

SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

HISTORICAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS UPON CURRENT TOPICS—COMPILED EVERY DAY FOR THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

An Expected "Revulsion of Feeling"—A Southern Blunder.

Mr. Herschel V. Johnson, in his recent conversation with our special correspondent, gave utterance to a sentiment which widely prevails in some parts of the South. "Our only hope," he said, "is in a reaction at the North."

With this as their reliance, a party in Georgia are prepared to vote against the projected Convention, with the purpose of defeating the Congressional scheme of reconstruction. A yet more considerable party in several of the States are acting on the advice of Mr. Hill, and abstaining from registration. They will not recognize the law by voluntary compliance with any of its provisions.

Similar opinions are zealously cultivated in South Carolina under the leadership of the Charleston Mercury. For some time after its reappearance, the Mercury displayed a wholesome moderation. It seemed inclined to accept the situation with all its realities, and to favor getting back into the Union in any way which the North might indicate.

But now the Mercury declaims as furiously against the authority and measures of Congress as though both were subject to the will of the Southern people. The Mercury, too, is preparing its readers for "a revulsion of feeling" at the North; arguing that sooner or later it must come, and that the present duty of the South is to stave off reconstruction until the "revulsion" actually occur.

Another fallacy which all these opponents of the law cherish is, that they may, without further inconvenience, frustrate the operations now in progress. Mr. Herschel Johnson and the Charleston Mercury alike err in this respect. Both suppose that by defeating the law as it stands, trouble will be brought to an end; the North will rush to the rescue, and the South will be "saved"—by which probably is meant "saved" from the measures of justice and safety which Congress seeks to establish.

These allegations furnish pretexts for the assertion that "a revulsion of feeling" in favor of the demands of the unreconstructed South has already begun. But there could be no more palpable mistake. "The leading radical members" have been overborne by more moderate Republicans, because the feeling predominant in the party is adverse to greater severity than is essential to the completion of thorough reconstruction.

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The more friendly tone of the Northern press admits of a similar interpretation. That which the Charleston Mercury hails as a proof of change, the result of fear, is the effect of a belief that, despite all opposition, the loyal elements in the South, black and white combined, will prove strong enough to insure compliance with the law. This belief is predicated on observations and reports akin to those of Senator Wilson, touching the rapid growth at the South of a disposition to abide by the law in good faith.

We do not accept Mr. Herschel Johnson as more than the exponent of a certain class of Georgia politicians—not of the Southern people; nor do we regard the Charleston Mercury as a representative organ of Southern newspaperdom. Both are noticeable only as indexes of particular difficulties to be encountered at the South, as well before as after reconstruction.

"We, the People."

When a distinguished member of the Convention which framed the Constitution of the United States was congratulated upon the prospect of happiness and prosperity apparently secured by it, he replied, "That depends upon the construction that may be put upon the Constitution." The sentiment in favor of a National Government was by no means unanimous. There were local reasons of State power and policy, and jealousies of State politicians, as well as fears of the novelty of this new Government, of great but untried powers, that arrayed against it a powerful minority, many of whose members had been leaders of the revolution for independence.

At Alexander H. Stephens said they always insisted upon a majority of the Supreme Court, and having a majority of Congress, and nearly all the Presidents; the interpretations put upon the Constitution were made chains wherewith to bind the arms of the nation. They ran the Government down the inclined plane of inimitable construction for eighty years into the pit of rebellion and civil war, thus proving that its beneficence depended materially upon the construction it should receive at the hands of those who administered it.

Great objection was made by the opponents of the National Government to the sentence with which the preamble begins—"We, the people." It was the object of constant attack, and it is, therefore, well to keep in mind the importance of that sentence in establishing the character of our Government.

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These allegations furnish pretexts for the assertion that "a revulsion of feeling" in favor of the demands of the unreconstructed South has already begun. But there could be no more palpable mistake. "The leading radical members" have been overborne by more moderate Republicans, because the feeling predominant in the party is adverse to greater severity than is essential to the completion of thorough reconstruction. Let it be generally understood, however, that other and severer penalties are necessary to perfect the work, and extinguish Rebel resistance, and these penalties will be promptly enacted and sternly enforced.

Here we find the startling force of Henry's accusation of "consolidated nationality" met by a defiant query as to what the States had to do with it. The people had the right to make a Government; if they wished to, and the States, which were the creatures of the people, not their makers nor masters, had no right to interfere. If the sovereignty which was vested in the people gave them power to make State Governments, it also gave them power to make a National Government, and Mr. Pendleton, who thought that the confederation was "no government at all," said of the Constitution:—"Suppose the paper on your table dropped from one of the planets, the people found it, and sent us here to consider whether it was proper for their adoption, must we not obey them? Then the question must be between this Government and the confederation."

"This system," said he, "is submitted to the people for their consideration, because on them it is to operate, if adopted; and after he had strengthened his position by lengthy argument and illustration, Mr. Henry renewed his attack by again proclaiming the Government created a "consolidated Government." He evidently thought the declaration of that simple truth enough to warn his hearers away from it; but they were not all as much afraid of consolidation as he was, and were quite willing to accept it as the only escape from growing and threatening evils.

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The President and His Cabinet—What Does the Emergency Require?

Mr. Stanton in retiring takes care to make up his case, evidently with a view to the future action of Congress. He seems, indeed, to have had the double purpose to fix his own position and at the same time the position of General Grant; trying, of course, in the latter to hold the General responsible in some part for what he esteems a violation of his rights, and this even while exchanging with the straightforward soldier expressions, hollow enough on his part, of admiration and respect.

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But how was it received by the friends of the Government? Did they shrink away from the issue, alarmed at the prospect of creating a grand consolidated nationality? No. Governor Randolph replied:—"The gentleman then proceeds, and inquires why we assumed the language, 'we, the people.' I ask, why not? The Government is for the people; and the misfortune was that the people had no agency in the Government before." What harm is there in consulting the people on the construction of the Constitution as this great orator did advise. To minds constituted like his own, to men of similar faith, it was startling and conclusive. But how was it received by the friends of the Government? Did they shrink away from the issue, alarmed at the prospect of creating a grand consolidated nationality? No. Governor Randolph replied:—"The gentleman then proceeds, and inquires why we assumed the language, 'we, the people.' I ask, why not? The Government is for the people; and the misfortune was that the people had no agency in the Government before."

theorists and demagogues who stand as their peculiar friends in virtue of the extravagant promises made—promises that can only be fulfilled at the expense of the rights of the white man.

As a blow against the negro policy—a blow in behalf of the rights of white voters North and South—the removal of Stanton is significant; for he was, during the war, the great leader of the negro clamor—the man who spent an undue amount of national money in putting into the national uniform some thousands of negroes who never fired a shot, and who were only intended to be used as capital for future nigger legislation, to pave the way to this very supremacy of nigger voters. He was, therefore, a good man to begin with; but the President must not stop with him. He must go through the entire Cabinet—must Steward, Welles, Randall, and more than all, Stantbery, the man who is, perhaps, more likely than any other to compromise the President before the nation; the man whose interpretations of laws and whose declaration in the Supreme Court of Democratic sympathies make him a political milestone. All these must be driven out; and the President must then reorganize his Cabinet with men whose very names will convince the country of the honesty of his purpose—will show that he is fighting the dangerous tendencies of faction, not opposing the will of the people. He must reorganize with men whose history, and, more especially, recent career, show them to be in sympathy with the great national movement; who were in for the war, heart and soul; who cannot be suspected of any disposition to betray the great principles for which the people fought; but who have the wisdom and the courage to oppose a firm front against that evil and dangerous policy of extreme Republicans that can only end in giving the political balance of the nation into the hands of half a million negro voters. This is the issue. If the President meets the necessity boldly, he will have the sympathy and support of the nation; if he goes half way, and stops, he will only have made matters worse.

The Prescription of Republican Voters.

Nobody has ever thought it amiable to snatch bread from the starving, or polite to pull his bed from under a dying man; but it seems to us, akin to these attentions is the attempt to bully a freedman out of his vote. There was a little too much of this for patience in the late Tennessee election. We can pass over the passion of that retired marine warrior, Admiral Semmes, for the right of an old salt to wear as prescriptive as his right to chew tobacco; and we cannot be sufficiently thankful that he did not burst a vessel on election day, but survived the aggravation with his arteries in their usual order. We can also pass over the mournful wails of the Atlantic newspaper, which hints at going to war again, if not day after to-morrow, at least in the course of a month or two. It is quite another matter when we find the Clarksville Chronicle advising citizens to withhold work from all colored men who voted for Brownlow—not immediately, mark you! but whenever laborers can be found to take their places.

Now, threatening to discharge a man from employment unless he votes with his employer, is the most shameful sort of bribery conceivable, and the wretch who succumbs to such influences might just as well be a slave as a so-called freeman. His freedom is merely nominal. The best part of him belongs to the political trader who buys him at the poor price of permitting him to earn a living by the sweat of his brow. Whether an employer thinks negro suffrage expedient or otherwise does not in the slightest degree affect the moral question. There are those who do not understand the use of money, and when they get it, unwisely squander it; but does this give anybody a right to pick their pockets? Shylock justly said that those who took the means whereby he lived, really took his life; and to threaten to pause him in freedom is morally simply for exercising a plain legal right, is no better than knocking him on the head. They again, what difference does it make whether the bribery of a voter is effected by a sum in hand or by prospective wages? by cajolery or by threats? by thrusting a spurious ballot into his fist, or by promising to starve him into political orthodoxy?

In every country in which anything like general suffrage prevails, this purchasing of votes, while it may not seldom be resorted to, is held to be disreputable. In England, bribery proved unseats a member of Parliament. In most of the respectable States of this Union, there are laws guarding the liberty of the voter to vote as he pleases; and these measures are taken to protect men who do not and cannot need the protection which is absolutely vital to the freedman. Now, intimidation, for many reasons, is vastly worse than a plump purchase. The fellow who sells himself out-and-out is probably lost to all feeling of the unspicable degradation of his position, and no doubt would dispose of his grandmother's body to the anatomist. Of course, he who can only be secured by threatening to deprive him of bread for himself and his wife and children, is better worth saving from a shameful oppression and an infamous temptation. The fact that he must be reached by such means presupposes a certain degree of honorable feeling on his part, and the very desire for work is in itself praiseworthy. Playing, therefore, upon domestic love, taking advantage of pressing necessities, availing himself of an accidental superiority, the employer who bullies a dependant out of his most sacred privilege, and wheedles him into becoming a mere tool, is guilty of a moral larceny, and as souls are of more importance than bodies, perhaps he may be declared guilty of a moral murder. It is extortion, and extortion under aggravating circumstances. It is merely an attempt to starve a voter's opinions and preferences out of him. It is worse than bread and water, with the grave instead of a dungeon.

The President and his Cabinet.

The statement that President Johnson will appoint "a New England ex-Governor," meaning Governor Andrew, as Mr. Stanton's successor, is probably one of those unfounded rumors to which conjecture gives wings whenever public curiosity is excited to a high pitch. It is against all reasonable probability that Governor Andrew would accept this appointment, if it should be tendered him. He is a radical, warm in his approval of Congress, and being a man of talents and ambition, he would not break with his party to aid the President. Nor would the President regain any influence by such an attempt to conciliate the radicals. Nothing more completely prostrates a statesman in public estimation as to play fast and loose either with political parties or public questions. The removal of Stanton is a defiant declaration of hostility to the Republicans, and the President cannot now afford to court them by inviting into his Cabinet men who are known to disapprove of his policy.

We have no great confidence that President Johnson will manage this, or any similar matter, with wisdom and skill—qualities of which he has shown so little heretofore. We can see how, at the outset, he might have appointed a strong radical Cabinet, and have gained by it. When he found that Congress inclined to be less liberal to the South than himself, two courses were open to him, either of which would have been more favorable to the success of his policy than the one he adopted, which was the worst possible. He might have formed a strong Democratic Cabinet, and have precipitated his quarrel with Congress before they had time to bring the public opinion of their party up to their mark; or he might have appointed a radical Cabinet, who would have given him efficient aid in managing Congress. With amazing want of tact, he has pursued a system which combined the evils of both these methods and secured the advantage of neither. He has inflamed

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Nat. Turner's Massacre. From the Elizabeth Dispatch. We regret to see that, in the Association of the Shiloh district of colored Baptists, held in Manchester a few days since, the horrid massacre set on foot by Nat. Turner in Southampton in 1830 was alluded to with the appearance of much élan and parade. The delegates from that county were referred to as coming from the county "where Nat. Turner struck the first blow for freedom," and they were marched forward, and there was much shaking of hands and general felicitation upon the occasion.

It was a bad-hearted act in the Moderator, Williams, (colored) to call up such a horrid reminiscence as worthy of special commendation. We suppose that a few persons of the colored congregation present were aware of the true nature of the Southampton feast of blood. That very year the people of Virginia were strongly inclined to the abolition of slavery. Mr. Jefferson had exerted a powerful influence on the public mind by his views against the practical benefits of slavery, and his serious apprehensions as to the injury it would inflict upon his State. The Convention of 1829-30 came near adopting a measure for the prospective abolition of slavery; and but for the effrontery of Messrs. Arthur Tappan, his brother, and Garrison, and others, it was then believed such a measure would have passed the Convention. The honors of Southampton reversed the tide of sentiment in the Legislature which succeeded the Convention, and abolition was postponed indefinitely. "First blow for freedom," indeed! It was the deadliest blow to kind feeling for the blacks and to the growing sentiment in favor of abolition which could have been inflicted. It was an event horrible to all men, civilized and savage, and which should not be revived by any one save for deprecation and regret.

The Rev. Mr. Williams would much better subscribe the cause of Christianity—would much better advance the interests of the colored people and inculcate the kind and conciliatory feeling which is indispensable to peaceful and prosperous relations between the blacks and the whites—if he would refrain from reviving such bloody and revolting recollections. But to revive them only to endorse them is an act of hostility. It can receive no other interpretation. The Rev. Mr. Colver, of Massachusetts, who is reported to be a kind-hearted and philanthropic man, was present, and would have done himself credit and subserved the cause of justice by excepting to the use made of that horror of horrors—the Southampton massacre.

But these things will pass away. The blacks will find out the shallow-heartedness of the unscrupulous and selfish persons who are widening the breach between them and those whose prosperity is theirs, and whose peace alone can give them repose; and they will curse the day when they listened to the cunning and heartless stories of the hypocrites now misleading them.

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