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The Week.

In an early number of The Nation we expressed an opinion that the powers of mischief of the Southern malcontents were to be feared in the local legislatures as well as in Congress; that the question really was, how to keep them out of the form—which called down upon us a good deal of indignation, particularly amongst our Baltimore friends, who were at that time greatly agitated by the alleged probability that the Clerk of the House would admit the whole Southern delegation to their seats before organization. Well, the Clerk of the House has done nothing of the kind. There does not seem to have been at any time the slightest ground for supposing that he would do anything of the kind. There is in Congress, as we then predicted there would be, a “powerful Northern majority,” who will not consent to the re-admission of the South until it has given ample security for its good behavior. But what great difference does this make as regards the condition of Southern society? The South wanted most of all to get back into Congress for, was its deliverance from military rule. That it is now securing without getting back into Congress, President Johnson is handing over the States one by one to the State authorities, and delivering to them the management of their own affairs. This to them is the essential thing. It gives them the control of the negroes within certain limits, it is true, but wide limits. It enables them by stay laws to hid defiance to their Northern creditors; by vagrant laws and labor laws, such as all the States are passing, to “keep the negro down” and “make him feel his inferiority,” and to build up on, in short, the ruins of the old social system a new one, very much better, no doubt, but still marked by features repugnant to the spirit of our institutions, and likely to prove a fertile source of trouble in the future. And what can Congress do to prevent all this? The exclusion of the Southern delegation does not interfere with it in the least. As far as we can judge, the delegates are willing to stay at home as long as the House pleases, provided the President refrains from interference; and the President has given, and is giving, the strongest proofs that his interference is nearly at an end. So that, important as the power of keeping them out of the House and Senate undoubtedly is, it is by no means all-important. The successful exercise of it does not, as we now see, enable us by any means to reach the core of the Southern difficulty. The mere adoption of the Constitutional Amendment does not do it, nor will the Freedman’s Bureau do it, unless it is supported by more force—brute force—than it has now at its disposal. It remains to be seen what can be done by enforcing the Amendment.

Carl Schurz is not responsible for the President’s cheerful view of the condition of the South, nor did he advise relinquishing the national control of the States lately in rebellion. His report declared that the loyalty of the masses and most of the leaders at the South means merely submission to necessity; and that the freedmen, in coming to be the slave of an individual, was regarded as still the slave of society. Mr. Schurz urged the President to recommend to Congress to send one or more investigating committees into the Southern States. Neither his testimony nor his advice being heeded, it is not imper tant to ask what are Mr. Johnson’s grounds for rejecting them, and more of the same tenor, which he has published, as if in entire justification of his sudden course?

A petition from the women of the United States to Congress, asking for an amendment to the Constitution, “prohibiting the several States from disfranchising any of their citizens on the ground of sex,” is in circulation, and has been forwarded to us for publication. We are unable to publish it, but we wish the movement all possible success. We think the women of the United States ought to have the franchise if they desire it, and we think they ought to desire it. But until they do desire it, and show that they do by a general and emphatic expression of opinion, we are opposed to their being saddled with it on grounds of mere theoretical fitness or justice. In any real democracy women ought to vote, but the position of disfranchised women differs in many important particulars from that of disfranchised men. The social emancipation of women must, in our opinion, precede their political emancipation. As long as they are socially dependent, as at present, on men, and do not generally desire or seek independence, the assertion of their political rights will be difficult or impossible. We should, for our part, witness without emotion the disfranchisement of all men who looked steadily and persistently to married life as a career or means of livelihood.

There are some Kentuckians who are silly enough to assert that slavery is one of the “reserved rights” of the States, and cannot be taken away by any constitutional amendment. We are glad to observe, on the other hand, how sensibly and humanely the Louisville Journal accepts the new order of things, and demands fair play for the emancipated. A similar spirit has been manifested by the Richmond Republican, and, except these two journals, by no others, not avowedly radical, that come to us from the South.

The Massachusetts Fish Commissioners, after careful inquiry, have reported that by means of fishways, to aid their ascent of the Merrimac and Connecticut, the salmon and shad that used to abound in those rivers may be enticed back again. But they must be bred at the headwaters in New Hampshire; the streams must be kept as clean as possible of chemical and other pollution; and there must be stringent laws concerning the time and manner of fishing. After all, manufactures must suffer to some extent, and it is a question if the moderate supply of fish anticipated is worth the outlay and damage. The report is a valuable one for reference.

It was stated last week, in a paper read before the American Social Science Association in Boston, that a committee from the New York Prison Association had visited all the prisons in the United States, and would lay the result of their investigations before the Legislature of this State.