

and bloody collisions with our outlying settle-
ments, and emigrants. The sound policy
and our imperative duty to these wards of
government demand our anxious and constant
attention to their material well being, to
their progress in the arts of civilization, and
above all, to that moral training, which, under
the blessings of Divine Providence, will con-
fer upon them the elevated and sanctifying
influence of the hopes and consolations of the
Christian faith.

I suggested in my last annual message the
propriety of remodeling our Indian system.—
Subsequent events have satisfied me of its
necessity. The details set forth in the re-
port of the Secretary will evince the urgent
need for immediate legislative action. I
commend the benevolence of the institutions
established or patronized by the Government
in this district to your generous and foster-
ing care.

Internal Improvements.

The attention of Congress during the last
session was engaged to some extent with a
proposition for enlarging the water communi-
cation between the Mississippi river and the
Northeastern seaboard, which proposi-
tion, however, failed for the time. Since
then, upon a call of the greatest respectabil-
ity, a convention has been called at Chicago
upon the same subject, a summary of whose
views is contained in a memorial addressed
to the President and Congress, and which I
now have the honor to lay before you. That
this interest is one which ere long will force
its own way, I do not entertain a doubt,
while it is submitted entirely to your wisdom
as to what can be done now. Augmented
interest is given to this subject by the actual
commencement of work upon the Pacific
Railroad, under auspices so favorable to its
rapid progress and completion. Enlarged
navigation becomes a palpable need to this
great road.

The Agricultural Department.

I transmit the second annual report of the
Commissioner of the Department of Agricul-
ture, asking your attention to the develop-
ments in that vital interest of the nation.

The Rebellion.

When Congress assembled a year ago, the
war had already lasted nearly twenty months,
and there had been conflicts on both land
and sea with varying results. The rebellion
had been pressed back into reduced limits, yet
the tone of public feeling and opinion at home
and abroad was not satisfactory. With other
signs, the popular elections then just past
indicated uneasiness among ourselves, while
amid much that was cold and menacing, the
kindest words coming from England were
uttered in accents of pity that we were too
blind to surrender. Our commerce was suffer-
ing greatly by a few armed vessels, built
upon and furnished from foreign shores, and
we were threatened with such additions from
the same quarter as would sweep our trade
from the sea and raise our blockade. We
had failed to elicit from European govern-
ments anything hopeful upon the subject.

The Emancipation Proclamation.

The Emancipation Proclamation, which
was issued in September, was running its
assigned period to the beginning of the new
year. A month later the final proclamation
came, including the announcement that col-
ored men of suitable condition would be re-
ceived into the war service. The policy of
emancipation and of the employment of
black soldiers, gave to the future a new as-
pect, about which hope and fear and doubt
contended in uncertain conflict. According
to our political system as a matter of civil
administration, the General Government had
no lawful power to effect emancipation in any
State, and for a long time it had been hoped
that the rebellion could be suppressed with-
out resorting to it as a military measure. It
was all the while deemed possible that neces-
sity for it might come, and that if it should,
the crisis of the contest would then be pre-
sented. It came, and, as was intended, it was
followed by dark and doubtful days. Eleven
months having passed, we are permitted to
take another review. The rebel borders
are pressed still further back, and by the
complete opening of the Mississippi river,
the country dominated over by the rebellion is
divided into distant parts.

Practical communication between them
and Tennessee and Arkansas, has been so
substantially cleared of insurgents' control
and influence, that the citizens in each, and
owners of slaves and advocates of slavery at
the beginning of the rebellion, now declare
openly for emancipation, in their respective
States. Of those States not included in the
emancipation proclamation, Maryland and
Missouri, neither of which years ago would
tolerate any restraint upon the extension of
slavery into its territories, only dispute now
as to the best mode of removing it from with-
in their own limits.

Of those who were slaves at the beginning
of the rebellion, fully one hundred thousand
are now in the military service of the United
States, about one-half of which number actu-
ally bear arms in the ranks, thus giving the
double advantage of taking so much labor
from the insurgent cause and supplying the
places which otherwise must be filled with so
many white men. So far as tested it is diffi-
cult to say that they are not as good soldiers
as any. No servile insurrection or tendency
to violence or cruelty has marked the mea-
sures of emancipation and arming the blacks.
These measures have been much discussed in
foreign countries, and contemporary with
such discussion the tone of public sentiment
there is improved. At home, the same mea-
sures have been fully discussed, supported,
criticized and denounced, and the annual elec-
tions following are highly encouraging to
those whose special duty it is to bear the
country through this great trial. Thus we
have the reckoning: the crisis which threat-
ened to divide the friends of the Union is
past.

A Reconstruction Proclamation.

Looking now to the present and future,
and with reference to the resumption of na-
tional authority within those States wherein
that authority has been suspended, I have
thought fit to issue a proclamation, a copy of
which is herewith transmitted. On examina-
tion of this proclamation, it will appear, as is
believed, that nothing is attempted beyond
what is simply justified by the Constitution.
True, a form of oath is given; but no man is

coerced to take it; the man who has promised
pardon in case he voluntarily takes the oath.
The Constitution authorizes the Executive to
grant or withhold the pardon at his own ab-
solute discretion, and this includes the power
to grant on terms, as is fully established by
judicial and other authorities. It is also
proffered that, if in any of the States named,
the State Government shall be in the mode
prescribed set up, such Government shall be
recognized and guaranteed by the United
States, and that under the State shall, on
Constitutional conditions, be protected against
invasion and domestic violence.

The constitutional obligation of the United
States to guarantee to every State in the
Union a Republican form of government, and
protect the State in cases as stated, is explicit
and full; but why tender the benefits of this
provision only to State governments set up in
this particular way? This section of the
Constitution contemplates a case wherein the
element within a State favorable to a Repu-
blican government in the Union may be too
feeble for an opposite and hostile element,
external to and even in the State; and such
are precisely the cases with which we are
now dealing. An attempt to guarantee and
protect a revised State government constructed
in whole or in part by the rebel element,
from the very element against whose hostility
and violence it is to be protected, is simply
absurd. There must be a test by which to sepa-
rate the opposing element, so as to build up
from the sound, and that test is a sufficient
and liberal one, which accepts as sound who-
ever will make a sworn recantation of his
former unsoundness.

But if it be proper to require a test of alle-
giance to the political body, an oath of alle-
giance to the Constitution of the United
States and to the Union under it, why not
also to the laws and proclamation in regard to
slavery? Those laws and proclamations were
enacted and put forth for the purpose
of aiding in the suppression of the rebellion.
To give them the fullest effect there had to
be pledges given for their maintenance. In
my judgment they have aided and will fur-
ther aid the cause for which they were enlisted.
To give up this principle would be not only
to relinquish a lever of power, but would also
be a cruel and astounding breach of faith.

I may add, at this point, that while I re-
main in my present position, I shall not at-
tempt to retract or modify the Emancipation
Proclamation, nor shall I return to slavery
any person who is made free by the terms of
the Proclamation, or by any act of Congress.
For these and other reasons, it is thought
best that the support of these proclamations
shall be included in the oath, and it is be-
lieved the Executive may lawfully claim it in
return for pardon and restoration of political
rights, which he has clear constitutional power
to withhold altogether, or grant upon the
terms which he shall deem wisest for the
public interest.

It should be observed also that this part
of the oath is subject to the modifying and
supreme power of legislation and Supreme
Judicial decision. The proposed acquiescence
of the National Executive in any honorable
temporary State arrangement for the freed
people, is made with the view of possibly
modifying the confusion and distressed desit-
uation, which must at best attend all classes
by a total revolution of labor throughout
the whole States. It is hoped that the already
deeply afflicted people in those States may be
somewhat more ready to give up the cause
of their affliction; and to this extent this vital
matter is left to themselves; while no power
of the National Executive to prevent an abuse
is abridged by this provision.

The Plan of the Re-Construction.

The suggestion in the proclamation as to
maintaining the political framework of the
States, on what is called the reconstruction,
is made in the hope that it may do good with-
out harm. It will save labor and avoid great
confusion. But why any proclamation now
upon this subject? This question is best
answered by the conflicting views that the step
might be delayed too long or be taken too soon.—
In some States elements for resumption have
been ready for action, but remain inactive
apparently for want of a rallying point, a
plan of action. Why shall A adopt the plan
of B rather than B that of A? and if A and
B should agree, how can they know that the
general government here will respect the plan?
By the proclamation, a plan is presented
which may be accepted by them as a rallying
point, and which they are assured in advance,
will not be rejected here. This may bring
them to act sooner than they otherwise
would.

The objection to premature presentation of a
plan by the National Executive, consists in the
danger of commitments on points which could
be more safely left to further developments.
Care has been taken to so shape documents as
to avoid embarrassment from this source. In
saying that on certain terms certain classes
will be pardoned, with their rights restored,
it is not said that other classes, on other
terms, will never be included. In saying that
a reconstruction will be accepted if presented
in a specified way, it is not said that it will
never be accepted in any other way. The
movement by State action for emancipation
in several of the States not included in the
Emancipation Proclamation, are matters
of profound gratification; and while I do not
repeat in detail what I have heretofore so
earnestly urged upon this subject, my general
views and feelings remain unchanged, and
I trust that Congress will omit no fair oppor-
tunity of aiding these important steps toward
the great consummation.

The War Power Our Reliance.

In the midst of our cares, however im-
portant, we must not lose sight of the fact
that the war power is still our main reliance.
To that power alone can we look yet for a
time to give confidence to the people in con-
tested regions that the insurgent power will
not again overrun them. Until that confi-
dence shall be established little can be done
anywhere for what is called reconstruction.—
Hence our chief care must still be di-
rected to our army and navy who have thus
far borne their harder part so nobly and well
and it may be esteemed fortunate that in giv-
ing the greatest efficiency to those indepen-
dent arms, we do also heartily encourage the
gallant men, from commander to soldier,
who compose, and to whom more than to all

others the world must stand indebted for the
home of freedom disinfected, regenerated,
enlarged, and perpetuated.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.
DECEMBER 8, 1863.

**THE PRESIDENT'S PROCLAMA-
TION.**

WHEREAS, It is provided by the Constitution of
the United States that the President of the
United States shall have power to grant
reprieves and pardons for offenses against
the United States, except in cases of impeach-
ment, and to receive and commission new
Officers; and whereas, the several States
have for a long time been subdivided, and many
persons have committed, and are now guilty
of treason against the United States. And
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