



Reading matter on every page.

WEDNESDAY MORNING, DEC. 8.

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

This document, which will appear in full in this morning's paper, will attract attention, principally because of the absurdity and impracticability of its leading recommendation. The President is evidently approaching monomania upon his pet doctrine of "compensated emancipation."

After reflecting upon the progress of the President in radicalism, since he, a few weeks since, condemned emancipation, the reader can well conceive the rapidity of his strides in the same direction, now that he has given way to the abolitionists.

Were we of this generation called upon to establish a legacy it would be altogether a different question with the American people. Those who framed our government found the evil entailed upon them, but instead of going to work to cut another's throat about it, they confined themselves to building up a government in which we could all live peacefully together.

After a year of halting, timidity and dissimulation, the President and the conservative portion of his cabinet have quailed before the lash of the radicals, and have adopted opinions which, but twelve months ago they pronounced reasonable and wicked.

Apprehension seems to exist among the people of the Southern States that, by an accession of a Republican Administration, their property, and their peace, and their personal security are to be endangered.

The opinions here announced, the President has reiterated upon various occasions. More than this; he ridiculed the issuing of an emancipation proclamation as being as useless as the "Pop's ball against the Comet," and scarcely had he made the announcement than he issued this same proclamation.

has given way to the radicals, and he accordingly adopts their measures, with apparently little reflection. The President, who wholly and honestly he will mean their decree. That the reader may form some opinion of the extremes, to which the radicals intend going to destroy the government, he has only to reflect back upon Mr. Sumner's project for reducing the Southern States to the condition of territories; and that other scheme for raising six or seven territories to the position of States. In addition to these schemes for the utter annihilation of our government, we have certain significant avowals from the President's organ, the Washington Chronicle, under the control of ultra abolitionists. That paper, of a recent date, replying to a border State contemporary says:

The Union as it was with all its defects, and all the misdeeds which it had become attached to since the simple and virtuous days of our early fathers, is again to mock the God of Justice, and offend the national brotherhood with those old inconsistencies which our greatest statesmen have so sincerely reprobated.

This means, simply, the destruction of the local institutions of the South, by the action of the Federal government; and the article concludes by an assurance that the President is determined to perform all that he promises. It says: "We say to those people," says Forney, "that they are deluding themselves with false hopes. So long as Abraham Lincoln is President of the United States, he will enforce all the military orders which are subject of slavery just as rigidly as those on any other subject; he will pay no attention to the law where he has proclaimed martial law; he will follow the proclamation of emancipation to its legitimate consequences; and the sooner they find out that the object of the sentence army and navy, of which he has the head, is something else than to prevent the value of slave property from becoming impaired, the better off they will be."

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The Law of Retaliation. The recent order of President Jeff. Davis has given rise to some discussion upon the propriety of the action of Gen. McNeil in hanging ten Confederate prisoners in Missouri, three or four weeks since, and some do not hesitate to condemn him for his want of humanity and judgment. The New York Times takes up the subject in the following article:

A question has arisen in Missouri between a Union officer and the rebel Government, which demands the prompt attention of our authorities at Washington. We find in yesterday's Tribune, a statement of the case. Andrew Alisman, an old resident of Palmyra, was a well known adherent of the Union cause, and had made himself especially valuable to our arms by his services as a guide. When the rebel Gen. Porter descended upon Palmyra, he took Alisman prisoner. When Gen. McNeil commanded the Union troops, he wrote to Porter demanding his return, alive and unharmed, within ten days, and threatened, in case this demand was not complied with, to execute with his own hands the rebel prisoners. So far as appears this demand was not delivered, and the Tribune says that it was "widely publicized and that Porter was known to be in Northeast Missouri during the specified ten days, it is impossible but that he became apprised of T. J. Holmes' command. These Mississippi Department" (Missouri and Arkansas), setting forth that information has been received of the murder of ten Confederate citizens of Missouri by order of Gen. McNeil of the United States Army; that Gen. Holmes, under a flag of truce which he would be expected to respect, had taken the lives of ten men, and that the demand in question was not complied with, and that the demand in question was not complied with, and that the demand in question was not complied with.

Some months ago, soon after Gen. Butler's execution of Manford, in New Orleans, for having hanged down a United States flag, President Lincoln issued an order that no military execution should take place in any Department until the case had been examined and approved by him, and the sentence had received his approval. Gen. McNeil seems to have paid no attention to this order, or at least we have no intimation from any quarter that he ever reported the facts of this execution to the President, either before or after the fact.

But besides these there are features of his action which certainly demand attention. Granting that he had the right to execute the killing of Alisman, it would seem that so serious a step should not have been taken without more formal than has been considered necessary in this instance. The killing of Alisman was never established, indeed, this message to Porter, demanding his return "alive and unharmed," assumes that he had not been killed, but was at that time a prisoner in Porter's hands. It does not appear that he communicated with Porter by a flag of truce, or that he took any pains to make any appeal to him in person the demand, on the reply to which hung the lives of ten prisoners in his own hands, and it may very well be doubted whether publication of the newspapers constitutes such a notification as the laws of war would require in so serious a case. Nor are we aware of any thing to justify his execution of ten men in retaliation for the supposed death of one.

"We do not mean to express any conclusive opinion without a fuller knowledge of the facts, upon the propriety of Gen. McNeil's action—still less upon the justice of the rebel President's demand for his surrender. But we desire to urge upon the Government at Washington immediate and careful attention to this matter. If the law of retaliation is to be invoked on our side, we think it should be, to prevent the horrible atrocities which have in many instances been perpetrated upon Union men, it is desirable that it should be done with more deliberate regard to the justice, and with scrupulous attention to show us guilty in the eyes of our countrymen, than Gen. McNeil seems to have considered necessary."

There is a bit of romance connected with this affair, which has not been generally published. It is stated that a young man, knowing that one of the condemned prisoners was the father of a family in delicate circumstances, offered himself to Gen. McNeil as a substitute, was accepted and executed. The St. Joseph Journal, a staunch Union paper gives the following in relation

to the treatment of Gen. McNeil by his brother officers. "GENERAL McNEIL. This officer, whose order ten men were shot at Palmyra, Missouri, became an old gentleman among us, but who afterwards carried up in Illinois, met with several merited rebuffs at St. Louis lately. He approached General McKinstry and offered his resignation. The General said to McNeil: "I don't shake hands with a murderer." McNeil afterwards asked three gentlemen to drink with him in the Flanter's House saloon. They turned on their heels and said, "We don't drink with a murderer." This was the reception he met with almost everywhere he went in St. Louis and no doubt the ghosts of the murdered men haunted him by day and by night. "The way of the transgressor is hard."

IMPORTANT DISCLOSURES. Napoleon's Proposition to the European Powers. RELATIONS OF ENGLISH DIPLOMACY TO THE AMERICAN QUESTION.

THE TONE in which the Emperor's proposals for an armistice in America have been treated by our press will be likely to blind you on the other side of the Atlantic to the real origin and object of those proposals that I think it right to inform you of certain facts which must eventually come to light.

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