

THE NEW YORK PRESS.

EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS UPON CURRENT TOPICS—COMPILED EVERY DAY FOR THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

Congress and the Public Perils.

From the Times. The New York Citizen published recently what purported to be remarks of President Johnson in private conversation on public affairs, especially on the finances of the country and the possibilities of repudiation. It is reported from Washington that the Judiciary Committee, which has the subject of impeachment in charge, proposes to inquire into the authenticity of this publication, to ascertain whether the President did actually express such sentiments as are therein attributed to him.

Such action would seem to us to indicate great poverty of material for impeachment on the part of the Committee. The "constitution" provides impeachment as a mode of punishing the President for "high crimes and misdemeanors;" if private conversations can be brought within that category, the scope of the process of impeachment is likely to be considerably enlarged. What Congress has to do with such conversations, or how they have any bearing upon the safety of the nation, we are not aware. The President has certain duties imposed upon him in connection with his office; if those duties are properly performed—if the laws are faithfully executed, and the Constitution upheld and maintained to the extent of his ability—what the President may say or do as an individual—what opinions he may utter or what apprehensions he may express, is a matter with which Congress has nothing to do. If he is to be held responsible for private conversations, we see no reason why members of Congress may not also.

But all this is of minor consequence. Congress may amuse the country by talk of impeachment. It may to some extent satisfy for a time the angry feeling of discontent which pervades the public mind, and which for the moment fastens upon the President as the "obstacle" to the reconstruction and restored prosperity of the Union. But it cannot by any such process long evade the higher duties which devolve upon it, and for which the country will hold it responsible. Denunciations of the South, impeachment of the President, schemes for the prolongation of party power, prosecuted in reckless disregard of the public welfare, will not divert public attention permanently from the gathering perils of the nation and the utter lack of provision for meeting them which characterizes the action of the Government. Congress may simulate a zeal for the public credit by punishing the President for hinting doubts whether it will be maintained; but it would be much more wisely employed in adopting measures to diminish the public burdens and to augment the resources out of which those burdens can alone be borne.

The idea of repudiating the public debt is abhorrent to the public sense of justice and national honor. It will be universally scouted with indignation. Any member of Congress who should rise in his place and propose it, would be gibbeted by the scorn and contempt of the public. But many a member courts applause and votes and a re-election by advocating measures which lead directly and inevitably to what is practically a repudiation of the public debt—namely, failure to pay it. General Banks very justly said some weeks ago in Congress that there were various ways of repudiating the debt, and that one of them was by adding to its amount so largely as to make its payment impossible—and in the same speech, within the same hour, General Banks declared that he would vote whatever bounties the soldiers might demand, whether that vote should add four hundred or eight hundred millions to the public debt.

General Schenck would doubtless resent with indignation the imputation that he favors repudiation—yet he is foremost among the many advocates of a system of bounties which can end only in failure to pay. The leading motive of men in Congress is always as to how they may get their names on the list of office dependents. Now and then a man may rise above this, but the general rule is the other way. Members will vote for whatever appropriations of money will make them popular—and so long as this money is to be received instead of paid, the larger the appropriations the more popular they will be.

It is only when the question of taxation comes up for action that we see the reverse of this tendency. Taxation is unpopular always and everywhere. During the war our people submitted to it not only with cheerfulness, but with alacrity—for they saw that it was of instant and inevitable necessity to the salvation of the nation. But this feeling will decrease with the lapse of time. It is already far weaker than it was two months ago. Every great productive interest in the country is impatient at Washington for relief from taxation. Every manufacturing establishment in Pennsylvania clamors incessantly to have its own taxes lightened or removed, and everybody else's doubled.

The Pennsylvania members of Congress are the foremost advocates for protection against competition, relief from taxation, and an inflation which shall keep things quiet as long as possible. This cannot last long. Congress has got to provide for paying the public debt, principal and interest, if it is to be paid at all; and it can do this only by imposing taxes upon the property and business of the people sufficient to meet it. It must husband the public resources, for vast as they are, they will be taxed to the utmost in this gigantic work. It must bring into activity the labor, the enterprise, and the capital of every section of the country, for all will be needed if this work is to be performed.

President Johnson's warnings against repudiation are timely and true. Congress will much better perform its duty by heeding and acting upon them than by impeaching him for having uttered them.

The Reconstruction Bill.

From the Tribune. Two amendments, offered by Mr. Drake, to the Supplementary Reconstruction bill were the subject of an interesting debate in the Senate on Thursday. The first amendment provided that at the first election held in each State the registered voters should vote for or against a State Convention, and that it should be held or not held as the majority decided. The bill provides that the members of the Convention shall decide whether the people want a State constitution; but Mr. Drake argued that the people should by direct vote declare their wishes. He was in favor of guarding the Southern people from the possibility of betrayal by their leaders, and was sustained by Mr. Howard, who thought the

amendment would fully submit to the people of the South the terms of reconstruction proposed by Congress, and enable them to plainly declare whether they were willing to comply with them.

Mr. Morton believed that both the amendment and the bill were wrong in allowing the voters to decide whether a Convention should be held and a constitution formed, and that it was only necessary to consult them as to the ratification of the latter. Mr. Fessenden argued that the duty of calling a Convention should not be imposed upon the people, but upon the ground that it was a compulsory method of forming a constitution, and that the Rebel States should not be obliged to act upon the offer the Government had made. Mr. Trumbull, speaking for the Judiciary Committee, thought the provision in the bill that the constitution must be ratified by a majority of the registered voters, sufficient to insure a true expression of the wishes of the people, and in this belief the Senate disagreed to the amendment by 27 to 17. Democrats and Johnson men voted against it.

Mr. Drake's second amendment, to the effect that no State constitution should be valid unless it provided for election by close ballot, and agreed that such mode of voting should not be changed without the assent of Congress, raised an important question—whether the States, after admission to the Union, would not have the legal right to strike such provision from their constitutions. Mr. Drake defended his amendment on the ground that such a provision would be an express contract with the Government, and its violation by any State would be a legal reason for the expulsion of its representatives from Congress. He was opposed by Mr. Conkling, who quoted a decision of the Supreme Court that any condition exacted as a condition for the admission of a State, ceased to bind after the State became a sovereign member of the Union. The proposition to enforce a secret ballot was opposed by Mr. Trumbull, Mr. Wilson, and Mr. Buckalew, who held that it would encourage fraud, and be no protection to the people.

But that which seems of most importance is whether Congress has the authority to impose conditions upon the Rebel States which shall be binding after their restoration to the Union. This opens a discussion not only upon the amendment of Mr. Drake, but upon the whole bill, and shows the probable uncertainty of the plan of reconstruction Congress has proposed. If the Rebel States, after their restoration, have the right to strike out any part of their Constitutions which Congress required them to insert, they have the right to strike out all that Congress has required. This is a question of extreme gravity, and one which seems to have impressed the Senate, though no direct allusion was made to it in the debate. Without acting on Mr. Drake's amendment the Senate adjourned; and we may expect careful consideration of Mr. Morton's suggestion that the clause requiring that the State Constitutions shall provide for voting by secret ballot, should be considered separately from that which asserts the right of Congress to make such a condition binding in the future.

The Prospects of Reconstruction.

From the Nation. The eyes of the country are just now turned more to the South than to Congress. The latter having passed a law providing for a definite method by which the Southern States may regain their old footing in the Union, yet having left something to their option, the chief questions of political interest are, whether those States will conform to the terms of the offer, and if so, what will be the result of their action.

The so-called Legislatures of two States have already acted decisively, and in opposite directions. The Legislature of Virginia (we cannot well avoid the use of the phrases that seem to admit a legality which we wholly deny) has passed a bill providing for the election of a convention in May, with liberty to colored men to vote. The Legislature of Louisiana, on the contrary, has passed resolutions declaring the acts of Congress void and has summoned a convention, to be elected by white men only. Governor Wells has met this action by a proclamation announcing the law of Congress to be in force, and declaring all elections not held conformably thereto to be void. The Legislature of North Carolina has adjourned without taking any action.

In several States there are decided indications of a rising agitation, the sentiments of the white population being divided as to the expediency of reorganizing in accordance with the law, or of remaining inactive. Ex-Governor Brown leads the agitation in favor of reorganization in Georgia, while he is opposed by Colonel Gattrell (formerly a member of Congress) and others. The only prominent Mississippiian who has recommended such action is General Chalmers, but he will soon be supported by others, although Governor Humphreys is understood to be opposed to doing anything under the law. In North Carolina, the minority of the Legislature, comprising all who heartily welcomed the restoration of the Union in 1865, have taken steps towards the summoning of a convention in an informal manner. We have not heard of anything definite from the other States.

Upon the whole, we judge that, if the law is faithfully enforced by the President and his subordinates, the whole South will speedily conform to the terms of Congress. The amendment enacted at the instance of Mr. Shellabarger deprives the Southern whites of the option between military government and universal suffrage, which Mr. Sherman's proposition left to them; so that, whether they elect conventions or not, they must admit colored men to vote at their next elections, while their only chance of escaping from military surveillance is by adopting constitutions recognizing the political equality of all men. The disfranchising clause affects only a very limited class, not including a single man under twenty-seven years of age; and it is improbable that the mass of people not excluded by law from political action will long continue to exclude themselves out of mere sympathy for the old race of politicians who are shut out. Even among the disfranchised class there are many sensible enough to comprehend the wisdom of submitting for a time to a limited disability, rather than to keep their States out of all participation in the Government. Congress has deprived the stubborn of their favorite argument, that it was better to control the States, without seats in Congress, than to gain a place in Congress by sharing power with the colored race; for they are no longer left in supreme control of their States, and they can now see clearly the necessity of being represented in Congress.

It cannot be denied, however, that the soundest reasoning may fail to afford a basis for predicting the action of the Southern people. After the elections last fall it certainly seemed as if none but idiots would, in the situation of the Southern whites, refuse to accept the Constitutional amendment as a basis of reconstruction. Yet they did so with

comparative unanimity. And we presume that if they had a similar opinion under the Sherman statute they would reject it, even if they held the worse terms would be imposed. But the new law gives them only the option between involuntary universal suffrage with military rule, and voluntary universal suffrage without military rule. This is, of course, upon the assumption that Mr. Johnson will execute the law in good faith. If he orders it to be set aside upon the first decision of a petty court against its validity, or if he repeats the late policy adopted at the Alexandria election, the law will effect no good. But we think that he has too much sense of his own danger to make any such rash experiments on the forbearance of Congress.

Measures have been initiated in both Houses of Congress for the purpose of putting the machinery of reorganization in motion, under the direct supervision of the national authorities; and some measure of the kind will, doubtless, be enacted forthwith. This is clearly the proper method; and the only wonder is that so able a body as the latter Committee of Fifteen should have so utterly failed in its mission as not to have reported such a bill at the last session. We rejoice, for the sake of all sections, North and South, that Congress has finally adopted the doctrine which we have steadily advocated, even when its success seemed hopeless, viz., that reconstruction should be immediate and compulsory, and not left to the choice of the insurrectionary population, either as to time or mode. Nothing could be more opposed to the theory of the Constitution than the let-alone policy which, while denying the validity of the de facto governments at the South, provided no means for the creation of legitimate governments. This false position, the result of timidity and distrust of the people, has been all along the weak point of the radical policy. Its abandonment will give general satisfaction.

Under all the circumstances, there can be no doubt that nearly or quite all of the Southern States will be properly organized and re-instated in the Union within twelve or eighteen months from this time. The only question in the future is as to the practical working of the new governments, and especially of universal suffrage.

It has been confidently asserted—and we have ourselves shared the apprehension—that the negroes, being confessedly ignorant, poor, and unorganized, would be surely controlled by their old masters when they came to vote. Of course there is much to be said on that side; and had universal suffrage been conceded in 1865, we think that such must have been the result in districts not fully governed by national troops. But for nearly two years past our efforts have been made to introduce light among the colored people; and Northern men and women have steadily gained influence over them, while their Southern masters have, to a very large extent, thrown away whatever influence they may have had by their oppressive laws and obstinate resistance to the elevation of the colored race. Of this latter fact, the immense emigration of negroes from South Carolina and Georgia, and the loud complaints of planters in Louisiana and the rest of the States, fully give proof. The colored people have, moreover, organized themselves in every large town in the South, if not more widely, during the last two years; and, with such assistance as their white allies will be prompt to give, they will be fully able to inform their brethren on plantations of the issues and the candidates. We therefore believe that the last hope of the disloyal will fall, and that the colored voters will generally sustain candidates acceptable to the North.

No one can doubt that the complete restoration of the Southern States, freed from all their old inequalities and oppressions, will materially benefit the whole country. An impartial administration of justice will give new energy to the laborer; for who that has ever worked while in doubt of being paid (whether at mechanical or mental labor) had not felt the impossibility of putting forth all his energy during the act of Congress void and has summoned a convention, to be elected by white men only. Governor Wells has met this action by a proclamation announcing the law of Congress to be in force, and declaring all elections not held conformably thereto to be void. The Legislature of North Carolina has adjourned without taking any action.

Homeward Bound.

Editorial Correspondence of the Independent. After a hundred days of absence—after ten thousand miles of travel by car, canal, steamer, wagon, and sleigh—after the recital of a "winter's tale" to seventy successive and long-suffering audiences—I expect to cross the sun-gilded Alleghenies to-morrow morning, singing, "Home, Sweet Home." Then, O editorial sanctum of the Independent!—dim, antique, and solemn cloister!—glad will be your wandering editor to look again at your weather-beaten walls, to dip a pen into a certain long-neglected and mouldy inkstand, to renew familiar fellowship with your mice and spiders, and to lie on your red lounge before the fire in meditation on Andrew Johnson.

Spring has brought to the nation the brightest period since the close of the war. The American people and the American Congress are at last beginning to see eye to eye, and walk hand in hand. Ever since Lee's surrender, the sentiment of the people has been far in advance of the action of Congress. But lately both the people and Congress have taken majestic strides in advance of their former selves. The Republic at last is facing towards justice and honor.

This illustrious fact is sufficient of itself to cover with a compensatory splendor every ill-omen to our financial prosperity, however shadowy. Financial depression, accompanied by general moral progress, is a thousand times better for the nation than financial prosperity in the midst of general moral decline. In no former period of our history, not even in the fiery glow and enthusiasm of the war, have the loyal masses been so sacredly animated by a love of Liberty, Justice, and Equality as at this auspicious hour.

those well-meaning but badly informed Conservatives who insist that the nation will submit to any reconstruction other than political equality. With the exception of Ohio (whose Legislature has just clothed itself with the shadow of shame) every Western State is engaged in the humane task of legislating into its statutes the equal rights of all classes of its citizens. The next report that comes from the Northwest will be the expunging of the word "white" from half-a-dozen State Constitutions. In forwarding of radical sentiment, the men who live West of the Mississippi rebuke the men who live East. Such a Legislature as has just voted disgrace upon Ohio, could not possibly have been elected in Iowa or Minnesota.

The Thirty-ninth Congress—after the inevitable solitude produced by two years' residence in Washington, even at the distance of a full mile from the White House—did not dare dismiss itself and return to the people without first cleansing its tarnished record of delay by giving to the nation a reconstruction bill which, both Houses, striking down the President's negative with a counter-veto, now holds over the misbehavior of the South the sword of a military government, to reconquer the Rebellion, to re-establish loyalty, and to reorganize peace.

The great act would have been morally greater had it compelled the immediate organization of State Governments in the South, on the basis of their loyal citizens both white and black, instead of leaving to the South the option of forming just and equal civil Governments, or of continuing as vassals under the rod of military rule. Nevertheless, the military plan is so much better than the most sanguine had reason to expect a month ago, that the day of its passage over the President's veto was a day to make the blood merry in a radical man's pulse. I happened to be in company with my friend Frederick Douglass in Chicago on the announcement of the good news; whereupon he immediately lifted his hands and cried, remembering his race and the prospect of their deliverance, "Thank God!"

To the new Congress the nation looks with new hope. Its first great duty is the impeachment of the President.

Be it spoken as the will of the loyal North that the Fortieth Congress is charged with the solemn duty of removing a traitor from the chief magistracy of the Republic. Nothing on the docket ought to take precedence of this business. The chief mischief-maker in the nation must be cut short in his career of crime. Andrew Johnson is now a greater obstacle to the reconstruction of the Union than either Robert E. Lee or Jefferson Davis. These men are Rebels out of office; but Andrew Johnson is a rebel in the highest of offices. Daily he is executing the will of these two men, instead of the will of the loyal people who made him President. To govern the South by the army, while Andrew Johnson is the head of the army, is a mockery. If the military plan of Congress is to succeed the army must have a new master-spirit. The impeachment of the President is the first necessity of the situation. With a Supreme Court loyal one day and disloyal the next, and with an Executive disloyal all days alike, Congress will count only one against two in the game of governing the South. It must make success certain by grinding the Executive to fine dust in the Senate, and blowing him away with the breath of a judicial sentence by the Chief Justice.

The country would cheer to the echo the dismissal of Andrew Johnson to the harmless-ness of private life. I say no audience all winter that did not applaud the impeachment of the President. Western men, familiar with the President's speeches, are in the habit of saying that Andrew Johnson should now "take a back seat." Nor let the Fortieth Congress imitate the Thirty-ninth in the bad example of waiting two years, and tardily doing its duty with its expiring breath. Two years hence the President will fall off like a withered leaf. What we want is that he should be shaken off now. A Congress, which he disdains to send a message may, before the two years are ended, find him denying its jurisdiction and arresting its members. Andrew Johnson is to-day the chief enemy of the republic; let him be removed!

And with these amiable reflections, O Independent! I here drop the pen of a pilgrim, in hope of soon walking up the steps of No. 5 Beekman street, and rejoining the goodly society of my office-mates, in the aforesaid chamber haunted of spiders and mice.

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300 yards Spring Delaines, 25 cents. Best Color Calicoes, 1 1/2, 1 3/4, 1 1/2, and 1 3/4. Choice Shades Colored Alpaca, 40 and 50c. Choice Shades Colored Mohairs, 62 1/2 cents. Black Alpaca, 25, 45, 60 cents, up to \$1 per yard.

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LADIES' MERINO AND MERINO GAUZE VESTS. MEN'S MERINO AND MERINO GAUZE VESTS. GENTS' MERINO, MERINO GAUZE, COTTON, AND HEAVY ALL-WOOL SHIRTS AND DRAWERS. YOUTH'S MERINO COTTON, AND MERINO GAUZE SHIRTS. 25 tubs.

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Will continue his old business. MILLINERY GOODS, With the addition of DRESS AND COAT TRIMMINGS.

His customers are respectfully invited to examine his stock, which is constantly replenished with the latest styles, and which he will sell at the lowest possible prices, and which he will sell at the lowest possible prices, and which he will sell at the lowest possible prices.

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MRS. R. DILLON, Nos. 223 and 331 SOUTH STREET. Has a handsome assortment of MILLINERY, Flowers, Frames, etc. Ladies who make their own Bonnets supplied with the materials. 15

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HIGHWAYS, Office, No. 108 South FIFTH STREET, PHILADELPHIA, March 11, 1867.

NOTICE will be received at the office of the Chief Commissioner of Highways until 12 o'clock, P. M., on Monday, the 19th inst., for the construction of the following sewers on the line of Vine street, from Third street to the west side of Fourth street, on Chestnut street, from Fourth street to the north side of Liberty street; on Lombard street, from Third street to the west side of Lombard street; on Fifteenth street, from Thompson street to the south side of Walnut street; on Water street, from Fifteenth street to the west side of Walnut street; on Thirteenth street, from Callowhill street to the north side of Wood street.

Two to twelve inches in diameter, also, a three-foot sewer in Marshall street, from Willow street to Spring Garden street, and a two-foot sewer in Jefferson street, from Alder street to the west line of War-nock street, with the necessary manholes for each, as may be directed by the Chief Engineer and Surveyor. The understanding to be that the Contractor shall take bills prepared against the property fronting on said sewer to the amount of one hundred and twenty-five cents for each line foot of front on each side of the street as so much cash paid; the balance, as limited by Ordinance, to be paid by the city.

When the street is occupied by a City Passenger Railroad track, the sewer to be constructed on the west side of said track in such manner as not to obstruct or interfere with the safe passage of cars thereon; and no claim for reimbursement shall be made by the contractor by the company using said track, as specified in Act of Assembly approved May 23, 1866.

All Bidders are invited to be present at the time and place of opening the said Proposals, each proposal will be accompanied by a certificate that a bond has been filed in the Law Department as required by Ordinance of May 23d, 1866. If the lowest Bidder shall not execute a contract within five days after the work is awarded, he will be deemed as declining and will be held liable on his bond for the difference between his bid and the next highest bid.

Specifications may be had at the Department of Surveys, which will be strictly adhered to. W. W. MEDLEY, Chief Commissioner of Highways.

CITY AND COUNTY OF PHILADELPHIA, THE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA. To John Byrd and Margaret Byrd, his wife; Lucy M. Gray, Lydia Gray, widow of James Gray, the Heirs of said James Gray, Philip C. Gray, James Duffie and Jane Duffie, his wife (George Gray), James McKay and Margaret McKay, his wife (William Douglass), William H. Gray, Robert MacAndrew and Mary Ann MacAndrew, his wife and Jane Gray, widow of Walter Gray deceased, or the heirs of said Jane Gray—Greeting.

We command you that, laying aside all business and excuses whatsoever, you be and appear in your proper person before the Honorable the Judges of the Orphans' Court, at a Court to be held on SATURDAY, the 4th day of May, A. D. 1867, at 10 o'clock of the forenoon, to show cause, if any there be, why the Court should not make an order and decree for the sale of the real estate and personal property of JAMES GRAY deceased, as prayed in the petition of JAMES BYRD and ORTH, Administrators, d. b. n. of said James Gray deceased, filed in our Court on the 8th day of March, A. D. 1867, and farther abide the order of the Court in that behalf made, or suffer the same to stand in default of a penalty of one hundred pounds.

Witness Honorable JOSEPH ALLISON, Esq., of Philadelphia, the thirteenth day of March, in the 23rd year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-seven. A FILED J. FORTNER, Pro Clerk, Orphans' Court.

GEORGE PLOWMAN, CARPENTER AND BUILDER, No. 223 CARTER STREET, And No. 141 DOCK STREET. Machine Work and Millwrighting promptly tended to.