The Sun.

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The Three Friends.

The arrival at Jacksonville of the steamer Three Friends, which is said to have exchanged shots with a Spanish launch at the mouth of the San Juan River, in Cuba, will bring up an interesting question.

The *Diario de la Marina* of Havana says that this vessel is a pirate, and ought to be tried for piracy; and it cites the famous case of the Ambrose Light in support of its views. The Ambrose Light was a brigantine captured in 1885 by our corvette Alliance, in the Caribbean Sea, during the insurrection in Colombia. Our Government had interfered in that trouble because Colon had been burned and free travel across the Isthmus checked. The trial showed that the Ambrose Light belonged to an insurgent leader, and Judge BROWN found that she was engaged in an "expedition technically piratical," and had therefore been lawfully seized; nevertheless, since a state of war had afterward been recognized by implication in a note of the State Department, the vessel was released and restored to her owners.

There are several points of difference between this case and that of the Three Friends. Not a man of the officers or crew of the Ambrose Light was a citizen of the United States, and she was intended to assist in the blockade and siege of Cartagena by the insurgents, from whom she carried a commission as a Colombian man-of-war. The first necessity in the case of the Three Friends is to ascertain certain facts which only a trial can judicially develop. But, judging from present appearances, she is likely to be tried for a violation of our neutrality laws, in operating against a country with which ours is at peace.

On such a charge she was libelled last May, and the decision of the court in that case seems not yet to have been announced. Many things may happen before a decision in the new case against her.

The Home Rule Makeshift.

It is not surprising that the Duke of TETUAN, Spain's Minister of Foreign Affairs, has hastened to supplement the royal decree regarding the reforms to be established in Porto Rico, by effusive assurances that still more will be done for Cuba.

Certainly there is nothing in this programme of so-called home rule which would tempt the patriots of Cuba to trade their independence for it. That island, under the new plan, is, like Porto Rico, to have a Council of Administration which "will for the first time give the Cubans a large share of control over their internal and domestic concerns." But when it is added that "the home government will retain control of the laws levying taxation, and will reserve the right to review the budget of appropriations, while the appropriations will be made by the Council of Administration, subject to the approval of the Ministry at Madrid," it is suggested at once what sort of a home rule is offered.

Spain would still hold Cuba in the leash, under pretence of letting her go hither and thither at will. She must still have the island as a source of income, and govern it with a view to her own interests. It would be strange, indeed, if meagre concessions, dating prior to the time when the present revolt of Cuba broke out, should satisfy those who, for nearly two years, have successfully defied the utmost power of Spain.

Foreign Minister TETUAN is eager, therefore, to say that Cuba may expect something more than Porto Rico is now to have. He says that the latter is to enjoy a new system "which, conveniently enlarged and extended, will be applied in due time to Cuba." He describes the measures thus to be transferred to Cuba as "amplified reforms," and promises "an additional decree," which will be such that "a genuine home administration will be constituted in our Antilles, in the first instance for Cuba, but to be extended to Porto Rico as soon and at the same time as it may be possible to apply it to the former island."

It seems to us that nothing more is needed to show that, even by Spain's own admission, she will not yet give a genuine home administration even to Porto Rico. But so far as Cuba is concerned, the whole business deals with matters past and gone. It is mainly of importance as showing Spain's inability to open her eyes to the facts of the hour. The decree of March 15, 1895, is as obsolete, in what relates to Cuba, as if it were two or three centuries old; nor can any additional decree so patch it out as to make it fit the facts of to-day. The practical question for Spain is on what terms she will acknowledge Cuba's independence; and she may never again be able to make as good terms as now.

Congress Should Pay No Heed to Mr. Olney.

There is no evidence before Congress, of which that body can properly take cognizance, that the President will disregard a joint resolution recognizing the independence of the Cuban republic. The Senators and Representatives merely know in their private capacities that the Secretary of State is reported to have intimated in an interview that such will be the course of the Executive. The assertion does not bind his chief, and there will be time enough to deal with Mr. CLEVELAND when by his own act, or by his own omission to act, he has signified a determination to treat with contempt a declaration of the Federal Legislature. Impeachment is not the only process by which an attempt at usurpation on the part of a President can be held up to public reprobation.

Meanwhile there are several reasons why Congress should treat Mr. OLNEY's unofficial remarks as if they had never been uttered. It is not compatible with the dignity of Senators and Representatives to take note of a private expression of opinion made by the Secretary of State. They have not called upon him for information concerning his personal conception of Executive functions. His utterance upon the subject was gratuitous, and any reference to it in debate would give it an importance it does not deserve. His relation to the President is essentially clerical, and it is not the servant, but the master, who should be held to account, when a breach of duty is in fact committed. As yet there has been no breach of duty. There has been simply a breach of decorum, and self-respect should admonish Congress to pass it over in disdainful silence. There is more urgent business before the Federal Legislature than academical animadversion on Mr. OLNEY's notions of a President's prerogative.

Not the slightest notice should be taken at this time of the OLNEY interview, because, on the face of it, its purpose was to distract attention from the Cuban question, and waste the time of Congress in debate over the constitutional limitations of legislative and Executive authority. In vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird. A trap has been set by the Secretary of State, but Congress will be too wary to fall into it. When it reassembles after the recess it will proceed to pass the joint resolution reported to the Senate by the Committee on Foreign Relations, just as if nobody had ever heard of Mr. OLNEY's curious propensity to magnify the office of his chief. That is the way to checkmate the Administration in the game it is playing in the interest of Spain.

If the Senate will promptly pass the Cameron resolution, the people will take care of the House of Representatives. Discouraging reports concerning the pro-Spanish prepossessions of certain members of the House were current a year ago, as they are now. Nevertheless, when the concurrent resolution in favor of recognizing the Cubans as belligerents, came up in that chamber, it was passed by a great majority. The Representatives had heard from their masters at home. They had found out that the man who tried to obstruct the utterance of the nation's sympathy for Cuba, would be branded in such a way that he would have to seek a hiding place in private life. The motives of opposition to an act of justice and humanity will not bear the light, and the men who are governed by them know it. When the introduction of the joint resolution forces the members of the House to stand up and be counted on the side of despotism or on that of liberty, we do not believe that the tools of Spain can muster a corporal's guard.

The Cameron resolution should be pushed through the Senate as speedily as possible. The House may be trusted to do its duty when its turn comes. Meanwhile, no honest and clear-headed friend of Cuba will allow himself to be diverted from the main business in hand into a desultory discussion of Mr. OLNEY's method of construing the Constitution. His views are of absolutely no importance, unless and until they are embodied in an act of the Executive's.

Fraud in Tennessee.

The Legislature of Tennessee, which will meet next Monday, will have one important piece of business to consider. The Tennessee Republicans assert that their candidate for Governor, the Hon. GEORGE N. TILLMAN, was elected last November and was "counted out" by means of frauds on the part of Popocratic election officers in the western part of the State. The returns indicated the election of the Hon. ROBERT L. TAYLOR, the Popocratic candidate, by a plurality of some six thousand votes. According to the Republicans, Mr. TILLMAN was elected by a plurality of some sixteen hundred. At the same time they believe that an investigation of the election will show that his plurality was more than three thousand.

It is notorious that HENRY CLAY EVANS, the Republican candidate for Governor, was elected in 1894, but TURNEY, the Democratic candidate, was counted in.

It is a matter of common information and belief that fraud was practised in Tennessee at the last election, and not in the State election alone. The *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, the most conspicuous Democratic paper in the State, has taken a manly and sensible position in favor of honest elections, and has been opposed therefor by some fool papers which seem to believe that fraud is laudable, or at least permissible, so long as it is practised against Republicans.

By the side of a direct and shameless violation of the freedom of elections, all merely temporary political or economic issues are of small importance. If the will of the majority can be set aside, a hideous despotism is possible; and under the forms of law lawlessness is triumphant. It is sad that any State of the South should countenance that fraud from which the South has suffered so much.

Unfortunately nothing immediate is likely to result from the pleadings which the Tennessee Republicans will submit to the Legislature next week. But the attention of the State and of the rest of the country will be called to their vitiated elections; and public opinion will prevent a repetition of them or else public opinion in Tennessee is not excited by palpable dishonesty.

The Nashville Exposition.

The bill passed by Congress just before the holidays in relation to Tennessee's Centennial Exhibition, declared that the sum therein provided should not be available until $500,000 had been raised by "solvent subscriptions" and appropriations for the scheme. At the time the vote was taken, it was announced that $458,943.77 had been raised, and now, amid great New Year's rejoicings, the remainder of the stipulated half million has been secured.

What the Government has agreed to do, in the bill which now becomes operative, is to erect a building for its own exhibits of various sorts, at a cost not exceeding $30,000, to appropriate a sum not exceeding $100,000 for other expenses relating thereto, to admit foreign exhibits free of duty, unless sold or withdrawn for use here, and to strike and issue medals for the exhibitors, to be paid for by the company which is running the exposition. A leading ground of the Government's participation was that this is the celebration of the hundredth anniversary of Tennessee's admission to the Union. The Philadelphia and Chicago expositions were cited as precedents, but there were differences. When, however, the New Orleans, Atlanta, and Omaha shows were brought up as cases in point, the House admitted their validity by a vote of 127 yeas to 25 nays. But we think that the historical event must be considered a very large element of influence in securing this costly Government participation, under a growing impression that it is time to call a halt to Federal aid to fairs.

Success may be heartily wished for this enterprise. In one sense it will be a year behind time, as the show will open on May 1, and Tennessee was admitted to the Union on June 1, 1796. But it has the Chicago precedent for not being ready on time, and the delay will make it a better display. Nashville is a city which in 1890 exceeded Atlanta in population. The construction of several of the buildings was carried on through last year, and the suburban park where the exhibition will be held will be very beautiful as the time for opening it approaches. Perhaps some ceremonies will recall the historic event which the fair is intended to celebrate, although that feature was largely attended to last summer.

New Things at Harvard.

Some interesting innovations hidden in the mass of facts contained in the catalogue of Harvard University, recently issued, deserve the attention of the friends of Harvard and of the higher education in the United States.

The university has launched into new philological fields, offering for the first time in its history instruction not only in the Slavic languages, in accordance with the suggestion made by THE SUN a year ago, but in the Celtic and Egyptian languages. A young man at Harvard has now the opportunity to learn the Russian and the Polish tongues, and to study their philology in the Old Church Slavic. The approach to two literatures of great interest and importance is thus opened to American scholars. Two courses in Irish are also provided, a good beginning toward placing Celtic studies in the position they deserve. By introducing into its curriculum the study of the Egyptian hieroglyphics, it opens up to the American student the field in which the most startling archæological discoveries of recent times have been made.

For the first time, too, there appears in a Harvard catalogue the announcement of Radcliffe College, with its list of officers, its conditions for admission, and its course of study. No list of students has ever been published either by the "Harvard Annex" or by Radcliffe College, and no list of student names appears now. The number of students, however, is given, showing that 356 young women are in attendance, of whom 212 are graduates or members in full standing of college classes. For the first time also two names of women appear in the list of graduate students of the Harvard Medical School.

Another innovation in the catalogue is the summary of graduates of other institutions and the colleges they came from, which is given for the graduate and professional schools. This was given last year for the Law School only. There are 444 graduates of about 150 American colleges and universities at work in Harvard, ranging from Acadia and the University of New Brunswick to the universities of California and Washington in the West, and that of Havana in the South. In the list of students are graduates of German gymnasia, of French lycées, one from the Paris École des Chartes, others from the universities of London and of Edinburgh. It is plain that Harvard is taking her place as a universal school of knowledge.

Three New Postal Measures.

The House has passed by large majorities and sent to the Senate for concurrence three measures relating to the mail service, all novel in this country, all important, and all of popular interest.

One bill makes it lawful, after July 1 next, to send written messages on private postal cards, to which a one-cent stamp is affixed. This is a concession to business interests, although, of course, it includes other writing; and it is possible that, should the bill become a law, it may become a custom, at least for a time, to use finer cards for social correspondence and various notices.

At first it might be thought that the new cards would make trouble in handling and delivery. But this is avoided by requiring them to be "approximately of the same form, quality, and weight" as the Government's card. Besides, the Postmaster-General is to make regulations on the subject, and he will perhaps be strict in demanding precisely the same length and width for the new card, with the thickness and weight approximate.

What are the gains in the new system? In the first place, it will save the Government the difference of cost between a one-cent stamp and a postal card wherever the new card is used. Next, it will increase the revenue of the Post Office. The latest report of the Postmaster-General of Great Britain and Ireland says that within seven months after the adoption of the private postal card there, the total card mail, if we understand the statement, increased from 248,000,000 to 312,750,000. This was an increase of one-fourth; and it is therefore safe to assume that not only will the business of our Post Office be enlarged by a similar system here, and not only will a proportional expense be saved in the printing, storing, and handling of official cards, but there will also be a new accommodation for the people.

A second bill provides that hereafter the senders or owners of registered letters lost in the mails may be indemnified to an extent not exceeding $10 for any one registered piece, and to the actual value when that is less than $10. This also is a system which has been adopted in most countries of Europe. Very likely it may be brought before the Postal Union Congress, which is to meet in Washington during the coming year, but, if the principle of limited indemnity is sound, it may properly be adopted by us forthwith. It was declared by one member during the House debate that many people now erroneously suppose that the Government guarantees indemnity for registered packages, and this belief may stimulate registration, and cause a very bitter feeling when losses occur without any satisfaction whatever. The belief, so far as it prevails, is founded on the idea that when, instead of paying two cents a letter, the sender pays four times as much additional for registration, it is only just to guarantee the sender at least partially against loss. It is true that he really only buys additional care; but if it turns out that he gets a care that is not even as effective as the cheap, ordinary mailing might have been, of what avail is it to him?

The principle of limited indemnity, however, does not rest wholly, if at all, on the foregoing consideration, or on what a sense of equity may demand. Probably most people know that registration does not now carry indemnity, and some may therefore risk small sums or valuable papers without it, whereas if an expenditure of eight cents would secure indemnity up to $10, or to the full value if less than $10, it might be considered a cheap insurance. As a fact, registration is a highly paying part of the Post Office system. When we consider that for the last fiscal year there were 11,744,525 paid registrations, besides 2,683,556 official and free, and that the registration fees were $975,388.88, it will be seen what the business is, and how important it is to increase it.

But will not the indemnities swamp the earnings? That question brings up the number of the losses. It appears that last year there were about 5,280 complaints of losses in the registered mail, and with every case a loss, at a maximum, the indemnity paid last year, had the proposed law been in operation, would have been only $52,800. It was estimated by Mr. LOUD, who had charge of the bill in the House, that the annual increase of registration would equal or exceed that amount under an indemnity bill, so that this equity could be effected substantially or wholly without loss to the Government.

But this estimate gives the maximum indemnity for lost packages, whereas under the law only the value could be secured when less than $10. And, what is more important, the complaints were much greater than the losses. Thus we find the Third Assistant Postmaster-General speaking of 1,850 cases of losses and reporting that in 998 there were recoveries and a restoration of the value of the lost articles, while in 852 cases recovery was impossible. And in 232 of the latter cases the contents were official, such as postage stamps and stamped paper, leaving "620 private losses only, or one in every 24,365 pieces registered." We think enough has been said to show that the Government can afford to enact this new law, even as a matter of business enterprise, and of course there is no doubt as to the question of popular satisfaction with it.

The third bill passed by the House can be dismissed with a few words, although, if enacted, it may have a widespread application. It provides for the delivery of letters in places where no free delivery now exists, under a system by which a number of persons not less than twenty, receiving their mail through the same office, shall, on petition to the Postmaster, have a carrier appointed for them, who can charge one cent for each piece of mail matter carried to or from the office. The object is to save time and much trouble for persons who have to go long distances to the Post Office either to carry letters or to ask for letters that may never come. This measure is really the old penny post system; but one objection is thought to be that of finding these letter carriers coming to Congress by and by for compensation, on the ground that they cannot collect their bills. The Senate may perhaps do well, therefore, to see whether the measure is fully guarded in this and other respects in order that the system may be stopped at once, wherever it does not appear to succeed. It should be said that the objections were rehearsed in the House, and in spite of them the bill was passed.

We Need More Battle Ships.

There are some signs of opposition to putting into the Naval Appropriation bill a provision for the construction of the three additional battle ships recommended by Secretary HERBERT in his recent report. There is reason to believe that a further supply of torpedo boats will be granted at once, as the little craft do not cost much; but the ground is taken by some members that the Fifty-fourth Congress will have done its full share in providing largely not only for the new Illinois, Alabama, and Wisconsin, but for the Kearsarge and Kentucky, which its predecessor authorized without making adequate initial appropriations.

This is mistaken reasoning, and we cannot think it will prevail. The question is not what some other Congress did, but what the country needs now. Our total of battle ships, built and building, is eleven, and with our enormous coast line, and multifarious interests, that is not enough. Indeed it is not argued that battle ship construction should stop here, but only that we may properly omit a year, in view of the number of ships still under construction and requiring current expenditures.

But the time to pause is only when we are reasonably well protected. No one can doubt that in the recent difficulties with England and Spain our diplomacy has received a great and essential support from the nucleus of the modern navy we have had at command. Even to-day this navy is more than able to cope with that of Spain, and accordingly, so far as she is concerned, we already dominate the waters of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea. But we must be prepared for the possibilities of aggression by other powers than Spain. If we should add three more battle ships to the nine of the first class, and the two of the second class already built or authorized, we should not be going beyond a strictly defensive policy. Of the nine, all but one are classed as coast-line ships, thus indicating their defensive character, and while they are also sea-going, the presence near our coast of outposts like Halifax, Bermuda, and Jamaica, that could be used as secondary bases to attack it, is ground enough for ascribing to sea-going battle ships a defensive purpose.

It will not be necessary to maintain in service all the battle ships that may be built. A reserve system will certainly be established, and, indeed, is likely to be set in operation for some of our largest and costliest vessels as soon as our present international complications are over.

The Fifty-third Congress did its duty toward the navy and should not be criticised for turning over so much of the cost of the Kearsarge and Kentucky to its successor. It was deemed necessary either to do that or to postpone their authorization. The wiser alternative was chosen; and we may add that should it be necessary now to choose between adding no new battle ships and authorizing the three recommended by the Secretary, making only trifling appropriations for them, this latter would be the better course. The plans could then be pushed on, and it is safe to say that the Fifty-fifth Congress will not be worried, as the present one has been, with a lack of funds for providing for great national needs to the extent desired.

The Governor evidently has a saving sense of humor.—*Tribune.*

Thank heaven for that! O, for a relief from the awful solemnity of vain, self-conscious, artificial, platitudinous, gloomy Mugwumpery!

Just now it seems that a successor to PARNELL may have suddenly sprung up among the Irish Nationalists in the person of Lord CASTLETOWN of Upper Ossory. His recent speech in Cork, at the meeting to condemn the overtaxation of Ireland, has produced a profound sensation. It sounds very much like a threat of revolution. There was no oratory in it; it was the plain language of a soldier. CASTLETOWN is a Geraldine of the old stock, and here is what he said at that Cork meeting:

"The question that we have met to go into is a momentous one, and it is quite possible that we may be met with Ministerial stubbornness and by official obstinacy. But I hope and pray that no statesman that calls himself a statesman in the sister island is of the way of thinking of trying to stop this movement. If there are such statesmen inclined to stand in the way of peace with honor, I would ask them to pause and think solemnly and seriously of what a nation can do, a nation such as United Ireland can do, when justice guides, and her welfare and her very life depend upon the result, possibly, of the contest. I do not want to use words that may be misinterpreted, but I feel so deeply upon this great question that I would like to draw attention to the fact that sometimes history repeats itself. An obstinate statesman and unfair taxation lost to England her greatest colony, the United States. I trust that every one in this room must hope that Cork may never have to follow the example of Boston, but, if it is necessary, we will be right, because we have justice on our side. When we have justice on our side, we will be right in adopting any means that we may have in our power of healing the sore that is sapping our very life blood and is forcing from Ireland and her shores those who should contribute to her commerce, to her agriculture, and to her nationhood among the peoples of the world."

We wish a happy New Year to old Ireland and success to Lord CASTLETOWN!

CANADIAN POLITICS.

The Catholic Bishops and Mr. Laurier on the Manitoba School Question.

MONTREAL, Jan. 1.—The gage of battle thrown down by the Catholic Bishops of the Archdiocese of Quebec in the mandement read out from all the pulpits last Sunday was formally taken up by Mr. Laurier on Wednesday evening. The occasion was furnished at a banquet given him and his colleagues by the Club National of this city, at which, among others, Mr. Greenway, the Premier of Manitoba was present. Mr. Laurier's speech, which was the pièce de résistance of the evening, was markedly moderate in tone, but firm in its expression of determination to withstand any encroachment on the civil rights of the people. He spoke with pride of his French origin, at the same time warning those whom it might concern that while the French of Canada respected the equality of rights of others inhabiting the country of a different origin, they also had rights they were resolved to maintain. Toward the clergy of his church he professed the highest respect while they confined their action within its legitimate sphere, but he denied to them the right to overstep it and dictate, under grievous penalties, the action of the citizen in the domain of civil rights. The settlement that had been arrived at between his Government and that of Manitoba, presided over by Mr. Greenway, had, he said, been accepted by the people of Manitoba of all races and creeds. Under it he showed that the French Catholics of Manitoba obtained all for which they could ask in justice, the right to have their language and religion taught in the public schools under regulations approved and agreed on by the provincial Government.

Mr. Laurier dealt severely with that section of the French press in the province of Quebec which, as he said, "has so long exploited religion to its profit," and went on to point out how, outside a certain circle, the settlement of the school question had been approved of by the religious press. "I was born in the Catholic religion," said Mr. Laurier, "and brought up in it, and I believe in liberty as Montalembert and Lacordaire believed in it. The bishops and priests—all men in a constitutional country like ours—are citizens as we are. They have the right to their opinions, as we have to ours, and what we ask for ourselves I am always ready to grant them. There are honest differences of opinion. Let us endeavor to understand each other, and let us endeavor, if possible, to practise conciliation." How far this attitude will touch the more militant of the hierarchy remains to be seen. I do not think the Bishops who took the extreme action they did last Sunday did so entirely *proprio motu*. They were urged on by desperate and defeated politicians, who, unable to attack the Liberal party with any chance of success in the ordinary way, have tried to utilize religious intimidation. The French Catholic electors of the Province of Quebec knew in June last when they gave their votes for Mr. Laurier that the penalties of the Church were suspended over them in the hands of certain of the Bishops, yet they voted for him all the same. It has to be noted that the Catholic Bishops of Ontario have at no time taken up the extreme position assumed by those of Quebec. In Ontario the Church is dependent on the good will of its adherents for maintenance; in Quebec, under the compact with England at the cession of Canada by France, the Church enjoyed the right to collect its revenues by law. Under that right its clergy have insisted on their privileges to an extent that was not always wise, with the result that under the yearly increasing burden of taxation the people have been fleeing the province by tens of thousands to escape the religious and civil taxgatherers. The question thus assumes an economic as well as religious aspect.

So far, Mr. Laurier has no reason to be dissatisfied with the general attitude of the press, with the exception of the ultra-clerical organs, which are mostly conducted by laymen with political aims. If, urged by the Bishops, too far, their pretension to dictate in civil matters to so large an element as the Catholic population of Canada becomes a most disturbing factor in Canadian party politics, and will raise such resentment that civil war would be an imminent possibility. I have, however, no fear of that. The French Catholic Canadians, through the inferiority of their education as compared with that of their Protestant fellow citizens, find themselves occupying a position in Canada far below that to which their merits as an industrious and naturally intelligent people entitle them. They also suffer through the rigorous determination of their Church authorities to extract the last sou of dues that can be legally exacted. They are not likely to fight to maintain a system that tells against them in the race of life, and if the Bishops are wise they will reject the counsels of the Hector Langevins, Adolphe Caronas and others, who are only too glad to see them troubling the waters in which they hope to catch the fish of personal profit.

The French radical press, at the head of which is *La Patrie* of this city, treats with withering scorn the "capons," as it terms those who dare not assert their manhood, and the proprietor, Honoré Beaugrand, announces his determination to enter as a candidate at the approaching provincial elections and to risk himself and all he has is worth in the struggle for the right to think.

The banquet to Mr. Laurier, curiously enough, was brought to a sudden termination after Mr. Greenway's speech by the announcement of the demise of Archbishop Fabre, who was universally respected. This unlooked for and abrupt conclusion of the proceedings disappointed some of the younger speakers, who were warming for the opportunity to let themselves out, and had been encouraged by the speech of Sir Richard Cartwright, who spoke of the "perils to be faced and the difficulties to be overcome before the ship of state should sail in the smooth waters," and of the "need there would be of all the patience and all the loyalty of the Liberal party and its leaders to repair the mischief of which they had been unwilling witnesses."

The Proposed Cuban Button.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* The suggestion that Cuban buttons similar to those worn during our late campaign should be sold for the benefit of the patriotic Cuban cause at the price of 10 cents each is a good idea, but I would offer an amendment to it. There should be no price put on the proposed button beyond the actual cost of manufacture, and every purchaser should be left to pay as much more as his sympathy and means suggest and permit and let that be the price for them.

It must be the earnest desire of every true American to assist the oppressed men and women on the island of Cuba to gain what our forefathers had to fight for more than one hundred years ago. Let the good work go on without any limitation. Those who are able to give $1,000 should be the first to come forward. Remember that time is precious and there should be no delay in assisting those who are struggling for liberty on the island of Cuba, and they know, and we ought to know, that it is to their interest to take all the advantage of time, and we must bring up the rear by giving them all of the support that we can.

I suggest that the editor of every paper in this country shall be selected a committee of one to receive any contributions that may be offered in the interest of the fighting men and women on the island of Cuba.

You will find enclosed a check for one dollar for one of the proposed buttons from a workingman.

McKEESPORT, Pa., Jan. 1. JOHN NIMAN.

Mr. Niman's check being drawn in the general interest of the Cuban cause, we have disposed of it accordingly; but there is no such button as he describes.

The Views of a Converted Jew.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* Apart altogether from the guilt or innocence of Mr. Warszawiak, have not the members of the Presbytery apparently done a great injury to the cause they represent by their action on Monday last? Was not their original mistake a question of degree? Is not their present error fundamental?

Originally they made the mistake common to Gentiles of grouping all Jews in one class, whereas there is as much difference between a Mosaically taught English-speaking Jew and a rabbinically taught Russian Jew as there is between an evangelical American churchman and a superstitious adherent of the Russian Greek Church. The Jews make an almost identical mistake in classing together all Gentiles, believers and unbelievers in Christ.

The Jews, as a whole, compare favorably with the Gentiles, because in almost every Jewish home there is a certain degree of loyalty to the traditions of their Israelitish forefathers. The average constant attendant at the synagogue does not suffer in comparison with the average professing Christian, simply because the average professing Christian is disloyal to the teachings of our Divine Master. But the special group of philanthropic and holy Jews is far below the special group of loyal Christians alike in the activities of spiritual worship and of self-sacrificing labors for their fellow men. The new covenant Almighty God made with Jew and Gentile alike in the Gospel of Jesus Christ possesses a power that does not inhere in Moses and the Prophets, otherwise there would be no justification for Jews to fly in the face of deep-rooted national prejudice when becoming followers of the despised, long misunderstood Hero of our race. I write from experience as one who was formerly a member of the North London (England) synagogue and of the London Jewish Board of Guardians, representative English-speaking Jewish institutions. MARK LEVY.

NEW YORK, Dec. 30.

NOTES OF LEGAL EVENTS.

It was announced on Thursday that the Murray Hill Bank litigation had been settled out of court by an abandonment of the attempt any longer to keep the assets out of the hands of Messrs. Trask and O'Brien, the receivers originally appointed by Mr. Justice Pryor in this city. The legality of the appointment of these gentlemen had been declared by the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court in this department and in the second department (Brooklyn), but the Attorney-General, nevertheless, persisted in an endeavor to establish the superior title and standing of the receivers appointed at his instance by Judge Dickey of Newburgh, Messrs. Odell and Hobbs. To this end, after a decision by Judge Truax here directing Judge Dickey's receivers to turn over the property of the bank to the receivers named by Judge Pryor, he went into court in the third department and procured an injunction from Judge Alden Chester of Albany which virtually nullified for the time being the decisions rendered in the two other departments. What has become of that injunction does not yet clearly appear. We observe that the Murray Hill Bank case is the subject of comment in the annual report of the Superintendent of the Banking Department. That officer thinks that the power to appoint receivers in such cases should be taken away from the Supreme Court and given to him, and he wants the Legislature to magnify his office accordingly.

The appointment of Harrison S. Moore to succeed Garret J. Garretson as County Judge of Queens county was not unexpected, and will doubtless prove satisfactory. His capacity and standing are such as to indicate that he will make a good judicial officer. The Governor also named him as the successor of Judge Garretson on the Greater New York Commission. Judge Moore will probably be the Republican candidate for County Judge at the election next fall.

The recent decisions of Mr. Justice Pryor relating to the first day of the week have attracted considerable attention. On Tuesday he denied an application to approve the certificate of incorporation of the Joseph Selling Social Club, saying: "The annual meetings of the proposed corporation are appointed for the last day of December. In time, the last day of December will be Sunday, and unless and until this coincidence be avoided, I cannot approve the certificate." It is to be observed that the Constitution of the State provides that the political year and the legislative term shall begin on the first day of January. Would it not be lawful under this provision of that instrument to inaugurate the Governor on New Year's Day if it should happen to fall on a Sunday? As to the refusal to incorporate an association of Hebrews who proposed to meet on Sunday, it is suggested that they might come within the purview of Section 204 of the Penal Code, which makes it a sufficient defense to a prosecution for work or labor on Sunday that the defendant uniformly keeps another day of the week as holy time, without working then, and that the labor on Sunday was so performed as not to interrupt or disturb others in their observance of that day.

One of the most interesting and important questions growing out of Mr. Justice Keogh's recent decision in the Brooklyn civil service case relates to the manner of selecting teachers in the public schools. Must they hereafter be appointed and promoted solely by means and as the result of competitive examinations? And does the same rule apply to teachers in rural districts, who are employed usually for short terms, as to those in the large cities who practically retain their positions during good behavior so long as their work is satisfactory? If school teachers come within the scope of the term "civil service of the State" or a civil division thereof, as used in the Constitution, the civil service reformers insist with much force that they can only be chosen through the agency of competitive examinations unless the courts are prepared to adjudge that the method is impracticable.

The right of Gov. Morton to abridge the term of office of the Inspector-General in a summary manner appears to be quite clear under the new Constitution. Whether the removal could have been made in the same way under the Constitution of 1846 may be doubted. The present Constitution authorizes the Governor to appoint the chiefs of the several staff departments, "all of whom shall hold office during his pleasure, their commissions to expire with the term of which the Governor shall have been elected." In the former Constitution the clause "all of whom shall hold office during his pleasure" did not appear. It seems to have been inserted so that the heads of the staff departments should be excepted from the general prohibition in the Constitution against the removal of commissioned officers of the National Guard unless by the State Senate, the sentence of a court martial, the findings of the Examining Board, or because of absence without leave for a period of six months or more.

The crime of arson in the first degree, for which Isaac Zucker was sentenced during the past week in this city to imprisonment for thirty-six years, was an offence formerly punishable by death under the laws of this State. Arson is classed by Wharton, and by writers on criminal law generally, as a crime against property; but the distinctive characteristic of arson in the first degree, as defined in the New York statute, is that it puts in peril the life of a human being in the night. It is the wilful burning or setting on fire in the night time either of a dwelling house in which there is a human being, or of a car, vessel, vehicle, structure, or building other than a dwelling house in which there is a human being, to the knowledge of the offender. Under the existing Penal Code imprisonment for forty years is the maximum punishment for arson in the first degree.

In these days of the needless and burdensome multiplication of law reports the official reporters at all events should refrain from padding their volumes. The miscellaneous reporter of this State now goes so far as to report cases at jury trial terms, consisting chiefly of the Judge's charge. Thus in the pamphlet number of what is known as the combined official series for Dec. 26, 1896, nearly eight pages are devoted to a charge by Mr. Justice Giegerich of this city in a case of assault and battery—and the charge is to be continued in the next number. No fault is to be found with Judge Giegerich's presentation of the law, but the publication of such instructions in cases that have not gone beyond the court of first instance ought to be left by the editor of the Miscellaneous Reports to private enterprise.

Those persons who travel by steamboat on our rivers or by steamship across the ocean ferry may read with satisfaction the recent decision of the Court of Appeals in the case of Adams vs. the New Jersey Steamboat Company, in which the defendant corporation was held liable for the loss of $160 stolen from the plaintiff's stateroom on the steamer Drew on the Hudson River after the plaintiff had retired for the night with the door locked and the windows fastened. Railroad companies have never been held to the same stringent degree of responsibility as the law applies to innkeepers, says Judge Denis O'Brien, by whom the opinion is written. "But the traveller who pays for his passage and engages a room in one of the modern floating palaces that cross the sea or navigate the interior waters of the country establishes legal relations with the carrier that cannot well be distinguished from those that exist between the hotel keeper and his guest. The carrier in that case undertakes to provide for all his wants, including a private room for his exclusive use, which is to be as free from all intrusion as that assigned to the guest at a hotel." The analogy between the two relations is declared to be so close as to require the application of the same rule of liability.

Turning Over a New Leaf with the New Year.

From the Evening Post.

Let us drop hypocrisy and cant.

WHAT IS GOING ON IN SOCIETY.

If noise is the herald of good fortune, then the future of 1897 is well assured. Such a mob as infested the city on New Year's eve has never been brought together by any great political demonstration, and such a blare of trumpets and shrieking of whistles is seldom heard in any civilized community. The chimes of various well-known churches, whose music was the ostensible object of the assemblage, were absolutely inaudible to the peaceful citizens who went to hear them, and it is to be hoped that their melodious notes will never be desecrated in the same way again.

In private houses there were many informal gatherings, the most jolly of which was probably Mrs. P. Cooper Hewitt's domino party at her residence in Lexington avenue. Dinners were given by Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish, Mrs. Roche, and Miss Turnure, where the guests assembled, and toward the midnight hour repaired in domino and mask to Mrs. Hewitt's, where they found the Hungarian Band in attendance and the Neapolitan singers wandering in and out among the crowd in fancy attire, and singing to mandolin and lute anything that might strike the fancy of those in their immediate neighborhood. At midnight the new year was welcomed with a supper in the dining room, songs, cheers, and much beating of drums and blowing of trumpets. Dancing followed, and old '96 was quite forgotten before the party broke up, several hours later.

In the suburbs the Tuxedo Club, as usual, had the jolliest celebration. The beautiful ballroom had its Christmas decorations brightened and freshened, and all the resident population, with parties from every house, danced, supped, and made merry until the new year was well advanced. There were many young girls who added not a little to the gayety of the dance. Among them were Miss King, daughter of Mrs. David King; Miss Una Soley, Miss Lewis, Miss Pierson; Miss Potter, daughter of Mr. James Brown Potter, and Miss Waldo. The Rockaway Hunt had its jollification, too, at Cedarhurst, in which those of the Meadowbrook people who are still left in their castles by the sad sea waves took part. The Richmond County Hunt gave a regular ball at St. George, S. I., where the men were all in pink and the women in white, and which was picturesque in consequence.

What merry-making was done at the Country Club of Westchester was quite within its own limits. No invitations were issued except to visitors at the members' houses, for a natural feeling of sympathy for Mr. and Mrs. Duncan Elliott, and for Mr. Julian Potter, who is still suffering from the effects of his flying leap from a window, to escape from Mrs. Elliott's burning house, prevented any noisy demonstrations. The utmost sympathy has been felt and expressed for Mr. and Mrs. Elliott in the loss of their home, with all its adornments and associations. Many good people will tell a suffering family, who have fled half clothed, or hardly clothed at all, from the flames that are devouring all their household gods, that "it might have been much worse, and they should be thankful that they were all saved alive," but only those who have passed through a fire know the horror and the terror that it carries with it, and the pain of seeing all their worldly possessions consumed before their eyes.

Opera at the Metropolitan seems to be scoring a succession of triumphs this year. The shifting of rôles among the prime donne has, in every instance, been productive of unqualified success, and the revival of "Siegfried" in German on Wednesday night caused an overflow of delight and enthusiasm which was only equalled by M. Jean de Reszke's impersonation of *Siegfried*, which was so instinct with life, vigor, and expression as to be little short of an inspiration. Mme. Melba's *Brünnhilde* was a plucky effort, as she essayed a part as different as possible from her usual rôles, and requiring an immense amount of dramatic ability, a quality in which she has been hitherto considered to be deficient. But her perfect voice and the ease with which she soared over all difficulties carried all before it, and, gaining freedom and confidence as she went on, she gave the final duet with all the force and expression of Lili Lehmann herself. It was a packed house, with stalls and boxes crowded, and all the glitter and fashion that has filled the Metropolitan on different occasions this winter.

From a social point of view, Mrs. Bradley Martin was the lion of the evening. It is two years since she has been seen in New York, and, in cherry-colored velvet with jewels ad infinitum disposed about her person, she was beseiged by visitors and overwhelmed with greetings and welcomes. Mrs. Astor at her side, in black velvet, relieved only by precious stones, looked quiet and almost simple in her attire. Mrs. John Gardiner of Boston was also a striking figure in white satin embroidered with silver spangles. Mrs. Almeric Hugh Paget looked extremely well in pale blue satin, with the superb pearls that belonged to her mother.

The rage for domin