

## DISTURBED CONDITION OF THE COUNTRY.

JANUARY 14, 1861.—Ordered to be printed, and made the special order for Monday, the 21st instant, at one o'clock, and continued from day to day until disposed of.

Mr. ADAMS, of Massachusetts, submitted the following report explaining his disagreement with the action of the committee:

### MINORITY REPORT.

The subscriber has labored earnestly in the committee to make himself master of the causes of the present discontents. So far as they were divulged there, they may be comprised under three heads: 1st. The personal liberty laws in some of the free States; 2d. Exclusion from the Territories; 3d. The apprehension of some future danger to the rights of the slave States from the adoption of constitutional amendments interfering with them. Without joining in the belief that there are very serious grounds for this uneasiness, the subscriber is too well convinced of its existence not to be disposed to apply any reasonable remedy to quiet it. He was, therefore, for this reason, induced to give his concurrence at first in several of the measures reported by the committee. He did so under a conviction that they contain the only reasonable as well as practicable adjustment of the differences unhappily existing in the country, without the sacrifice of principle on either side, that has thus far come within his observation; and although not entirely approving of them in the abstract, he was ready to give his co-operation in adopting them, if there was good reason to suppose that they would effect the object aimed at. He endeavored to act in good faith, and with a view to the restoration of the kindly relations between the opposite sections of the country, which seem to be so rudely threatened. That this spirit has been fairly reciprocated by a portion of the representatives of the aggrieved States he takes great pleasure to acknowledge. Had that portion constituted only a bare majority of the whole number, he would still have pledged all the limited aid in his power to unite with them; but the fact is wholly otherwise. Whilst three States have refused to be represented at all, seven more, thus making ten out of fifteen, have decided to reject the conclusions arrived at by the committee. This fact alone would seem to render all prospect of a general adjustment very dim; and when it appeared, on the other hand, that a number of representatives of the free States were equally disinclined to accept them, what hope was left of any advantageous result from perseverance?

Another significant incident happened, which put an end to all further doubt in the mind of the subscriber, because it convinced him that, even if all the measures recommended could be adopted, the

adjustment anticipated would be as far off as ever ; that the causes of the difference are but superficially touched in the alleged grievances, which have engrossed the attention of the committee; and that the true source of discord lies altogether too deep for the plummet of congressional legislation.

By reference to the journal of the committee it will appear that on Friday, the 11th of January, a resolution was offered by the subscriber, in direct response to one portion of the President's message, specifically referred to the consideration of this committee. As finally amended, it was in the following words :

*“ Resolved, That peaceful acquiescence in the election of a Chief Magistrate, accomplished in accordance with every legal and constitutional requirement, is a high and imperative duty of every good citizen of the United States. ”*

Great was the surprise of the mover on perceiving that the annunciation of this indisputable proposition, in his belief of vital moment to the permanence of any republic founded on the consent of men, was met by hesitation on the part of several members. The President, in his annual message, had distinctly affirmed the same thing in another form of language. No reason seemed to exist why the committee should not, by responding unanimously to his sentiment, aid in giving to the country confidence in the belief that the discontents existing in some quarters were merely such as a conciliatory policy might remove. Instead of this, a written paper was presented by seven members, assigning reasons for their refusal to record their votes at all. The substance of that paper is found recorded in the journal. It alleges that voting upon such a declaration would, in the opinion of the signers, do more harm than good. Why it would have that effect it does not explain. If the proposition be true, and if there exist no intention, in any quarter, to deny its truth, either by word or act, surely it could do neither harm nor good to vote for it. It would fall powerless, like any accepted truism of society. It is only in the alternative when some portion of a community is determined, at all hazards, to act in direct contravention of it, that it can do harm ; for it may then, indeed, serve to excite the public attention to the true nature of the issue presented, and to embitter the animosities which radical differences naturally produce.

Whilst the subscriber would not venture to intimate a doubt of the sincerity of the members in assigning the reasons for their hesitation to accept so undeniable a proposition, he cannot abstain from expressing his profound regret that their course should unavoidably raise up anxious doubts in the minds of great numbers of people as to the nature of the struggle now presented to the country. Is it, after all, only the election of a President of the United States, whom one section of the Union did not nominate and support, that constitutes the main grievance, and stimulates to a dissolution of the Union? If it be indeed so, then is there no necessity for organizing legislative committees to find a remedy? The Constitution becomes a mere bit of paper, if men determine with their eyes open to violate and annul its most fundamental provisions.

The subscriber is yet reluctant to believe the case quite so desperate

as this would show it. He still believes that much of this extreme conduct is the effect of sudden impulse and excited passions, and that there is a fund of reason and loyalty at bottom which may be relied upon ultimately to turn the current in favor of the Constitution and the enforcement of the laws; and he is encouraged in this faith by observing that the representatives of some of the dissatisfied States cordially came forward and recorded their names as well as their reasons for voting in favor of the resolution. Yet, on the other hand, it cannot be denied that they constitute only a minority of the disturbed States. The majority stand on the record as refusing all terms of adjustment they do not dictate, and declining to commit themselves to the support of a principle without the acknowledgment of which constitutional government is impossible. In this state of things, it is at least doubtful whether the legitimate powers of Congress, if fully exerted, would avail to reach the seat of the disease.

The general conclusion to which the subscriber has arrived, from a close observation of the action of the committee, is this: that no form of adjustment will be satisfactory to the recusant States which does not incorporate into the Constitution of the United States a recognition of the obligation to protect and extend slavery. On this condition, and on this alone, will they consent to withdraw their opposition to the recognition of a constitutional election of the Chief Magistrate. Viewing the matter in this light, it seems unadvisable to attempt to proceed a step further in the way of offering unacceptable propositions. He can never give his consent to the terms demanded.

For this reason it is that, after having become convinced of this truth, he changed his course and declined to recommend the very measures which he in good faith had offered. It certainly can be of no use to propose as an adjustment that which has no prospect of being received as such by the other party. Hence he feels it his duty now to record his dissent from the action of a majority of his colleagues in introducing any measures whatever for the consideration of the House.

CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS.