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THE OBSTRUCTIVE PRESIDENT.

THE President of the United States appears to be a man of small intellect and strong passions. At present he is acting like young chess-players playing a losing game, who cannot deny themselves the small temporary gratification of uselessly checking their opponent, even though to do so they throw away the little chance that is left them of retrieving their battle. Nothing could be at once more cynical and more silly than the policy Mr. Johnson has lately been pursuing in his unequal struggle with Congress, — cynical, because it inflicts the most terrible sufferings in individual cases without advancing, nay, at the expense of, that cause of colour-caste in the South, which Mr. Johnson has espoused; — silly, because in several instances Mr. Johnson has thwarted his opponents simply for the pleasure of thwarting them, without even the power of overruling them, and without the pretence of the legal pleas on which he has generally professed to act. If the Committee to inquire whether he has done anything worthy of impeachment — which the Atlantic Telegraph tells us was carried in the House of Representatives by the large majority of 108 to 38 — should really propose to impeach him, and should meet with any success, the success will be entirely due to the senseless obstinacy of his recent acts, which assuredly render him an obstacle in the path of the new policy which it is desirable to shovel out of the way, if it can be done without any serious disruption of the party of freedom. Our own view has been, till within the last week, unfavourable to so strong a measure as the impeachment of the President, and would be so still, if any milder remedy for preventing the complete waste of two most important years of political action could be discovered. Mr. Johnson is clearly not responsible in any way for his own narrow intellect, or probably not *now* responsible for his own strong passions. It is not in order to punish him for being what he is, that any true friend of freedom would wish to see the ordinary course of events in the United States interrupted. But if the future is to be permanently imperilled because these two men of mean intellect and poor character — Mr. Johnson and Mr. Seward — stand in the way, then it becomes the duty of those who know what the war really meant, and how great is the danger of letting society in the South crystallize again on the old law, the law of Slavery, instead of the new,

to sweep away these obstinate misinterpreters of the distinct will of a great nation. Hitherto, however, we do not doubt that Mr. Johnson's narrow passions have done good, and not harm. As Louis Napoleon is said to have apologized in 1859 for leaving Venetia in the hands of Austria, on the ground that Italy would be consolidated far sooner with two great external irritants, Rome and Venice, still to chafe the Italian nation into active patriotism and absolute unity of feeling, so Mr. Johnson, if he had the astuteness of the French Emperor, might some day plead before the bar of the American nation, that his bitterness against the cause of freedom was essential in the hour of victory to alarm the too lenient spirit of the North, to secure the coherence of the Free-Soil party and its adherence to its resolve that the South should never be trusted again till it had frankly obliterated the principle of social tyranny on which the rebellion took its stand. Mr. Johnson has hitherto prevented, and perhaps only a President of such bitter prejudices could have prevented, the North from unguardedly, in the generosity of its heart, making fatal concessions to the South. But now that he has succeeded in making them wake as one man to their danger, the next thing should be to save two most important years in dealing with it, and Mr. Johnson seems determined to show the North that this cannot be done without brushing aside the unfortunate political accident who professes to administer their will. X

The case against Mr. Johnson is this. Congress has passed, — and passed as the net moral result of the war, without the complete and sincere acceptance of which the war would be over only in name, — and the requisite majority of the States of the Union have ratified, the Constitutional Amendment finally abolishing slavery, except as a criminal punishment, and giving Congress power to enforce this new provision of the Constitution by appropriate legislation. So far the President and the late rebellious States professed to go with Congress. But this change was only nominal so long as the States lately in rebellion continued to hold to all their old legal and social customs constructed on the *ideas* of the system they professed to surrender; so long as whites who shoot negroes are acquitted of all guilt, and negroes who lift a finger against whites are shot dead; so long as white men may travel where they please, and negro travellers are called vagrants and condemned to slavery for terms of years; so long as white evidence hangs

any number of negroes, and negro evidence is not even accepted against a white; so long as negroes are taxed for the schools which white children alone may attend, and white men burn down the schools for negroes with absolute impunity; so long as deliberate massacres of the negroes go absolutely unpunished; so long as Southern Courts laugh at the Constitutional Amendment, and declare it unconstitutional. Let slavery be declared abolished, and yet all these things of which we have spoken go on without interference on the part of Congress or the Executive, and it is clear that the results of the war are cast to the winds. Yet this is precisely what Mr. Johnson has moved heaven and earth to effect. Congress passed a Freedmen's Bureau Bill last Session to protect the negroes in the South. Mr. Johnson vetoed it. Congress passed a Civil Rights Bill declaring all native negroes citizens of the United States, and entitled to all the civil rights of whites born under the same circumstances. Mr. Johnson vetoed it. During the long vacation a most bloody and malignant plot was laid by the citizens of New Orleans against the Free-Soil party of that State, and a massacre organized which in part took effect, which actually cost the lives of more than a score of loyalists, and but for the United States troops would have been a second St. Bartholomew. Mr. Johnson did his best at the time, and has done his best ever since, to palliate the guilt of that deliberate massacre and to throw the blame upon the victims. All this has long been known. But now Mr. Johnson is playing more and more boldly the same disgraceful part. This session Congress, which is the only legislature of the district of Columbia in which Washington lies, has passed by two-third majorities in both Houses a Bill giving the suffrage to negroes in that district. Mr. Johnson has vetoed it, although his power only extends to delaying it for a day or two, when the same majorities given after his veto will pass it into law. Still worse, the only power by which the evil passion of the South against its freedmen was mitigated was the military power. Till lately it was known that if negroes were murdered and the State Courts refused to take cognizance of the crimes, or acquitted the criminals, the military authorities would interfere. In Georgia in the last year there have been three hundred such murders of which only three, or 1 per cent., were punished, and these under the influence of fear of the military authorities, who would have had far more influence

but for the known bias of the President against the negroes. Mr. Johnson has just withdrawn this one feeble offset against the malignant negro-hatred of the South. The Supreme Court has decided that in Indiana, — a State where there never was any rebellion, — the military tribunals had no authority except over soldiers, and has set aside a sentence on a civilian passed by a military Court. Mr. Johnson with indecent haste has used this decision to further his purpose of giving each of the Southern States full freedom to slay or torture its own negroes, without danger of interference from the Central Government. He has revoked as unconstitutional the military order directing the Federal officers to interfere in case of any flagrant repudiation by the Southern Courts of the plain civil rights of the negroes, and has himself dissolved the Commission sitting to try a self-confessed murderer at Richmond, Dr. James L. Watson, who had been acquitted by the local Court, in spite of his own boastful confession of the murder, simply and solely on the ground that negro murder is not murder. In this case a negro coachman called Echols had driven his mistress's carriage against Dr. Watson's. Dr. Watson, the next day, proceeded to cowhide Echols, and on Echols running away called him back under pain of death to undergo more cowhiding, and shot him for not returning. Of this the murderer Watson boasted, and the County Court acquitted him as guiltless of murder. The Military Commission which was sitting to try him is dissolved by Mr. Johnson, on the ground that the Supreme Court had declared trials by military commission in the Northern States, — where there never was any rebellion or need of military authority, — unconstitutional. And Dr. Watson may murder a fresh negro each day of the new year with absolute certainty of impunity, if not of fame. In Maryland the judges, aware that Mr. Johnson vetoed the Civil Rights Bill, which was passed over his veto, and will do nothing to enforce it, are setting it at naught in the most flagrant manner, and on Saturday, 22d December, four negroes were sold for a term of years at Annapolis for some slight offence, — we believe under the vagrant laws, — one of them being actually permitted to buy himself in, which he certainly would not have been if the offence had been more than nominal. The other three were sold to farmers for a term of years, Judge Magruder declaring the Civil Rights Bill passed by Congress, which refuses to admit any distinction in

the civil laws founded on colour, as unconstitutional and inconsistent with the law of Maryland. All over the South the same absolute contempt for the civil rights of the negro is shown, under the fostering care of Mr. Johnson's justice. North Carolina papers declare that State ready for a new rebellion on the basis of Mr. Johnson's principles. South Carolina rejects the new Constitutional Amendment, which incorporates the Civil Rights Bill, by 95 to 1. In Memphis, Tennessee, organizations to prevent by terror commercial dealings with loyal shopkeepers are formed. In Missouri the burning down of freedmen's schools is a popular amusement. And everywhere the President's cry is to 'let be,' unless the very people who conspire to do these things interfere by their own Courts or militia to prevent them.

These are not iniquities merely requiring a strong-handed remedy, but mockeries of the whole policy of the war. If this be constitutional,—as our "Yankee" correspondent, in his blind ardour for legalities, boasts,—it was far more constitutional to permit secession at first, than for the nation now, after paying hundreds of millions sterling to prevent secession, to foster all the springs of secession into a new and still more threatening activity. Whatever price must be paid to reap the full fruits of the greatest and most successful of human struggles clearly must be paid. And if so insignificant a President as Mr. Johnson must be thrown overboard to prevent the wreck of the ship in the very sight of port, why no one will regret *him*, though many may regret the necessity of having to do anything that looks revolutionary for the sake of clearing away so trivial an impediment, which by an unfortunate accident of position is yet a formidable drag on the movement of a great nation.