THE NEW YORK HERALD.

WHOLE NO. 9648. NEW YORK, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1863. PRICE THREE CENTS

MEDIATION.

Important Correspondence Between the French Minister for Foreign Affairs and Mr. Dayton and Secretary Seward.

Mr. Dayton's Exposition of the Situation of the Belligerents.

The French Proffer of Mediation and Mr. Seward's Reply.

Napoleon's New Plan of Mediation.

&c., &c., &c.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 12, 1863.

The President to-day sent to the Senate the following despatches:—

DEPARTMENT OF STATE, Feb. 12, 1863.

TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES:—

The Secretary of State, to whom was referred the resolution of the Senate of the 10th inst., requesting the President, if not in his judgment incompatible with the public interests, to lay before the Senate any correspondence which has taken place between this government and the government of France on the subject of mediation, or other measures looking to the termination of the existing civil war, has the honor to lay before the President a copy of the correspondence called for by the said resolution.

Respectfully submitted.

WILLIAM H. SEWARD.

MR. DAYTON TO MR. SEWARD. [Extract.]

PARIS, Nov. 18, 1862.

SIR—Herewith I enclose to you the copy of a communication just made to Drouyn de Lhuys.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM L. DAYTON.

MR. DAYTON TO MR. DROUYN DE LHUYS.

PARIS, Nov. 16, 1862.

MONSIEUR LE MINISTRE—In a recent conversation had with your Excellency, you asked some questions in relation to the population of the Southern States of the United States and the position of the several divisions of our army. This, in connection with a statement in your despatch of the 30th of October to his Majesty's Ambassadors at London and at St. Petersburg, officially published, induced me to make to you this communication.

Although that despatch was not addressed to me or to my government, yet it so intimately concerns the latter that I am sure I shall be excused if I refer to it in connection with the subject matter of your conversation. I do this, not with a view to any criticism, or to the exposition of my opinions beyond those already given by me, but to correct, so much as I can, what seems to me a misapprehension of facts. I do this in the hope that should the question present itself for consideration in the future, your Excellency may be induced to revise your opinions as to the strength of the parties involved in the war now existing in the United States. Your Excellency says there has existed between the belligerents from the very outset of the war an equality of strength which has been almost constantly maintained ever since; and after so much bloodshed they are now in this respect very nearly in the same position as at first. Nothing justifies the expectation of any more decided military operations at an early day. In answer to your questions in our conference of the 11th inst., I endeavored, with the aid of a map, to point out the districts of country occupied at present by the several divisions of our army. If your Excellency can, from memory, recall these questions, and compare them with the condition of things at the very outset of the war, or even as it has been within the past year, you will find cause, I am sure, for grave doubt as to the accuracy of opinion expressed in the above extract.

A little more than a year ago the whole of the slave States south of the Potomac, and almost to the Mississippi, thirteen in all, were in possession of the insurgents, except only a small locality in Virginia opposite to Washington, a tract of country in the same State to the west of the Alleghany Mountains in which there was a moral possession, the northern parts of Kentucky, and perhaps half of Missouri. With these exceptions they held undisputed sway of the entire country of the South. They possessed at the same time the military arsenal at Harper's Ferry and the vast naval arsenals and dockyards at Norfolk and Pensacola. They had likewise possession of the eastern shore of the Chesapeake bay, which, in connection with the command of the Potomac, gave them control over the approach by water to Washington, the capital of the nation. They have lost during the year the eastern shore of the Chesapeake and the command of the Potomac; the city of Norfolk, with its arsenals and dockyards, and the adjoining country and the dockyards at Pensacola. They have lost all Virginia west of the Alleghanies, Kentucky and Missouri, and part of Tennessee, comprising among other points Nashville, the capital, and Memphis, the commercial port on the Mississippi. They have lost every post, harbor and fortification on the Atlantic coast of any value, those at Charleston alone excepted, from the mouth of the Chesapeake to the southern point of Florida, and thence around the Gulf coast to Pensacola. But, more important even than this, they have within the year lost New Orleans, the great commercial metropolis of the South, with the numerous fortifications established for its defence. They have likewise lost the Mississippi, with every island and river fortification, save that at Vicksburg, by which it was defended. This river, which drains the entire valley of the West, and upon which could float the navies of the world, which can neither be forded nor bridged, must forever separate the four slave States and their contiguous territories on its western side from those on the east. The loss of this river was more injurious to the cause of the insurrectionists than the loss of many battles. Conscious that this would be so it was fortified, your Excellency will remember, not only at its mouth, and below and at New Orleans, but at every available point upwards, yet with its many fortifications, Vicksburg alone excepted, it has within the year been lost to the South. The Tennessee and Cumberland, great interior rivers of the West, with their defences and fortifications, have likewise been taken, after a hard struggle, by the armies of the Union. In a word, the insurgents do not now hold a foot of ground which they did not hold early in the war, while the flag of the Union has been constantly advancing, and now floats somewhere on the soil or over the fortifications of every slave State save one. Their armies have, in the meantime, been driven from an area of country embracing in the aggregate not less than 100,000 square miles, and occupied by a population ranging from 1,500,000 to 2,000,000 of people.

But in war equality in strength consists not in these things only. Permit me, therefore, to remind your Excellency that, while all the insolvent efforts on the part of the South to create a navy have been defeated, and her vessels destroyed, the navy of the United States has, within the year, grown from a very small to a very great power, offering all the ports of the South, precluding, save with our consent, all entrance to or exit from them, unless by casualty or accident. This power, which the South has little to meet, is almost exclusively the growth of the year; and on our own coasts, and in the ports, harbors and rivers of the South, it cannot but be in the future a most efficient means of attack or defence.

There are two other elements of strength which specially require consideration—men and money. The armies of the South have been large beyond example, as compared with the extent of population from which they have been drawn. To raise them to their present standard the conscription law of the South has embraced all from the age of eighteen to forty five years. Their armies, like our own, waste away by the casualties of war, and there can be little force in reserve to supply the drain. An examination of the preliminary report of the census of 1860, of which I have had the honor to transmit you a copy, will show on page 131 that the body of the population upon which the South must draw for the supply of the drain is less even than I suggested in our recent communication. The aggregate free population of all the slave States, including Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, Kentucky and Missouri, is only 8,289,768; but from this must be deducted the population of those slave States in the possession of the United States where no conscription law of the South could possibly be enforced, and likewise the free blacks of the South, all whose hands they dare not place arms. The free population of those States shown by the census of 1860 is as follows:—Delaware, 110,418; Maryland, [illegible]; Kentucky, 930,201; Missouri, 1,067,081; Kanawha, or Western Virginia, with Jefferson, Accomac and Northampton counties, estimated at 370,774; free blacks of the South to be deducted, 250,787—making an aggregate of 3,328,121, which, when deducted from the aggregate free population of the South, leaves only 4,961,642, including men, women and children. The general accuracy of these figures can readily be tested by reference to pages 131 and 286, 287, 288 and 289 of the Census Report before referred to. It is true that to some slight extent troops may voluntarily go into the Southern army from portions of the country not in their possession; but these would probably be at least balanced by those withholding themselves along the coasts, in the towns and cities of the South subject to our control, and for which no allowance is made in the above calculation. I need not recapitulate the population of the free States and of the border States in our possession. The aggregate, by a reference to the same Census Report, will be seen to be within a fraction of 22,000,000 (21,996,846). During the last summer, in addition to the army then in the field, they raised within the space of two months, principally by voluntary enlistment, 600,000 men, and there is yet another and still another army in the reserve, as I am instructed, to take their place, in whole or in part, should that unhappily become necessary.

In the foregoing estimate I have taken no account of the slaves of the South as a source either of strength or weakness. As they have been used heretofore, they have, certainly added strength to their masters. They have, in fact, fed the army. Some have been forced to labor with it in the trenches, while the great mass have toiled in the fields at home, thus leaving almost the entire population of the South free to fight its battles. Emancipation, should it occur, while it liberates the slave, would take off this source of strength from their masters. Their population in the rear must be fed, all of their army can not be held together. The one is essential to the maintenance of the other. A time may soon come, therefore, when, aside from the apprehensions incident to emancipation, the slaves of the South will be to their masters a source of weakness, and not of strength. Permit me, however, here to add that, whoever may have entertained apprehensions of a servile war, such I do not suppose for a moment to have been contemplated by the President in foreshadowing his policy of emancipation. The slaves of the South, scattered over a vast extent of country, have no arms and no means of procuring them. They have little intelligence, no means of distant intercommunication, and can have no general concert of action. They may refuse to labor for their masters, and their masters cannot maintain them.

The map left with your Excellency showing the percentage of slaves in each county of the South will prove this beyond a question. In certain large sections of country, along the Mississippi more especially, there is about twenty eight per cent only of white population. All the rest are slaves. Of this population the able-bodied are now almost entirely away with the army. Could attempts be made here or in other sections to constrain the slaves to a forced obedience, they may resist, or they may leave their plantations, as many have already done, and seek the friendly shelter of the Union flag. But neither principle nor policy will induce the United States to encourage a servile war, or prompt the slave to cut the throat of his master or his master's family. The government will not even permit, as I have already said to you, its own soldiers, or the soldiers of the enemy acting as guerillas or marauders, belonging to no organized force and under no regular flag, to make war or attack even an armed enemy without punishment; still less would it encourage or permit slaves to offend against humanity by attacks upon the feeble and helpless. That an isolated case or cases of wrong may occur in the course of establishing a great change, if such shall be established, in the social organization of the South, is not improbable, but in every such case I doubt not that the arm of the government would promptly interfere to protect and to punish. This, however, is matter incidental only to the subject of my communication.

Leaving the question of population, I pass for a moment to the other great element of strength in war, and that is money. I have already said that the resources of the South in men would seem to be practically exhausted, and their resources in money, I think, must be equally so. I am instructed that, with a floating debt of $400,000,000, represented by paper at a discount of 75 per cent, they have neither raised, nor have they the means of raising, a revenue equal to $10,000,000 in any form or for any purpose. Want and distress are already disclosing themselves in painful forms throughout the entire region occupied by the insurgents. On the other hand, the government of the United States has, as I am instructed, a revenue available in the precious metals of more than $100,000,000, while its mines are yielding gold more rapidly than foreign trade withdraws it from the country. In this vital matter of finance, therefore, there does not seem to exist between the parties an equality of strength. So far, indeed, as I can see, such equality has existed now here, except on certain battle fields, especially between the two great armies in Virginia. Here the insurgents have advanced and retreated. They have gained battles and lost them. I do not mean to deprecate their gallantry; they are yet my countrymen. Here at least they have shown equality of strength; but everywhere else the permanent gain has been with the armies of the Union.

I avail myself of this occasion to renew to your Excellency assurances of the most distinguished consideration, with which I have the honor to be your Excellency's very obedient servant, WILLIAM L. DAYTON.

MR. DAYTON TO MR. SEWARD. [Extract—No. 23.]

PARIS, Nov. 25, 1862.

SIR—I received last night from M. Drouyn de Lhuys a communication, dated the 23d inst., in answer to mine of the 17th inst. (dated by mistake the 16th). The communication of M. de Lhuys is one of so much interest that I send you herewith a copy of the original and a translation.

I am, sir, your obedient servant, WM. L. DAYTON.

To WM. H. SEWARD, Secretary of State.

MR. DROUYN DE LHUYS TO MR. DAYTON.

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, PALACE OF COURBEVOIE, Nov. 23, 1862.

SIR—I have learned with lively interest the information which you have been pleased to communicate to me upon the respective situations of the two belligerent parties in the United States. You express to me the hope that these suggestions may modify my opinion as to the equilibrium of strength between the States of the North and those of the South; and they are certainly of a nature to make me appreciate all the resources of your government. But it is none the less true that, notwithstanding the inequality of numbers and of financial means, notwithstanding local advantages and partial conquests, the conditions of soil and climate seem to oppose insuperable obstacles to the progress of the struggle, and that the equal energy of both sides tends to impress upon it a character of indomitable desperation. I am prepared to render homage with you to the courage which the Americans, upon the one side and the other, have shown thus far. But this courage, even while it excites the admiration of the world, is only calculated to render more uncertain the result of the combats and to retard the termination of the disasters of this bloody war. You know, sir, what feelings this sad spectacle has given rise to in us. You know the step which a profound sympathy for America has inspired in the government of the Emperor, in the hope of opening the way to a reconciliation. This step you know also ought and could take place, in the opinion of the Emperor, only with the consent and concurrence of the two belligerent parties. At present the reception given to our proposition by the Cabinets of London and St. Petersburg prevents us from thinking our friendly dispositions have not changed. If some day the Americans, tired of turning their valor against themselves, should wish to have recourse to us, in order to seek in concert the means of terminating this conflict, they would find us always ready, associated with other Powers or separately, to aid them with our co-operation, and to testify by our good offices the feelings which have not ceased to animate France in regard to them.

Receive, sir, the assurance of my distinguished consideration. DROUYN DE LHUYS.

Mr. DAYTON, Envoy Extraordinary, &c.

MR. SEWARD TO MR. DAYTON. [Extract—No. 261.]

DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, Nov. 28, 1862.

WM. L. DAYTON, Esq., &c., &c.—

SIR—Your despatch of November 10 (No. 223) has been received only at this late day. I have now only to say that the views presented by me in my despatch of October 20 are the deliberate and settled convictions of the government, always to be expressed when in your judgment any expression whatever on the subject of the action of foreign Powers shall be either necessary or expedient. In reply to a suggestion in your despatch, it is proper for me to say that neither M. Mercier nor any other person has had the least warrant from any authority of the United States for representing to his government that the President would be disposed to entertain any proposition in regard to the action of this government in the conduct of our domestic affairs from any foreign quarter whatsoever. The exact contrary is in effect all that has ever passed between all the ministers residing here and this department. You will judge whether it is important to clear up this point at Paris.

I am, sir, your obedient servant, WM. H. SEWARD.

MR. SEWARD TO MR. DAYTON. [No. 263—Extract 5.]

DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, Nov. 30, 1862.

WM. L. DAYTON, Esq., &c.—

SIR—Your several despatches of November 12 (No. 224), November 15 (No. 225), November 14 (No. 226), have been received. I have also, by aid of the telegraph, the substance of the invitation which was addressed by the Emperor of France to the Emperor of Russia and the Queen of Great Britain, to join in recommending an armistice in our civil war, together with the answer or those two sovereigns declining that invitation. In regard to the same subject my instructions will be very simple and short. An inconclusive conference concerning the United States has been held between these Powers, all of whom avow themselves as friends of the United States, and yet the United States were carefully excluded from the conference. Neither party in the conference proposed any combination to coerce the will or control the policy of the United States. Under these circumstances the United States are not called upon to say what they would have done if the proposition of France, which was declined by Russia and Great Britain, had been adopted and carried into effect. Nor are we called upon to discuss the propriety of the propositions and proceedings respectively of the several parties in the conference. Such a debate upon a subject which has already lost its practical character, or which, to speak more accurately, has not attained such a character, might produce irritations and jealousies which the President desires to avoid. Acting on these principles, we shall ask no explanations, nor shall we in any manner comment upon the explanations which shall be voluntarily made. A government which is conducting a great nation through a civil war must deal continually with new events as they arise, not with those which have already gone into history. The United States has continually said to all Europe that they know that the saving of the American Union depends on the American people, and not at all on the policies of foreign states, severally or combined. Such States may, as they have heretofore, prolong and agitate our unnatural and lamented strife by exciting or maintaining the hopes of our disloyal citizens; but they cannot change our purpose to maintain the integrity of the Union, or defeat its accomplishment. This government will, in all cases, reasonably warn foreign Powers of the injurious effect of any apprehended interference on their part. And having done this, it will measure its means of self-defence by the magnitude of the dangers with which the country is threatened. Foreign nations need scarcely to be reminded that family quarrels are always of short duration; that the very scandal which they bring operates as an incentive to reconciliation. Much more does the unavoidable apprehension of foreign interference work in that direction. The emissaries of treason who now remain in the European capitals will very soon disappear, and the whole American people will forever afterwards be asking who among the foreign nations were the most just and most forbearing to their country in its hour of trial. It is the President's policy so to conduct our national affairs that all who have heretofore been our friends may abide in that relation. If any of them shall be lost, our regret will be modified by the reflection that the bereavement resulted from our misfortune, and not our fault.

I am, sir, your obedient servant, WM. H. SEWARD.

MR. SEWARD TO MR. DAYTON. [Extract 5—No. 665.]

DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, Dec. 5, 1862.

SIR—Your despatch of November 18, No. 227, has been received. Having already indicated the course which the President has decided to adopt concerning the late proceedings of the French government, it is not necessary now for me to review the note which, in the absence of instructions, you have written to Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys.

I am your obedient servant, WM. H. SEWARD.

To WM. L. DAYTON, Esq., &c., &c.

MR. SEWARD TO MR. DAYTON. [No. 266.]

DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, Dec. 11, 1862.

SIR—Your despatch of November 25, No. 231, has been received, together with the note which Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys addressed to you on the 23d of November, by way of answer to your communication to him of the 17th of the month. From my previous despatches you will probably have inferred that the President did not expect you to open a correspondence with Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys upon the subject of the proposition concerning American affairs, which the Emperor has recently submitted to the Emperor of Russia and the Queen of Great Britain. Inasmuch as you have done so without consulting this government, and have thus drawn forth from the imperial government a frank and friendly answer, it is only proper that you should now inform Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys that his note has been submitted to the President, and that he is gratified with the explanations it gives of the present policy of the Emperor in regard to the United States. You are authorized also to inform Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys that this government desires, no less sincerely than it has always done, to retain and fortify its traditional relations with France, and that every proceeding which it shall have occasion to take in the conduct of international affairs, shall manifest that spirit, and no other. You are authorized further to say to Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys that this government appreciates the assurances which the Emperor has given us of his willingness at a future time, if invited by it, to render his good offices towards forwarding a termination of the civil war in which we are so unhappily engaged, and that this assurance is received as a fresh demonstration of the same good will and cordial friendship towards our country upon which this government and the American people have so constantly relied.

I am, &c., WM. H. SEWARD.

WM. L. DAYTON, Esq., &c., &c.

MR. DAYTON TO MR. SEWARD. [Extract—No. 246.]

PARIS, Dec. 23, 1862.

SIR—Your despatch of December 5, No. 265, is received. You simply acknowledge the receipt of my despatch of November 18, No. 227, and say that, "having already indicated the course which the President has decided to adopt concerning the late proceedings of the French government, it is unnecessary for me now to review the note, which in the absence of instructions you (I) have written Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys." I had supposed that that note, as it did not assume to indicate any policy, but merely to sum up briefly the successes of our army and the governmental resources, in hopes of its having weight in any future deliberation of this government, could not fail at least to meet the approbation of the department. My general instructions in reference to the subject matter were most ample, and I had held verbal conference with Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys on the subject before. He told me what he had done, and I could answer, when, perhaps, the government could not. The emergency, I thought, not only justified, but required, that, in view of the possible future, I should put my verbal suggestions in writing. As one useful result, at all events, I have received the important communication of Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys of November 23 last, a copy of which accompanied my despatch No. 231. I may add, also, that I felt that it was but just to myself that my countrymen, as well as the government, should see and know that I had not failed in the crisis which had occurred fairly to represent its condition.

I am, sir, your obedient servant, WM. L. DAYTON.

To His Excellency WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Secretary of State, &c., &c.

MR. SEWARD TO MR. DAYTON. [Extract—No. 283.]

DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, Jan. 9, 1863.

SIR—Your despatch of December 23 (No. 246) has been submitted to the President. My recent despatches, especially No. 268, will have relieved you, I trust, of any concern about the caution which the President thought it prudent to observe, in the first instance, in relation to the note which you addressed to Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys immediately after the publication of his correspondence with the governments of Great Britain and Russia in relation to a proposed armistice. The note was opportune, and wisely judiciously conceived, and it has produced gratifying results. I am, sir, your obedient servant, WM. H. SEWARD.

WM. L. DAYTON, Esq., &c., &c.

MR. DAYTON TO MR. SEWARD. [Extract—No. 255.]

PARIS, Jan. 15, 1863.

SIR—A despatch will shortly be sent by Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys to Mr. Mercier, requesting him to suggest to you on a suitable occasion the propriety of appointing commissioners to treat with the South for peace and for Union if possible; if not possible, for such terms of separation as may be eventually agreed upon. This communication was submitted by Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys to the Emperor on the 9th inst., and returned to him by the Emperor yesterday. The despatch answers what is supposed would have been the objections to a proposal for an armistice or mediation.

First—It proposes, it says, no interference of any kind by a foreign Power.

Second—It does not require or ask for any cessation of hostilities pending the negotiations, but, like the negotiation for peace in 1783 between the United States and Great Britain, permits everything to proceed as if no efforts for a settlement were being made.

I am, sir, your obedient servant, WM. L. DAYTON.

To Hon. Excellency WM. H. SEWARD, Secretary of State.

MR. DROUYN DE LHUYS TO MR. MERCIER.

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, POLITICAL DIVISION, PARIS, Jan. 9, 1863.

SIR—In forming the purpose of assisting, by the proffer of our good offices, to shorten the period of those hostilities which are desolating the American continent, we have not to be guided beyond all by the friendship which actuates the government of the Emperor in regard to the United States. The little success of our overtures might chill the interest with which we follow the fluctuations of this contest; but the sentiment to which we have yielded is too sincere for indifference to find a place in our thoughts, that we should cease to be painfully affected while the war continues to rage. We cannot regard without profound regret this war worse than civil, comparable to the most terrible distractions of the ancient republics, and whose disasters multiply in proportion to the resources and the valor which each of the belligerent parties develops. The government of his Majesty have, therefore, seriously examined the objections which have been made to us when we have suggested the idea of a friendly mediation, and we have asked ourselves whether they are truly of a nature to set aside as premature every tentative for reconciliation. On one part has been opposed to us the repugnance of the United States to admit the intervention of foreign influence in the dispute; on the other the hope, which the federal government has not abandoned, of attaining its solution by force of arms. Assuredly, sir, recourse to the good offices of one or several neutral Powers contains nothing incompatible with the pride so legitimate amidst a great nation, and means purely international are not these alone which furnish examples of the moral character of mediation. We flatter ourselves, besides, that in proffering to place ourselves at the disposal of the belligerent parties to facilitate between their negotiations, the basis of which we abstain from prejudging, we have manifested to the patriotism of the United states all the considerations to which it is entitled—now, perhaps, still more than ever, after such new proof of moral force and energy. We are none the less ready, amid the wishes which we form in favor of peace, to take into account all the susceptibilities of national feeling; and we do not at all question the right of the federal government to decline the co-operation (concours) of the great maritime Powers of Europe. But this co-operation, it is not the only means which offers itself to the Cabinet of Washington to hasten the close of the war? And if it believes that it ought to repel any foreign intervention, could it not honorably accept the idea of direct (*pourparlers*) informal conferences with the authority which may represent the States of the South? The federal government does not despair, we know, of giving a more active impulse to hostilities. Its sacrifices have not exhausted its resources, still less its perseverance and its steadfastness. The protraction of the struggle, in a word, has not shaken its confidence in the definitive success of its efforts.

But the opening of informal conferences between the belligerent parties does not necessarily imply the immediate cessation of hostilities. Negotiations about peace are not always the consequence of a suspension of warfare. They precede, on the contrary, more often the establishment of a truce. How many times have we not seen plenipotentiaries meet, exchange communications, agree upon all the essential provisions of treaties—resolve, in fine, the question even of peace or war—whilst the leaders of armies continued the strife, and endeavored, even to the latest moment, to modify by force of arms the conditions of peace. To recall only one memory drawn from the history of the United States—the negotiations which consecrated their independence were commenced long before hostilities had ceased in the New World, and the armistice was not established until the act of the 30th November, 1782, which, under the name of provisional articles, embraced in advance the principal clauses of the definitive treaty of 1783. Nothing, therefore, would hinder the government of the United States, without renouncing the advantage which it believes it can attain by the continuation of the war, from entering upon informal conferences with the Confederates of the South, in case they should show themselves disposed thereto. Representatives or commissioners of the two parties could assemble at such point as it should be deemed proper to designate, and which could for this purpose be declared neutral. Reciprocal complaints would be examined into at this meeting. In place of the accusations which North and South mutually cast upon each other at this time would be substituted an argumentative discussion of the interests which divide them. They would seek out, by means of well ordered and profound deliberations, whether these interests are definitively irreconcilable, whether separation is an extreme which can no longer be avoided, or whether the memories of a common existence, the ties of every kind which have made of the North and the South one sole and whole federative State, and have borne them on to so high a degree of prosperity, are not more powerful than the causes which have placed arms in the hands of the two populations. A negotiation, the object of which would be thus determinative, would not involve any of the objections raised against the diplomatic intervention of Europe, and, without giving birth to the same hopes as the immediate conclusion of an armistice, would exercise a happy influence on the march of events. Why, therefore, should not a combination, which respects all the relations of the United States, obtain the approbation of the federal government? Persuaded on our part that it is in conformity with their true interests, we do not hesitate to recommend it to their attention, and, not having sought in the project of a mediation of the maritime Powers of Europe any vain display of influence, we would applaud with entire freedom from all susceptibilities of self esteem, the opening of a negotiation which would invite the two populations to discuss, without the co-operation of Europe, the solution of their differences.

I request you, sir, to give this assurance to the Cabinet of Washington, while commending to its wisdom counsels dictated by most sincere interest in the prosperity of the United States. You are, moreover, authorized, if Mr. Seward expresses the wish, to leave with him a copy of this despatch.

Accept, sir, the assurance of my high consideration. DROUYN DE LHUYS.

To Mr. MERCIER, Minister of France at Washington.

MR. SEWARD TO MR. DAYTON. [No. 297.]

DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, Feb. 6, 1863.

WM. L. DAYTON, Esq., &c., &c.—

SIR—The intimation given in your despatch of January 15 (No. 256), that I might expect a special visit from Mr. Mercier, has been realized. He called on the 3d instant, and gave me a copy of a despatch he had just received from Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys, under the date of the 9th of January. I have taken the President's instructions, and I now proceed to give you his ideas upon the subject in question. It has been considered with seriousness, resulting from the reflection that the people of France are known to be faultless sharers with the American nation in the misfortunes and calamities of our unhappy civil war. Nor do we on this, any more than on other occasions, forget the traditional friendship of the two countries, which we unhesitatingly believe has inspired the counsels that Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys has imparted. He says:—"The federal government does not despair, we know, of giving more active impulse to hostilities;" and again he remarks:—"The protraction of the struggle, in a word, has not shaken the confidence of the federal government in the definitive success of its efforts." These passages seem to me to do unintentional injustice to the language, whether confidential or public, in which this government has constantly spoken on the subject of the war. It certainly has had and avowed only one purpose—a determination to preserve the integrity of the country. So far from admitting any laxity of effort, or betraying any despondency, the government has, on the contrary, borne itself cheerfully in all vicissitudes with unvarying confidence in an early and complete triumph of the national cause. Now, when we are in a manner invited by a friendly Power to review the twenty-one months' history of the contest, we find no occasion to abate that confidence. The history, which, in an alternation of victories and defeats, or in the appointed incident of war, the land and naval forces of the United States have steadily advanced, reclaiming from the insurgents the ports, forts and posts which they had treacherously seized before the strife actually begun, and even before it was seriously apprehended, so many of the States and districts which the insurgents included in the field of their projected exclusive slave holding dominion have already been re-established under the flag of the Union that they now retain only the States of Georgia, Alabama and Texas, with half of Virginia, half of North Carolina, two-thirds of South Carolina, half of Mississippi, and one-third respectively of Arkansas and Louisiana. The national forces hold even this small territory in close blockade and siege. This government, if required, does not hesitate to submit its achievements to the test of comparison, and it maintains that in no part of the world, and in no time, ancient or modern, has a nation, when rendered suddenly ready for combat by the enjoyments of eighty years of almost unbroken peace, so quickly awakened at the alarm of sedition, put forth energies so vigorous and achieved successes so signal and effective as those which have marked the progress of this contest on the part of the Union.

Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys, I fear, has taken other light than the correspondence of this government for his guidance in ascertaining its temper and finances. He has probably read of divisions of sentiment among those who hold themselves forth as organs of public opinion here, and has given to them an undue importance. It is to be remembered that this nation of thirty millions is civilly divided into forty one States and Territories, which cover an expanse hardly less than Europe; that the people are a peace democracy, exercising everywhere the utmost freedom of speech and suffrage; that a great crisis necessarily produces vehement as well as profound debate, with sharp collisions of individual, local and sectional interests, sentiments and convictions, and that this heat of controversy is increased by the intervention of speculations, interests, prejudices and passions from every other part of the civilized world. It is, however, through such debates that the agreement of the nation upon any subject is habitually attained, its resolutions formed and its policy established; while there has been much difference of popular opinion and favor concerning the agents who shall carry on the war, the principles on which it shall be waged and the means with which it shall be prosecuted.

Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys has only to refer to the statute books of Congress and the executive ordinances to learn that the national activity has hitherto been and yet is as efficient as that of any other nation, whatever its form of government ever was, under circumstances of equally grave import to its peace, safety and welfare. Not one voice has been raised anywhere out of the immediate field of the insurrection in favor of foreign intervention, or mediation, or arbitration, or of compromise, with the relinquishment of one acre of the national domain or the surrender of even one constitutional franchise. At the same time it is manifest to the world that our resources are yet abundant and our credit adequate to the existing emergency.

What Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys suggests is that this government shall appoint commissioners to meet on neutral ground commissioners of the insurgents. He supposes that in the conferences to be thus held reciprocal complaints could be discussed, and, in place of the accusations which the North and the South now mutually cast upon each other, the conference would substitute an argumentative discussion of the interests which divide them. He assumes, further, "that the commissioners would seek, by means of well ordered and profound deliberations, whether these interests are definitively irreconcilable; whether separation is an extreme that can no longer be avoided, or whether the memories of a common existence, the ties of every kind which have made of the North and the South one whole federative State, and have borne them on to so high a degree of prosperity, are not more powerful than the causes which have placed arms in the hands of the two populations." The suggestion is not an extraordinary one, and it may well have been thought by the Emperor of the French, in the earnestness of his benevolent desire for the restoration of peace, a feasible one.

But when Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys shall come to review it in the light in which it must necessarily be examined in this country, I think he can hardly fail to perceive that it amounts to nothing less than a proposition that, while this government is engaged in suppressing an armed insurrection with the purpose of maintaining the constitutional national authority and preserving the integrity of the country, it shall enter into diplomatic discussion with the insurgents upon the questions whether that authority shall not be renounced and whether the country shall not be delivered over to disunion, to be quickly followed by ever increasing anarchy. If it were possible for the government of the United States to compromise the national authority so far as to enter into such debates, it is not easy to perceive what good results could be obtained by them. The commissioners must agree in recommending either that the Union shall stand or that it shall be voluntarily dissolved, or else they must leave the vital question unsettled, to abide at least the fortunes of the war.

The government has not shut out knowledge of the present temper, any more than of the past purposes, of the insurgents. There is not the least ground to suppose that the controlling actors would be persuaded, at this moment, by any arguments which a national commissioner could offer, to forego the ambition that has impelled them to the disloyal position they are occupying. Any commissioner who should be appointed by those actors, or through their dictation or influence, must enter the conference imbued with the spirit and pledged to the personal fortunes of the insurgent chiefs. The loyal people in the insurrectionary States would be unheard, and any offer of peace by this government on the condition of the maintenance of the Union must necessarily be rejected.

On the other hand, as I have already intimated, this government has not the least thought of relinquishing the trust which has been confided to it by the nation under the most solemn of all political sanctions; and, if it had any such thought, it would have still abundant reason to know that peace, proposed at the cost of disunition, would be immediately, universally and indignantly rejected by the American people. It is a great mistake that European statesmen make if they suppose this people are demoralized. Whatever, in case of an insurrection, the people of France, or Great Britain, or Switzerland, or of the Netherlands, would do to save their national existence, no matter how the strife might be regarded by or affect foreign nations, just so much, and certainly no less, the people of the United States will do, if necessary, to save for the common benefit the region which is bounded by the Pacific and Atlantic coasts and by the shores of the Gulfs of St. Lawrence and Mexico, together with the free and common navigation of the Rio Grande, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, Ohio, St. Lawrence, Hudson, Delaware, Potomac and other national highways by which this land, which to them is at once a land of inheritance and a land of promise, is opened and watered.

Even if the agents of the American people, thus exercising their power, should, through fear or faction, fail below this height of national virtue, they would be speedily, yet constitutionally, replaced by others of sterner character and patriotism.

I must be allowed to say, also, that Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys errs in his description of the parties to the present conflict. We have here, in a political sense, no North, no South—no Northern, no Southern States. We have an insurrectionary party which is located upon, and is chiefly adjacent to, the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, and we have, on the other hand, a loyal people, who constitute not only Northern States, but Eastern, Middle, Western and Southern States. I have on many occasions heretofore submitted to the French government the President's views of the interests and ideas which lie at the bottom of the determination of the American government and people to maintain the federal Union. The President has done the same thing in his messages and other public declarations. I refrain, therefore, from reviewing that argument in connection with the existing question. Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys draws to his aid the conferences which took place between the colonies and Great Britain in our Revolutionary War. He will allow me to answer that action, in the crisis of a nation, must accord with its necessities, and therefore can be seldom conformed to precedents. Great Britain, when entering on that negotiation, had manifestly come to entertain doubts of her ultimate success, and it is certain that the counsels of the colonies could not have failed to take new courage, if not to gain other advantage, when the parent State compromised so far as to treat of peace on the terms of conceding their independence. It is true, indeed, that peace must come some time, and that conferences must attend if they are not allowed to precede the pacification. There is, however, a better form for such conferences than the one which Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys suggests. The latter would be palpably in derogation of the constitution of the United States, and would carry no weight, because destitute of the sanction necessary to bind, either to the loyal or disloyal portions of the people.

On the other hand, the Congress of the United States furnishes a constitutional forum for debates between the alienated parties. Senators and Representatives from the loyal people are there already, fully empowered to confer. And seats are also vacant and inviting the Senators and Representatives of the discontented party, who may be constitutionally sent there from the States involved in the insurrection. Moreover, the conferences which can thus be held in Congress have this great advantage over any that could be organized on the plan of Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys, viz: that Congress, if it thought wise, could call a national convention to adopt its recommendations, and give them all the solemnity and binding force of organic law. Such conferences between the alienated parties may be said to have already begun. Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee and Missouri, States which are claimed by the insurgents, are already represented in Congress, and are submitting, with perfect freedom and in a proper spirit, their advice upon the course best calculated to bring about in the shortest time a firm, lasting and honorable peace. Representatives have been sent, also, from Louisiana, and others are understood to be coming from Arkansas. There is a preponderating argument in favor of the Congressional form of conference over that which is suggested by Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys, viz: that, while accession to the latter would bring the government into concurrence with the insurgents in disregarding and setting aside an important part of the constitution of the United States, and so would be of pernicious example, the Congressional conference, on the contrary, preserves and gives new strength to that sacred instrument, which must continue through future ages the sheet anchor of the republic.

You will be at liberty to read this despatch to Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys, and to give him a copy if he shall desire it. To the end that you may be informed of the whole case, I transmit a copy of Mr. Drouyn de Lhuys' despatch.

I am, sir, your obedient servant, WM. H. SEWARD.

The New Plan of Mediation.

PROPOSAL FOR AN AMERICAN CONGRESS.

[Paris (Jan. 23) correspondence of London Times.]

The *Constitutionnel* of Tuesday contained an article suggesting that Commissioners delegated by the federal government of America and by the Southern States should meet on neutral ground and confer together without hostilities being suspended. While the armies were engaged the delegates might deliberate on means to put an end to the fratricidal struggle. They might examine in succession the questions which have given rise to that sanguinary conflict. They might coolly consider each of them. Might it not be possible that the painful experience acquired since the commencement of the struggle, and the disappointed hope of seeing it promptly concluded—that the sight of a country formerly so flourishing and now so desolate, that the mourning of so many families, the loss of so much wealth, might cause a change in their opinions? The commissioners, after mature deliberation, might declare whether they considered the separation indispensable, or they might declare in favor of the Union, and, if so, declare on what conditions it could be maintained. The voice of these men would have great authority. The Northern States and those of the South could more calmly estimate the cause of their difference. They might advise mutual concessions, and effect a reconciliation so desirable for the interests of the world.

I allude to the article of which the foregoing is the substance merely to say that *I have reason to know that instructions to the same effect have been sent out to the French Minister at Washington*; that the substance of those instructions was at the same time communicated to the American Minister in Paris, *and that the American Minister did not appear to consider them unreasonable, unfitted for, or unacceptable.*

[From the Paris Pays, Jan. 28.]

We believe we are able to state that the government of the Emperor has addressed a communication to Washington, proposing officiously the means of an arrangement between the belligerents which would fully protect the *amour propre* and dignity of the Americans.

NEWS FROM FORTRESS MONROE.

FORTRESS MONROE, Feb. 11, 1863.

In reply to a demand made for the release of Union army officers, Colonel Ludlow, United States Commissioner for the exchange of prisoners, has received information from Mr. Ould, rebel Commissioner, that all the United States officers captured before the 10th of December, 1862, the date of Jeff. Davis' proclamation, would be immediately released.

All the sutlers, clerks and United States employ