ITS LEGAL AND POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES.

The late formal decision of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott case has been undergoing the most vigorous and untiring explanation and discussion in the New York journals, and no end of incomprehensible legal profundity is employed to mystify the few intelligible points of constitutionality and law contained in the decision. These points may be resumed as follows: The Court decrees that negroes, bond or free, are not citizens of the United States under the Federal Constitution; that the ordinance of 1787 was superseded by the Constitution; that the Missouri restriction against slavery of 1820 was unconstitutional; that slaveholders have the right to take their slaves into the Territories; that the legal *status* of a slave is not affected by his temporary sojourn in a free State; and that Congress has no power over slavery in a Territory, and consequently can delegate none to a Territorial Legislature.

This decision has but little practical importance and bearing at this time. As far as the South is concerned, it is much like having the gap closed after the wolves have devoured all the sheep; it is but little satisfaction to her to know that she had a right to what has been stolen from her, and that she has been denied the benefits of a Constitution which should have protected her. In the North it will not necessarily affect the *status* of free negroes, who are now recognized as citizens of those States and are qualified to vote or exercise other political functions. For the Supreme Court many years ago decided that the citizenship of the United States and the citzenship of a State were distinct legal conditions, and that the same person might be a citizen of the United States but not of any State, and, on the other hand, a citizen of a State but not of the United States; and in the late decision of the Dred Scott case this position is fully confirmed where the Court says:

> Previous to the adoption of the Constitution, every State might confer the character of a citizen, and endow a man with all the rights pertaining to it. This was confined to the boundaries of a State, and gave him no rights beyond its limits. Nor have the several States surrendered this power by the adoption of the Constitution. Every State may confer the right upon an alien or on any other class or description of persons who would, to all intents and purposes, be a citizen of the State.

So it is obvious, even if this decision should have the effect in some cases of disqualifying free negroes from the right of suffrage where they now enjoy it, as in Rhode Island, whose Constitution recognizes only citizens of the United States as voters, that such result can readily be overcome by an amendment of the State Constitution.

The truth is, popular error and prejudice have taken too deep a root and have spread with too baleful a luxuriance throughout the North, to be removed by the abstract opinions of the Supreme Court; and its effects upon political organization, aim and tendency there will be a hundred fold more visible than any mere legal consequences it may involve. What says the New York Times, which, since the Presidential election, has been bordering on national conservatism? Hear it; it says:

> Apparent peace will follow the action of the Supreme Court. The partisans of its conduct and its doctrines will proclaim it to be the end of controversy upon this subject, and the immediate result will seem to confirm their hopes. But it has laid the only solid foundation which has ever yet existed for an Abolition party; and it will do more to stimulate the growth, to build up the power and consolidate the action of such a party, than has been done by any other event since the Declaration of Independence.

And the New York Herald which has come completely into the charmed circle of Buchanan*cum*-Cassism, thus points to some of its political results:

> Altogether the sensation produced is great and must increase. Had the partisans of anti-slavery principles hired the United States Supreme Court to give them help and comfort, they could not have been more faithfully, more dexterously or more opportunely served. Nowhere does the fire threaten to go out for want of fuel than this Supreme Court appears, and loads the embers with dry combustible material. The Kansas election in June and Convention in September, with the possibility of a violent collision between the anti-slavery majority and the pro-slavery minority, with a legislature and Governor at swords points, with a condition of morals and manners in the Territory favorable to every ebullition of passion—this is the second act of the drama. Where will the third find us?

The New York Tribune is of course rebellious, truculent and blatant, and will not fail to lash abolition fanaticism into greater violence than ever, while such conservative and soberly behaved sheets as the Times will organize the more solid materials of anti-slavery upon a well-seeming national sort of a platform. The organization for the contest in 1860 commenced as soon as the last was decided; it is now going on, and will not cease till the last act of the drama is played; but nevertheless we are solemnly told by the Washington Union, and all the subordinate organs in the descending scale of partisan fealty-ism, that Mr. Buchanan's election was the death-knell of sectionalism; that his inauguration buried it some fathoms in the ground; that now the Dred Scott decision has given a finality to the slavery question, and we may repose in peace and quietude, and take no more concern about the future. "Agitation is not good for the South," says her self-appointed physicians; "she needs repose." Nay, answer we, not when repose is death.