

**A CATECHISM OF THE
CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED
STATES OF AMERICA. ADAPTED
TO STUDENTS AND STATESMEN**

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A Catechism of the Constitution of the United States of America. Adapted to Students and Statesmen by John W. Overall

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JOHN W. OVERALL

**A CATECHISM OF THE
CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED
STATES OF AMERICA. ADAPTED
TO STUDENTS AND STATESMEN**

A CATECHISM OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

WITH SKETCHES OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND RATIFYING CONVENTIONS; AND VALUABLE PERSONAL, HISTORICAL, POLITICAL AND LEGAL INFORMATION, CRITICISM AND INTERPRETATION

ADAPTED TO STUDENTS AND STATESMEN

BY
JOHN W. OVERALL
JOURNALIST

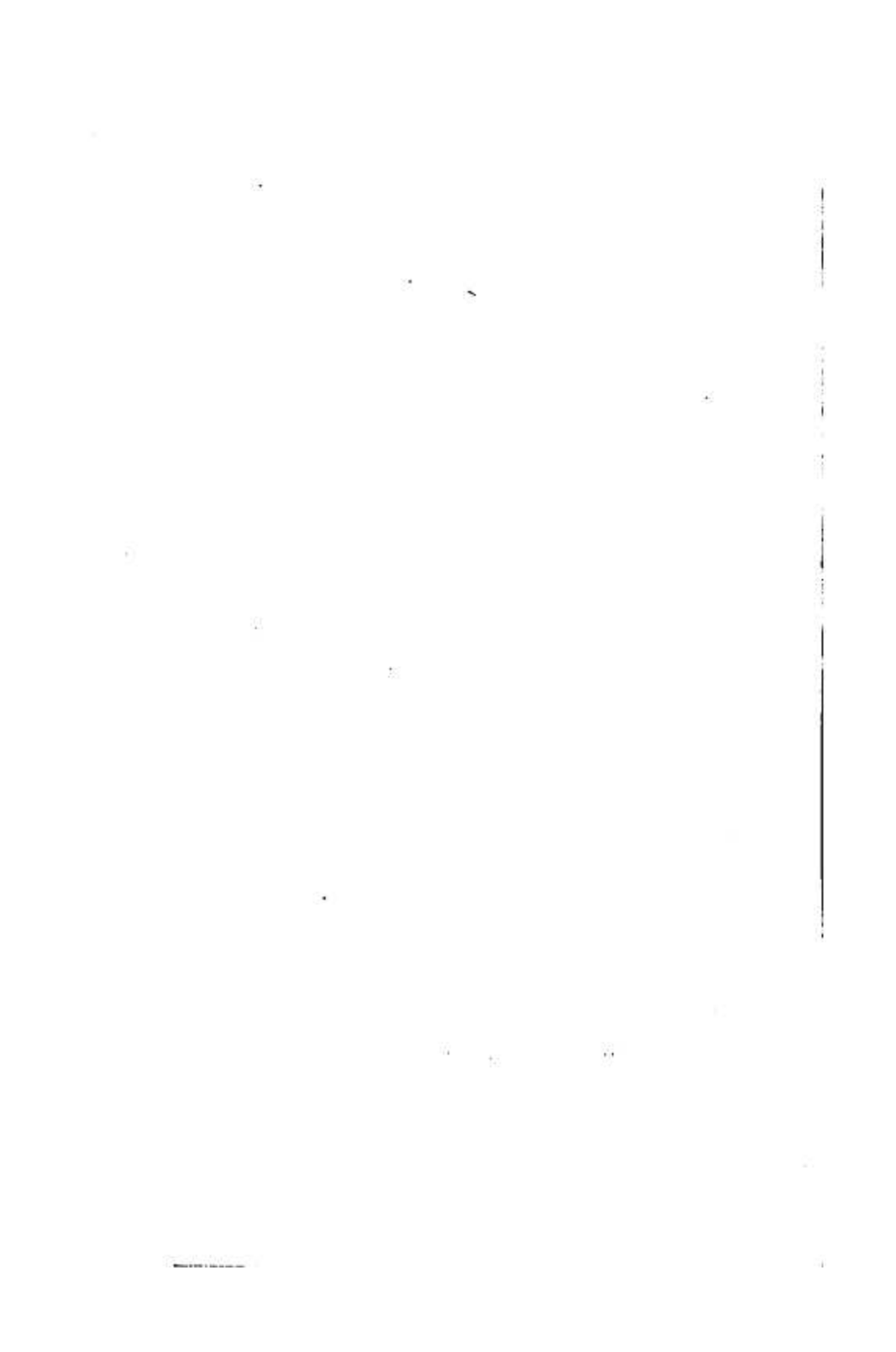
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1896

TO MY BROTHER
GIBSON Y. OVERALL
OF ALABAMA

EMINENT AT THE BAR
AND DEVOTED TO THE PRINCIPLES
OF THE CONSTITUTION

THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
BY THE AUTHOR



PRELIMINARY.

PERIL OR SAFETY—WHICH SHALL IT BE?

Napoleon the Third proclaimed, "The Empire is Peace." The empire was war until it went down in the red sunset of Sedan.

Melville W. Fuller, on the eve of his nomination to the Chief-Justiceship of the United States, said, in his eulogy on Stephen A. Douglas: "The Republic is Opportunity." He ought to have said that this extended confederation of States was meant to be Opportunity.

In the convention which framed the Constitution of the United States, Charles Pinckney declared, "In the United States there is but one order." Is that true to-day? Is there not the growing aristocracy of wealth?

In the same convention Alexander Hamilton declared that, "As long as office is open to all men and no constitutional rank is established, it is true republicanism." Is that true to-day? Is genius or moral merit or political knowledge rewarded by even so slight a thing as acknowledgment? Is it not a crime to be poor, however gifted? James Madison in the "Federalist" wrote:

"Who are to be the objects of the popular choice? Every citizen whose merits may recommend him to the esteem and confidence of his country. No qualification of wealth or civil profession is permitted to fetter the judgment or disappoint the inclination of the people." Is that true to-day? Are not nominations bought before election in the name of assessment?

Are the questions of Thomas Jefferson now asked of an aspirant to public office: "Is he honest? Is he capable? Is he faithful to the Constitution?" The only question asked as to a presidential candidate, or an aspirant to such candidacy, is this one: "Is he available?" Or, in case of an applicant for appointment: "What is his influence in his city or county or State?" Is suffrage not a farce played by demagogues? Are not ignorant voters the puppets of opulent or crafty and ambitious office-seekers? Does not wealth often dominate the Senate of the United States, and intrepid mediocrity dominate often the House of Representatives? Do not Presidents bid for second terms and manipulate so-called "national conventions"?

Is not worse than Walpolean corruption winked at in high places everywhere? Is not the success of party everything, the State a second consideration? Is not monopoly supreme in many of the

States of the Union? Is the whole country not changing from an exotical human inundation and a growing tendency to European centralism?

Instead of the splendid axiom of a late writer: "Worms to the dust; eagles to the empyrean," is not the opposite too true: Worms to the front; vultures to the empyrean? In the gradual focalization of power in Washington, and consequent disregard of the limitations of the Constitution and the reserved rights of the several States, is not the spectre of the Man on Horseback discerned in the twilight of distance? Is not his coming ultimately certain, unless there shall be social and political reform? In the insweeping, unrestricted tide of foreign immigrants of monarchical habits of thought, diverse tongues, differing religions, and unassimilating tendencies, is there not anarchic danger? Is there not an ignorant use of the ballot by a growing African-American population, and a terrible prospective racial collision which must end in the extinction of one race or the other, or the ruin of both the white and the black races by hybridization? Is not the Republic Peril?

WHAT IS THE ROAD TO SAFETY?

The author has endeavored to reblaze the road to safety in the pages which follow. Our fathers

studied the principles of the Declaration of Independence and the letter and spirit of the Constitution of the United States. In the rush of commerce and trade, the selfish desire for plutocratic millions, and the mad struggle for political power and plunder, good government is neglected, and the great charters of freedom relegated to the dust of the libraries. We must become students and patriots again, or the historian will chronicle the greatest suicide of the centuries—the destruction of the last republic that promised to federate the world.

Authors and statesmen who understand the genius and practical workings of our institutions should make haste to correct a growing fallacy which has for its nourishment political ignorance. The fallacy is that the United States have outgrown the Constitution, which needs important revision.

Although more than a century has elapsed since its ratification by the States, the people have not grown up to the principles of the Constitution. The minority have governed, and still govern. This is chiefly due to the tremendous influx of new peoples who are in everything diverse. They need education in the great school of our fathers, who were students of the histories of all of the republics and nations of the earth.