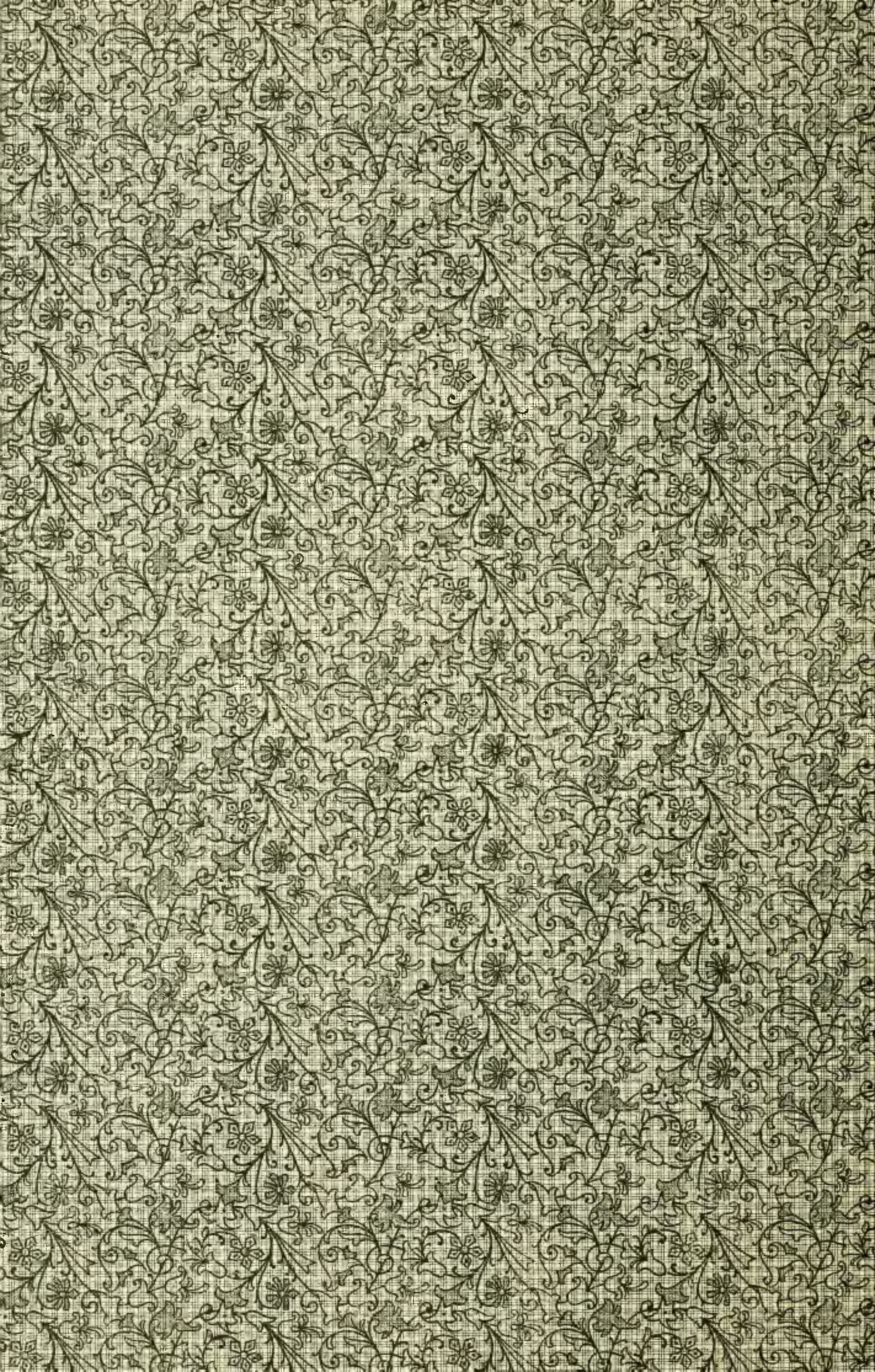
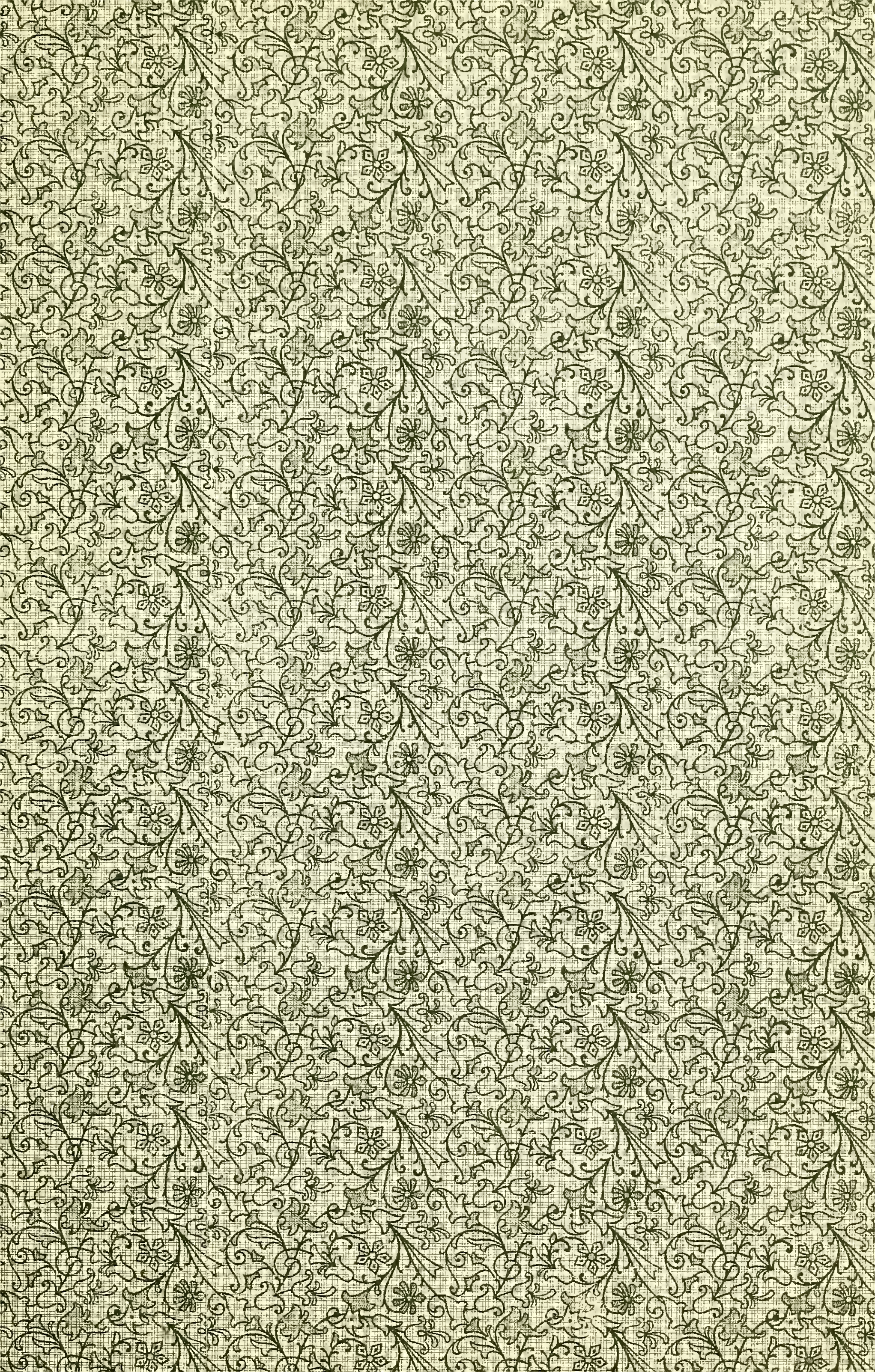
The President's Policy

LOWELL





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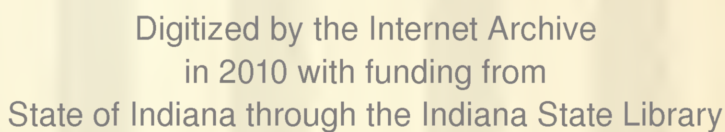
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No. 16.

The President's Policy

BY

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

From the North American Review, January, 1864.

THE NORTHERN MESSAGE.

From the Spectator, 26th December.

Power is teaching Mr. Lincoln those reticent forms under which, in English opinion, a statesman's work should be done. His Message this year is marred by none of that diffuseness, made original by none of those quaintnesses which all his previous utterances have educated us to expect. That slight hesitation, too, which was formerly so perceptible,—a hesitation as of a man doing his thinking aloud, and anxious to fortify his own judgment while convincing the country, has entirely disappeared. The Message is pervaded throughout by a new and impressive tone, as of a man who at last sees his way, whose mind is made up, and who will never again debate the policy he has adopted. The old forensic tinge is, of course, there still, for it is as natural to the constitution-loving President as to the Illinois lawyer; but the tinge now is that which pervades the judge's, not the advocate's mind. He does not argue with the nation, or with a party within the nation, or with the foes who are still barring the nation's way; but he delivers a charge, a final summing-up of the law, which, "while he occupies his position," will be executed, be the resistance what it may. Taking up a half-forgotten clause in the Constitution of the United States,—a clause which binds the central authority "to guarantee to every State a republican form of government, and protect it against domestic violence," and remembering his own prerogative of pardon, he builds thereon a polity as wide as the mischief to be put down. That clause, it is certain, was intended to apply to all cases in which a minority of well-affected persons were threatened by a majority hostile to republican institutions, and in that sense he employs it to work a revolution in the South. Recognising that slavery is the very root of the existing civil war, and that any desertion of the blacks "would now be a cruel and astounding breach of faith," he, by a proclamation added to the Message, but defended within it, offers the South the following terms: Every citizen who has brought himself within the scope of the general laws against treason, or of the special laws passed by Congress against this particular treason,—i. e., nine-tenths of the South—may, on taking an oath to maintain the decree of emancipation, receive a full pardon. His life will be thenceforth safe, all his property, *except slaves*, will be restored, and he will be competent *ex facto* to all and every political act. In short, by ceasing to be slaveholder, he will become a citizen, not a tolerated resident, not a pardoned "suspect," not even an inhabitant of territories still in a dependent condition, but a citizen with every right as complete as Mr. Lincoln himself enjoys. Pardon for treason, —and secession is treason, even if we recognise the revolutionary right,—was never offered on more merciful terms; but the President goes one step farther. In his eager constitutionalism,—too eager, unless Mr. Chase is indeed to be Chief Justice of the Supreme Court,—he bids the South remember that the proclamation to which they swear is the proclamation as interpreted by the highest judicial body, towards which even the South has always professed respect. Every individual in the South is offered free and instant pardon, to be claimed as of right, to be enjoyed without reservations, provided only that he will consent to live the free citizen of a free republican State. After this announcement, never yet equalled in humanity, except by a British Ministry in an Irish case, we do trust we have heard the last of Mr. Lincoln's legal cruelty.

Cold he is, as the *Times* has said, but it is with the coldness of an immutable resolve. Rising without abruptness from the individual to the State, Mr. Lincoln announces for that also a mode of re-entry to peace and quietness. Whenever one-tenth of the male inhabitants have accepted his offer, have announced, that is, their desire to be free citizens of a free State, the State powers shall on one other condition revive. The condition is that slavery cease. The Legislatures may take time; may impose stringent laws against vagrancy, or still more stringent rules against idleness; may visit a "masterless knave" with the penalties once inflicted in England; may do anything "consistent as a temporary arrangement with the blacks' present condition as a laboring, landless, and houseless class;" but they must set them free,—free of the lash and the auction block,—free to read and to worship, to possess their wives and to guard their children like other human beings. Each State may, we imagine, vote

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There have been many painful crisises since the impatient vanity of South Carolina hurried ten prosperous Commonwealths into a crime whose assured retribution was to leave them either at the mercy of the nation they had wronged, or of the anarchy they had summoned but could not control, when no thoughtful American opened his morning paper without dreading to find that he had no longer a country to love and honor. Whatever the result of the convulsion whose first shocks were beginning to be felt, there would still be enough square miles of earth for elbow-room; but that ineffable sentiment made up of memory and hope, of instinct and tradition, which swells every man's heart and shapes his thought, though perhaps never present to his consciousness, would be gone from it, leaving common earth and nothing more. Men might gather rich crops from it, but that ideal harvest of priceless associations would be reaped no longer; that fine virtue which sent up messages of courage and security from every sod of it would have evaporated beyond recall. We should be irrevocably cut off from our past, and be forced to splice the ragged ends of our lives upon whatever new conditions chance might twist for us.

We confess that we had our doubts at first, whether the patriotism of our people were not too narrowly provincial to embrace the proportions of national peril. We had an only too natural distrust of immense public meetings and enthusiastic cheers, and we knew that the plotters of rebellion had aroused a fanaticism of caste in the Southern States sure to hold out longer than that fanaticism of the flag which was preached in the North, for hatred has deeper roots than sentiment, though we knew also that frenzy would pass through its natural stages, to end in dejection, as surely in Carolina as in New York.

That a re-action should follow the holiday enthusiasm with which the war was entered on, that it should follow soon, and that the slackening of public spirit should be proportionate to the previous over-tension, might well be foreseen by all who had studied human nature or history. Men acting gregariously are always in extremes; as they are one moment capable of higher courage, so they are liable, the next, to baser depression, and it is

often a matter of chance whether numbers shall multiply confidence or discouragement. Nor does deception lead more surely to distrust of men, than self-deception to suspicion of principles. The only faith that wears well and holds its color in all weathers, is that which is woven of conviction and set with the sharp mordant of experience. Enthusiasm is good material for the orator, but the statesman needs something more durable to work in,—must be able to rely on the deliberate reason and consequent firmness of the people, without which that presence of mind, no less essential in times of moral than of material peril, will be wanting at the critical moment. Would this fervor of the Free States hold out? Was it kindled by a just feeling of the value of constitutional liberty? Had it body enough to withstand the inevitable dampening of checks, reverses, delays? Had our population intelligence enough to comprehend that the choice was between order and anarchy, between the equilibrium of a government by law and the tussle of misrule by *pronunciamiento?* Could a war be maintained without the ordinary stimulus of hatred and plunder, and with the impersonal loyalty of principle? These were serious questions, and with no precedent to aid in answering them.

At the beginning of the war there was, indeed, occasion for the most anxious apprehension. A President known to be infected with the political heresies, and suspected of sympathy with the treason of the Southern conspirators, had just surrendered the reins, we will not say of power, but of chaos, to a successor known only as the representative of a party whose leaders, with long training in opposition, had none in the conduct of affairs; an empty treasury was called on to supply resources beyond precedent in the history of finance; the trees were yet growing and the iron unmined with which a navy was to be built and armored; officers without discipline were to make a mob into an army; and, above all, the public opinion of Europe, echoed and re-inforced with every vague hint and every specious argument of despondency by a powerful faction at home, was either contemptuously skeptical or actively hostile. It would be hard to over-estimate the force of this latter element of disintegration and discouragement among a people where every citizen at home, and every soldier in the field, is a reader of newspapers. The pedlers of rumor in the North were the most effective allies of the rebellion. A nation can be liable to no more insidious treachery than that of the telegraph, sending hourly its electric thrill of panic along the remotest nerves of the community, till the excited imagination makes every real danger loom heightened with its unreal double. The armies of Jefferson Davis have been more effectually strengthened by the phantom regiments of Northern newspapers, than by the merciless dragoonery of his conscription.

And even if we look only at more palpable difficulties, the problem to be solved by our civil war was so vast, both in its immediate relations and its future consequences; the conditions of its solution were so intricate and so greatly dependent on incalculable and uncontrollable contingencies; so many of the data, whether for hope or fear, were, from their novelty, incapable of arrangement under any of the categories of historical precedent,—that there were moments of crisis when the firmest believer in the strength and sufficiency of the democratic theory of government might well hold his breath in vague apprehension of disaster. Our teachers of political philosophy, solemnly arguing from the precedent of some petty Grecian, Italian, or Flemish city, whose long periods of aristocracy were broken now and then by awkward parentheses of mob, had always taught us that democracies were incapable of the sentiment of loyalty, of concentrated and prolonged effort, of far-reaching conceptions; were absorbed in material interests; impatient of regular, and much more of exceptional restraint; had no natural nucleus of gravitation, nor any forces but centrifugal; were always on the verge of civil war, and slunk at last into the natural almshouse of bankrupt popular government, a military despotism. Here was indeed a dreary outlook for persons who knew democracy, not by rubbing shoulders with it lifelong, but merely from books, and America only by the report of some fellow-Briton, who, having eaten a bad dinner or lost a carpet-bag here, had written to the Times demanding redress, and drawing a mournful inference of democratic instability. Nor were men wanting among ourselves who had so steeped their brains in London literature as to mistake Cockneyism for European culture, and contempt of their country for cosmopolitan breadth of view, and who, owing all they had and all they were to democracy, thought it had an air of high-breeding to join in the shallow epicedium that our bubble had burst. Others took up the Tory gabble, that all the political and military genius was on the side of the Rebels, and even yet are not weary of repeating it, when there is not one of Jefferson Davis' prophecies as to the course of events, whether at home or abroad, but has been utterly falsified by the event, when his finance has literally gone to rags, and when even the journals of his own capital are beginning to inquire how it is, that, while their armies are always victorious, the territory of the Confedracy is steadily diminishing.

But beside any disheartening influences which might affect the timid or the despondent, there were reasons enough of settled gravity against any over-confidence of hope. A war—which, whether we consider the expanse of the territory at stake, the hosts brought into the field, or the reach of the principles involved, may fairly be reckoned the most momentous of modern times—was to be waged

by a people divided at home, unnerved by fifty years of peace, under a chief magistrate without experience and without reputation, whose every measure was sure to be cunningly hampered by a jealous and unscrupulous minority, and who, while dealing with unheard-of complications at home, must soothe a hostile neutrality abroad, waiting only a pretext to become war. All this was to be done without warning and without preparation, while at the same time a social revolution was to be accomplished in the political condition of four millions of people, by softening the prejudices, allaying the fears, and gradually obtaining the co-operation of their unwilling liberators. Surely, if ever there were an occasion when the heightened imagination of the historian might see Destiny visibly intervening in human affairs, here was a knot worthy of her shears. Never, perhaps, was any system of government tried by so continuous and searching a strain as ours during the last three years; never has any shown itself stronger; and never could that strength be so directly traced to the virtue and intelligence of the people,—to that general enlightenment and prompt efficiency of public opinion possible only under the influence of a political framework like our own. We find it hard to understand how even a foreigner should be blind to the grandeur of the combat of ideas that has been going on here,—to the heroic energy, persistency, and self-reliance of a nation proving that it knows how much dearer greatness is than mere power; and we own that it is impossible for us to conceive the mental and moral condition of the American who does not feel his spirit braced and heightened by being even a spectator of such qualities and achievements. That a steady purpose and a definite aim have been given to the jarring forces which, at the beginning of the war, spent themselves in the discussion of schemes which could only become operative, if at all, after the war was over; that a popular excitement has been slowly intensified into an earnest national will; that a somewhat impracticable moral sentiment has been made the unconscious instrument of a practical moral end; that the treason of covert enemies, the jealousy of rivals, the unwise zeal of friends, have been made not only useless for mischief, but even useful for good; that the conscientious sensitiveness of England to the horrors of civil conflict has been prevented from complicating a domestic with a foreign war;—all these results, any one of which might suffice to prove greatness in a ruler, have been mainly due to the good sense, the good humor, the sagacity, the large-mindedness, and the unselfish honesty of the unknown man whom a blind fortune, as it seemed, had lifted from the crowd to the most dangerous and difficult eminence of modern times. It is by presence of mind in untried emergencies that the native metal of a man is tested; it is by the sagacity to see, and the fearless honesty to admit, whatever of

truth there may be in an adverse opinion, in order more convincingly to expose the fallacy that lurks behind it, that a reasoner at length gains for his mere statement of a fact the force of argument; it is by a wise forecast which allows hostile combinations to go so far as by the inevitable re-action to become elements of his own power, that a politician proves his genius for state-craft; and especially it is by so gently guiding public sentiment that he seems to follow it, by so yielding doubtful points that he can be firm without seeming obstinate in essential ones, and thus gain the advantages of compromise without the weakness of concession, by so instinctively comprehending the temper and prejudices of a people as to make them gradually conscious of the superior wisdom of his freedom from temper and prejudice,—it is by qualities such as these that a magistrate shows himself worthy to be chief in a commonwealth of freemen. And it is for qualities such as these that we firmly believe History will rank Mr. Lincoln among the most prudent of statesmen and the most successful of rulers. If we wish to appreciate him, we have only to conceive the inevitable chaos in which we should now be weltering, had a weak man or an unwise one, been chosen in his stead.

"Bare is back," says the Norse proverb, "without brother behind it;" and this is, by analogy, true of an elective magistracy. The hereditary ruler in any critical emergency may reckon on the inexhaustible resources of *prestige*, of sentiment, of superstition, of dependent interest, while the new man must slowly and painfully create all these out of the unwilling material around him, by superiority of character, by patient singleness of purpose, by sagacious presentiment of popular tendencies and instinctive sympathy with the national character. Mr. Lincoln's task was one of peculiar and exceptional difficulty. Long habit had accustomed the American people to the notion of a party in power, and of a President as its creature and organ, while the more vital fact, that the executive for the time being represents the abstract idea of government as a permanent principle superior to all party and all private interest, had gradually become unfamiliar. They had so long seen the public policy more or less directed by views of party, and often even of personal advantage, as to be ready to suspect the motives of a chief magistrate compelled, for the first time in our history, to feel himself the head and hand of a great nation, and to act upon the fundamental maxim laid down by all publicists, that the first duty of a government is to defend and maintain its own existence. Accordingly, a powerful weapon seemed to be put into the hands of the opposition by the necessity under which the administration found itself of applying this old truth to new relations. They were not slow in turning it to use, but the patriotism and common sense of the people were more than a match for any

sophistry of mere party. The radical mistake of the leaders of the opposition was in forgetting that they had a country, and expecting a similar obliviousness on the part of the people. In the undisturbed possession of office for so many years, they had come to consider the government as a kind of public Gift Enterprise conducted by themselves, and whose profits were nominally to be shared among the holders of their tickets, though all the prizes had a trick of falling to the lot of the managers. Amid the tumult of war, when the life of the nation was at stake, when the principles of despotism and freedom were grappling in deadly conflict, they had no higher conception of the crisis than such as would serve the purpose of a contested election; no thought but of advertising the tickets for the next drawing of that private speculation which they miscalled the Democratic party. But they were too little in sympathy with the American people to understand them, or the motives by which they were governed. It became more and more clear that, in embarrassing the administration, their design was to cripple the country; that, by a strict construction of the Constitution, they meant nothing more than the locking up of the only arsenal whence effective arms could be drawn to defend the nation. Fortunately, insincerity by its very nature, by its necessary want of conviction, must erelong betray itself by its inconsistencies. It was hard to believe that men had any real horror of sectional war, who were busy in fomenting jealousies between East and West; that they could be in favor of a war for the Union as it was, who were for accepting the violent amendments of Rebellion; that they could be heartily opposed to insurrection in the South who threatened government with forcible resistance in the North; or that they were humanely anxious to stay the effusion of blood, who did not scruple to stir up the mob of our chief city to murder and arson, and to compliment the patriotism of assassins with arms in their hands. Believers, if they believed anything, in the divine right of Sham, they brought the petty engineering of the caucus to cope with the resistless march of events, and hoped to stay the steady drift of the nation's purpose, always setting deeper and stronger in one direction, with the scoop-nets that had served their turn so well in dipping fish from the turbid eddies of politics. They have given an example of the shortest and easiest way of reducing a great party to an inconsiderable faction.

The change which three years have brought about is too remarkable to be passed over without comment, too weighty in its lesson not to be laid to heart. Never did a President enter upon office with less means at his command, outside his own strength of heart and steadiness of understanding, for inspiring confidence in the people, and so winning it for himself, than Mr. Lincoln. All that was known of him was that he was a good stump-speaker, nomi-

nated for his *availability*,—that is, because he had no history,—and chosen by a party with whose more extreme opinions he was not in sympathy. It might well be feared that a man past fifty, against whom the ingenuity of hostile partisans could rake up no accusation, must be lacking in manliness of character, in decision of principle, in strength of will,—that a man who was at best only the representative of a party, and who yet did not fairly represent even that,—would fail of political, much more of popular, support. And certainly no one ever entered upon office with so few resources of power in the past, and so many materials of weakness in the present, as Mr. Lincoln. Even in that half of the Union which acknowledged him as President, there was a large, and at that time dangerous minority, that hardly admitted his claim to the office, and even in the party that elected him, there was also a large minority that suspected him of being secretly a communicant with the Church of Laodicea. All that he did was sure to be virulently attacked as ultra by one side; all that he left undone, to be stigmatized as proof of lukewarmness and backsliding by the other. Meanwhile he was to carry on a truly colossal war by means of both; he was to disengage the country from diplomatic entaglements of unprecedented peril undisturbed by the help or the hindrance of either, and to win from the crowning dangers of his administration, in the confidence of the people, the means of his safety and their own. He has contrived to do it, and perhaps none of our Presidents since Washington has stood so firm in the confidence of the people as he does after three years of stormy administration.

Mr. Lincoln's policy was a tentative one, and rightly so. He laid down no programme which must compel him to be either inconsistent or unwise, no cast-iron theorem to which circumstances must be fitted as they rose, or else be useless to his ends. He seemed to have chosen Mazarin's motto, *Le temps et moi.* The *moi*, to be sure, was not very prominent at first; but it has grown more and more so, till the world is beginning to be persuaded that it stands for a character of marked individuality and capacity for affairs. Time was his prime-minister, and, we began to think at one period, his general-in-chief also. At first he was so slow that he tired out all those who see no evidence of progress but in blowing up the engine; then he was so fast, that he took the breath away from those who think there is no getting on safely while there is a spark of fire under the boilers. God is the only being who has time enough; but a prudent man, who knows how to seize occasion, can commonly make a shift to find as much as he needs. Mr. Lincoln, as it seems to us in reviewing his career, though we have sometimes in our impatience thought otherwise, has always waited, as a wise man should, till the right moment brought up all his reserves.

Semper nocuit differre paratis, is a sound axiom, but the really efficacious man will also be sure to know when he is *not* ready, and be firm against all persuasion and reproach till he is.

One would be apt to think, from some of the criticisms made on Mr. Lincoln's course by those who mainly agree with him in principle, that the chief object of a statesman should be rather to proclaim his adhesion to certain doctrines, than to achieve their triumph by quietly accomplishing his ends. In our opinion, there is no more unsafe politician than a conscientiously rigid *doctrinaire*, nothing more sure to end in disaster than a theoretic scheme of policy that admits of no pliability for contingencies. True, there is a popular image of an impossible He, in whose plastic hands the submissive destinies of mankind become as wax, and to whose commanding necessity the toughest facts yield with the graceful pliancy of fiction; but in real life we commonly find that the men who control circumstances, as it is called, are those who have learned to allow for the influence of their eddies, and have the nerve to turn them to account at the happy instant. Mr. Lincoln's perilous task has been to cast a rather shackly raft through the rapids, making fast the unrulier logs as he could snatch opportunity, and the country is to be congratulated that he did not think it his duty to run straight at all hazards, but cautiously to assure himself with his setting-pole where the main current was, and keep steadily to that. He is still in wild water, but we have faith that his skill and sureness of eye will bring him out right at last.

A curious, and as we think, not inapt parallel, might be drawn between Mr. Lincoln and one of the most striking figures in modern history,—Henry IV. of France. The career of the latter may be more picturesque, as that of a daring captain always is; but in all its vicissitudes there is nothing more romantic than that sudden change, as by a rub of Aladdin's lamp, from the attorney's office in a country town of Illinois, to the helm of a great nation in times like these. The analogy between the characters and circumstances of the two men is in many respects singularly close. Succeeding to a rebellion rather than a crown, Henry's chief material dependence was the Huguenot party, whose doctrines sat upon him with a looseness distasteful certainly, if not suspicious, to the more fanatical among them. King only in name over the greater part of France, and with his capital barred against him, it yet gradually became clear to the more far-seeing even of the Catholic party, that he was the only centre of order and legitimate authority round which France could re-organize itself. While preachers who held the divine right of kings made the churches of Paris ring with declamations in favor of democracy rather than submit to the heretic dog of a Béarnois,—much as our *soi-disant*

Democrats have lately been preaching the divine right of slavery, and denouncing the heresies of the Declaration of Independence,—Henry bore both parties in hand till he was convinced that only one course of action could possibly combine his own interests and those of France. Meanwhile, the Protestants believed somewhat doubtfully that he was theirs, the Catholics hoped somewhat doubtfully that he would be theirs, and Henry himself turned aside remonstrance, advice, and curiosity alike with a jest or a proverb, (if a little *high*, he liked them none the worse,) joking continually as his manner was. We have seen Mr. Lincoln contemptuously compared to Sancho Panza by persons incapable of appreciating one of the deepest pieces of wisdom in the profoundest romance ever written; namely, that, while Don Quixote was incomparable in theoretic and ideal statesmanship, Sancho, with his stock of proverbs, the ready money of human experience, made the best possible practical governor. Henry IV. was as full of wise saws and modern instances as Mr. Lincoln, but beneath all this was the thoughtful, practical, humane, and thoroughly earnest man, around whom the fragments of France were to gather themselves till she took her place again as a planet of the first magnitude in the European system. In one respect Mr. Lincoln was more fortunate than Henry. However some may think him wanting in zeal, the most fanatical can find no taint of apostasy in any measure of his, nor can the most bitter charge him with being influenced by motives of personal interest. The leading distinction between the policies of the two is one of circumstances. Henry went over to the nation; Mr. Lincoln has steadily drawn the nation over to him. One left a united France; the other, we hope and believe, will leave a re-united America. We leave our readers to trace the further points of difference and resemblance for themselves, merely suggesting a general similarity which has often occurred to us. One only point of melancholy interest we will allow ourselves to touch upon. That Mr. Lincoln is not handsome nor elegant, we learn from certain English tourists who would consider similar revelations in regard to Queen Victoria as thoroughly American in their want of *bienséance*. It is no concern of ours, nor does it affect his fitness for the high place he so worthily occupies; but he is certainly as fortunate as Henry in the matter of good looks, if we may trust contemporary evidence. Mr. Lincoln has also been reproached with Americanism by some not unfriendly British critics; but, with all deference, we cannot say that we like him any the worse for it, or see in it any reason why he should govern Americans the less wisely.

The most perplexing complications that Mr. Lincoln's government has had to deal with have been the danger of rupture with the two leading commercial countries of Europe, and the treatment

of the slavery question. In regard to the former, the peril may be considered as nearly past, and the latter has been withdrawing steadily, ever since the war began, from the noisy debating-ground of faction to the quieter region of practical solution by convincingness of facts and consequent advance of opinion which we are content to call Fate.

As respects our foreign relations, the most serious, or at least the most obvious, cause of anxiety has all along been the irritation and ill-will that have been growing up between us and England. The sore points on both sides have been skilfully exasperated by interested and unscrupulous persons, who saw in a war between the two countries the only hope of profitable return for their investment in Confederate stock, whether political or financial. The always supercilious, often insulting, and sometimes even brutal tone of British journals and public men, has certainly not tended to soothe whatever resentment might exist in America.

> "Perhaps it was right to dissemble your love,
> But why did you kick me down stairs?"

We have no reason to complain that England, as a necessary consequence of her clubs, has become a great society for the minding of other people's business, and we can smile good-naturedly when she lectures other nations on the sins of arrogance and conceit; but we may justly consider it a breach of the political *convenances* which are expected to regulate the intercourse of one well-bred government with another, when men holding places in the ministry allow themselves to dictate our domestic policy, to instruct us in our duty, and to stigmatize as unholy a war for the rescue of whatever a high-minded people should hold most vital and most sacred. Was it in good taste, that we may use the mildest term, for Earl Russell to expound our own Constitution to President Lincoln, or to make a new and fallacious application of an old phrase for our benefit, and tell us that the Rebels were fighting for independence and we for empire? As if all wars for independence were by nature just and deserving of sympathy, and all wars for empire ignoble and worthy only of reprobation, or as if these easy phrases in any way characterized this terrible struggle,—terrible not so truly in any superficial sense, as from the essential and deadly enmity of the principles that underlie it. His Lordship's bit of borrowed rhetoric would justify Smith O'Brien, Nana Sahib, and the Maori chieftains, while it would condemn nearly every war in which England has ever been engaged. Was it so very presumptuous in us to think that it would be decorous in English statesmen if they spared time enough to acquire some kind of knowledge, though of the most elementary kind, in regard to this country and the questions at issue here, before they pronounced so

off-hand a judgment? Or is political information expected to come Dogberry-fashion in England, like reading and writing, by nature?

And now all respectable England is wondering at our irritability, and sees a quite satisfactory explanation of it in our national vanity. *Suave mari magno*, it is pleasant, sitting in the easy-chairs of Downing Street, to sprinkle pepper on the raw wounds of a kindred people struggling for life, and philosophical to find in self-conceit the cause of our instinctive resentment. Surely we were of all nations the least liable to any temptation of vanity at a time when the gravest anxiety and the keenest sorrow were never absent from our hearts. Nor is conceit the exclusive attribute of any one nation. The earliest of English travellers, Sir John Mandeville, took a less provincial view of the matter when he said, "that in whatever part of the earth men dwell, whether above or beneath, it seemeth always to them that dwell there that they go more right than any other folk."

It is time for Englishmen to consider whether there was nothing in the spirit of their press and of their leading public men calculated to rouse a just indignation, and to cause a permanent estrangement on the part of any nation capable of self-respect, and sensitively jealous, as ours then was, of foreign interference. Was there nothing in the indecent haste with which belligerent rights were conceded to the Rebels, nothing in the abrupt tone assumed in the Trent case, nothing in the fitting out of Confederate privateers, that might stir the blood of a people already overcharged with doubt, suspicion, and terrible responsibility? The laity in any country do not stop to consider points of law, but they have an instinctive appreciation of the *animus* that actuates the policy of a foreign nation; and in our own case they remembered that the British authorities in Canada did not wait till diplomacy could send home to England for her slow official tinder-box to fire the "Caroline." Add to this, what every sensible American knew, that the moral support of England was equal to an army of two hundred thousand men to the Rebels, while it insured us another year or two of exhausting war. Even if we must come to grief, the openly expressed satisfaction of a disinterested acquaintance, and his triumphant "I told you so's," are not soothing to the best-regulated nerves; but in regard to the bearing of England toward ourselves, it was not so much the spite of her words (though the time might have been more tastefully chosen) as the actual power for evil in them that we felt as a deadly wrong. Perhaps the most immediate and efficient cause of mere irritation was the sudden and unaccountable change of manner on the other side of the water. Only six months before, the Prince of Wales had come over to call us cousins; and everywhere it was nothing but "our American

brethren," that great offshoot of British institutions in the New World, so almost identical with them in laws, language, and literature,—this last of the alliterative compliments being so bitterly true, that perhaps it will not be retracted even now. To this outburst of long-repressed affection we responded with genuine warmth, if with a little of the awkwardness of a poor relation bewildered with the sudden tightening of the ties of consanguinity when it is rumored that he has come into a large estate. Then came the rebellion, and, *presto!* a flaw in our titles was discovered, the plate we were promised at the family table is flung at our head, and we were again the scum of creation, intolerably vulgar, at once cowardly and overbearing,—no relations of theirs, after all, but a dreggy hybrid of the basest bloods of Europe. Panurge was not quicker to call Friar John his *former* friend. We could not help thinking of Walter Mapes's jingling paraphrase of Petronius,—

> "Dummodo sim splendidis vestibus ornatus,
> Et multa familia sim circumvallatus,
> Prudens sum et sapiens et morigeratus,
> Et tuus nepos sum et tu meus cognatus,"—

which we may freely render thus:

> So long as I was prosperous, I'd dinners by the dozen,
> Was well-bred, witty, virtuous, and everybody's cousin:
> If luck should turn, as well she may, her fancy is so flexile,
> Will virtue, cousinship, and all return with her from exile?

There was nothing in all this to exasperate a philosopher, much to make him smile rather; but the earth's surface is not chiefly inhabited by philosophers, and we revive the recollection of it now in perfect good humor, merely by way of suggesting to our *ci-devant* British cousins, that it would have been easier for them to hold their tongues than for us to keep our tempers under the circumstances.

The English Cabinet made a blunder, unquestionably, in taking it so hastily for granted that the United States had fallen forever from their position as a first-rate power, and it was natural that they should vent a little of their vexation on the people whose inexplicable obstinacy in maintaining freedom and order, and in resisting degradation, was likely to convict them of their mistake. But if bearing a grudge be the sure mark of a small mind in the individual, can it be a proof of high spirit in a nation? If the result of the present estrangement between the two countries shall be to make us more independent of British criticism, so much the better; but if it is to make us insensible to the value of British opinion, in matters where it gives us the judgment of an impartial and cultivated outsider, if we are to shut ourselves out from the advantages of English culture, the loss will be ours and not theirs. Because the door of the old homestead has been once slammed in our faces,

shall we in a huff reject all future advances of conciliation, and cut ourselves foolishly off from any share in the humanizing influences of the place, with its ineffable riches of association, its heirlooms of immemorial culture, its historic monuments, ours no less than theirs, its noble gallery of ancestral portraits? We have only to succeed, and England will not only respect, but, for the first time, begin to undersand us. And let us not, in our justifiable indignation at wanton insult, forget that England is not the England only of the snobs who dread the democracy they do not comprehend, but the England of history, of heroes, statesmen, and poets, whose names are dear, and their influence as salutary to us as to her.

Undoubtedly slavery was the most delicate and embarrassing question with which Mr. Lincoln was called on to deal, and it was one which no man in his position, whatever his opinions, could evade; for, though he might withstand the clamor of partisans, he must sooner or later yield to the persistent importunacy of circumstances, which thrust the problem upon him at every turn and in every shape. He must solve the riddle of this new Sphinx, or be devoured. Though Mr. Lincoln's policy in this critical affair has not been such as to satisfy those who demand an heroic treatment for even the most trifling occasion, and who will not cut their coat according to their cloth unless they can borrow the scissors of Atropos, it has been at least not unworthy of the long-headed king of Ithaca. Mr. Lincoln had the choice of Antonio offered him. Which of the three caskets held the prize which was to redeem the fortunes of the country? There was the golden one whose showy speciousness might have tempted a vain man; the silver of compromise, which might have decided the choice of a merely acute one; and the leaden,—dull and homely-looking, as prudence always is,—yet with something about it sure to attract the eye of practical wisdom. Mr. Lincoln dallied with his decision perhaps longer than seemed needful to those on whom its awful responsibility was not to rest, but when he made it, it was worthy of his cautious but sure-footed understanding. The moral of the Sphinx-riddle, and it is a deep one, lies in the childish simplicity of the solution. Those who fail in guessing it, fail because they are over-ingenious, and cast about for an answer that shall suit their own notion of the gravity of the occasion and of their own dignity, rather than the occasion itself.

In a matter which must be finally settled by public opinion, and in regard to which the ferment of prejudice and passion on both sides has not yet subsided to that equilibrium of compromise from which alone a sound public opinion can result, it is proper enough for the private citizen to press his own convictions with all possible force of argument and persuasion; but the popular magistrate, whose judgment must become action, and whose action involves the

whole country, is bound to wait till the sentiment of the people is so far advanced toward his own point of view, that what he does shall find support in it, instead of merely confusing it with new elements of division. It was not unnatural that men earnestly devoted to the saving of their country, and profoundly convinced that slavery was its only real enemy, should demand a decided policy round which all patriots might rally,—and this might have been the wisest course for an absolute ruler. But in the then unsettled state of the public mind, with a large party decrying even resistance to the slaveholders's rebellion as not only unwise, but even unlawful; with a majority, perhaps, even of the would-be loyal so long accustomed to regard the Constitution as a deed of gift conveying to the South their own judgment as to policy and instinct as to right, that they were in doubt at first whether their loyalty were due to the country or to slavery; and with a respectable body of honest and influential men who still believed in the possibility of conciliation,—Mr. Lincoln judged wisely, that, in laying down a policy in deference to one party, he should be giving to the other the very fulcrum for which their disloyalty had been waiting.

It behooved a clear-headed man in his position not to yield so far to an honest indignation against the brokers of treason in the North, as to lose sight of materials for misleading which were their stock in trade, and to forget that it is not the falsehood of sophistry which is to be feared, but the grain of truth mingled with it to make it specious,—that is not the knavery of the leaders so much as the honesty of the followers they may seduce, that gives them power for evil. It was especially his duty to do nothing which might help the people to forget the true cause of the war in fruitless disputes about its inevitable consequences.

The doctrine of State rights can be so handled by an adroit demagogue as easily to confound the distinction between liberty and lawlessness in the minds of ignorant persons, accustomed always to be influenced by the sound of certain words, rather than to reflect upon the principles which gave them meaning. For, though Secession involves the manifest absurdity of denying to a State the right of making war againt any foreign power while permitting it against the United States; though it supposes a compact of mutual concessions and guarantees among States without any arbiter in case of dissention; though it contradicts common sense in assuming that the men who framed our government did not know what they meant when they substituted Union for Confederation; though it falsifies history, which shows that the main opposition to the adoption of the Constitution was based on the argument that it did not allow that independence in the several States which alone would justify them in seceding;—yet, as slavery was universally admitted to be a reserved right, an inference could

be drawn from any direct attack upon it (though only in self-defence) to a natural right of resistance, logical enough to satisfy minds untrained to detect fallacy, as the majority of men always are, and now too much disturbed by the disorder of the times, to consider that the order of events had any legitimate bearing on the argument. Though Mr. Lincoln was too sagacious to give the Northern allies of the rebels the occasion they desired and even strove to provoke, yet from the beginning of the war the most persistent efforts have been made to confuse the public mind as to its origin and motives, and to drag the people of the loyal States down from the national position they had instinctively taken to the old level of party squabbles and antipathies. The wholly unprovoked rebellion of an oligarchy proclaiming negro slavery the cornerstone of free institutions, and in the first flush of over-hasty confidence venturing to parade the logical sequence of their leading dogma, "that slavery is right in principle, and has nothing to do with difference of complexion," has been represented as a legitimate and gallant attempt to maintain the true principles of democracy. The rightful endeavor of an established government, the least onerous that ever existed, to defend itself against a treacherous attack on its very existence, has been cunningly made to seem the wicked effort of a fanatical clique to force its doctrines on an oppressed population.

Even so long ago as when Mr. Lincoln, not yet convinced of the danger and magnitude of the crisis, was endeavoring to persuade himself of Union majorities at the South, and to carry on a war that was half peace in the hope of a peace that would have been all war,—while he was still enforcing the Fugitive Slave Law, under some theory that Secession, however it might absolve States from their obligations,* could not escheat them of their claims under the Constitution, and that slaveholders in rebellion had alone among mortals the privilege of having their cake and eating it at the same time,—the enemies of free government were striving to persuade the people that the war was an Abolition crusade. To rebel without reason, was proclaimed as one of the rights of man, while it was carefully kept out of sight that to suppress rebellion is the first duty of government. All the evils that have come upon the country, have been attributed to the Abolitionists, though it is hard to see how any party can become permanently powerful except in one of two ways,—either by the greater truth of its principles, or the extravagance of the party opposed to it. To fancy the ship of state, riding safe at her constitutional moorings, suddenly engulfed by a huge kraken of Abolitionism, rising from

* This is a misconception, as the President never had a theory that Secession might absolve States from their obligations.—*Ed.*

unknown depths and grasping it with slimy tentacles, is to look at the natural history of the matter with the eyes of Pontoppidan. To believe that the leaders in the Southern treason feared any danger from Abolitionism, would be to deny them ordinary intelligence, though there can be little doubt that they made use of it to stir the passions and excite the fears of their deluded accomplices. They rebelled, not because they thought slavery weak, but because they believed it strong enough, not to overthrow the government, but to get possession of it; for it becomes daily clearer that they used rebellion only as a means of revolution, and if they got revolution, though not in the shape they looked for, is the American people to save them from its consequences at the cost of its own existence? The election of Mr. Lincoln, which it was clearly in their power to prevent had they wished, was the occasion merely, and not the cause of their revolt. Abolitionism, till within a year or two, was the despised heresy of a few earnest persons, without political weight enough to carry the election of a parish constable; and their cardinal principle was disunion, because they were convinced that within the Union the position of slavery was impregnable. In spite of the proverb, great effects do not follow from small causes,—that is, disproportionately small,—but from adequate causes acting under certain required conditions. To contrast the size of the oak with that of the parent acorn, as if the poor seed had paid all costs from its slender strong-box, may serve for a child's wonder; but the real miracle lies in that divine league which bound all the forces of nature to the service of the tiny germ in fulfilling its destiny. Everything has been at work for the past ten years in the cause of anti-slavery, but Garrison and Phillips have been far less successful propagandists than the slaveholders themselves, with the constantly-growing arrogance of their pretensions and encroachments. They have forced the question upon the attention of every voter in the Free States, by defiantly putting freedom and democracy on the defensive. But, even after the Kansas outrages, there was no wide spread desire on the part of the North to commit aggressions, though there was a growing determination to resist them. The popular unanimity in favor of the war three years ago, was but in small measure the result of anti-slavery sentiment, far less of any zeal for abolition. But every month of the war, every movement of the allies of slavery in the Free States, has been making abolitionists by the thousand. The masses of any people, however intelligent, are very little moved by abstract principles of humanity and justice, until those principles are interpreted for them by the stinging commentary of some infringement upon their own rights, and then their instincts and passions, once aroused, do indeed derive an incalculable reinforcement of impulse and intensity from those higher ideas,

those sublime traditions, which have no motive political force till they are allied with a sense of immediate personal wrong or imminent peril. Then at last the stars in their courses begin to fight against Sisera. Had any one doubted before that the rights of human nature are unitary, that oppression is of one hue the world over, no matter what the color of the oppressed,—had any one failed to see what the real essence of the contest was,—the efforts of the advocates of slavery among ourselves to throw discredit upon the fundamental axioms of the Declaration of Independence and the radical doctrines of Christianity, could not fail to sharpen his eyes. This quarrel, it is plain, is not between Northern fanaticism and Southern institutions, but between downright slavery and upright freedom, between despotism and democracy, between the Old World and the New.

The progress of three years has outstripped the expectation of the most sanguine, and that of our arms, great as it undoubtedly is, is trifling in comparison with the advance of opinion. The great strength of slavery was a superstition, which is fast losing its hold on the public mind. When it was first proposed to raise negro regiments, there were many even patriotic men who felt as the West Saxons did at seeing their high-priest hurl his lance against the temple of their idol. They were sure something terrible, they knew not what, would follow. But the earth stood firm, the heavens gave no sign, and presently they joined in making a bonfire of their bugbear. That we should employ the material of the rebellion for its own destruction, seems now the merest truism. In the same way men's minds are growing wonted to the thought of emancipation; and great as are the difficulties which must necessarily accompany and follow so vast a measure, we have no doubt that they will be successfully overcome. The point of interest and importance is, that the feeling of the country in regard to slavery is no whim of sentiment, but a settled conviction, and that the tendency of opinion is unmistakably and irrevocably in one direction, no less in the Border Slave States than in the Free. The chances of the war, which at one time seemed against us, are now greatly in our favor. The nation is more thoroughly united against any shameful or illusory peace than it ever was on any other question, and the very extent of the territory to be subdued, which was the most serious cause of misgiving, is no longer an element of strength, but of disintegration, to the conspiracy. The Rebel leaders can make no concessions; the country is unanimously resolved that the war shall be prosecuted, at whatever cost; and if the war go on, will it leave slavery with any formidable strength in the South? and without that, need there be any fear of effective opposition in the North?

While every day was bringing the people nearer to the conclusion

which all thinking men saw to be inevitable from the beginning, it was wise in Mr. Lincoln to leave the shaping of his policy to events. In this country, where the rough and ready understanding of the people is sure at last to be the controlling power, a profound common-sense is the best genius for statesmanship. Hitherto the wisdom of the President's measures have been justified by the fact that they have always resulted in more firmly uniting public opinion. It is a curious comment on the sincerity of political professions, that the party calling itself Democratic should have been the last to recognise the real movement and tendency of the popular mind. The same gentlemen who two years ago were introducing resolutions in Congress against coercion, are introducing them now in favor of the war, but against subjugation. Next year they may be in favor of emancipation, but against abolition. It does not seem to have occurred to them that the one point of difference between a civil and a foreign war is, that in the former, one of the parties must by the very nature of the case be put down, and the other left in possession of the government. Unless the country is to be divided, no compromise is possible, and if one side must yield, shall it be the nation or the conspirators? A government may make, and any wise government would make, concessions to men who have risen against real grievances; but to make them in favor of a rebellion that had no juster cause than the personal ambition of a few bad men, would be to abdicate. Southern politicians, however, have always been so dexterous in drawing nice distinctions, that they may find some consolation inappreciable by obtuser minds in being coerced instead of subjugated.

If Mr. Lincoln continue to act with the firmness and prudence which have hitherto distinguished him, we think he has little to fear from the efforts of the opposition. Men without sincere convictions are hardly likely to have a well-defined and settled policy, and the blunders they have hitherto committed must make them cautious. If their personal hostility to the President be unabated, we may safely count on their leniency to the opinion of majorities, and the drift of public sentiment is too strong to be mistaken. They have at last discovered that there is such a thing as Country, which has a meaning for men's minds and a hold upon their hearts; they may make the further discovery, that this is a revolution that has been forced on us, and not merely a civil war. In any event, an opposition is a wholesome thing; and we are only sorry that this is not a more wholesome opposition.

We believe it is the general judgment of the country on the acts of the present administration, that they have been, in the main, judicious and well-timed. The only doubt about some of them seems to be as to their constitutionality. It has been sometimes objected to our form of government, that it was faulty in having a

written constitution which could not adapt itself to the needs of the time as they arose. But we think it rather a theoretic than a practical objection; for in point of fact there has been hardly a leading measure of any administration, that has not been attacked as unconstitutional, and which was not carried nevertheless. Purchase of Louisianna, Embargo, Removal of the Deposits, Annexation of Texas, not to speak of others less important,—on the unconstitutionality of all these, powerful parties have appealed to the country, and invariably the decision has been against them. The will of the people for the time being has always carried it. In the present instance, we purposely refrain from any allusion to the moral aspects of the question. We prefer to leave the issue to experience and common sense. Has any sane man ever doubted on which side the chances were in this contest? Can any sane man who has watched the steady advances of opinion, forced onward slowly by the immitigable logic of facts, doubt what the decision of the people will be in this matter? The Southern conspirators have played a desperate stake, and, if they had won, would have bent the whole policy of the country to the interests of slavery. Filibustering would have been nationalized, and the slave-trade re-established as the most beneficent form of missionary enterprise. But if they lose? They have, of their own choice, put the chance into our hands of making this continent the empire of a great homogeneous population, substantially one in race, language, and religion,—the most prosperous and powerful of nations. Is there a doubt what the decision of a victorious people will be? If we were base enough to decline the great commission which Destiny lays on us, should we not deserve to be ranked with those dastards whom the stern Florentine condemns as hateful alike to God and God's enemies?

We would not be understood as speaking lightly of the respect due to constitutional forms, all the more essential under a government like ours and in times like these. But where undue respect for the form will lose us the substance, and where the substance, as in this case, is nothing less than the country itself, to be over-scrupulous would be unwise. Who are most tender in their solicitude that we keep sacred the letter of the law, in order that its spirit may not keep us alive? Mr. Jefferson Davis and those who, in the Free States, would have been his associates, but must content themselves with being his political *guerilleros*. If Davis had succeeded, would he have had any scruples of constitutional delicacy? And if he has not succeeded, is it not mainly owing to measures which his disappointed partisans denounce as unconstitutional?

We cannot bring ourselves to think that Mr. Lincoln has done anything that would furnish a precedent dangerous to our liberties,

or in any way overstepped the just limits of his constitutional discretion. If his course has been unusual, it was because the danger was equally so. It cannot be so truly said that he has strained his prerogative, as that the imperious necessity has exercised its own. Surely the framers of the Constitution never dreamed that they were making a strait waistcoat, in which the nation was to lie helpless while traitors were left free to do their will. In times like these, men seldom settle precisely the principles on which they *shall* act, but rather adjust those on which they *have* acted to the lines of precedent as well as they can after the event. This is what the English Parliament did in the Act of Settlement. Congress, after all, will only be called on for the official draft of an enactment, the terms of which have been already decided by agencies beyond their control. Even while they are debating, the current is sweeping them on toward new relations of policy. At worst, a new precedent is pretty sure of pardon, if it successfully meet a new occasion. It is a harmless pleasantry to call Mr. Lincoln "Abraham the First,"—we remember when a similar title was applied to President Jackson; and it will not be easy, we suspect, to persuade a people who have more liberty than they know what to do with, that they are the victims of despotic tyranny.

Mr. Lincoln probably thought it more convenient, to say the least, to have a country left without a constitution, than a constitution without a country. We have no doubt we shall save both; for if we take care of the one, the other will take care of itself. Sensible men, and it is the sensible men in any country who at last shape its policy, will be apt to doubt whether it is true conservatism, after the fire is got under, to insist on keeping up the flaw in the chimney by which it made its way into the house. Radicalism may be a very dangerous thing, and so is calomel, but not when it is the only means of saving the life of the patient. Names are of great influence in ordinary times, when they are backed by the *vis inertiæ* of life-long prejudice, but they have little power in comparison with a sense of interest; and though, in peaceful times, it may be highly respectable to be conservative merely for the sake of being so, though without very clear notions of anything in particular to be conserved, what we want now is the prompt decision that will not hesitate between the bale of silk and the ship when a leak is to be stopped. If we succeed in saving the great landmarks of freedom, there will be no difficulty in settling our constitutional boundaries again. We have no sympathy to spare for the pretended anxieties of men who, only two years gone, were willing that Jefferson Davis should break all the ten commandments together, and would now impeach Mr. Lincoln for a scratch on the surface of the tables where they are engraved.

We cannot well understand the theory which seems to allow the

Rebels some special claim to protection by the very Constitution which they rose in arms to destroy. Still less can we understand the apprehensions of many persons lest the institution of slavery should receive some detriment, as if it were the balance-wheel of our system, instead of its single element of disturbance. We admit that we always have thought, and think still, that the great object of the war should be the restoration of the Union at all hazards, and at any sacrifice short of honor. And however many honest men may scruple as to law, there can be no doubt that we are put under bonds of honor by the President's proclamation. If the destruction of slavery is to be a consequence of the war, shall we regret it? If it be needful to the successful prosecution of the war, shall any one oppose it? Is it out of the question to be constitutional, without putting the slaveholders back precisely where they were before they began the rebellion? This seems to be the ground taken by the opposition, but it becomes more and more certain that the people, instructed by the experience of the past three years, will never consent to any plan of adjustment that does not include emancipation. If Congress need any other precedent than *salus populi suprema lex* for giving the form and force of law to the public will, they may find one in the act of Parliament which abolished the feudal privileges of the Highland chiefs in 1747. A great occasion is not to be quibbled with, but to met with that clear-sighted courage which deprives all objections of their force, if it does not silence them. To stop short of the only measure that can by any possibility be final and decisive, would be to pronounce rebellion a harmless eccentricity. To interpret the Constitution has hitherto been the exclusive prerogative of Slavery: it will be strange if Freedom cannot find a clause in it that will serve her purpose. To scruple at disarming our deadliest foe, would be mere infatuation. We can conceive of nothing parallel, except to have had it decided that the arrest of Guy Fawkes and the confiscation of his materials were a violation of Magna Charta; that he should be put back in the cellar of Westminster palace, his gunpowder, his matches, his dark-lantern, restored to him, with handsome damages for his trouble, and Parliament assembled overhead to give him another chance for the free exercise of his constitutional rights.

We believe, and our belief is warranted by experience, that all measures will be found to have been constitutional at last on which the people are overwhelmingly united. We must not lose sight of the fact, that whatever is *extra*-constitutional is not necessarily *un*constitutional. The recent proclamation of amnesty will, we have no doubt, in due time bring a vast accession of strength to the emancipationists from the slaveholding States themselves. The danger of slavery has always been in the poor whites of the South;

and wherever freedom of the press penetrates,—and it always accompanies our armies,—the evil thing is doomed. Let no one who remembers what has taken place in Maryland and Missouri think such anticipations visionary. The people of the South have been also put to school during these three years, under a sharper schoolmistress, too, than even ours has been, and the deadliest enemies of slavery will be found among those who have suffered most from its indirect evils. It is only by its extinction—for without it no secure union would be possible—that the sufferings and losses of the war can be repaid. That extinction accomplished, our wounds will not be long in healing. Apart from the slave-holding class, which is numerically small, and would be socially insignificant without its privileges, there are no such mutual antipathies between the two sections as the conspirators, to suit their own purposes, have asserted, and even done their best to excite. We do not like the Southerners less for the gallantry and devotion they have shown even in a bad cause, and they have learned to respect the same qualities in us. There is no longer the nonsensical talk about Cavaliers and Puritans, nor does the one gallant Southern any longer pine for ten Yankees as the victims of his avenging steel. As for subjugation, when people are beaten they are beaten, and every nation has had its turn. No sensible man in the North would insist on any terms except such as are essential to assure the stability of peace. To talk of the South as our future Poland is to talk without book; for no region rich, prosperous, and free could ever become so. It is a geographical as well as a moral absurdity. With peace restored, slavery rooted out, and harmony sure to follow, we shall realize a power and prosperity beyond even the visions of the Fourth of July orator, and we shall see Freedom, while she proudly repairs the ruins of war, as the Italian poet saw her,—

> "Girar la Libertà mirai
> E baciar lieta ogni ruina e dire
> Ruine sì, ma servitù non mai."

compensation in any form it pleases, may, for example, tax the blacks for a generation for the benefit of their old owners, or vote the wild lands to the planters, an acre for every dollar's worth of emancipated flesh, but slavery they cannot retain. If they will retain it in spite of all,—why the demand for the war for the coming year is still one hundred and eighty millions. Take the Southern States to be what you will,—empires conquered by the sword, or revolted provinces subdued by the government,—and terms more moderate were never offered by successful civilized ruler. If Russia offered them to-morrow to Poland, i. e., absolute and real autonomy, her own laws, her own officials, her own language, her own system of teaching, her own taxation, and a dominant vote at St. Petersburg, on the single condition of enfranchising the serfs, what would be Tory scorn if the offer were refused? Yet the blood feud between South and North is of three years' standing; between Poland and Russia of six hundred.

So much for the justice of the new polity; now for its expediency. We are not of those who expect that this offer will be received in the South with acclamation, or bring the war at once to any acceptable end. The talk of Lord Lyons having indorsed Mr. Seward's ninety days is talk merely, invented in order to influence the sensitive market for cotton. The leaders are all excepted from the amnesty, and in the South the leaders *lead;* the generals are all excepted,—a real mistake,—and the army which they have led on successful battle-fields will never give them up. The terms by their very nature involve a temporary re-union with triumphant "Yankees," and the South hates Yankees even when not triumphant; above all, they involve emancipation, and the South, once driven to think of accepting them, may emancipate for itself. But the terms offered are, nevertheless, at once just and wise. They convince the North that the hour has arrived when the quarrel must be fought out, and so give to the whole nation the strength which springs from the sense of a Cause; they convince the slaves that the Federal Government, whatever its temptations, will never break faith with them; and within the South itself they organize disaffection. Throughout North Carolina and the uplands of Georgia, all over Arkansas, and in the hill section of Tennessee, exist men who, though not devoted to the Union, are not devoted to slavery, and rather than war on forever, will re-organize their States as free. Constitutional tradition is strong, and power accretes to regular governments even when supported only by a minority. Everywhere as a State is traversed by the troops, they will leave behind them a regular organization, as strong, and we greatly fear as stern, as minorities in possession of power are apt to be. That authority will have at disposal its own section of whites, increased every day by waverers, all immigrants from the North, all Northern soldiers settled in garrison, and the whole black community, that is, huddled together as they now are, fully one-half of the South.

It is possible with those means to pacify the States, to re-organize society, and to put down, once for all, the legal sanctions of human slavery. Slavery once at an end, and the blacks settled down as an humble but free population, making their own way by study and thrift and usefulness towards political rights,—a process which their use as soldiers will greatly facilitate—the irritation created by slavery must gradually disappear, and the Union will hang together until the different but free civilizations naturally produced outside and within the tropics, once again reveal to the North and the South their inherent antagonism. Then, when the cause for separation may be one which will not injure mankind, Europe may be justified in wishing for that absence of uniformity in America which in Europe has made civilization one grand competitive rush. All that, however, is dreamy, and for the present the only fact worth attention is that the Message and proclamation, while binding the North together, sow dissention in the South, and secure final emancipation with the least possible disturbance of the existing order.

We have little more to say of the Message, the first columns of which are filled with facts of purely American interest. Mr. Chase's statement will require an analysis of its own; but we must here remark that President Lincoln seems at length to have perceived the fairness of English counsels, and though he cannot but think, as it is his duty to think, of the chances of his own re-election, he makes no *ad captandum* appeal to catch the Irish vote. The Message begins with acknowledging that the British Government has "fulfilled just expectations," speaks of all pending questions in a tone of conciliation, and expresses the full determination of the United States to "do justice to foreigners." There is a total absence on this subject alike of hectoring and of argument, and the tone employed suggests that misfortune has at last taught the executive of the Union that international statesmanship which does not employ coercion, is based on mutual concession.

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