SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS UPON CURRENT TOPICS—COMPILED EVERY DAY FOR THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

THE PRESS IN FRANCE.

From the N. Y. Tribune.

A well-known Paris journalist, M. Louis Ulbach, was fined 300 francs a few weeks ago for a disrespectful remark about the Emperor in his journal *La Cloche*. It is just about a year since Louis Napoleon promulgated the Press law which was supposed to raise the profession of journalism from the disgraceful thraldom in which it had languished since the 2d of December, 1851. Under this law journalists were at last accorded the privilege of discussing political questions without the express permission of the Government. How much the tardy concession was worth the history of the past year must show. It seems to have been in fact little else than a scheme for dragging the enemies of imperialism to the light and bringing them within reach of the official arm. Republicans who had hitherto kept silence rather than recognize the usurper by asking a license to publish their political views through the press, were now at liberty to speak, but speaking was as full of danger as ever. In fact, the severity of the press prosecutions under the new system has increased rather than diminished. When the editor of a Toulouse paper was acquitted on a trial for publishing the Baudin subscriptions, the prosecutor, M. Seguier, received an official notification that his arguments were "too weak," and the Minister of Justice would accept his resignation. He published a manly reply:—"Speaking in court under the surveillance of a secret police, and expressing convictions forced upon me in advance by the Minister of Justice, are two things to which I cannot stoop." During the year since the press law went into operation, nearly one hundred suits have been instituted, and almost every one has been followed by conviction. In most instances, the editors have been both fined and imprisoned. Seven newspapers have been altogether suppressed. Three have been temporarily interdicted. M. Delescluze, a Paris editor, has been, moreover, divested of his civil and political rights—denied the privilege of voting, of holding office, of publishing anything over his signature—placed, in fine, on a level with convicted felons. Fines and imprisonments and disfranchisement are not the only penalties which editors have to dread. Summary suppression of the sale of obnoxious journals in the streets and at railway stations precedes the formality of trial, and if by any rare luck the trial end in acquittal, there is no redress for the wrong already done. The Government therefore can ruin any newspaper, even without cause. Though the paper be never so cautious to keep within the law, it may be practically suspended during trial for some imaginary offense, and its business ruined before the jury can declare it innocent.

But the animosity of an offended Government does not sate itself on the editors and proprietors. The business agents and type-setters share in the punishments for obnoxious articles which they never saw. This is a blow not at free thought but at free industry. The Frenchman cannot follow an honest trade except with the approval of the Emperor. He must work only for Napoleon's friends. We wonder that the offenses of republican journals are not visited on the mill-owners who manufacture their paper and the founders who make their type. The scrutiny is as rigid under the new law as it was under the old. The censorship, which is blind to the grossest assaults upon morality and decency, has a keen eye for the slightest departure from political orthodoxy. It is no offense to lampoon the Almighty, but his Majesty the Emperor must be treated with becoming respect.

We are told in recent letters from France that Napoleonism as a popular worship is fast dying out. The reverence for the great founder of the dynasty has been rudely shaken; the splendor which surrounded that grand historic name fades gradually away; the proposal to celebrate the centenary of his birth by a pension to his few surviving soldiers—even this, though it might well be deemed an homage to the military glory of the French nation—is disfavored by the Emperor's own servants. Whatever strength Napoleon III may have derived from his uncle's fame has now failed him. He could not preserve the glory; he could not keep alive the reverence; he cannot trust to the memories of Austerlitz. He stands now by his own strength. He holds his people only by a heavy curb. It is a dangerous hold, and it cannot last for ever.

THE CONTINENT OPEN TO COLONIES.

From the N. Y. Times.

The substantial completion of the Pacific Railroad is an event as significant to the Old World as to the New, and will have a special effect on the many Europeans who have been dreaming of trying their fortunes in the republic of the West. Close upon every great epoch like the present comes a fuller swell in the ever-constant flood of immigration. When news has spread among all would-be emigrants that the American war is over, or that new and cheaper transportation across the ocean is furnished, or that a better homestead law has been passed by Congress, or, as now, that the vast continent has been spanned by a railroad and the inner territories penetrated by steam power—that the locomotive, emblem of progress, will henceforth fly like a shuttle between the Atlantic and Pacific, weaving something new, with each journey, into the grand fabric of American civilization—the effect is instantly seen in the fresh influx of foreign populations. While to those of us who may not be personally interested in grand strokes of interior progress, they pass as seven days' wonders, to the *Americans of the future* they are of supreme importance. To these incipient citizens they become pregnant with a meaning we do not instinctively attach to them; a trans-continental railroad implies, for example, complete exploration, subduing the wilderness to civilization, easy transit to distant homes, and the means of returning if disappointed: it implies the opening of a continent to colonization, and the interest of a powerful corporation and of Government itself to keep at least one broad belt between the oceans secure from perils to travel and to settlement.

PROGRESS OF POLITICAL LIGHT.

From the N. Y. Times.

We see a case reported in England which shows how slowly improvements are made in that country, and how far behind us, in practical politics, the inhabitants of that "effete old monarchy" are as yet. It seems that the Admiralty wanted some timber, and invited proposals. Thereupon one T. Gambier, a clerk in the Admiralty, through one Rumble, an engineer, informed a Mr. Maxwell that for £30 he could get him the contract. Mr. Maxwell told the Admiralty, and the two together laid a trap for Gambier. They paid Rumble the £30, Maxwell got the contract, and then both Rumble and Gambier were arrested, tried for conspiring to obtain money under false pretenses, convicted and sentenced to eighteen months of imprisonment at hard labor!

What would be said of such a performance in this country? What is usually done to persons who, for money, obtain offices or contracts for others? Are they sent to prison or to Congress? Ask any of the members of the latter body, for, as a general thing, they *know*. And what would be thought of the man who should *peach* in such a case, and tell who it was that had got him the contract, and how much he had paid for it? And what would be thought of the jury which should convict an honest patriotic citizen on the evidence of such a traitor? And what would be thought of a judge who should sentence to the ignominy and hard work of a prison, a gentleman convicted of making money by getting contracts or offices for friends in that way? And finally, what are we to think of the political institutions of a country where such things *can* be done, without arousing the indignation of the whole male population?

We must consult the new Governor of Montana and his "dear Case" on these intricate points of political law. The committee of Congress that investigated the case of Ashley, who wanted to be a full partner with Case in all his Iowa lots and land site speculations, if he got him the appointment of surveyor, reported that they were "not aware of any rule that excludes members of Congress from buying and selling as other men, or from availing themselves of such means of information in relation to such purchases as may be accessible to all the world." This, it will be seen, is sound and wholesome doctrine, and makes politics a respectable and *paying* business—respectable because it *does* "pay." But it is confined to this country as yet. Political reforms always advance slowly; and it may take a score of years before the British Parliament will treat the matter with as much intelligence and as frank a recognition of the merits of the case, as are shown by the committee that considered Ashley's case in our Congress. But it takes millions of years, we are told, for light to reach us from some of the fixed stars: why should we complain that it should take a score or even a hundred years for *our* political light to penetrate the dense darkness of England?

GENERAL GRANT AND THE RADICAL MANAGERS.

From the N. Y. Herald.

The Republican managers, through their various newspaper organs, East and West, are discussing the important question, "What shall we do with General Grant?" They are already beginning to look upon him as their white elephant, or as a sort of second Andy Johnson more dangerous than the first. They are hard to please. What just ground of complaint have they against General Grant? None in the world. Has he not faithfully adhered to the Chicago platform? Has he not actively supported the ratification of the fifteenth amendment of the Constitution for the establishment of equal suffrage to all male citizens, over the age of twenty-one, whites, negroes, Chinese, Indians and all? Has he not, in his appointments to office, established the doctrine of equal rights to whites, blacks, and reds—in a black man, for instance, as Minister to Liberia and another to Hayti, and another as internal revenue assessor in New Orleans, and another as postmaster of Columbia, S. C., and in an Indian as Commissioner of Indian Affairs? He has done all these things, and with the consent and applause of the Senate. Nor has he forgotten women's rights, for, beginning with Richmond, late the Confederate capital of Jeff. Davis, he has appointed a fair proportion of women as postmasters.

In all these appointments he has certainly labored in good faith to carry out the extreme radical dogma of equal rights of men of all colors to vote, and of equal right to hold office by white women, along with white men, red men, and black men. He has, moreover, generously done the best he could in the division of the spoils to satisfy the Republican members of both houses of Congress, and especially the managers of the Senate; and all this for the sake of peace with the party electing him and with Congress. At the same time, in behalf of peace and harmony in the South, he has turned adrift the men of Andy Johnson, and has put in their places not only white Republicans, known as carpet-baggers and scalawags, but reconstructed white Rebel soldiers and representative loyal blacks; and, above all, he has caused it to be understood in every section and among all parties that, whether he likes or dislikes this or that law, he will faithfully execute all the laws of the United States. And he is faithfully executing them, Tenure-of-Office law, all the amendments of the Constitution, and all the reconstruction laws of Congress included.

Could mortal man do more in the White House as the embodiment of the Chicago platform and the Republican party? No. Did anybody ever expect General Grant to do so much? No. Why, then, all these discords in the camp and all this clamor against General Grant from the party organs and managers? It is simply because, in giving out some three thousand offices, General Grant has failed to satisfy the thirty thousand men who had expected these offices. To the twenty-seven thousand who are disappointed and their backers we are indebted for all this hue-and-cry against General Grant. Spoils, spoils—it is all about the spoils. But the seed is sown, and a good crop of weeds is already beginning to sprout among the spring wheat. The truth is that, as the Republican party has gained its extreme demands, and has no longer any great principles to fight for, it has nothing to do but to wrangle and squabble over the spoils, which is the beginning of a general disintegration and break up.

What, then, will General Grant do with the Republican managers? It is evident that whatever he may do now to harmonize them around his administration, he will fail. His proper course is no longer to attempt to harmonize their conflicting claims, demands, or suggestions, but to pursue his own policy; for by this course, whatever may befall the Republican party in the interval, the administration party in 1872 will be master of the field. General Grant's services as a soldier settled the election of 1868. His policy as a statesman during his present four years' term will settle the election for the succession. Having fulfilled the Republican programme, the party is adrift; and the Democratic party, from the complete defeat of its Tammany platform, is adrift; so that the best materials of both these parties may be fused by General Grant into the great party of the future, leaving the intractable managers, cliques, and factions on both sides to shift for themselves.

GRANT AS A SULTAN.

From the N. Y. World.

The conspicuous absurdity and indecency of President Grant's official conduct, in appointing such a person as Mr. Elihu B. Washburne to two such positions successively as those of Secretary of State and Minister to France, should not blind the country to the fact that, bad as this case is, it is only the worst of many similar cases, and is entirely in keeping with the general tenor of the President's appointments. This fact the radical supporters of President Grant well know. It has alienated already from his person, if not from his administration, by far the greater number of the real leaders of the radical party, and this without conciliating to him either the respect or the sympathy of Democratic statesmen. For it is not upon questions of political opinion, nor even of party tactics, that President Grant has broken and is breaking with the authors of his political fortune. He has shown no particular desire to assert himself on such questions; nor is there any evidence, indeed, that he has convictions of his own or cares for convictions at all on such questions. He is blindly subservient to the will of such men as Sumner and Wilson and Chandler in regard to matters of public policy, "reconstruction," the rights of States, the rights of persons, foreign affairs—in regard to everything, in short, upon which it is desirable that the chief magistrate of a great people should have views and principles of his own.

He is autocratic only where it would become him to be considerate of the wishes and anxious for the counsel and the co-operation of his political friends—in the matter, that is, of his appointments to office. He treats the matter precisely as a man would be likely to treat the matter of the disposal he should make of a great prize fallen to him in the lottery, or of an unexpected great inheritance from some unsuspected grand-uncle in the Himalayas. His notion of the Presidential office seems to be that it clothes him with power to reward his personal friends and to punish his personal enemies. The most solemn and important public trusts appear to him not in the light of grave responsibilities to his country, nor even in the less creditable light of serious responsibilities to his party, but absolutely as opportunities which he controls for obliging those whom he likes and disobliging those whom he dislikes. It is not a vague rumor nor a mere piece of bastard and orphan gossip, but a well-authenticated fact, that, when the President was somewhat sharply taken to task by a responsible leader of his party for his nomination of Washburne to the Secretaryship of State, he excused himself on the ground that he had only intended to "pay Washburne a compliment," and hadn't supposed that he would ever "qualify for the post." This is no doubt true, and that it is true puts the character of Washburne in no very respectable light. It would seem that the Illinois Inventor of Grant is a copy in galena—a leaden image, as one may say—of that famous Sixtus V who, after going decrepit and bent double until his election to the throne of St. Peter, no sooner found himself entitled to wear the fisherman's ring and the triple crown than he sprung up "full-statured in an hour," spat to the ceiling, and gave Rome a master. In like manner, it is understood, did Mr. Washburne impose himself upon Grant as an invalid careless of place and favor, until he had secured both. But whatever we may think of Washburne in this story, what does it say for Grant?

What sense of the political or moral obligations of his position can a man have who, being elected President of the United States, thinks the Secretaryship of State a mere bauble fit to be used for flattering the vanity of an imbecile personal friend? And what must be thought of that man when, finding that he could only induce his imbecile personal friend to give up one bauble by offering him another, he selects the most important diplomatic post in his gift as his sop to Cerberus?

The truth is that General Grant looks upon himself not as a President, but as a sort of Sultan. His view of his office is thoroughly Oriental. We do not mean, of course, to imply that he entertains Oriental opinions on questions of domestic economy. But he sees in power what a Sultan sees in power—a weapon and a net, not a duty and a trust. The Presidency to him is at the best a promotion. It is a fresh recognition of his services, an enlargement of his resources, an increase of pay, and an extension of influence. It has made him personally a more important individual. It gives him a right to a more numerous staff. It enables him to do more than he ever could before for the couple of dozen kinsmen and family connections who come down rejoicing out of the Northwest to crowd the Presidential table at meat and to clamor in the Presidential ear for office. Perhaps this is, after all, no more than was to have been expected from a person whose sole experience of the public service had been earned in the army. The soldier was the seed of the Sultan in old times. Why should the seed bear other fruit to-day? The sword of General Grant is but a sword after all, like the sword of a Tamerlane or a Mahmoud or a Bajazet. It has carved out for him a political fortune hardly less marvellous than any of those antique and famous blades achieved for their possessors. Possibly we have no right to be surprised that, like them, he should regard the fortune which his sword has given him as his own to do with it as he will.

But it is certain that the American party leaders who find him in this mood are not the sort of men tamely to acquiesce in his indulgence of such an infatuation as to his claims and his opportunities. He may, and he probably will, succeed in destroying the organization which those men represent. But they, in their turn, will as certainly destroy him. The era of the bowstring and the janissaries has not yet ripened in the New World.

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