

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

The Reconstructed States.

A year of peace and general prosperity to this nation has passed since the last assembling of Congress. We have, through a kind Providence, been blessed with abundant crops, and have been spared from complications and war with foreign nations. In our midst comparative harmony has been restored. It is to be regretted, however, that a free exercise of the elective franchise has by violence and intimidation been denied to citizens in exceptional cases, and in several of the States lately in rebellion; and the verdict of the people has thereby been reversed. The States of Virginia, Mississippi and Texas have been restored to representation in our national councils. Georgia, the only state now without representation, may confidently be expected to take her place there also at the beginning of the new year; and then, let us hope, will be completed the work of reconstruction. With an acquiescence on the part of the people in the national obligation, to pay the public debt created as the price of our union, the pensions to our disabled soldiers and sailors, and their widows and orphans, and in the changes to the Constitution which have been made necessary by the great rebellion, there is no reason why we should not advance in material prosperity and happiness as no other nation did after so protracted and devastating a war.

American Protection in France.

Soon after the existing war broke out in Europe, the protection of the U. S. Minister in Paris was invoked in favor of the North Germans domiciled in French territory. Instructions were issued to grant the protection. This has been followed by an extension of American protection to citizens of Saxony, Hesse, Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Columbia, Portugal, Uruguay, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Chili, Paraguay and Venezuela in Paris. The charge was an onerous one requiring constant and severe labor, as well as the exercise of patience, prudence and good judgment. It has been performed to the entire satisfaction of this government, and, as I am officially informed, equally so to the satisfaction of the government of North Germany.

Attitude of the U. S. to the French Republic.

As soon as I learned that a republic had been proclaimed in Paris and the people of France had acquiesced in the change, the minister of the United States was directed, by telegraph, to recognize it and tender my congratulations and those of the people of the United States in the re-establishment in France of a system of government disconnected with the dynastic traditions of Europe, which appeared to be a proper subject for the felicitations of Americans. Should the present struggle result in attaching the hearts of the French to our simpler forms of representative government, it will be a subject of still further satisfaction to our people. While we make no effort to impose our institutions upon the inhabitants of other countries; and while we adhere to the traditional neutrality in civil interests elsewhere, we cannot be indifferent to the spread of American political ideas in a great and highly civilized country like France. We were asked by the new government to use our good offices, jointly with those of European powers, in the interest of peace. The answer was made that the established policy, and the true interests of the United States, forbade them to interfere in European questions jointly with European powers. I ascertained informally and unofficially, that the government of North Germany was not then disposed to listen to such representations from any powers; and, though earnestly wishing to see the blessings of peace restored to the belligerents with all of whom the United States are on terms of friendship, I declined on the part of the Government to take a step which could only result in injury to our true interests without advancing the object for which our intervention was invoked. Should the time come when the action of the United States can hasten the return of peace by a single hour, that action will be heartily taken.

American Neutrality.

I deemed it prudent, in view of the number of persons of German and French birth living in the United States, to issue, soon after the official notice of a state of war had been received from both belligerents,

a proclamation defining the duties of the United States as a neutral, and the obligations of persons residing within their territory to observe their laws and the laws of nations. The proclamation was followed by others, as circumstances seemed to call for them. The people thus acquainted in advance of their duties and obligations, have assisted in preventing violations of the neutrality of the United States.

The United States and Spain.

It is not understood that the condition of the insurrection in Cuba has materially changed since the close of the last session of Congress. In an early stage of the contest the authorities of Spain inaugurated a system of arbitrary arrests, of close confinement, or military trial and execution of persons suspected of complicity with the insurgents, and of summary embargo of their property and the sequestration of their revenues by executive warrant. Such proceedings, as far as they affected the persons or property of citizens of the United States, were in violation of the provisions of the treaty of 1795, between the United States and Spain. Representations of injuries resulting to several persons claiming to be citizens of the United States, by reason of such violations, were made to the Spanish government from April, 1869, to June last. The Spanish minister at Washington had been clothed with a limited power to aid in redressing such wrongs, but that power was found to be withdrawn in view, as it was said, of the revolutionary situation in which the island of Cuba then was, which, however, did not lead to the revocation or suspension of the extraordinary and arbitrary functions exercised by the Executive power in Cuba; and we were obliged to make our complaint at Madrid. In the negotiations thus opened, and still pending there, the United States only claimed that for the future the rights secured to their citizens by treaty should be respected in Cuba; and that as to the past a joint tribunal should be established in the United States with full jurisdiction over all such claims, before such an impartial tribunal, each claimant would be required to prove his case. On the other hand, Spain would be at liberty to traverse every material foot, and thus complete equity would be done. A case which at one time threatened seriously to affect the relations between the United States and Spain has already been disposed of this way. The claims of the *Lloyd*, *Aspinwall*, for the illegal seizure and detention of that vessel, was referred to arbitration by mutual consent, and has resulted in an award to the United States, for the owners of the same, of nineteen thousand seven hundred and two dollars and fifty cents in gold.

Another and long pending claim, of like nature—that of the whale-ship *Canada*, has been disposed of by friendly arbitration during the present year. It was referred by the joint consent of Brazil and the United States to the decision of Sir Edward Thornton, her Britannic Majesty's Minister at Washington, who kindly undertook the laborious task of examining the voluminous mass of correspondence and testimony submitted by the two governments, and awarded to the United States the sum of one hundred thousand seven hundred dollars and nine cents, in gold, which has since been paid by the imperial government. These recent examples show that the mode which the United States has proposed to Spain, for adjusting the pending claims, is just and feasible, and that it may be agreed to by other nations without dishonor. It is to be hoped that this moderate demand will be acceded to by Spain without further delay. Should the pending negotiations unfortunately and unexpectedly be without result, it will then become my duty to communicate that fact to Congress and invite its action on the subject.

The South American Republics.

The long deferred peace conference between Spain and the allied South American Republics, has been inaugurated in Washington under the auspices of the United States. Pursuant to a recommendation contained in the resolution of the House of Representatives, of the 17th December, 1866, the executive department of the Government offered its friendly offices for the promotion of peace and harmony between Spain and the allied Republics. Hesitation and obstacles occurred to the acceptance of the offer. Ultimately, however, a conference was arranged and was opened in this city on the 29th of October, at which I authorized the Secretary of State to preside. It was at-

tended by the Ministers of Spain, Peru, Chili and Ecuador. In consequence of the absence of a representative from Bolivia, the conference was adjourned until the attendance of a plenipotentiary from that Republic could be secured, or other measures could be adopted towards compassing its object. The allied and other Republics of Spanish origin on this continent, may see in this fact a new proof of our sincere interest in their welfare, of our desire to see them blessed with good governments, capable of maintaining order and preserving their respective territorial integrity; and of our sincere wish to extend our own commercial and social relations with them. The time is not, probably, far distant when, in the natural course of events, the European political connection with this continent will cease. Our policy should be shaped in view of this probability, so as to ally the continental interests of these Spanish states more closely to ours, and thus give the United States all the pre-eminence and all the advantage which Monroe, Adams and Clay contemplated, when they proposed to join to the Congress of Panama.

San Domingo Annexation.

During the last session of Congress, a treaty for the annexation of the Republic of San Domingo to the United States, failed to receive the requisite two-thirds vote of the Senate. I was thoroughly convinced then that the best interests of the country, commercially and materially, demanded its ratification. Time has only confirmed me in this view. I now firmly believe that the moment it is known that the United States have entirely abandoned the project of accepting as a part of its territory the island of San Domingo, a free port will be negotiated for by European nations in the bay of Samana. A large commercial city will spring up, to which we will be tributary without receiving corresponding benefits. The government of San Domingo has voluntarily sought this annexation. It is a weak power, numbering probably less than one hundred and twenty thousand souls, and yet possessing one of the richest localities under the sun, capable of supporting a population of ten millions of people in luxury. The people of San Domingo are not capable of maintaining themselves in their present condition, and must look for outside support. They yearn for the protection of our free institutions and laws, our progress and civilization. Shall we refuse them? The acquisition of San Domingo is desirable because of its geographical position. It commands the entrance to the Caribbean Sea and the Isthmus transit of commerce. It possesses the richest soil, the best and most capacious harbors, the most salubrious climate, and the most valuable products of the forest and mines and soil of any of the West India islands. Its possession by us will in a few years build up a coast-wise commerce of immense magnitude, which will go far toward restoring to us our lost merchant marine. It will give to us those articles which we consume greatly and do not produce, thus equalizing our exports and imports. In case of foreign war, it will give us command of all the islands referred to, and thus prevent an enemy from again possessing himself of a rendezvous upon our coast. At present our coast trade between the states bordering on the Atlantic and those bordering on the Gulf of Mexico, is by the Bahamas and the Antilles. Twice we must, as it were, pass through foreign countries to get from Georgia to the east coast of Florida. San Domingo, with a stable government under which her immense resources can be developed, will give remunerative wages to ten thousand laborers not now upon the island. This labor will take advantage of every available means of transportation to abandon the adjacent islands and seek the blessings of its freedom and the sequence of each inhabitant receiving the reward of his own labor. Porto Rico and Cuba will have to abolish slavery, as a measure of self-preservation to retain their laborers. San Domingo will become a large consumer of the products of the northern farms and manufactures. The cheap rate at which her citizens can be furnished with food, tools and machinery make it necessary that citizens of contiguous islands should have the same advantages in order to compete with the production of sugar, coffee, tobacco and tropical fruits. This will open to the United States a wider market for her products; and the production of our supply of these articles will cut off more than one hundred millions of our annual imports, besides largely increasing our exports. With such a picture it is easy to see how our large debt abroad is ultimately to be

extinguished, with a balance of trade against us, including interest of bonds held by foreigners; and the money shipment of our citizens traveling in foreign lands, which is equal to the entire yield of precious metals in this country. It is not so easy to see how this result is to be otherwise accomplished. The acquisition of San Domingo is an adhesion to the Monroe doctrine and is a measure of national protection. It is asserting our just claims to a controlling influence over the great commercial traffic, soon to flow from the west to the east by way of the Isthmus of Darien; it is to build up our merchant marine; it is to furnish new markets for the products of our farms, shops and manufacturers; it is to make slavery unsupportable in Cuba and Porto Rico at once, and ultimately so in Brazil; it is to settle the unhappy condition of Cuba and end an exterminating conflict; it is to provide an honest means of paying our honest debts without overtaxing the people; it is to furnish our citizens with the necessities of every-day life at cheaper rates than ever before; and it is, in fine, a rapid stride towards that greatness which the intelligence, industry and enterprise of the citizens of the United States entitle this country to assume among the nations.

Early Action Urged.

In view of the importance of this question, I earnestly urge upon Congress early action and an expression of its views as to the best means of acquiring San Domingo. My suggestion is, that by joint resolution of the two Houses of Congress, the Executive be authorized to appoint a commission to negotiate for a treaty with the authorities of San Domingo, for the acquisition of that Island, and that an appropriation be made to defray the expenses of such commission. The question may then be determined by the action of the two Houses of Congress, upon a resolution of annexation, as in the case of the acquisition of Texas. So convinced am I of all the advantages to flow from the acquisition of San Domingo, and of the great disadvantages, I might almost say calamities, to flow from non-acquisition, that I believe the subject has only to be investigated to be approved.

Mexico.

It is to be regretted that our representations in regard to the injurious effects, especially upon the revenue of the United States, of the policy of the Mexican government in exempting from import duties a large tract of its Territory on our borders, have not only been fruitless, but that it is even proposed in that country to extend the limits within which the privilege adverted to has hitherto been in operation. The expedience of looking into and giving your serious consideration to the proper means for counteracting the policy referred to, it is presumed will engage your earnest attention.

Extradition.

It is the obvious interest, especially of neighboring nations, to provide against injury to those who may have committed high crimes within their border and who may have sought refuge abroad. For this purpose extradition treaties have been concluded with several of the Central American republics and others are in progress.

The Venezuela Claims.

The sense of Congress is desired as early as may be convenient upon the proceedings of the commission on claims against Venezuela, which were communicated in the messages of March 4th, 1869, March 1st, 1870, and March 31st, 1870. It has been deemed advisable not to distribute any of the money which has been received from that government until Congress shall have acted upon the subject.

The Massacres in China.

The massacres of French and Russian residents at Tientsin, under circumstances of great barbarity, were supposed by some to have been premeditated and to indicate a purpose among the populace to exterminate foreign residents in the Chinese Empire. The evidence fails to establish such a supposition, but shows a complicity by the local authorities and the mob. The government at Peking, however, seems to have been disposed to fulfil its treaty obligations, so far as it was able to do so. Unfortunately, the news of the war between the German States and France reached China soon after the massacre, and it would appear that the popular mind became possessed with the idea that this contest extending to Chinese waters would neutralize the Christian influence and