

Report of the
Committee.

Const. 179, says, The law of Congress punishes treason, on conviction, with death, but declares that no conviction or judgment for any capital or other offence shall work corruption of blood, or any forfeiture of estate. The history of other countries abundantly proves that one of the strong incentives to prosecute offences, as treason, has been the chance of sharing in the plunder of the victims. Rapacity has been thus stimulated to exert itself in the service of the most corrupt tyranny; and tyranny has been thus furnished with new opportunities of indulging its malignity and revenge, of gratifying its envy of the rich and good, of increasing its means to reward favorites, and secure retainers for the worst deeds. In eighteen hundred and sixty-two they declared the penalty of treason to be death, and freedom to the slaves of the traitor; or imprisonment and fine, and freedom to his slaves. But no provision has been made whereby civil and political rights were to be forfeited; and it is too late to attempt to do so now, even by constitutional amendment.

The Reconstruction Committee do not pretend to claim the forfeiture of civil and political rights by virtue of the Constitution and Laws of the United States. For though, rather inconsistently, they call the people of the late Confederate States at one time insurgents, rebels and traitors, and as such of course answerable only to the laws of the United States, yet at other times they call them public enemies of the United States, conquered in war, and under the Committee's interpretations of the law of nations governing the results of a civil war that not only all civil and political privileges, but even the lives, liberty and property of all those people, are at the absolute disposal of their conquerors, subject only to their ideas of the requirements of humanity. Certainly, enlightened civilization and Christianity have done little to relieve war of the horrible barbarities of ignorant and despotic times if any such law is now recognized in civilized countries as applicable to a Constitutional Republic!

Vattel states the law of nations thus: If a town which made part of a republic or a limited monarchy, and enjoyed a right of sending deputies to