

## THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

The Annual Message of the President of the United States was yesterday communicated to the two Houses of Congress. It is as follows:—

*Fellow-citizens of the Senate  
and of the House of Representatives:*

The Constitution requires that the President shall, from time to time, not only recommend to the consideration of Congress such measures as he may judge necessary and expedient, but also that he shall give information to them of the state of the Union. To do this fully involves exposition of all matters in the actual condition of the country, domestic or foreign, which essentially concern the general welfare. While performing his constitutional duty in this respect the President does not speak merely to express personal convictions, but as the Executive Minister of the Government, enabled by his position and called upon by his official obligations to scan with an impartial eye the interests of the whole and of every part of the United States.

Of the condition of the domestic interests of the Union, its agriculture, mines, manufactures, navigation, and commerce, it is necessary only to say that the internal prosperity of the country, its continuous and steady advancement in wealth and population, and in private as well as public well-being, attest the wisdom of our institutions, and the predominant spirit of intelligence and patriotism, which, notwithstanding occasional irregularities of opinion or action resulting from popular freedom, has distinguished and characterized the people of America.

In the brief interval between the termination of the last and the commencement of the present session of Congress the public mind has been occupied with the care of selecting, for another constitutional term, the President and Vice President of the United States.

The determination of the persons who are of right or contingently to preside over the administration of the Government is, under our system, committed to the States and the People. We appeal to them, by their voice pronounced in the forms of law, to call whomsoever they will to the high post of Chief Magistrate.

And thus it is that as the Senators represent the respective States of the Union, and the members of the House of Representatives the several constituencies of each State, so the President represents the aggregate population of the United States. Their election of him is the explicit and solemn act of the sole sovereign authority of the Union.

It is impossible to misapprehend the great principles which, by their recent political action, the people of the United States have sanctioned and announced.

They have asserted the constitutional equality of each and all of the States of the Union as States; they have affirmed the constitutional equality of each and all of the citizens of the United States as citizens, whatever their religion, wherever their birth or their residence; they have maintained the inviolability of the constitutional rights of the different sections of the Union; and they have proclaimed their devoted and unalterable attachment to the Union and to the Constitution as objects of interest superior to all subjects of local or sectional controversy, as the safeguard of the rights of all, as the spirit and the essence of the liberty, peace, and greatness of the Republic.

In doing this they have at the same time emphatically condemned the idea of organizing in these United States mere geographical parties; of marshalling in hostile array towards each other the different parts of the country, North or South, East or West.

Schemes of this nature, fraught with incalculable mischief, and which the considerate sense of the people has rejected, could have had countenance in no part of the country had they not been disguised by suggestions plausible in appearance, acting upon an excited state of the public mind, induced by causes temporary in their character, and it is to be hoped transient in their influence.

Perfect liberty of association for political objects and the widest scope of discussion are the received, and ordinary conditions of government in our country. Our institutions, framed in the spirit of confidence in the intelligence and integrity of the people, do not forbid citizens, either individually or associated together, to attack by writing, speech, or any other methods short of physical force, the Constitution and the very existence of the Union. Under the shelter of this great liberty, and protected by the laws and usages of the Government they assail, associations have been formed in some of the States of individuals who, pretending to seek only to prevent the spread of the institution of slavery into the present or future inchoate States of the Union, are really inflamed with desire to change the domestic institutions of the existing States. To accomplish their objects they dedicate themselves to the odious task of depreciating the Government organization which stands in their way, and of calumniating, with indiscriminate invective, not only the citizens of particular States, with whose laws they find fault, but all others of their fellow-citizens throughout the country who do not participate with them in their assaults upon the Constitution, framed and adopted by our fathers, and claiming for the privileges it has secured and the blessings it has conferred the steady support and grateful reverence of their children. They seek an object which they well know to be a revolutionary one. They are perfectly aware that the change in the relative condition of the white and black races in the slaveholding States which they would promote is be-

yond their lawful authority; that to them it is a foreign object; that it cannot be effected by any peaceful instrumentality of theirs; that for them, and the States of which they are citizens, the only path to its accomplishment is through burning cities and ravaged fields, and slaughtered populations, and all there is most terrible in foreign complicated with civil and servile war; and that the first step in the attempt is the forcible disruption of a country embracing in its broad bosom a degree of liberty and an amount of individual and public prosperity to which there is no parallel in history, and substituting in its place hostile Governments, driven at once and inevitably into mutual devastation and fratricidal carnage, transforming the now peaceful and felicitous brotherhood into a vast permanent camp of armed men, like the rival monarchies of Europe and Asia. Well knowing that such and such only are the means and the consequences of their plans and purposes, they endeavor to prepare the people of the United States for civil war by doing every thing in their power to deprive the Constitution and the laws of moral authority, and to undermine the fabric of the Union by appeals to passion and sectional prejudice, by indoctrinating its people with reciprocal hatred, and by educating them to stand face to face as enemies rather than shoulder to shoulder as friends.

It is by the agency of such unwarrantable interference, foreign and domestic, that the minds of many, otherwise good citizens, have been so inflamed into the passionate condemnation of the domestic institutions of the Southern States as at length to pass insensibly to almost equally passionate hostility towards their fellow-citizens of those States, and thus finally to fall into temporary fellowship with the avowed and active enemies of the Constitution. Ardently attached to liberty in the abstract, they do not stop to consider practically how the objects they would attain can be accomplished, nor to reflect that, even if the evil were as great as they deem it, they have no remedy to apply, and that it can be only aggravated by their violence and unconstitutional action. A question which is one of the most difficult of all the problems of social institution, political economy, and statesmanship, they treat with unreasoning intemperance of thought and language. Extremes beget extremes. Violent attack from the North finds its inevitable consequence in the growth of a spirit of angry defiance at the South. Thus in the progress of events we had reached that consummation which the voice of the people has now so pointedly rebuked, of the attempt of a portion of the States, by a sectional organization and movement, to usurp the control of the Government of the United States.

I confidently believe that the great body of those who inconsiderately took this fatal step are sincerely attached to the Constitution and the Union. They would, upon deliberation, shrink with unaffected horror from any conscious act of disunion or civil war. But they have entered into a path which leads nowhere unless it be to civil war and disunion, and which has no other possible outlet. They have proceeded thus far in that direction in consequence of the successive stages of their progress having consisted of a series of secondary issues, each of which professed to be confined within constitutional and peaceful limits, but which attempted indirectly what few men were willing to do directly, that is, to act aggressively against the constitutional rights of nearly one-half of the thirty-one States.

In the long series of acts of indirect aggression the first was the strenuous agitation, by citizens of the Northern States, in Congress and out of it, of the question of negro emancipation in the Southern States.

The second step in this path of evil consisted of acts of the people of the Northern States, and in several instances of their governments, aimed to facilitate the escape of persons held to service in the Southern States, and to prevent their extradition when reclaimed according to law and in virtue of express provisions of the Constitution. To promote this object legislative enactments and other means were adopted to take away or defeat rights which the Constitution solemnly guaranteed. In order to nullify the then existing act of Congress concerning the extradition of fugitives from service, laws were enacted in many States forbidding their officers, under the severest penalties, to participate in the execution of any act of Congress whatever. In this way that system of harmonious co-operation between the authorities of the United States and of the several States, for the maintenance of their common institutions, which existed in the early years of the Republic, was destroyed, conflicts of jurisdiction came to be frequent, and Congress found itself compelled, for the support of the Constitution and the vindication of its power, to authorize the appointment of new officers charged with the execution of its acts, as if they and the officers of the States were the ministers respectively of foreign Governments in a state of mutual hostility, rather than fellow-magistrates of a common country, peacefully subsisting under the protection of one well-constituted Union. Thus here, also, aggression was followed by reaction; and the attacks upon the Constitution at this point did but serve to raise up new barriers for its defence and security.

The third stage of this unhappy sectional controversy was in connexion with the organization of Territorial governments and the admission of new States into the Union. When it was proposed to admit the State of Maine, by separation of territory from that of Massachusetts, and the State of Missouri, formed of a portion of the territory ceded by France to the United States, Representatives in Congress objected to the admission of the latter

unless with conditions suited to particular views of public policy. The imposition of such a condition was successfully resisted; but, at the same period, the question was presented of imposing restrictions upon the residue of the territory ceded by France. That question was, for the time, disposed of by the adoption of a geographical line of limitation.

In this connexion it should not be forgotten that when France, of her own accord, resolved, for considerations of the most far-sighted sagacity, to cede Louisiana to the United States, and that accession was accepted by the United States, the latter expressly engaged that "the inhabitants of the ceded territory shall be incorporated in the Union of the United States, and admitted as soon as possible, according to the principles of the Federal Constitution, to the enjoyment of all the rights, advantages, and immunities of citizens of the United States; and in the mean time they shall be maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their liberty, property, and the religion which they profess;" that is to say, while it remains in a Territorial condition, its inhabitants are maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their liberty and property, with a right then to pass into the condition of States, on a footing of perfect equality with the original States.

The enactment which established the restrictive geographical line was acquiesced in rather than approved by the States of the Union. It stood on the statute-book, however, for a number of years; and the people of the respective States acquiesced in the re-enactment of the principle as applied to the State of Texas; and it was proposed to acquiesce in its further application to the territory acquired by the United States from Mexico; but this proposition was successfully resisted by the Representatives from the Northern States, who, regardless of the statute line, insisted upon applying restriction to the new territory generally, whether lying north or south of it, thereby repealing it as a legislative compromise, and, on the part of the North, persistently violating the compact, if compact there was.

Thereupon this enactment ceased to have binding virtue in any sense, whether as respects the North or the South; and so in effect it was treated on the occasion of the admission of the State of California, and the organization of the Territories of New Mexico, Utah, and Washington.

Such was the state of this question when the time arrived for the organization of the Territories of Kansas and Nebraska. In the progress of constitutional inquiry and reflection, it had now at length come to be seen clearly that Congress does not possess constitutional power to impose restrictions of this character upon any present or future State of the Union. In a long series of decisions, on the fullest argument, and after the most deliberate consideration, the Supreme Court of the United States had finally determined this point, in every form under which the question could arise, whether as affecting public or private rights—in questions of the public domain, of religion, of navigation, and of servitude.

The several States of the Union are by force of the Constitution co-equal in domestic legislative power. Congress cannot change a law of domestic relation in the State of Maine; no more can it in the State of Missouri. Any statute which proposes to do this is a mere nullity; it takes away no right, it confers none. If it remains on the statute-book unrepealed, it remains there only as a monument of error and a beacon of warning to the legislator and the statesman. To repeal it will be only to remove imperfection from the statutes, without affecting, either in the sense of permission or of prohibition, the action of the States or of their citizens.

Still, when the nominal restriction of this nature, already a dead letter in law, was in terms repealed by the last Congress, in a clause of the act organizing the Territories of Kansas and Nebraska, that repeal was made the occasion of a wide-spread and dangerous agitation.

It was alleged that the original enactment being a compact of perpetual moral obligation, its repeal constituted an odious breach of faith.

An act of Congress, while it remains unrepealed, more especially if it be constitutionally valid in the judgment of those public functionaries whose duty it is to pronounce on that point, is undoubtedly binding on the conscience of each good citizen of the Republic. But in what sense can it be asserted that the enactment in question was invested with perpetuity and entitled to the respect of a solemn compact? Between whom was the compact? No distinct contending powers of the Government, no separate sections of the Union, treating as such, entered into treaty stipulations on the subject. It was a mere clause of an act of Congress, and, like any other controverted matter of legislation, received its final shape and was passed by compromise of the conflicting opinions or sentiments of the members of Congress. But, if it had moral authority over men's consciences, to whom did this authority attach? Not to those of the North who had repeatedly refused to confirm it by extension, and who had zealously striven to establish other and incompatible regulations upon the subject. And if, as it thus appears, the supposed compact had no obligatory force as to the North, of course it could not have had any as to the South, for all such compacts must be mutual and of reciprocal obligation.

It has not unfrequently happened that law-givers, with undue estimation of the value of the law they give or in the view of imparting to it peculiar strength, make it perpetual in terms; but they cannot thus bind the conscience, judgment, and the will of those who may succeed them, invested with similar responsibilities, and clothed with equal authority. More careful investigation may prove the law to be unsound in principle,—

Experience may show it to be imperfect in detail and impracticable in execution; and then both reason and right combine not merely to justify, but to require its repeal.

The Constitution, supreme as it is over all the departments of the Government, legislative, executive, and judicial, is open to amendment by its very terms; and Congress or the States may, in their discretion, propose amendment to it, solemn compact though it in truth is between the sovereign States of the Union. In the present instance a political enactment, which had ceased to have legal power or authority of any kind, was repealed. The position assumed, that Congress had no moral right to enact such repeal, was strange enough, and singularly so in view of the fact that the argument came from those who openly refused obedience to existing laws of the land, having the same popular designation and quality as compromise acts; nay, more, who unequivocally disregarded and condemned the most positive and obligatory injunctions of the Constitution itself, and sought, by every means within their reach, to deprive a portion of their fellow-citizens of the equal enjoyment of those rights and privileges guaranteed alike to all by the fundamental compact of our Union.

This argument against the repeal of the statute line in question was accompanied by another of congenial character, and equally with the former destitute of foundation in reason and truth. It was imputed that the measure originated in the conception of extending the limits of slave-labor beyond those previously assigned to it, and that such was its natural as well as intended effect; and these baseless assumptions were made, in the Northern States, the ground of unceasing assault upon constitutional right.

The repeal in terms of a statute which was already obsolete and also null for unconstitutionality could have no influence to obstruct or to promote the propagation of conflicting views of political or social institution. When the act organizing the Territories of Kansas and Nebraska was passed, the inherent effect upon that portion of the public domain thus opened to legal settlement was to admit settlers from all the States of the Union alike, each with his convictions of public policy and private interest, there to found in their discretion, subject to such limitations as the Constitution and acts of Congress might prescribe, new States, hereafter to be admitted into the Union. It was a free field, open alike to all, whether the statute line of assumed restriction were repealed or not. That repeal did not open to free competition of the diverse opinions and domestic institutions a field which, without such repeal, would have been closed against them; it found that field of competition already opened in fact and in law. All the repeal did was to relieve the statute-book of an objectionable enactment, unconstitutional in effect, and injurious in terms to a large portion of the States.

Is it the fact that in all the unsettled regions of the United States, if emigration be left free to act in this respect for itself, without legal prohibitions on either side, slave labor will spontaneously go every where in preference to free labor?—Is it the fact that the peculiar domestic institutions of the Southern States possess relatively so much of vigor that wherever an avenue is freely open to all the world they will penetrate to the exclusion of those of the Northern States? Is it the fact that the former enjoy, compared with the latter, such irresistibly superior vitality, independent of climate, soil, and all other accidental circumstances, as to be able to produce the supposed result, in spite of the assumed moral and natural obstacles to its accomplishment and of the more numerous population of the Northern States?

The argument of those who advocate the enactment of new laws of restriction and condemn the repeal of old ones in effect avers that their particular views of government have no self-extending or self-sustaining power of their own, and will go nowhere unless forced by act of Congress. And if Congress do but pause for a moment in the policy of stern coercion; if it venture to try the experiment of leaving men to judge for themselves what institutions will best suit them; if it be not strained up to perpetual legislative exertion on this point; if Congress proceed thus to act in the very spirit of liberty, it is at once charged with aiming to exterminate slave labor into all the new Territories of the United States.

Of course these imputations on the intentions of Congress in this respect, conceived as they were in prejudice and disseminated in passion, are utterly destitute of any justification in the nature of things, and contrary to all the fundamental doctrines and principles of civil liberty and self-government.

While, therefore, in general, the people of the Northern States have never, at any time, arrogated for the Federal Government the power to interfere directly with the domestic condition of persons in the Southern States, but on the contrary, have disavowed all such intentions, and have shrunk from conspicuous affiliation with those few who pursue their fanatical objects avowedly through the contemplated means of revolutionary change of the Government; and with the acceptance of the necessary consequences—a civil and servile war—yet many citizens have suffered themselves to be drawn into one evanescent political issue of agitation after another, appertaining to the same set of opinions, and which subsided as rapidly as they arose when it came to be seen, as it uniformly did, that they were incompatible with the compacts of the Constitution and the existence of the Union. Thus, when the acts of some of the States to nullify the existing extradition law imposed upon Congress the duty of passing a new one, the country was invited by agitators to enter into party organization for its repeal; but that agitation speedily ceased by reason of the impracticability of its object. So, when the statute restriction upon the institutions of new States, by a geographical line, had been repealed, the country was urged to demand its