THE NEXT STEP IN RECONSTRUCTION.

There is, of course, a good deal of allowance to be made in every canvass for hussome and exaggeration in estimating the amount of weight which ought to be attached to campaign speeches; and although Southern orators could not complain if we took literally all they are just now saying, probably very few people do take it literally. It is most likely that neither Blair, Wade Hampton, nor Forrest feels nearly as valorous or as bloodthirsty as he talks. If they did, they would not only belie all our past experience of Southern speeches, but of all campaign speeches. If campaign orators really went through all the emotions they describe themselves as going through, few of them would ever witness the Presidential election. There are limits to human endurance; and if speakers usually found—like General Battle, the other day, at Mobile—that "no language could express the emotions that swelled their bosoms," there would be a grave mistake beside every stump. But there is little doubt that, though Southern politicians do not mean as much mischief as their words, taken literally, would indicate, they mean a good deal of mischief. There is good reason for believing that they do not intend to be very scrupulous about the use of intimidation as a means of influencing the coming election. They are busy getting up a "Conservative party" amongst the negroes by moral suasion, and any negro who is convinced by their arguments that the Southern planters are his best friends, they appear to be receiving into their ranks with a good deal of cordiality. But then, it would be a mistake to suppose that they give up as hopeless cases those negroes who are not convinced by their arguments. For them they are providing a simple and efficient system of social persecution, by which, in some parts of the country at least, any negro who is not armed with a card, issued by a white committee, testifying to his "soundness," will not receive employment in any capacity. But there will, of course, be a large number of cases in which both the moral suasion and the denial of employment will prove ineffective; and the great question of Southern politics now is, how will these and the white abolitionists—the carpet-baggers and "scalawags"—be dealt with on the first Tuesday in November next? We suspect roughly. We doubt very much whether, in a large number of districts in the South, voting the Radical ticket at the polls will not be a service of much difficulty and great personal danger.

Now, this ought not to be. If all we have heard during the last year or two of the "regeneration" of the Southern States through the adoption of the new constitutions and the readmission of their members to Congress has been true, there ought to be no more ground for anxiety about the elections in Georgia and Alabama than about the elections in New York or Connecticut. But it was not true, or true only in a Pickwickian sense. Southern society remains in the States which are in the Union exactly what it is in the States which are out of the Union. The loyal portion of the population are represented in Congress, which is all very well so far as it goes; but the disloyal portion is no smaller, and no less fierce and bitter than it has ever been. What we have gained by reconstruction is, that the government of the restored State has been handed back to those of its own people who are fit to be trusted with it, and that the negroes are being familiarized with the duties of political life. But the tie which binds the State to the Union has not been really strengthened, nor have the normal guarantees of social order. No shifting of the power from one hand to another, no distribution of the franchise, no administration of oaths, will do this. Nothing will do it but the growth of new habits on the part of the people. A State is made peaceful and prosperous, not by the appearance of a certain number of gentlemen in black broadcloth in certain seats in the House and Senate, and the accession of Jones, in place of Brown, to the governorship or shirILITY, but by the acquisition by the mass of the people of certain ways of looking at life, and their adoption of certain standards of propriety for the regulation of their conduct. If the mass of men in South Carolina had the same notions of the objects of living, and of the difference between vice and virtue, comfort and discomfort, as the mass of men in Massachusetts, even though their views about the rebellion were substantially what they are now, you might safely let them send Hampton and Forrest, or anybody else they pleased, to Congress, and let everybody vote without any test oath or other restriction. A man might approve of the rebellion most heartily, but if he had a sincere respect for the law, or, at all events, a hearty horror for violence and outrage, he would prove a very good citizen, and discussion might fairly be relied on to cure his political heresies. But the mass of men in most Southern States are not in this condition, or in any thing like it, and therefore it is that we call "reconstruction"—that is, the restoration of civil government in the Southern States, and the reappearance of their members in Congress—instead of being the "regeneration" of Southern society, is only one of the various agencies by which that regeneration is to be effected.

The foremost amongst them, we say still, as we have frequently said during the past two years, and we say it now more confidently than we have ever said it before, are time and order. What does most to make the spectacle of the political equality of the negroes odious to Southerners is what made the spectacle of negro freedom odious to them—want of familiarity with it. What makes it so hard for them to have negroes vote is their never having seen them vote. What makes it so hard for them to keep their knives out of negro ribs, and their pistols away from negro heads, is the fact that outrages on colored people, or, in fact, on any people, are always associated in their minds, as they are in the minds of the members of more civilized communities, with legal punishment. It is, therefore, in the highest degree important—no matter who represents the South in Congress—that the State governments should be in the hands of persons who will use their powers to give security to all classes, and that there should be an administration at Washington which may be counted on to uphold these governments in case of necessity. Put Seymour and Blair in power, and the process of undoing at the South once begins; the rule of the strong hand is restored, and we are just as far from real reconstruction as ever—in fact, farther than ever—for the beneficent effects of the last three years of military rule would be lost. The idea of respect for the law, as something higher and stronger than the feelings of the local mob, which has been slowly taking root in the Southern mind, would be torn up and cast out, and we should be worse off than ever. To govern the South militarily so long is the best thing that the Republican party has done next to emancipation, and if it could, with due regard to the interests of the whole country, which we admit it cannot, keep it under military rule for four years more, it would be rendering the South the highest service that it can receive through any human agency. Unless the machinery of government the party has set up there, however, can be kept going for some years longer—unless, in short, the South can be governed by law, and not, as in times past, by the passions and prejudices of the most passionate and most prejudiced of the most turbulent community in the world, reconstruction will prove a complete farce. The South of 1869 will be the South of 1860, minus so many men killed, so much property destroyed, and the destruction of legal slavery.

The danger of a Democratic triumph, too, does not lie in the fact that Seymour is this kind of man, or Blair that kind of man, but that the party which elects them has ceased to be a party of progress or reform. This has been often said of it of late; but it is usually said, and most loudly said, with special reference simply to its opposition to the removal of negro Disabilities, and the change which has been made in their members' views of the moral and political position of the negro made less impression on the public mind than it ought. The fact is that it is the enemy of all useful changes or ameliorations in the government. Judicial purity, administrative efficiency, popular education, the sense of corporate honor, the strict administration of justice, and, in fact, all restraints on the evil tendencies of society, in whatever direction, have no worse enemy. In fact, the only principle it can be said to hold firmly and preach persistently is that liberty is not a means but an end, and that as long as a man can do what he pleases, what it pleases him to do is of little or no consequence—a doctrine as hostile to social and political progress as any that ever was preached. It is in this fact, indeed, that the gravity of the present crisis lies. Usually, an opposition has the other half of a political and social truth in its possession, and while pursuing the same great ends as the party in power, advocates the use of different agencies, and has at its head men who, whether right-headed or wrong-headed, are sincerely wedded to ideas, and stand as high morally as their opponents. The peculi-
arity of the Democratic party is—and the history of the last seven years justifies us in saying this—that its sole principle is hostility to the men in power, so that if the Republicans sit on a plan of adding twenty healthy, happy years to human life, the Democrats would devote themselves to persecuting the people that the boon, coming from such hands, was worthless. There is probably nothing in political history equal to the speeches of the Brookes, Vallandighams, and Seymours, since 1861, for emptiness of everything but negation and invective; and the readiness the Democratic members of the House invariably show to vote on House with any Republican, on any subject, who sets himself up in opposition to the rest of his party, is a striking illustration of their childishness and the impotency of their tactics. Their accession to office, therefore, for the government of any community, would be a great misfortune—much more for a community in so disturbed and critical condition as this.

THE PROBABLE SOLUTION OF THE GREENBACK CONTROVERSY.

While the country is agitated with the discussion of “the greenback question,” meaning thereby the question of repudiation, no one appears to notice the very important fact that another “greenback question,” vitally affecting this controversy, and bearing directly upon the business interests of the whole country, is now under consideration. In the highest court of the land, and that within a short time we may hear of a judicial decision which will compel the Pendletons and Butlers to take their choice between the full payment and the total repudiation of the public debt. Yet this fact is well known; and, although the judges have said little or nothing, there is very little doubt among those who know their habit of mind as to what their decision will be. It is the firm conviction of every one who has any means of foreseeing the result, that the Supreme Court will declare the Legal Tender Act unconstitutional.

The reasons for such an expectation are obvious to any one even slightly familiar with law and politics. No judge of a State Court, adhering to the Democratic party, has acknowledged the validity of the Act, while several prominent Republican judges have denied it. It is manifest from the written opinions of those judges who affirmed the constitutionality of the statute, that they did so under the pressure of a supposed necessity, and that they found great difficulty in reaching that conclusion. The period of necessity has passed. The real interest of the country plainly demands a different decision, and in so far as the judges may be affected by feeling, it is more likely to lead them to overthrow the statute than to induce them with a desire to maintain it. There are eight judges, four of whom are unquestionably allied to the Democratic party, and two others are understood to have leaned toward it for some time past. We think there can be no doubt that Messrs. Nelson, Grier, Clifford, and Field believe the Legal Tender Act to be invalid; and it was a matter of common rumor at Washington last spring that Chief-Justice Chase was disposed to take the same view. We think that Judge Davis will, and we should not be surprised if the court were unanimous.

It is easy to see that such a decision would scatter to the winds all the ingenious schemes that have been devised for pretending to pay the public debt without really paying any of it. As Congress is not restrained from passing laws impairing the obligation of contracts, the legal tender clause of the Act of 1862, if declared unconstitutional at all, must be held void by us to future contracts as well as in respect to past ones. It cannot fall on account of its retrospective operation, and must therefore fall as a whole. It follows that the holders of the five-twentieths, and, in fact, of every species of claim against the Government, would have an absolute legal right to payment in gold. The holders of greenbacks and other obligations of the Government not bearing interest would, of course, have no means of enforcing their claims at once; but the holders of interest-bearing bonds would have such a practical right of payment of interest until the Government was ready to pay the principal in gold, that their claim could not be evaded without unequivocal, undisguised repudiation. Honest men would then get face to face with political Jeremy Diddlers; and we should have no more palliation of fraud by reference to “the letter of the law.”

But there is another result certain to follow this judgment, and not so agreeable to contemplate. The decision which we predict will involve a forced and sudden return to specie payments among private citizens. The injustice which was suffered by creditors in 1862 and 1863, when debts contracted in gold were paid off in depreciated paper, will now be inflicted upon debtors, who must pay in gold debts contracted in paper. In the majority of cases, such payment will not be exacted, because paper will continue to constitute the actual currency, and gold will be paid only upon legal compulsion; but debts secured by bonds or mortgages will be largely collected in gold, and the courts feel at liberty to go behind the technical word “money,” and inquire what the position really meant when the bond was drawn. In any event, the decision which we anticipate must seriously unsettle business for a time, and produce some hardship; yet we believe that its ultimate benefits will far outweigh its temporary disadvantages.

The existing system is demoralizing the nation; and scarcely any price is too dear to pay for the sake of getting back to solid bottom. Congress will, we fear, never dare to return to a specie basis; and our only hope is in the severe remedy of a judicial decision.

The Senate, foreseeing this event, twice passed a bill allowing contracts to be made for payment in gold; but the House and Representatives, with its usual shortsightedness, refused to concur. The passage of such a measure would have enabled the community to anticipate and avoid the evil results of a sudden return to specie payments. As matters stand, it is difficult, but not quite impossible to do so. The courts are more disposed now than they were during the war to enforce specie contracts; and with a little care such contracts may be drawn so as to protect all parties. We should advise all who have large sums to pay after next winter, and who expect to pay in full, to consider well the form of their obligation, and either to secure the right of paying in greenbacks or to agree to pay in gold of specified weight and fineness the equivalent of what they have received. Nevertheless, it must be distinctly understood that all our warning is founded upon surmise, and that no one must blame us if our predictions are not fulfilled. The Legal Tender Act may be folly sustained. Every one must fore-

THADDEUS STEVENS.

Mr. Stevens cannot be said to have so associated himself with any public measure or series of measures as to make it a memorial of him personally and peculiarly, except the school system of Pennsylvania. He was not, strictly speaking, the founder of this; but he did what was, perhaps, harder than founding it—he saved it from the attacks of the friends of ignorance, and made it the means of raising Pennsylvania from darkness into light, and of furnishing her material industry with the only sure basis, that of popular intelligence. This alone, of course, gave him a fair title not only to fame, but to the gratitude of posterity, but it would hardly have sufficed to make him much known outside the boundaries of his own State. Coupled with his personal popularity, however—which his habit of living in public and the extraordinary kindliness of his nature made unusually great—it enabled him to enter Congress with an amount of hearty confidence from his constituency such as few representatives ever enjoy. This confidence he never lost, and it made his re-election so sure that he became one of the oldest and most experienced members of the House, and its readiest and shrewdest tactician. Other constituencies might well learn a valuable lesson from the course pursued by his—the lesson that, when they have got a good man to represent them in Congress, the very best thing they can do is to keep him, and that in keeping him they not only increase his value to the country, but increase their own influence on national affairs.

His earlier Congressional record appears to have been simply that of a hard worker in committee-rooms. His attention, like that of all other politicians, statesmen, or philanthropists, was absorbed in the slavery question as the great, and, in fact, the only, question of the day, and to the agitation of this he brought almost unequalled ardor and enthusiasm, a shrewd wit and bitter tongue, such as few of the