

**The "Carpet-Bagger" Regime
(1868-1876)**

From the pen of Judge Jeremiah S. Black,† of Pennsylvania, comes this description of the "carpet-bagger", who he was and what he did:††

The people (Southern) would not have been wholly crushed (politically) either by the soldier or the negro, if both had not been used to fasten upon them the domination of another class of persons which was altogether unendurable. These were called carpet-baggers, not because the word is euphonious, but because they have no other name whereby they are known among the children of men. They were unprincipled adventurers who sought their fortunes in the South by plundering the disarmed and defenseless people; some of them were the dregs of the Federal army—the meanest of the camp followers; many were fugitives from Northern justice; the best of them were those who went down after peace, ready for any deed of shame that was safe and profitable. These, combining with a few treacherous 'scalawags',§ and some leading negroes to serve as decoys for the rest, and backed by the power of the general government, became the strongest body of thieves that ever pillaged a people. Their moral grade was far lower, and yet they were much more powerful than the robber bands that infested Germany after the close of the Thirty Years' War. They swarmed over all the States, from the Potomac to the Gulf, and settled in hordes, not with the intent to remain there, but merely to feed on the substance of a prostrate and defenseless people. They took whatever came within their reach, intruding themselves into all private corporations, assumed the function of all offices, including the courts of justice, and in many places even 'ran the churches'. By force and fraud, they either controlled all elections, or else prevented elections from being held. They returned sixty of themselves to one Congress and ten or twelve of the most ignorant and venal among them were at the same time thrust into the Senate.

This false representation of a people by strangers and enemies, who had not even a bona-fide residence among them, was the bitterest of all mockeries. There was no show of truth or honor about it. The pretended representative was always ready to vote for any measure that would oppress and enslave his so-called constituents; his hostility was unconcealed, and he lost no opportunity to do them injury. Under all these wrongs and indignities, the Caucasian men of the South were prudent, if not patient. No brave people accustomed to be free ever

†Judge Black was a Union statesman and jurist, of the time and of the same State as Thaddeus Stevens.

††"Union-Disunion-Reunion", Cox, p. 624-5.

§A Southern native white man who bolted the Democratic party and became a Republican after the war for the sole purpose of a selfish gain from politics, was called a "scalawag", and in the eyes of the true Southerner he was a turncoat, a recreant to his race.