

hoped that the countries which have not yet assented will be influenced favorably, and that the rules may go into effect on July 1, 1897, with unanimous support.



The President's Message

The President adheres to the practice of issuing a message so voluminous that only officials and editors will read it. Pity that he had not left the public to get its official history of the country from Departmental reports, and confined his message to a few short, sharp, and decisive paragraphs on critical questions. We condense into paragraphs the more important portions of this message, adding in a sentence our comment thereon.

Turkey. The condition in Asiatic Turkey has been "hideous and bloody." American property has been destroyed, and though none of our citizens have yet been killed or wounded, "their safety in the future is by no means assured." But any attempt to make provision for their safety would be resisted by the Ottoman Government and regarded as an interference in their plans by the European Powers. Therefore nothing can be done.—True! by this Administration. We must live in hope of a more courageous and independent policy from the next one.

Cuba. The war in Cuba has passed beyond the bounds of legitimate warfare. Neither side regards the rules of war. The continuance of the present struggle can end only in leaving the Gem of the Antilles so desolated that even commerce cannot restore it. American interests in the island are estimated in millions of dollars, and are now suffering and are liable to be wholly ruined. We have offered our good offices as a mediator, thus far in vain. Our attitude of expectation cannot be indefinitely maintained, and higher obligations may yet require us to interfere.—The Outlook is of the same opinion. While it is not our duty to assume a protectorate over every feeble republic on this side of the Atlantic, we ought not to permit barbarism at once to destroy our neighbors and impoverish ourselves.

Venezuela. The Venezuelan difficulty is ended. The treaty negotiated between Great Britain and the United States assures a peaceful settlement. And "negotiations for a treaty of general arbitration for all differences between Great Britain and the United States are far advanced, and promise to reach a successful consummation at an early date."—Good. The credit of this result is to be divided between reformers in Great Britain and reformers in the United States and our own Secretary of State, who has shown as much vigor and skill in dealing with the later stages of this question as he has shown lack of both in dealing with the Armenian question.

Currency. "We can have no assured financial peace and safety until the Government currency obligations upon which gold may be demanded from the Treasury are withdrawn from circulation and canceled . . . by their exchange for long-term bonds bearing a low rate of interest, or by their redemption by the proceeds of such bonds."—That is, we must stop borrowing of the people without interest, and instead borrow from the banks and pay interest. We do not believe that the people will see the financial wisdom of this plan, which substitutes an interest-bearing debt for a non-interest-bearing debt, nor the political wisdom of this plan, which lessens the power of the people and correspondingly increases the power of the banks over the currency.

Tariff. The present tariff law, "if allowed a fair opportunity, will in the near future yield a revenue which, with reasonably economical expenditures, will overcome all deficiencies." In the fiscal year ending June 30, 1896,

imports increased \$6,500,000 over the previous year, exports increased \$70,000,000, while the revenue from tariff was nearly \$8,000,000 greater than the year before. True, for the last fiscal year there has been a deficit of \$25,000,000, yet this need not disturb us. For we have in the Treasury a gold reserve of \$100,000,000 and a further surplus of more than \$128,000,000, which it is better to appropriate to the payment of justifiable expenses than to hoard as an invitation to future extravagance.—The President forgets to mention that the deficit this year is already \$52,000,000, and that the surplus of \$128,000,000 is what remains of the proceeds of \$262,000,000 of bonds recently sold, not for current expenses, but to protect our gold reserve. That the President's satisfaction with the present tariff is not shared by the country is evident from the recent election. Some measure of either increasing revenues or decreasing expenditures is certain to be recognized by the next Congress, if not by this.

Miscellaneous. We are getting on famously in building fortifications—and in getting into debt for them. We are increasing our navy and building big guns—which it is devoutly to be hoped we shall never want to use.—Indians ought to be protected from liquor-dealers by a prohibitory law, and a non-partisan and permanent Indian Commission should take the place of a political Indian Commissioner.—Civil Service Rules now cover substantially all positions except fourth-class postmasters.—If the Post-Office would not carry so much second-class matter at a loss, better facilities and cheaper rates would be practicable for first-class matter. That is, if publishers of cheap literature were not served so well at public expense, the people would be better served—a very just conclusion.—"Trusts" are very bad; but the only real remedy is State legislation.

On the whole, it cannot be expected that this message, dignified and moderate though it may be, will exercise any perceptible influence upon Congress or public opinion. The former must wait and the latter will wait that change in affairs which may be expected from an incoming Administration. The country is more interested to-day to know what Mr. McKinley thinks the country ought to do than what Mr. Cleveland thinks the country ought to have done.



The Basis of Government

The statement of the Rev. Lyman Abbott in Plymouth pulpit the other Sunday, that the theory incorporated in the Declaration of Independence that government rests upon the consent of the governed is an exploded theory, appears to have aroused an unexpected degree of criticism, if not resentment, in certain quarters. The Boston "Herald" endeavors to bring this denial into disrepute by claiming that it is identical with the teaching of the late John C. Calhoun; the Chicago "Tribune," erroneously saying that "Dr. Abbott did not state what his theory of government was," counsels him "to leave the Declaration of Independence and American theories of government alone," as "beyond him;" several Chicago clergymen, interviewed by the Chicago "Times-Herald," condemn in more or less vigorous terms the principle that government rests upon the will of God, not on the will of the people; and the Chicago "Evening Post," the Waterbury "American," the New York "Journal," and other papers in various forms join in the chorus of dissent.

There was nothing in Dr. Abbott's statement in the least new or startling; nothing which is not, indeed, familiar

in all academic circles, not to say accepted by all scientifically educated men. The declaration that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed is an attempt to embody in a practical form the results of Rousseau's theory of government. That theory is, in a sentence, that men by nature were in a state of freedom, that, for the benefits anticipated from government, they relinquished some portion of their natural, God-given freedom, and that thus all government rests upon what Rousseau called the "Social Contract." Subsequent historical research has entirely disproved Rousseau's theory. It has shown beyond all possible question that there never was a state of freedom, and never was a surrender, express or implied, of freedom for the real or supposed advantages of government. A single quotation will suffice as well as many. We quote from Sir Henry Maine's "Popular Government:"

"This political speculation, of which the remote and indirect consequences press us on all sides, is, of all speculations, the most baseless. The natural condition from which it starts is a simple figment of the imagination. So far as any research into the nature of primitive human society has any bearing on so mere a dream, all inquiry has dissipated it. The process by which Rousseau supposes communities of men to have been formed, or by which, at all events, he wishes us to assume that they were formed, is, again, a chimera. No general assertion as to the way in which human societies grew up is safe, but perhaps the safest of all is that none of them were formed in the way imagined by Rousseau."

While history has disproved the historical basis of Rousseauism, philosophy and history have combined to show that as a theory it is wholly impracticable. The French Republic was founded on the Social Contract, and the French Republic proved that the foundation was one of sand. The Republic built upon it disappeared almost as soon as it was erected. And the Republic reared on this side of the Atlantic would not have outlived the century, if the Nation had acted consistently on the doctrine that government rests on the consent of the governed. The Boston "Herald" has put itself in direct antithesis to history in its statement. John C. Calhoun was the political descendant of Rousseau's apostle in America, Thomas Paine; he held that government rests on the consent of the governed, drew from it the logical conclusion that when the consent was withdrawn the right to govern was gone, and therefore maintained the right of a State to nullify the action of the Federal Government. Nullification and secession are the children of Rousseauism. If government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed, then the Southern States were right, and the Northern States were wrong, in the Civil War; for we of the North insisted on maintaining a government over half a continent without its consent, and in spite of a very vigorous and emphatic dissent.

The true basis of government is very simple, easily stated, easily understood. There are certain great eternal, invisible laws, laws of mind and morals, as gravitation is a law of matter. They are laws of God's own nature, or, if the agnostic prefers, laws of man's nature. They are in either case eternal, indefeasible, unalterable, and absolutely independent of any edict, human or divine. The Ten Commandments—taking them as an admirable illustration of these laws—are not right because they are commanded; they are commanded because they are right. If the community, by an overwhelming majority, decrees murder, as an overwhelming majority are now doing in Turkey, or theft, as an overwhelming majority of Americans did during fifty years of African slavery, murder and theft are not made in the least more righteous than they were before. Democracy can no more make wrong right than it can make white black, or convert the law of gravitation into a law of levitation.

When democracy is unjust, the injustice is just as wicked as when a single despot is unjust. Taine, in his history of the French Revolution, has shown from history what De Tocqueville has shown from philosophic considerations, that the despotism of a democracy is just as deadly as the despotism of a Bourbon king. A majority can no more create a law of morals than it can create a law of nature.

Law is. It exists wholly independently of Acts of Congress or votes of populace. All that human government can do is to ascertain what is law, and incorporate it in the commonwealth. If it succeeds, prosperity follows; if it fails, disaster follows. Various forms of government resort to various methods of ascertaining and incorporating in human society these divine laws. The world has tried intrusting this function to a single king, supposed to be the father of his people; to the clergy, supposed to be especially religious and disinterested; to an aristocracy, selected by some process of election for the purpose of securing the best men in the nation for this purpose. The king has rarely proved himself either wise or benevolent; the ecclesiastics, whether a Papal priesthood in Italy or a Puritan ministry in New England, have shown themselves always narrow, and often cruel; the aristocracy, however selected, have shown themselves eager to promote their own interests, and careless or ignorant, or both, of the interests of others. Democracy sets the whole people in quest of these infinite, eternal, divine laws. It does not rest on the infallibility of the majority, still less on its omnipotence. The one assumes that the voice of the people is the voice of God, although, in fact, it is often the voice of passion, prejudice, or ignorance; the other assumes that people can make laws, although, in fact, all they can do is to ascertain laws and conform to them. Nor does it rest on the consent of the governed, a theory which, carried to its logical conclusion, issues in philosophical anarchism, the doctrine of no-government. Democracy rests on the assumption that the wisdom of the all is greater than the wisdom of any class, and that out of the conflict of judgment, conscience, and interest a clearer understanding of justice and righteousness will emerge than out of any system which believes in and trusts to a monopoly of conscience and judgment in one man or class of men. A godless democracy is the grossest of all political inconsistencies, and an unrighteous democracy, that is, a democracy which recognizes no law apart from its own will, would be the worst of all despotisms.

The question of the true basis of government is not unimportant. It is not a question of abstract theory for the consideration of the schoolmen. Alexis de Tocqueville and James Bryce have both pointed out the serious danger to the Republic from what both call the "tyranny of the majority." The only remedy for that tyranny is in awakening in the people a recognition of the truth that there is a "higher law" than the popular will, and that the people must find that law and conform to it at their peril. With politicians flattering the populace, as sycophantic courtiers have in all ages flattered the king; with newspapers recognizing for themselves no higher function than to furnish the people with such principles of action as will flatter their prejudices and apparently promote their immediate interests; and with even orthodox preachers denying that there is for America any higher standard of obligation than is furnished by the resolve of a sometimes ignorant and often fickle multitude, there is greater need than we had supposed (until this recent outburst of criticism) for an emphatic reiteration of the principle that law is divine, and that nothing is just, whencesoever it emanates and howso-