

SPRIT OF THE PRESS.

Editorial Opinions of the Leading Journals upon Current Topics—Compiled Every Day for the Evening Telegraph.

OUR SOLDIERS' GRAVES.

Every religious form, most probably, no matter how dead now, had at first its animating idea, divine or brutish, as the case might be, but assuredly alive. A form, however, of any sort, is so apt to become a mere accretion of dead matter as time goes by, that the stified idea inside has no more chance to utter itself than had Ariel in the cloven pine. Whenever, therefore, a good or ennobling idea springs up spontaneously in any nation, it is wisest to let it alone. Leave it to find its own defense and expression, and above all, keep off the itching fingers of legislators who so complacently propose to bring it into shape. No better instance of the damning quality of such meddling can be found than in the bill introduced into the House on May 2, by Mr. Schenck, providing that "the 30th of May, being the day appointed and accustomed to be observed for the decoration of the graves of the soldiers who died in war in defense of the Union against the Rebellion, shall be a public holiday, to be for ever observed as such by the people of the United States."

No feeling more pure or tender has ever had birth among us than that which has drawn, year after year, the compatriots who survived our dead heroes, and the women who loved them, to their graves, to lay there a few fresh flowers in token of the immortal gift which they bought for us with their lives, and cherishing some vague hope that by, that the stark, cold body which lies beneath, still dear to us in spite of reason, may be cheered and comforted by our presence. Who can tell? Trifles perhaps; only a few violets, or a scrap of a flag. But to those who have passed into that more helpful and more earnest life, where man first forgets to hope and learns to be, the simple, sincere meaning beneath the symbols is read with eyes different from ours; and, even in the midst of that nobler work which God has given them there to do, the poor flowers, the tears falling on the heavy sod, may carry to them, better than we know, the message we would send. But, in proportion as the observance is just and beautiful when spontaneous, we protest against its degradation into an enforced legal holiday. We all know what that means. The American mind gravitates naturally to powder and shot; we are not yet educated to any higher idea of the sanctity of a holiday than unlimited tipsiness. We celebrate the anniversary of our independence and the birthday of the Saviour of mankind in precisely the same manner; however different may be our emotions, they find alike a voice in fire-crackers, the booming of cannon, the refined egg-nogg, or the vulgarer whisky sling. In a year or two, our dead heroes will be honored or dishonored in the same manner. The only class who will benefit by the measure will be the demagogue orators of every shade and party, who, even on the last decoration day, made use of the collected crowds, and carried their minds adroitly from the scattered flowers and those who lay beneath to the next election day. We sacrifice a good deal to these same office-mongers: let them at least not grind the bones of our dead heroes to make their bread.

Apart from the inevitable vulgarizing of the ceremony, however, we doubt the propriety of enforcing its observance. Many of our dead heroes will be honored or dishonored in the same manner. The only class who will benefit by the measure will be the demagogue orators of every shade and party, who, even on the last decoration day, made use of the collected crowds, and carried their minds adroitly from the scattered flowers and those who lay beneath to the next election day. We sacrifice a good deal to these same office-mongers: let them at least not grind the bones of our dead heroes to make their bread.

THE CUBAN MIDDLE.

The Government of the United States introduced into the question between Cuba and Spain the dickerer feature. It gratuitously flung into the affair the proposition that the Cubans should pay Spain one hundred millions for their independence. If the Cubans are entitled to independence they owe no money for it, not even for the public property; for this, so far as it cost money, was paid for out of Cuban revenues. To propose to buy independence is to admit that the Cuban people have not the right to it. Our Government has a bad habit in this line of dicker. It was brought in by Democratic administrations, who were desirous to get Cuba in order to add two more States to the slave power, and who offered one hundred or two hundred millions for Cuba.

It was expanded by Mr. Seward and Andy Johnson in the Alaska purchase, the St. Thomas purchase, and the San Domingo negotiations for a lease, a protectorate, and annexation—all and several—but all involving a payment of purchase money. With all this our Government has come to be looked upon as more greedy than wise for acquiring land, and as standing with money in hand ready to seize any worthless tract that may be offered, and to pay almost any amount for annexation, whose benefits are wholly on the other side. It was our administration that embarrassed the Cuban cause by this offer of one hundred millions to Spain. It resulted from a mixing up of the cause of Cuban independence with our desire to acquire the island.

We talked of impartial mediation and friendly offices; but our mind was running on annexation designs, and these made one hundred millions seem a trifling sum. But it is a heavy debt to saddle upon Cuba, in addition to her war expenses, which will be represented by bonds to ten times the money actually received. In any question between Cuba and Spain, there can be no consideration for the payment of money. The only question between the parties to that conflict is whether the Cuban people have declared for independence, whether they have the right to it, or whether they can maintain it by force of arms.

It is a matter of record that the revolutionary Government of Spain was much perplexed by the Cuban revolt. They perceived that, according to the principles of their own revolution the Cuban people were entitled to autonomy if they declared for it. They desired to avoid the undertaking to reduce the Cubans to subjection. They freely expressed this sentiment to Mr. Sicles when he formally tendered the mediation and good offices of our Government. We have here published extracts from Mr. Sicles' despatches showing all this. They were anxious to get rid of the contest, and at the same time to save their own credit and the pride of the people of Spain by refusing any negotiation with rebels in arms.

They virtually offered to shove Cuba into the hands of our Government, only stipulating for some formal provisions that need not have placed any obstruction in the way. If met in the same spirit, had the President been willing to assume but a part of the responsibility in negotiating with Spain that he has assumed in the negotiations with the questionable government of San Domingo, he could have had the destinies of Cuba placed in his hands, either to settle the terms of Cuban independence, or to have brought in the ulterior plan of annexation. And it may be remarked that if the acquisition of a West India island were desirable to the United States, Cuba, in respect to all its conditions, would be far the most desirable.

The Spanish Ministers did not talk of money. They spoke of principles. Mr. Sicles, by instructions from the administration, first introduced the proposition of payment. When General Prim inquired how much he stated one hundred millions as what he thought would willingly be paid. It was a proper offer to make, if we were negotiating for ourselves, but an improper one to make for the Cuban revolutionists. Mr. Sicles went provided with a letter of instructions to read to the Government of Spain, offering mediation, and conveying a menace that if not accepted the United States Government would be compelled to recognize Cuban belligerency. He first saw the ministers informally, and found them more willing than he expected, and that they would be glad to place Cuba in our hands.

The President had laid down a basis of negotiations. The Ministers excepted to this, but stated another basis which they would accept if offered. This would have made our Government master of the situation. The President refused this, and insisted on carrying it out on his line. The feature that was principally objectionable to the Spanish Government in this, was that it required a virtual recognition of Cuban independence as a starting point, and that Spain should negotiate directly with rebels in arms. The counter proposition made by Spain was entirely reasonable and practicable. But it was rejected, and so our unfortunate mediation terminated. Mr. Sicles, who had hitherto conducted all this by informal conversations, now presented his letter of instructions. The menace contained in it got abroad, and so incensed the Spanish people that the Ministers asked him to withdraw the letter, and he did so.

Having thus muddled the matter, there seems to be no way for us but to keep our hands out of it. We have lost our opportunity for doing anything with Spain. We have no occasion nor right to confer any status of belligerency on Cuba. The only honorable course for us is to maintain our laws, and let Spain and the Cubans fight it out, and if the Cubans successfully resist the attempt of Spain to reduce them to allegiance, they will owe Spain nothing. And what with the Cuban bonds they have had to sell very cheap for supplies, and those they have distributed very generously in this country to influence public opinion and legislation, the Cuban debt will be quite large enough without adding to it anything for purchase money.

The report to a false newspaper at New York that the Spanish Government proposes to cede Cuba to the Spanish volunteers for one hundred millions, and that the administration contemplates it, is utterly foolish. And so is the report that parties are working to prevent Congress from recognizing Cuban belligerency until they can blackmail the Cuban agents. The parties raising this cry are the blackmailers, who have received Cuban bonds on pretense that they could influence public opinion and legislation, and who are urging recognition in order to give some value to their bribe.

NEW RELATIONS BETWEEN AMERICA AND AUSTRALASIA.

It is scarcely possible to overestimate the significance of the opening of the new route across this continent, between the English settlements in the Pacific and Great Britain. No occurrence could more accurately typify the progress that which is to be the great and leading event of the remainder of this century—the gathering together into one focus of power the scattered English communities. Hitherto, the routes between Australasia and Great Britain have been by way of the two great Southern capes at the extremities of the African and American continents, or, for speedy mail transit, by way of the Suez Isthmus and France. These routes, it is now tolerably clear, have been, from every point of view, provisional only. They have sufficed, and will suffice, until this American nation shall have grown rich, and populous, and strong enough to pierce the Darien Isthmus, and establish lines of railway across the continent. We are already witnessing the first stage of this consummation. The line of travel by way of this continent is opened, and it is not too soon, therefore, to consider the meaning and consequences of this new state of things.

These are of too wide a scope to be more than indicated within such limits as we can now assign to the subject. What is obvious on the face of this event to those who will examine the map, is that quite a new set of influences and ideas will set in upon the subject of the relations between Great Britain, America, and Australasia, when the stream of traffic between the extreme points of New Zealand and England flows regularly through this continent, as it is certain to do hereafter. The broad and striking fact to be apprehended is that by this new route the whole of the English Dominion, with the exception only of the Cape of Good Hope and India, will have its line of intercommunication upon its own grounds, instead of through continents and countries occupied by alien races. The line of travel in this day is nearly certain to foreshadow, and even prescribe, the line of political development. And it may be argued with confidence that in the lapse of another generation this great result will be arrived at, arising directly from the incident which we have just witnessed. America, which furnishes the physical will to also furnish the moral or political bond of relation between Australasia and Great Britain. The stream of American and Australasian travel to England and Europe will commingle; and the habit will gradually arise in the English and European mind of considering these two streams as virtually one. While

this result is gradually ripening, our republic will be concurrently rising to a height of power which will establish it insensibly and unchallenged in a position of virtual and unassailable political supremacy among the English communities. Out of these elements new political and international combinations will doubtless arise, which cannot be exactly stated beforehand. But shrewd thinkers will have difficulty in concluding that they will amount to a most important revolution in the general affairs of mankind.

Those who are aware of the tendencies which have been setting in during these last three years in the Australasia and New Zealand, in consequence of the late colonial policy of England, cannot but regard the opening of this new American route as a most extraordinary instance of the way in which moral and physical facts combine to direct the course of human events. England, under the Gladstone-Bright-Granville administration, has been giving unequivocal signals, fully expected by those who know what these three statesmen think about such matters, of being no longer willing or able to retain the responsibility of defending her colonial settlements. Unmistakable indications have been given by the mother country that her colonies must consider themselves ripe for independence before long. The truth, however, is that the Australasia colonies and New Zealand are not now, and are never likely to be, strong enough to hold an effective independent position in the world where vast empires exist, and are growing to be vaster still with every decade. The eyes of Australasia and New Zealanders have been turned, for some time past, been turned to this Republic as their probably destined protector in the future. In fact, at a private meeting held not a year since, all the influential and wealthy Australasia residents in London, to consider the relations between their settlements and the mother country, it was unanimously determined that, failing the establishment of a better understanding and relations between the colonies and the metropolis, it might be necessary, and that soon, to seek the protection of the American Republic.

In the interval that has since elapsed, an abortive attempt in England has been made to raise the question of drawing close the ties between England and her colonies by the establishment of some sort of imperial council in London, in which the whole Empire should be represented. But this attempt has come to nothing. Nobody has been found who could put into definite shape such a new imperial constitution. And it is safe to say that the theory of organizing into one political whole the mother country and the colonies has been proved to be a mere barren theory and nothing else. Immediately upon the proved failure of this theory comes the establishment of the new American route between England and the Pacific settlements, pointing the moral of that failure, and fortifying the minds of those political pioneers who are beginning to see in this Republic the key to solve the problem. What, in the course of the next century, it will be the relation of sovereignty between the different countries where the English tongue holds sway?

THE VIRGINIA RAILROAD WAR.

The bill consolidating the Southside Virginia railroads was made the special order in the State Senate of Virginia yesterday. Our Richmond correspondent, referring to this fact, speaks of it as being "charged with the most eager opposition to the Southside consolidation of railroads under the control of General Mahone," and that "some people here claim that it is a clear case of Baltimore vs. Norfolk," etc. It is all very well for both parties in the above consolidation issue to use all legitimate means for the success of their own views, but we protest against Baltimore being made a bugbear of one party to array imagined State interests against the other. This city neither opposes any consolidation of Virginia railroads, nor considers itself particularly interested in the result of that policy. The mere matter of Virginia consolidation of railroads, though that of a general and equitable policy, alike for all the roads of the State, may be, but in any case it is not apt to meddle with the good name of other communities. In regard to Norfolk, it is shown by official reports that out of the freights transported over the Virginia and Tennessee road and the roads working through with it to Norfolk, in 1869, New York received 20,259,624 pounds, Boston received 8,646,508, Philadelphia received 7,213,404, Baltimore received 5,384,729, and Norfolk received 2,792,952.

Now, it is entirely for Virginia to decide whether, for consolidating an institution (the Virginia and Tennessee, the Southside and Norfolk) in a union to be the great and leading event of the remainder of this century—the gathering together into one focus of power the scattered English communities. Hitherto, the routes between Australasia and Great Britain have been by way of the two great Southern capes at the extremities of the African and American continents, or, for speedy mail transit, by way of the Suez Isthmus and France. These routes, it is now tolerably clear, have been, from every point of view, provisional only. They have sufficed, and will suffice, until this American nation shall have grown rich, and populous, and strong enough to pierce the Darien Isthmus, and establish lines of railway across the continent. We are already witnessing the first stage of this consummation. The line of travel by way of this continent is opened, and it is not too soon, therefore, to consider the meaning and consequences of this new state of things.

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debt, is a matter which Baltimore "certainly cannot determine. Therefore it is idle to be using her name so freely in connection with the matter."

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So much of the Coal as may be required for use in this city, including the United States Arsenal at Bridesburg and Gray's Ferry road, to an amount not exceeding twelve hundred (1200) tons, must be delivered without additional expense to the United States. The balance to be delivered on board of vessels at this port, in good order and condition, free from slate, bone, dirt, and other impurities. Proposals must be made out in duplicate on blank forms, which can be obtained at this office, and envelopes endorsed "Proposals for delivery of Coal." Each proposal must be accompanied by a sufficient guarantee that, in the event of the acceptance of the proposal, the bidder or bidders will enter into a contract for the delivery of the Coal, and will conform to the conditions of the contract. No proposal will be considered unless made in strict conformity to the above. Bidders are invited to attend at the opening of proposals.

The Quartermaster's Department reserves the right to reject any and all bids. Any additional proposals desired by parties wishing to bid will be furnished upon application to this office. HENRY C. BODGES, Brevet Lieut.-Colonel and Quartermaster, U. S. A.

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FINANCIAL. WILMINGTON AND READING RAILROAD Seven Per Cent. Bonds. FREE OF TAXES. We are offering \$200,000 of the Second Mortgage Bonds of this Company AT 82 1/2 AND ACCRUED INTEREST. For the convenience of investors these Bonds are issued in denominations of \$1000s, \$500s, and \$100s. The money is required for the purchase of additional Rolling Stock and the full equipment of the Road. The receipts of the Company of the one-half of the Road now being operated from Coatesville to Wilmington are about TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS per month, which will be more than DOUBLED with the opening of the other half, over which the large Coal Trade of the Road must come. Only SIX MILES are now required to complete the Road to Birdsboro, which will be finished by the middle of the month. WM. PAINTER & CO., BANKERS, No. 36 South THIRD Street, PHILADELPHIA. LEHIGH CONVERTIBLE 6 Per Cent. First Mortgage Gold Loan, Free from all Taxes. We offer for sale \$1,750,000 of the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company's new First Mortgage Six Per Cent. Gold Bonds, free from all taxes, interest due March and September, at NINETY (90) And interest in currency added to date of purchase. These bonds are of a mortgage loan of \$2,000,000, dated October 6, 1869. They have twenty-five (25) years to run, and are convertible into stock at par until 1873. Principal and interest payable in gold. They are secured by a first mortgage on 5000 acres of coal lands in the Wyoming Valley, near Wilkesbarre, at present producing at the rate of 300,000 tons of coal per annum, with works in progress which contemplate a large increase at an early period, and also upon valuable Real Estate in this city. A sinking fund of ten cents per ton upon all coal taken from the mines for five years, and of fifteen cents per ton thereafter, is established, and The Fidelity Insurance, Trust and Safe Deposit Company, the Trustees under this mortgage, collect these sums and invest them in these Bonds, agreeably to the provisions of the Trust. For full particulars, copies of the mortgage, etc., apply to C. & H. BORIE, W. H. NEWBOLD, SON & AERTSEN, JAY COOKE & CO., BREXEL & CO., E. W. CLARK & CO. 511th

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