

# TESTIMONY

TAKEN BY

*U. S. Congress*

THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE

TO INQUIRE INTO

## THE CONDITION OF AFFAIRS

IN

THE LATE INSURRECTIONARY STATES.

---

MISCELLANEOUS AND FLORIDA.

---

WASHINGTON:  
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.  
1872.

*Question.* They have had the control of the State ?

*Answer.* They have of the legislature, if you call that the control of the State.

*Question.* Under your system the governor has the appointment of all the local officers of the counties, except the constables ?

*Answer.* I think so ; I do not know but he has that in certain cases ; in the event that they are not elected, I think that he has then the power to appoint.

*Question.* In regard to elections ; the county commissioners, I understand, are appointed by the governor ?

*Answer.* Yes, sir, that is a requirement of the constitution.

*Question.* And the elections are held under their directions ?

*Answer.* Well, they designate the precincts and the parties to hold the elections.

*Question.* When the ballots have been cast and the election closed, into whose custody are the poll-books given ?

*Answer.* I think they are left in the hands of those who are appointed to hold elections until the ballots are counted out ; I think the law requires that they shall remain in their control until counted out.

*Question.* Are they generally throughout the State men of one party ?

*Answer.* I cannot speak of that ; I cannot tell you ; I think that in some counties they are divided.

*Question.* As a rule is it generally the case that they are of one party ?

*Answer.* A majority of the officers may be of one party.

*Question.* How long were they counting out the votes cast at the election ?

*Answer.* I do not know ; I was holding court.

*Question.* How long before the result was declared in the State ?

*Answer.* There was some stoppage in the declaration of the votes, on account of the returns not coming in, or the decision of Judge White, or something suspending it.

*Question.* Were not the votes of a great many precincts thrown out ?

*Answer.* Where ; at Tallahassee ?

*Question.* Yes.

*Answer.* I have heard so ; I do not know anything about it.

*Question.* Were not enough democratic votes thrown out to change the result of the election ?

*Answer.* That is the rumor ; I do not know how true it is.

*Question.* Who were the board of canvassers ?

*Answer.* Mr. Gibbs was one.

*Question.* Who is he ?

*Answer.* He is the secretary of state.

*Question.* Is he a colored man ?

*Answer.* Yes, sir.

*Question.* Who were the others ?

*Answer.* Mr. Gamble was another, and I think the attorney general was the other one.

*Question.* Have they the control of the question whether the votes of precincts or districts should be received ?

*Answer.* I think they have.

*Question.* You do not know what votes were thrown out by them ?

*Answer.* I do not.

*Question.* To the best of your information, what number of votes were rejected ?

*Answer.* Well, if you go into that, I can only tell you what people have told me.

*Question.* Credible persons ?

*Answer.* I have heard Judge Niblack say so, and I think I have heard a great many others say so ; I do not recollect who they are.

*Question.* What did they tell you ?

*Answer.* They said that enough was thrown out to secure the election of Mr. Walls, and enough thrown out to secure the election of Judge Tate.

*Question.* That was by the attorney general, the secretary of state, and the comptroller ?

*Answer.* Yes, sir.

*Question.* How many weeks did it take to do that ?

*Answer.* I cannot tell ; it was some time.

---

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA, November 13, 1871.

J. C. GIBBS (colored) sworn and examined.

By the CHAIRMAN :

*Question.* State your age, where you were born, and where you now reside.

*Answer.* I am about forty-two years years of age ; I was born in Philadelphia ; and I now reside in Tallahassee, Florida.

*Question.* How long have you been living there?

*Answer.* I came into this State in 1867.

*Question.* And you have been living in Tallahassee all the time?

*Answer.* For the best portion of the time. I lived down on the river for awhile, until I was made secretary of state, and then I removed to the capital.

*Question.* What do you know of an organization in this State that is commonly called the Ku-Klux?

*Answer.* I have seen some men that I have reason to believe belonged to that organization. I have seen one man who told me himself that he was a member of the Ku-Klux.

*Question.* Who was he?

*Answer.* His name was Mark Richardson.

*Question.* In what county did he live?

*Answer.* In Taylor County.

*Question.* Was he a white man?

*Answer.* Yes, sir.

*Question.* Did he give you any account of the organization?

*Answer.* He did. He said that he knew where the regalia was, and that he had attended their meetings. I telegraphed to the United States commissioner to come up and take his statement concerning the matter. Some four or five others came in with him from Taylor County at the time, and complained that a body of men had come into Taylor County with a flag with three Ks on it; that they had alarmed the people very much; had committed some acts of violence; and, among others, that this man himself, Mark Richardson, was odious to them for some reason or other, for the reason that he was a republican, they believed, and therefore they wished to squelch him. He was as badly frightened and as uneasy as any man I have ever seen for a long while. I believe his statement was correct; but when he came before the commissioner, Judge Grunwell, he refused to take his testimony on this ground: He asked him when he was in the lodge last, and he said about thirteen months ago; and he asked when he saw that regalia and these men, and he said about the same time. And the commissioner said he would not take his testimony, because the law authorized him to take notice only of that which had taken place since that time; and he went on to state that it was contrary to usage to legislate backward; that was the pith of what he said.

*Question.* When did Richardson have this talk with you?

*Answer.* He had this talk with me probably two months or two months and a half ago.

*Question.* Have you in your position as secretary of state any information from other counties?

*Answer.* I have.

*Question.* What is the character of that information?

*Answer.* I have in my pocket now a letter that was written to me by Captain Dickinson just a month before he was killed; it was when the idea was first broached of this committee. I wrote to Mr. Dickinson, as the clerk of the county, to give me his views of such outrages as had taken place in a reliable form, so that I might lay them before this committee. I wrote to him, and I wrote to many others in this State in that way, asking them to state what outrages had occurred, and to be careful and state just what could be proved. Captain Dickinson wrote me that letter, and it was not more than a month afterward that he was killed. There is another thing that I wish to say just at this point; that is, I believe Mr. Dickinson was as pure a man in his life, and as perfect a gentleman, as is to be found anywhere. I take pleasure, in connection with the matter, to call attention to that fact. He was a religious man, a good man, a man of pure life. I do not think there was really a man in Florida against whose moral character less could be said. He was a high type of a gentleman, a graduate of Harvard College, a man of large experience of men. Any man who will read this letter can see pretty clearly what kind of a man he was.

[The letter referred to is as follows:

“MARIANNA, JACKSON COUNTY, *February 23, 1871.*

“SIR: Your letter of the 14th instant, requesting certain information as to outrages committed in this county since reconstruction, as to the spirit of the press, &c., &c., was received last night; the high water on the Apalachicola River delayed the mails.

“I regret the fact that outrages upon loyalty in this county are always so vivid a reality of the present and so fearful a probability of the future that we have failed to think of the past. I cannot, without considerable time and research, give you any history of the different terrible scenes through which I have passed here.

“You intimate that your information must be immediate, and I will give you the best views of the situation I can under the circumstances. Since reconstruction there have been about seventy-five persons violently killed in this county; and more than nine-tenths were republicans, and nearly nine-tenths colored.

"Practically the civil rights of the colored man are subordinate to those of the white man. The press has been and is disgustingly uncandid, abusive of everything republican, and at times openly seditious.

"Human life is counted cheap when passion or politics call for its sacrifice, and the frequency and cold blood which have characterized our murders has not been to me so fearful a fact as the carelessness with which the public learn a new outrage.

"Public sentiment is terribly demoralized in this direction. Within the last few days our sheriff has been shamefully beaten on the public streets and two colored men fatally assaulted. Neither of them are yet dead, but I believe no hopes are entertained of their recovery. For myself, I blush to say that, for nearly three years, I have managed to live here only by dexterously compromising the expression of my opinions, and by a circumspect walk. To say that the colored man here has, through my agency, uniformly obtained even-handed justice, would be a lie!

"To say that I have striven, even to a loss of self-respect, and several times by incurring personal danger, to do the best thing under the circumstances, is but to tell the whole truth. If more particular information is required, I shall require time to prepare it.

"Very respectfully,

"J. Q. DICKINSON.

"Hon. J. C. GIBBS, *Secretary of State*.

"P. S.—One of the colored men I mentioned died last night, and I have held an inquest to-day. Verdict, Unknown! Everybody in the county knows the murderer; he has left for Alabama. I learn just now that the other man is dead, and I also hear it disputed.

"I shall immediately investigate.

"In haste,

"J. Q. DICKINSON."]

*Question.* It has been testified here this afternoon that it was very generally reported out there in Jackson County that Captain Dickinson was killed by a colored man of the name of Bryant, and that the killing proceeded from his having criminal connection with a colored woman in his employ.

*Answer.* I have not the least hesitancy in saying, in connection with that matter, that I believe that to be untrue in every particular; I believe that story was got up simply for the purpose of scandalizing the man; I believe it a vile act of injustice to the man's memory. If I thought there was anything in it I would as frankly say so as any one.

*Question.* You are satisfied it is a calumny for the purpose of screening the guilty?

*Answer.* Yes, sir, perfectly so. I have seen the man many times; I have talked with him; I have seen him under circumstances that were very trying up there in Jackson County, in the face of those men; I know something of his life up there in that very respect. Why, sir, for months before he was slain it was a common thing—we all knew it; I talked with him about it and he talked with others concerning the matter—it was a common thing to say that he would be slain.

*Question.* State whether this is a solitary instance where a republican has been put to death, and then his memory blackened by the accusation of some crime?

*Answer.* No, sir; it is a common thing. Let me say another thing just on this point. Inasmuch as it is considered a very disgraceful thing socially here, or among refined people, civilized people, to have a scandal of that kind started against their memory in connection with women, I have noticed that as a general thing when a man is politically obnoxious and is cut off or anything of that kind, immediately they say there is a woman in it.

*Question.* Have you information of acts of violence from other counties?

*Answer.* Yes, sir, I have a number of letters in my possession; here is a brief abstract I have made from letters concerning outrages and murders that have been committed in some eight counties; and that is not all. I am certain, to the best of my belief, that I have understated the matter. You will see at the head of this list that I set down one hundred and fifty-three murders in Jackson County. I have stated that publicly in a speech here over a year ago, that that number of murders had taken place in Jackson County. Many persons have spoken about it here in this city, and I was told by Mr. McMillan that he had an account of one hundred and eighty-three murders in that county; I have put it at one hundred and fifty-three; my speech was published in the papers at the time, and a number of public men have asked me if I really believed that was the case, and I told them what I thought was the honest statement in the matter.

The following is a brief abstract of the number of murders committed in the several counties mentioned, from letters in the office of secretary of state of Florida, since reconstruction: Jackson County, 153; Madison County, 20; Columbia County, 16; Taylor County, 7; Suwannee County, 10; Alachua County, 16; Lafayette County, 4; Hamilton County, 9.

*Question.* What is the condition of your people generally in this State?

*Answer.* Notwithstanding the difficulties that have occurred, I really believe that the colored people of Florida are better off than they are in any other Southern State; I believe there is more liberty, more personal freedom for them here; that they are doing better, notwithstanding there has been that slaughter. I think that so far as the whites are concerned, the poorer class of whites, I honestly believe to-day that there is a large class of whites who are in a more hopeless condition in Florida than the blacks are, and particularly in the counties of Taylor, Lafayette, Sumter, and counties of that description, in which there lived during the war a class of men known as Union men. In Taylor and Lafayette Counties there took place what was called the Campfield raid. There were a number of men who ran away from the confederate army and went to their families in Taylor and Lafayette counties. The troops made a raid on those people, burned up their houses, drove them out, took the wives and daughters of those men and carried them off, and put them in a stockade near Tallahassee, where they suffered very much. Now, in those counties at the present time, the persecution that has been carried on there is between what we call the democracy and the Union men. They swear that no Union man or republican shall live in those counties. Mr. Kreminger was killed there. Many times he has said to me that those men had sworn that no Union man should live in that county. He said over and over again that at times he was very much alarmed. At one time he wrote to me that they had threatened to burn his house and shoot him as he ran out.

*Question.* How about schools for your people?

*Answer.* We have at least two schools in this State that are rather above the average of common schools among the freedmen; they are doing in that particular pretty well in view of the circumstances.

*Question.* Where do you get your teachers?

*Answer.* The most of them come from the North.

*Question.* How are they received by the citizens here?

*Answer.* They are badly received. I think we have thirty-one schools open in Leon County; there are a number of white teachers there, and they are ostracised altogether; the people do not recognize them, have nothing to do with them, and talk of them as though they were the offscouring of the earth; that is a common thing.

*Question.* What is the feeling among the same class in respect to people of your color owning land?

*Answer.* I think the feeling in that respect is moderating; I think the opposition to their owning land is not so great as it was some time ago. I think there is a change in many respects for the better; it is coming around slowly; I think there is a marked change observable.

By Mr. BAYARD:

*Question.* You lived in Philadelphia?

*Answer.* Yes, sir.

*Question.* What was your occupation there?

*Answer.* I lived there when I was about sixteen or eighteen years of age, and went to school; I was educated in Dartmouth College, in New Hampshire, and I studied theology at Princeton, New Jersey.

*Question.* With whom?

*Answer.* With Dr. Hodge and Dr. Alexander.

*Question.* Were you in the theological institute there?

*Answer.* Yes, sir.

*Question.* Did you graduate there?

*Answer.* I did not; I was there for nearly two years; I was a regularly matriculated student.

*Question.* You came from there to Florida?

*Answer.* No, sir; from there I went to Philadelphia, and was a pastor of a Presbyterian church there. I remained there until about the time that General Burnside took New Berne, and then I was selected by the Old School Presbyterian Church to come down here and take charge of the scattered members of the Presbyterian Church, and open schools and churches for them. I came down and operated in North Carolina and South Carolina until the latter part of 1867, and then I came into Florida. The original idea of my coming into Florida was in connection with the school interest here. I was elected as a delegate to the constitutional convention.

*Question.* You are a regularly ordained clergyman?

*Answer.* Yes, sir. I was elected as a delegate to the constitutional convention; I felt interested in the reorganization of the State, and took hold earnestly at that time. There was a necessity for men to take hold, and I did so, and became interested in politics from that point of view. When the organization of the State took place I was chosen as secretary of state, and have been acting as such ever since.

*Question.* You came here in 1867; when was the convention?

*Answer.* In 1868.

*Question.* You went at once into political life here, and have remained in it until this time?

*Answer.* Yes, sir.

*Question.* You were a delegate to the convention of ministers and laymen?

*Answer.* Yes, sir. That was a convention of the Methodist Church. As a general thing, I am expected to attend these meetings and conferences; both of the Baptists and of the Methodists; I generally go there for the purpose of urging upon the ministers this school matter and homestead matter. I make it a point to attend the conventions for that purpose. In that way I can conveniently get at men all over the State.

*Question.* I observe that you attended that convention and took part in their deliberations.

*Answer.* Yes, sir.

*Question.* And you approved of their action?

*Answer.* As a general thing I did.

*Question.* All the resolutions that they adopted, &c.?

*Answer.* Some of them I did, and some I did not. There was one resolution that I do not exactly indorse. I was not present at the time, but I have spoken to several about it since. It was in relation to a statement made by Governor Reed there about his inability to protect loyal men in this State. I spoke about that to Bishop Pearce to-day. I understood Governor Reed to say that in view of the difficulties that were about him, unless matters changed and assumed a more favorable aspect, he did not see how he could protect loyal men. It was a sort of a prospective statement. That was the idea to my mind at the time. I did not understand him to say directly to that convention that he could not protect them. It is true that in some instances I have felt that the State government has not been able to protect loyal men in this State, both white and colored. At times there has been great fear manifested. I think we have between 6,000 and 7,000 republican majority in this State; but at the present time, with the fears that have been brought to bear upon the people, I do not believe that we could have a clear majority of votes polled in this State. Take Jackson County, for instance: at the first election there there were 200 white men who cast their votes with the republican party; we had a majority in that county of 800. At the last election that took place there there was a bare republican majority of two or three. The most of the white republicans have run away out of the county. I do not believe there were five white men in Jackson County who voted the republican ticket. I know of an instance in Wakulla County where a number of white men who called themselves Union men came to Governor Reed and said that they desired to cast in their lot with the republican party, but they were afraid. I went down into Wakulla County, and those men promised to meet me there and have a meeting, but they did not come near me. A few days afterward they came to Tallahassee, and we asked them why they did not come, and they said that they were afraid; that there was not a white man in the county who dared to go out to our meeting.

*Question.* I observe that you state that you have made up this list of murders in the several counties from letters in the office of the secretary of state.

*Answer.* Yes, sir.

*Question.* Those are letters written by private individuals to you?

*Answer.* Yes, sir; letters written by private individuals, but generally by prominent men; some of them have been members of the legislature; they are well-known men in those counties—men who have been in prominent positions.

*Question.* Did they give you the numbers or the names merely?

*Answer.* Well, they gave me the names in a number of instances; in other instances they gave just the number. In some instances they would specify particular cases by name. In Alachua I think all the names were given; in several other counties a number of names were given; in other counties only the number of cases.

*Question.* Did they give you the names in the county of Jackson?

*Answer.* No, sir; they did not give the names. If you will observe, in that letter of Mr. Dickinson, he speaks of seventy-five men killed, but he does not give me the names even of those two men who were at that time wounded, and who, he says in a post-script, had died.

*Question.* This information is from private sources by letter to you?

*Answer.* Yes, sir; though some of the men are public men.

*Question.* You say these murders have occurred since reconstruction, from 1863 to 1871?

*Answer.* Yes, sir; I am very certain that I went under rather than over the mark.

*Question.* That is your opinion?

*Answer.* Yes, sir.