

SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

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

THE CHURCH OF SPAIN.

From the N. Y. Tribune.

The Republicans of the Cortes, slandered some time ago by the report that they would prove non-jurors to the new Constitution of their country, are at this moment urging upon their constituents a simple fealty to the Constitution and the regime of Serrano. With the Church party, the cable informs us that it is far otherwise. The priests of Spain have not yet recovered from the shock dealt to them not merely by the general majority of the Cortes, but especially by the speeches of the extreme class of Republicans. They are now acting evidently in the spirit of the boast of Cardinal Cuesta, that three millions of Spaniards were ready to sign their names to a pledge to resist a constitution which asserted itself to be the enemy of the Church. The Cardinal was wildly out of the way in his calculations; but the Church, if resolved to oppose the Constitution with blind zeal, may do mischief to the State no less than to itself.

Competition against enforced monopoly is an old moral of trade. It is also the moral of the Church defeat in Spain. Inasmuch as a competition in religion is often a saving of morals, good Spaniards aver that the sincerity and activity of their Church will profit by the stimulant of a new faith and a new idea. Crowds have attended the service of Protestantism since the ordination of tolerance, though it is said that the owner of the house in Madrid where it was held has been threatened with assassination. Whether we believe this or not, it is certain that the new religion, together with the new principle of tolerance, have secured an invincible foothold. To keep the peace of opinion, much more is to be demanded from the forbearance of the Republicans than the inveteracy of the churchmen. We commend to free religionists the candid confession uttered in the Spanish Cortes by one Diaz Quintero. "I belong to no religion," said Senor Quintero. "I am not even an atheist, because I have nothing to do with religions, not even to defy them. They are all subservive of morality. I say with Don Carlos in Schiller, 'My ideas are not of this age. I should have lived at a more advanced period.'" According to his own statement, Mr. Quintero would advance like the crab, backwards. But the real progress of Spanish ideas will tend away from such egotism as this into something like the charity of "union—a charity not more demanded of such churchmen as Mantola and Cuesta, and the Bishop of Jaen, than of such Republicans as Surer and Quintero.

It is no common defeat which has been wrought upon the Church, nor can we say that it has been sustained vulgarly and in the spirit of irreconcilable defiance. The most jealous lovers of their religion have bitterly lamented this first step of divorce between the Church and the State. None have done so with more sincere sorrow than the pious Bishop of Jaen, whose fanatic shock upon hearing the atheism uttered in the Cortes moves a certain compassion and even admiration, spite of the Bishop's unreasoning opposition to moral liberty. "There were those," he said, "who declared Catholic morals inferior to universal morals. There were those who asked tolerance only to impugn religion. There were those who ridiculed the existence of the Holy Spirit. Some invented fables, and were praised—falsified history, and were applauded. Compassion—compassion for all! The measure, beyond being full, ran over its sides, with the stench of we know not how many miseries more unjustifiable than punishable; but they were not sufficient. Miseries deplorable—pitiful, worthy to be washed, even on our part, in a sea of truly expiatory tears!" Few will be indisposed to grant to the Bishop's compassionate jeremiad the merit of eloquence and sincerity worthy of the days when the orator of Spain was the fierce devotee who upheld the cross. He mistakes the nature of his opponents—both their power to do harm by aggression or to do good by forbearance. The Church can only save itself—the State can rob it of none of its true possessions. The absence of competition does not make its morals a whit better—the presence of it cannot shake its rightful hold if it be founded in the truth. On the other hand, the reformers gain nothing by their unreasoning advocacy of reason. Unless they themselves learn the tolerance and the charity they demand—unless they can in their own conduct commend to the Church its own texts—they have really not a great deal to teach, however fierce the onslaught their Quixotism may make against forms in the name of shadows.

THE UNITED STATES AND CUBA.

From the N. Y. World.

The recent activity of the Government in making arrests and trying to thwart the Cuban expeditions fitting out from our shores, is certainly open to censure, though to no just censure on the grounds presented by the enthusiasts for Cuban independence. While the neutrality laws remain unrepudiated, nothing can be clearer than the duty of the Executive to enforce them. But the friends of the Cubans have good reason to complain that the administration has not dealt with them honestly, or at least, not consistently; that it has encouraged hopes which it now disappoints; that three months of voluntary blindness and connivance was a virtual permission and sanction of the kind of enterprises which it now undertakes to repress and punish.

It has been the custom of the Government, on similar occasions, to issue an early proclamation setting forth the substance of the law, and warning all concerned of the danger they would incur by its violation. Even if there were no reasons for such a course (and there are strong reasons, as we shall presently see), the fact that such a proclamation has always been customary would make it proper to continue the practice, lest the failure to warn should be construed as a permission to act. The neutrality laws do not differ from other laws in respect to this circumstance attending their enforcement. Most crimes are committed by individuals in concealment, acting alone, giving no intimation of their purpose until it is disclosed by their consummation. But in all offenses where large numbers of men act together, carried away by a common impulse, it is customary for the public authorities to attempt to save misguided men from punishment by timely warning. In all cases of riot, and all cases of domestic insurrection, proclamations are issued at an early stage calling upon citizens to obey the laws, and warning them of the consequences of transgression. This is never so fitly done as when concerted attempts are about to be made to violate the neutrality laws. Such enterprises are prompted by generous motives; they enlist the young, the ardent, the thoughtless, as well as the

bold and reckless, and compassion for their ignorance, if not respect for their generous impulses, should induce the Government to save them, if possible, from the commission of offenses which it is far better to prevent than to punish.

The failure of General Grant's administration to pursue this usual course, and its affected blindness to enterprises which were perfectly notorious, were naturally regarded by the Cuban agents as a proof that the Government would give them its secret connivance, if not its open sanction, as a proof that the neutrality laws would be treated as a dead letter, and that the sympathies of the administration were really on the side of the violators of the laws. This was very unfair and very unhandsome dealing, if the administration intended to act against these enterprises with vigor and severity when they reached a riper stage. The organizers and promoters of such expeditions should not have been left in doubt as to the mode in which the Government would treat them. If connivance and secret encouragement were the policy of the Government, the connivance should have been uniform and consistent; but if the Government recognized its duty to enforce the laws, it should have made its purpose clearly understood as soon as the subject began to occupy public attention, in order that the unwary might not be enticed into such enterprises by the hope of impunity, and afterwards punished for permitted acts.

In this respect, as in most other respects, the course of General Grant's administration has been marked by discrepant vacillation and blundering. The new President has a marvellous aptitude for dissatisfying all parties upon almost all questions. In this Cuban business, he first earned the distrust of citizens who think the neutrality laws ought to be enforced; and he has now forfeited the confidence of the abettors of the Cubans by his tardy vigor. He cannot recover the forfeited respect of the first; for the obligation to enforce the laws was as binding from the beginning as it is at present. If he had issued a reasonable proclamation, the mere warning would probably have sufficed without any necessity of resorting to punishment. His recent vigor is so far from atoning for his former lenity that it brands the lenity as a foolish weakness and short-sighted mistake, by which multitudes have been deluded into a belief that the acts which are now punished had the secret approval of the Government. His past connivance will cause the Cubans to hate him as a renegade to their cause, whereas if he had consistently enforced the laws from the beginning, they would at worst have merely looked upon him as an enemy, and more probably as a conscientious officer who felt that he had no authority to suspend the laws which he had sworn to execute. They can now justly blame him for deluding them with false hopes; while the other party blame him, with equal justice, for having so long shirked a plain duty, and created a necessity for severity by his neglect of timely prevention.

We suppose the truth to be that General Grant has changed his opinion as to the chances of Cuban independence; and having become convinced that the cause is hopeless, he wishes to escape the mortification of enlisting his administration on the losing side. His present opinion is probably correct; but it is unfortunate for his reputation that he should have been found, within so short a period, favoring opposite sides in the same contest. Besides forfeiting the good opinion and incurring the odium of all parties by his inconsistent and fluctuating course, he has postponed that ultimate annexation of Cuba to the United States which has long been expected by our most enlightened statesmen, and desired by a majority of our people. Every premature and unsuccessful attempt to sever Cuba from Spain furnishes topics of discouragement when the time shall be really ripe for the acquisition of that important island. Cuba is too small for an independent nation. Its geographical proximity to the United States marks out its destiny as a part of the American Union. We can afford to wait, as there is no danger that it will pass into the hands of any other power than Spain; and it is not expedient for us to attempt to assimilate a foreign population of a different race, language, and religion, until our Union shall have become knit together and consolidated after the disintegrating effects of the late civil war, and the admission of such a vast mass of barbarism and ignorance as the Southern negroes into our politics. Considering that Spain itself has just gone through a remarkable revolution, and is striving to establish liberal institutions, it would not be creditable to our magnanimity if we should take advantage of her unsettled state to attempt to wrest from her a part of her dominions which will surely fall to us in time by the natural progress of events.

BRITISH OPINION OF THE ALABAMA QUESTION.

From the N. Y. Times.

To speak of "the American" or "the British" view of the Alabama question is a rather odd expression, more convenient than accurate. No statement ever yet made of the question on this side of the water deserves being called "the American view," since we have here all grades and shades of opinion from Senator Sumner's to Senator Grimes'; and so, we fancy, it is in England, where there is a wide diversity between the positions, for example, of Lord Stanley and the London Star. However, one cardinal variance between American popular demands and British official offers, as they now stand, is that the former rest on a preliminary "acknowledgment of responsibility" for the Alabama's ravages, while the latter make this very responsibility matter for arbitration.

So long as this substantial difference remains, so long the quarrel is open. It precludes the possibility of peaceful settlement; its only outlook is a compulsory settlement at some future day when one party may have the other at disadvantage. For example, while engaged in war with a third power, is there any hope that one or the other may yield? We frankly confess there is nothing here that looks like it. Here in America, as has been said, we have many different views of the grounds of British responsibility for the Alabama's ravages. Some deduce it from a general "premature recognition of Confederate belligerency," others more specifically from the issue of the Queen's proclamation, still others from British "national and official sympathy" with the insurgents, and others yet hold, as we ourselves have insisted from the start, that the real injury is based on the fact that the Alabama was simply a British vessel, directed against American commerce—hostile naval expedition proceeding from Liverpool as its naval base, and afterward protected and provisioned in British colonial ports. But the main point is that we all hold, without a dissenting voice, that the British Government is somehow, and on some ground, responsible for the Alabama's ravages. That being so, it is idle to hope for American consent to make the decision upon that responsibility doubtful

by referring it to an umpire. If the present British Government is not satisfied of the existence of that responsibility, let it take time to make up its mind regarding it. We, meanwhile, do not intend to run any risk of a decision against us on this point.

How is it on the other side of the water? Do Englishmen cling to the key-point of the discussion with a tenacity equally certain and equally universal? If they do, then, as we have said, good-bye to pacific settlement. But they do not so cling to it. On the contrary, a large body of Englishmen admit a national responsibility for the Alabama's career. For example, we see evidence of such a sentiment in the British press. There is, it is true, a difference of opinion amongst British journals in this matter, just as there is amongst our own—and, indeed, it is amusing to note how patronizingly the former speak of our inconsistencies, when they themselves are quite as much at variance—so easy is it to see the mote in a brother's eye, and so hard to note the beam in one's own. Nevertheless, as a whole, the British press agree on this particular point—and an essential one it is—that the specific damages caused by the Alabama should be paid by their Government.

We admit that this is an utterance of the unofficial sentiment of the British people, as against the official sentiment promulgated through the Government. We admit, too, that the latter is directly opposed to the former, and has thus far never conceded responsibility for specific Alabama damages. Indeed, there never was a livelier illustration than at this moment of the wide difference between unofficial national force, as represented in the British press, and official national force, as embodied in the British Government—the former is but the monstrous force of a bound giant, till it actually seizes on and controls the latter. Nevertheless, the attitude of the British press is encouraging, though it is national sentiment in Great Britain that must settle this great problem, sooner or later; and the only question is, which is likelier to be the mouthpiece of public opinion, the true organ of national purpose, the press, or any special class? We believe the former represents the real potential British opinion.

Now, the London press has for months been urging—rather, hinting—a course which would satisfy America without compromising English national honor. This course is to pay the specific Alabama claims. We could cite indications of willingness to settle the matter in this way from half a dozen leading English journals—and yet it is something which has never occurred to the British Government to officially propose. The latter will discuss and "arbitrate" till the crack of doom; but at the mention of the simple word pay official dignity revolts—"base is the slave that pays." On the other hand, what we in America desire to get at is, not arbitration—save for settling accounts after admitting original responsibilities—but payment.

What we have demanded of the British Government is, in a word, simply to follow the suggestions of distinguished public men among its own people. When once it makes up its mind (and nobody here urges haste in its deliberation) that the Alabama was essentially a British ship, and not a Confederate, having never entered a Confederate port, it will be prepared to assume the proper responsibility for its specific outrages. All after that is of easy settlement; for ten lines in a diplomatic despatch, or ten words in the preamble of a protocol, would sufficiently settle that difficulty without derogation from the dignity of either party.

OUR FOREIGN RELATIONS—OUR NEW MINISTERS ABROAD—MEXICO.

From the N. Y. Herald.

Our foreign relations are pacific and promise peace with all the nations of the world and the rest of mankind. Thanks to General Webb. He has made it all right with Brazil. Mr. Motley has declared to the delighted Britishers that his programme is peace—same language, ties of blood, institutions, trade, Anglo-Saxon civilization, and all that. Mr. Washburne has exchanged with Napoleon the warmest assurances of a "happy accord" between France and the United States, no allusion being made to Mexico or Jeff. Davis on either side, those questions being settled. As for Russia, Mr. Curtin at St. Petersburg will meet with a hearty welcome, and he will lay before the Czar the kindest and most friendly acknowledgments from our Government and people touching the unbroken relations of goodwill that have always existed between the great republic and the great empire.

As for Spain, Mr. Hale is awaiting at Madrid the arrival of his appointed successor, General Sickles, and the General, now in Washington, is doubtless awaiting his instructions concerning the island of Cuba and the American eagle—that is, the golden eagle. Meantime, although the Cubans and filibusters are doing very well in reducing for Spain the cash value of the island, Mr. Fish, it will be seen, can have nothing to do with them, except to catch such outgoing filibusters as may happen to fall in his way. Nor does he like the idea of declaring belligerent rights for the Cubans, while England's belligerent rights to Jeff. Davis are mixed up with those Alabama claims.

General Nelson, our new Minister to Mexico, we are glad to learn, has arrived at the "Halls of the Montezumas," and has raised quite a ferment among the Mexican politicians from the prevailing report which ushered him in, that his mission is to gobble up the republic without ceremony and without salt. At the same time, while General Nelson was coming in from the Atlantic side, General Rosecrans, the retiring Minister, was going out on the Pacific side, en route to San Francisco. It has been rumored that General Rosecrans had been casting about for a treaty involving the cession to the United States of another strip of Northern Mexico, including Tamaulipas, Matamoras, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Sonora, Lower California, and the Gulf of California, and that the scheme had some connection with a certain American land purchase in Lower California from Juarez, and with General Fremont's Southern Pacific Railroad; but we suppose that as such negotiations, even if entered upon by Rosecrans, were dropped with his retirement, General Nelson will begin with a new set of books.

Here, at all events, is a splendid opportunity for General Grant to settle the Mexican question to the satisfaction of the civilized world. In 1847 certain Mexican officials and others, holding in their hands at the time the power to act in the premises, in the city of Mexico, proposed to General Scott to make him Governor-General of the whole country in the name and in behalf of the United States, on a salary of a million of dollars a year pro tem, but this liberal proposition General Scott declined, because of the difficulty of fusing the white, Indian, and negro equality of Mexico with the negro slavery and negro inferiority which at that day were the corner-stones of the Constitution of the United States. Now no such difficulty exists. On the contrary, with the annexation of Mexico, in the acquisition of

five or six millions of Mexican citizens of the Indian race, we shall have something like a balance of power against our four millions of negroes, which will not only establish a sort of equilibrium between our Indians and negroes, but open the door at once to the fusion with our voting population of all the Indian tribes of the United States, with the simple imposition of a penny tax.

In this broad political view of the subject, it is to be hoped General Grant will open his Mexican policy; and in every view, looking to the establishment of law, order, trade, and American enterprise in Mexico, he is called to meet the demands of "manifest destiny."

MR. SEWARD AS A PROPHET.

From the N. Y. Sun.

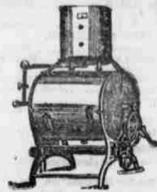
We mentioned a few days ago that Mr. Seward assigned as one reason for making his long journey to China that he expected a break-up in the administration of President Grant within a year, and he was anxious to be as far away as possible when that should occur.

Mr. Seward has tried his skill as a prophet before, but the event proved him a false prophet rather than a true one. He predicted that the Rebellion would blow over in ninety days, and significantly boasted that nobody was hurt, thereby implying that nobody would be hurt. He proved to be as far from the truth that time as he now desires to get from General Grant's administration.

In his present prognostication there is at least a possibility that Mr. Seward may turn out to be in the right. We see that the Herald—which has long been noted for its political sagacity—takes the same view as Mr. Seward of the prospect before us. The Herald says:—

"An implicit war has commenced, indicating the breaking up of the Republican party and of General Grant's administration." Thus we see that the Herald sustains Mr. Seward in his opinion of the fate which awaits the administration. The next question is, will the Herald support Mr. Seward as a candidate for President? The Commercial Advertiser would be pretty sure to support him; and if the Herald should do so, he would then have two papers in his favor.

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