling, who, on June 5 of the same year, had made the speech nominating him (Grant) for a third term.

IN view of the known character of the speaker who is to address you to-day, and his long public career, and association with the leading statesmen of this country for the past twenty years, it would not be becoming in me to detain you with many remarks of my own. But it may be proper for me to account to you on the first occasion of my presiding at political meetings for the faith that is in me.

I am a Republican, as the two great political parties are now divided, because the Republican party is a national party seeking the greatest good for the greatest number of citizens. There is not a precinct in this vast nation where a Democrat cannot cast his ballot and have it counted as cast. No matter what the prominence of the opposite party, he can proclaim his political opinions, even if he is only one among a thousand, without fear and without proscription on account of his opinions. There are fourteen States, and localities in some other States, where Republicans have not this privilege. This is one reason why I am a Republican.

But I am a Republican for many other reasons. The Republican party assures protection to life and property, the public credit, and the payment of the debts of the government, State, county, or municipality, so far as it can control. The Democratic party does not promise this; if it does, it has broken its promises to the extent of hundreds of millions, as many Northern Democrats can testify to their sorrow. I am a Republican, as between the existing parties, because it fosters the production of the field and farm, and of manufactories, and it encourages the general education of the poor as well as the rich.

The Democratic party discourages all these when in absolute power. The Republican party is a party of progress, and of liberty toward its opponents. It encourages the poor to strive to better their children, to enable them to compete successfully with their more fortunate associates, and, in fine, it secures an entire equality before the law of every citizen, no matter what his race, nationality, or previous condition. It tolerates no privileged class. Every one has the opportunity to make himself all he is capable of.

Ladies and gentlemen, do you believe this can be truthfully said in the greater part of fourteen of the States of this Union to-day which the Democratic party control absolutely? The Republican party is a party of principles; the same principles prevailing wherever it has a foothold.

The Democratic party is united in but one thing, and that is in getting control of the government in all its branches. It is for internal improvement at the expense of the government in one section and against this in another. It favors repudiation of solemn obligations in one section and honest payment of its debts in another, where public opinion will not tolerate any other view. It favors fiat money in one place and good money in another. Finally, it favors the pooling of all issues not favored by the Republicans, to the end that it may secure the one principle upon which the party is a most harmonious unit—namely, getting control of the government in all its branches.

I have been in some part of every State lately in rebellion within the last year. I was most hospitably received at every place where I stopped. My receptions were not by the Union class alone, but by all classes, without distinction. I had a free talk with many who were against me in war, and who have been against the Republican party ever since. They were, in all instances, reasonable men, judging by what they said. I believed then, and believe now, that they sincerely want a break-up in this “Solid South” political condition. They see that it is to their pecuniary interest, as well as to their happiness, that there should be harmony and confidence between all sections. They want to break away from the slavery which binds them to a party name. They want a pretext that enough of them can unite upon to make it respectable. Once started, the Solid South will go as Kukluxism did before, as is so admirably told by Judge Tourgee in his “Fool’s Errand.” When the break comes, those who start it will be astonished to find how many of their friends have been in favor of it for a long time, and have only been waiting to see some one take the lead. This desirable solution can only be attained by the defeat, and continued defeat, of the Democratic party as now constituted.

Source: <http://www.bartleby.com/268/10/13.html>