THE LESSON OF THE CRISIS.

The one thing which was evident throughout the war, whatever might be doubtful or indistinct, was the determination of the Northern people to preserve the Union. There was a great deal of discussion on almost every other point, but there never was any room for discussion on this. The one thing which is now plain is that the people determined that there shall no longer be any such thing as political inequality on American soil, that all men shall be equal before the law, and that no legal barrier shall stand between any man and any of the prizes of life. About the cause of this determination and about its wisdom and about the means used for carrying it out, there may be a good deal of difference of opinion; about its existence we believe there is none. There are people who say that the negro ought not to be the equal of the white man before the law, and there are others who say that if he is it will ruin the country; but there are none who deny that the majority are determined to have him so, and the greater the number of obstacles thrown in the way of the gratification of this desire, the fiercer it seems to burn. It would not be possible to point out a single act, either of the South, or of the Democratic party at the North, committed since Lee's surrender with the view of hindering or delaying or discrediting the movement for equality, which has not had the effect of strengthening and accelerating it. The President came out of the war armed with almost absolute power, and in possession of enormous patronage, and at the head of a party which four years of bloody struggle had familiarized with executive usurpation. His defection, one would have said, would have scattered his party like sheep. It only made it fiercer and more compact. Some of its most gifted and influential members, who had borne the heat and burden of the day, followed his example, and were simply overwhelmed by excursions and defiance. The South has been emboldened by the countenance of the President and of the Northern Democrat into changing its attitude from that of a vanquished enemy into that of a power treating on equal terms, and has found, in spite of the largeness of the Northern majority, that there was even less to hope from resistance than from submission. The trade, the commerce, and the manufactures of the busiest community in the world are terribly embarrassed by the prolongation of the political disquietude, and yet no man dares to raise his voice in favor of the slightest lowering of the terms of settlement. In fact, hardly a month passes that something is not added to make them bitterer and less easy to swallow. The men who during the past year have been rising in influence are not the moderate but the extreme men, and the sentiments which are now most loudly cheered at public meetings are those which suggest the most desperate remedies. In short, after waiting a year and a half for the North to cool, it has only grown hotter and hotter.

Ought not "Conservatives" by this time to be satisfied that the measures they have been opposing are not the result of hasty, half-fledged impulses, but of a ripened judgment and determined will? If the events of the last eighteen months do not prove this, in the name of common sense what will prove it? We think that a man needs to be neither prophet nor sage to feel satisfied now that if the South and the Democracy persist much longer in their opposition to the policy of the Northern majority, we shall find ourselves thrust violently upon a stage of the struggle which will be distinctly and manifestly revolutionary, and over which the nation will hardly pass without serious damage to some of the most valued and still most revered features of the Government. The signs of this are now so abundant that only a blind man can fail to perceive them, and we charge those who continue their senseless opposition to the popular will with responsibility of all the mischief, be it great or small, which may result from the resort of the majority to extra-legal courses. The South and the Democratic party are led by men who profess to be statesmen, and who talk and write as if they had read history, but they are acting like African "rain-makers." There is nothing of which they profess to be so well satisfied as of Radical unpunctuality and disregard of constitutional obligations, and yet they act as if every Radical held constitutional obligations to be absolutely sacred. For instance, when they got the Executive on their side, they pawed and neighed fearfully, and shook the second article of the Constitution in everybody's face, as if the question was now settled. When they found that the Radicals were nothing daunted by this, and that they were disposed, if necessary, to get rid of Mr. Johnson by impeachment, these same Conservatives called the Supreme Court to their aid, and having got a decision against military commissions, they are twisting their thumbs complacently and assuring the world that it is all over, and that the Radicals must now submit—and all this in the same breath in which they preach upon Radical contempt for law.

Now, if there is any lesson which history teaches clearly, it is that there never has existed, and there never is likely to exist, a nation which will allow constitutions or forms of any kind on paper to stand between it and such a change in its policy as it deems necessary to its safety. That the popular safety is the highest law is not a mere saw of the publicists; it is a truth which every man in a free community has buried in his heart. There is nothing in which political sagacity is better displayed, whether in a statesman or in a party, than in the detection of the signs which indicate that the nation has reached the point at which it begins to consider whether it will blindly adhere to constitution forms and persist or disregard them and live. The wise politician—whether in a monarchy, oligarchy, or democracy—is he who knows when resistance to the popular will has gone far enough, and, when the proper moment has come, turns his attention to finding out the best mode of carrying it out without violating the letter of the law. There are a thousand signs that we have reached this point here, and that people are fast, thanks to Mr. Johnson and the South, getting into a state of mind in which constitutional forms will count for very little. One of these, and not the least important, is the way in which the recent decision of the Supreme Court, as well as its dictum, has been received. The court is made the object of the most violent abuse, and the agreement of the judges on a point of law of unusual clearness is denounced unapologetically as a "judicial conspiracy," and movements are even talked of for putting the judges on their trial for it. All this is, of course, very wild and absurd talk; but there is behind it a sentiment which is neither wild nor absurd, and that is, that the question of reconstruction is a question too momentous, too wide in its range, and affecting too vitally the destiny of the nation, to allow of its being submitted to any court of law or decided upon any technical rules of interpretation. In other words, it is essentially a political question, and political questions nations and not courts must solve. No people in the world ever has—no people, it is safe to say, ever will agree to live in danger of its own dissolution as a political community, or permit the perpetuation in its government of principles which it deems immoral or unsafe because nine judges think it ought to do so. It may be legally proper that it should, but it would be logically and morally absurd.

Now, political equality, the absence of all distinctions based on birth or color, having been determined upon as the basis of the National Government, and the fixity and sincerity of this determination having been thoroughly tested, the part of true statesmanship is to inaugurate the new régime under constitutional forms, and with as little departure from legality as possible. Equality may be made the basis of our political system in a perfectly legal way, and without doing any outward damage either to the independence of the States or the independence of the Supreme Court. What the South fears from the imposition of the new rule by Congress is the establishment of a precedent which might lead to the overthrow of various other conditions by a victorious majority. But there is no political change that is not a choice of evils; no matter what we do, whether the amendment be accepted or rejected, whether impartial suffrage be established or not, the majority will still rule. The question is not whether it is to be allowed to rule—this has been decided—but whether it shall rule in good temper, under constitutional forms, and with its traditional respect for law still intact, or rule exasperated, after having been
driven to extremes, and forced to fall back on its superior physical force for the defence of its policy. The plan of resistance to the majority which the South is now trying has been twice tried, and on much the same grounds—that is, that it was undertaken for the protection of "indissoluble rights."—ones by the Stuarts and once by the Bourbons. In both cases the minority lost, partly for their property, and the constitution was swept away altogether, Charles I, and his adherents, and Louis XVI. and his adherents, were determined to "save their honor," and "to hold firm at the outset;" "not to let in the narrow end of the wedge," "to show the world what stuff 'gentleman' were made;" "to save the rights of the monarchy," "to save the nation from a parcel of fanatics," just as the equally crazy "Conservatives" in this country now are—and the result was that the majority at last lost temper and made short work of them and their rights.

All these are things which most people as yet shrink from saying, although they are present to the minds of nine out of ten of the intelligent men of the community. The outlook is not a pleasant one. It is rendered every day darker and darker by such performances as the Democratic Convention at Hartford, and the steady and almost sublime stupidity with which the Southern legislatures go on manufacturing their cheap defiance. There is no more danger that these people will have their own way in the matter of reconstruction than there is that the United States will be annexed to Canada and pass again under the British crown; but there is danger that they may continue their opposition long enough to lead to the maiming up of some of the paper defences behind which they are now hiding their foolish heads.

**THE NEW INDIAN HOSTILITIES.**

Any shred of incredulity regarding the hostile spirit of the Dakota Indians which may hitherto have clung to our countrymen must be swept away by the tidings of the late horrid massacre near Fort Philip Kearney. Whether or not there be a general complais among all the Territorial Indians, as alarmists assert, yet surely in that vicinage, at least, the red men have dug up the hatchet and struck out on the war-path. To judge from the tone of the public press, this revelation takes the country with thorough surprise; whereas the havoc in Colonel Carrington's command is only a bolder outcropping of the evil long felt by judicious observers to be near the surface. Our whole Indian policy is a system of mismanagement, and in many parts one of gigantic abuse. Yet, on all occasions of Indian raids and massacres, it has been a systematic aim in some quarters to lull the popular mind, to deny or to gloss the hostile rumors, and to represent that the relations between the much-revered "Great Father," and his docile and affectionate "red children" were elysian, or could be made so by extra appropriations for gin and blankets. Hence, for example, in the same day we got a Washington telegram stating that "the Commissioner of Indian Affairs does not credit the report of a massacre near Fort Philip Kearney," and a Fort Laramie telegram showing that the scalped and mutilated bodies of over eighty of the victims of that massacre had already been recovered and buried.

The Indians in our Territories number in all between 300,000 and 350,000 souls. No precise census of them has ever been made; for no man has had power, or leisure either, to "call from their woodland hamlets the savage train and count them on the plains." But within these somewhat distant margins the total of those who retain a tribal organization is included. For this great class of our population we have no settled governmental policy, and our present Indian economy is a most peregrine makeshift. We have not even fixed in our minds, much less in theirs, what reciprocal plan of duty and protection can be or ought to be afforded. In a pending suit at law, it is made a question for adjudication whether hostile Indians are foreign enemies or domestic rebels. We do not justly discriminate between the tribes themselves; and our practice is usually first to massacre, by the wholesale, all the redskins we can get at—brave, squaw, and papoose—and next to patch up a peace by presents with all that are left.

Dismaying as apocryphal the story of "twelve tribes" coalescing for the winter's campaign, we must nevertheless credit a somewhat general rising among the Sioux and Cheyennes. New, it is curious to observe that these two tribes have abundant cause for war—at least in the logic of the "untutored mind"—in our own dealings with them. The Cheyennes were the tribe among whom Colonel Cushing and his "gallant men" committed their deeds of hideous barbarity about the Black Hills. It was under his command, according to the Committee on the Conduct of the War, murder in cold blood a hundred unsuspecting Cheyennes of a friendly band, three-fourths of the butchered being women and children. "From the sucking babe to the old warrior, all overtures were deliberately murdered," and that with accompanying acts of "rotating barbarity, such as, it is to be hoped, never before discriminated the acts of men claiming to be civilized." And in this hellish story the worst feature is that "the dastardly massacre, which would have disgraced the veriest savage," was "deliberately planned" in accordance with the almost incredible public sentiment of that region which applauded the shooting of Indians like wolves. It is the rough, relentless frontier spirit which trains the very infants of the log-cabin to "hate an Injin like pizen," and which finds expression in countless such foils of current mortality as "I don't vally a redskin above a rattlesnake." If any one can read the record of our dealings with the Cheyennes, and then marvel at their present murderous marauding, he has poorly studied human nature. Nothing of this sort do we profess, of course, in excuse for the Indian outrages, but in explanation, rather, of those outrages; we trace back from the harvest to the seed.

The other tribe, the Sioux, have a different history. Their nucleus is known as the Upper Sioux tribe of Dakota, found all along the valley of the Upper Missouri. This powerful tribe has been in open hostilities with us intermittently ever since the outbreak of the Southern rebellion. It would be a tedious story to recount all our warlike expeditions against these Sioux. Enough to say that our much-vaunted expeditions up the valley, undertaken at the cost of millions of dollars, have usually unaccomplished almost nothing. Throughout 1893 and 1894, especially, these expeditions were briskly conducted; but so excited were our people over the great rebellion, that they had no time or mind to sift the stories of "brilliant victories over the Sioux." But those brilliant victories were trifling and indecisive skirmishes, and the Indians were not then, and never have been, thoroughly whipped. If the Cheyennes—or rather the friendly bands of the Cheyennes—have been wronged by too harsh treatment, the Sioux have been injured by too feeble treatment. Both, therefore, as we said, have incitement sufficient to unite against us.

The random stories from the forts regarding the number of tribes now leagued for war are, of course, utterly untrustworthy. It is not probable that all the bands of any one tribe deliberately purpose hostilities; it is not probable that they contemplate a war of extermination. Of the Sioux of the Upper Missouri, however, there are about 12,000 souls. They were reinforced, some years ago, by their kindred, speaking the same dialect, the Sioux of the Mississippi, say about 5,000 strong. These latter were expelled from Minnesota after their wild riot of savagery in that State, whose memory even now makes the blood curdle. From that day to this, tempestuous and bloodthirsty spirits among the Sioux have been defiantly threatening our outposts; and, as we said, our boasted expeditions of two and three years ago did not quell them. The Sioux of the Plains, who inhabit the valleys of the Arkansas and Platte, number probably 5,000. The Cheyennes, who adjourn in the same region, number about 3,000. If we add the Arapahos, denizens of the same locality, we obtain 3,000 more. As these figures represent total populations, the available warriors cannot be of alarming strength even were all conjoined.

But, in truth, so far from being the indication of a grand combination of Indians for a war of races, the late massacre among the 18th Infantry and 3d Cavalry is rather the sign of a new league for marauding. It is this bitter reflection which carries our minds from the immediate catastrophe to the larger question of our Indian policy. This consists, in a word, of the offer of a premium for robbery and murder. This effect it accomplishes in the following manner: In order to assist the Western march of civilization, and more especially to afford safe routes for travel across the continent, the Indians were induced to exchange certain tracts of desirable land occupied by them for annuities