Mississippi Democrat.

THREE DOLLARS] "THAT GOVERNMENT IS BEST WHICH GOVERNS LEAST." [IN ADVANCE.

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Miscellany.

DR. LARDNER'S LECTURES.

THE PLURALITY OF WORLDS.

On Wednesday evening, Calvert Hall again presented a select company of ladies and gentlemen, capable of discriminating between the meretricious and the real, and wisely choosing to improve the brief opportunity for instruction and agreeable amusement, which the lectures of this accomplished and learned philosopher now offer to our citizens. Dr. Lardner commenced with some appropriate observations on the Divine purposes in the creation of our system, and then directed attention to the means of information with regard to it which we possess. He spoke of the telescope as the chief aid in all astronomical inquiries; but too much had been expected from this instrument, and consequently disappointment had been the result. Unfortunately, just in the same proportion that we endeavor to gain in one particular by its use, do we lose in another, for as soon as we increase its power beyond a certain extent, do we inevitably diminish its efficiency to present the object distinctly. The greatest power, therefore, that can be practicably obtained from the best instrument, is 1000; that is, the means of bringing any object one thousand times nearer than it really is. Now, if we apply this power to the moon, we shall at once discover how little we have to expect from its use. The moon we know is distant from the earth 240,000 miles, and by the aid of the telescope we are enabled to bring it 1000 times nearer, or within 240 miles. Thus we see the moon under exactly the same circumstances, that we should, could we look with the naked eye upon any object at the distance of 240 miles, with the exception that the eye observes with more distinctness, for that was made by a more skilful hand. But what could we distinguish by the eye at that distance? A man? No. A horse? No. An elephant? No. A city even two miles in diameter would, if discernible at all, be but an indistinguishable speck upon the surface. We at once see therefore, the hopelessness of the telescope, as a means of affording us any information as to the character of the moon from actual observation, and how much less have we to expect from the same source when directed to the planets. We must content ourselves, accordingly, with such circumstantial evidence as we find accessible. The solar system, I need scarcely say to you, is composed of a number of planetary orbs, revolving round the sun. With one of these we are perfectly acquainted, and our present inquiry is, shall we be able to acquire any knowledge of the purpose designated by the maker of the earth for others. If we find that the peculiar globe which we inhabit has been provided with certain qualities adapted to express purposes, and that the same provisions have been made, down to the remotest particular in all the globes within our system, the sun and moon excepted, we must infer that it is for the same purposes. The conclusion then will depend on the closeness of the analogy. Let us then consider the provisions with regard to the earth; in doing this we must carefully draw a distinction between known properties of matter and those which are immediately contributed by the hand of the Creator. There are two prominent principles to be considered, first, light and heat. We find that they are imparted to us with a degree of uniformity that is never interrupted by the extreme of either, or by such an extreme as would be incompatible with the well-being of the creatures who inhabit the earth with us. By the peculiar orbit of the earth we are secured and guaranteed in a uniform supply of these essentials to life and its enjoyment. It may be said that the earth could not have done otherwise than revolve in its present orbit. It is not so. It might have been launched forth into space, from the hand of its Creator, in an orbit, or a thousand other orbits utterly destructive of organilzed matter; but such is not the case; and if not directed by the divine will, it has wonderfully indeed selected the only path consistent with its preservation. But we cannot doubt, that the design so beneficent, was from the hand infinitely good. The lecturer here adverted to the peculiar capacities of the inhabitants of the earth, and its revolution on its axis to the capacities of every living thing, and even vegetation, to the smallest flower upon it.—He illustrated these capacities by the alteration of day and night, and their suitability to man for labor and repose. We have our periodical functions, and vegetation have the same, and any other alteration that we enjoy, would have been incompatible with the beneficence we experience. These functions, then, are regulated by intervals of 12 hours, or about the same as those which regulate the division of day and night. And what is day and night. It is the expedient by which he who created, "divided the light from the darkness and saw that it was good."—And how was it good? Not in the mere division of the light from the darkness.—Suppose we had an alteration of one hour of light and one hour of darkness, would that have been good? Or a year of light and a year of darkness, would that have been good? It was not the mere separation then that was good, but the time in which the earth revolves on its axis as suited to its purpose. We thus discover that it was good in multifarious ways, which will suggest themselves to every reflecting mind. The earth might have revolved on its axis in any time whatever, and that without violating any known laws of matter. It might not have turned at all, or might have revolved in one hour, or 100 hours, or it might have occupied a year. But had it been in any other time than 24 hours or about that period, not one of the species which beautify and animate it now, could inhabit it at all. Thus we find between the time which the earth takes to revolve on its axis, and the peculiar functions and capacities of the creatures upon it, there is a most intimate connection. Again it might have turned upon a pole at the line of the equator; or on the plane of the ecliptic, the obvious result of which would have been that one hemisphere would be continually light and the other continually dark.

The position of the earth relatively with the sun, is also of vast importance; upright, or we should have equal day and night; but being slightly stooping from its axis, by this expedient, we have the grateful succession of the seasons, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, and the pleasing diversity of climates. And this stoop from the axis is 23½ deg., just enough to make the seasons of about equal duration, and without injuriousness of extremes, and exactly compatible with our well-being. There is one other fact to be considered in connection. The earth is surrounded with a thin fluid, which we call the atmosphere, and is the means whereby all respiratory creatures have their existence. It is also the peculiar agency of the winds, and is thus serviceable for the purpose of navigation, of ventillation and irrigation, bearing the [illegible] place two principles common to all—all are globes in their form, and all revolve round the sun. Now let us see whether they are bodies to which the same expedients have been applied. Is there a uniform supply of light and heat? In one and all of them we find there is. They all revolve like the earth, nearly in circles; and thus they all receive the same uniformity of light and heat. Have they the divisions of night and day? Has he who divided the light from the darkness upon the face of the earth, and saw that it was good, adopted the same expedient for the other planets of the system? And if so, is it not for the same cause? The next inquiry will be, are the intervals the same as those upon the earth? If a terrestrial globe were now before you, and was turned round, you would see the geographical marks of the several continents, islands, seas, &c., as they successively came into view on one side, passed to the centre, and disappear on the other; they would then remain out of sight while passing behind. And exactly the same facts exist with regard to the planets; and watching them closely we may also ascertain the time in which they revolve, and their position on their axis. And this has already been done in regard to the planet Mars, and it has been ascertained that its diurnal revolution is exactly the same as the earth, or at least within a minute or two. In Mars therefore, we find that the same expedients have been resorted to, and for the same purpose. We find that the planets Venus and Mercury are surrounded with an atmosphere, the clouds can be distinctly observed upon the surface, the same provision exists with reference to Mars. There is a peculiarity connected with Venus and Mercury worthy of our attention here; they have the same variety of phases with which we are familiar in our moon. They wax and wane, sometimes appearing as a thin crescent; at others half full, and full circle. Both of these planets are densely covered with clouds, so dense that we have never yet been able to see the surface of the planets. For a long period this was a great impediment to science in the pursuit of investigation relative to the character of these planets, for they offered nothing to the eye but a dense mass of clouds, and it is the sun shining on these clouds which makes the planet Venus so resplendant an object.—With this obstacle in the way, you will very naturally inquire, how did we discover their diurnal motion? It is a very interesting circumstance, and was discovered by the most extraordinary accident. Tractor, a German philosopher, had for several years been engaged in a particular examination of the planet Venus during her crescent state, and one evening, while directing his observations to her cuspis or horns, as the points of the crescent are denominated, he was much surprised to perceive that one of them gradually became blunt, which bluntness continued to increase until it seemed as if the point of the crescent was broken off. At first he thought he must have made some mistake, or that there was some imperfection in the instrument. After some time, however, he found that this bluntness again began to disappear until the point of the cresent recovered its usual appearance. This was a remarkable phenomenon, one that he could not explain.

On the next evening he observed the same planet again and again at the same time the same phonomenon recurred. And so long as the atmosphere of Venus was sufficiently clear, did he continue to observe the same occurence. But how to account for it? This was for some time a difficulty. At length it was ascertained that at the particular time at which the bluntness of the horn of the crescent occurred, it was involved in the shadow of a high mountain upon the surface of the planet, and which was in fact the sole cause of the phenomenon. Thus then it was explained. Now we know that shadows are always long, in the morning or the evening, when the sun is either rising or setting, hence it was clearly inferrible that at the point of the crescent involved in the mountain shadow, it was either morning or evening. But this was not all. How came the mountain there? And why was it not always there? Simply because the planet Venus revolved on its own axis, and carried the mountain with it. Thus then it was ascertained beyond doubt that the planet had a revolution of its own.—But this was not all. The mountain told another tale. It came at a particular time, and always with the same effect, and by nice philosophical observation it was thus ascertained that the planet Venus had a diurnal revolution almost exactly the same as the earth and the planet Mars.—This discovery led to observations with the same view in the planet Mercury, and as a mountain had revealed these interesting facts in relation to Venus it was tho't that probably another mountain in Mercury might present the same facilities. And singular as the fact is, it was but a short time, before the same phenomenon was observed in the planet Mercury, and from the same cause. The horn was eclipsed at periodical intervals, and it was thus ascertained that the planet Mercury also revolved on its own axis, and at intervals almost the same as those of Mars, Venus and the Earth.

Here then we find the same prominent characteristics in each of the planets we have named. Can the inquiring mind ask more of the astronomer than this? We see that the divine author has adopted similar expedients in each, and can we doubt but that they are for the same qualities in every respect, peculiar to none but common to all, and we feel that it is the work of Him who has made all things in beneficence and love.

There are few things more alarming to the friends of the Union of these States, than the split of the Methodist Church into northern and southern divisions. If men professing the forbearing and conciliating spirit of Religion can no longer harmonize on the difference of views as to purely political institutions, how long will professed politicians do better? [*Sent.*

Political.

EXTRACT FROM THE SPEECH OF

ROBERT DALE OWEN, *of Indiana*,

In the House of Representatives, January 8, 1845, on the Annexation of Texas.

* * * * * *

Slavery is not the true difficulty. In replying to the arguments of the abolitionists, we are not at the bottom of the question. We have not penetrated to the depths of the opposition against annexation. We have not yet touched the argument, the strongest, the deepest seated in the minds of its opponents. Late indications distinctly reveal it to us. In the columns of the leading metropolitan whig journal—the most moderate and respected organ of the party—in the leader of the National Intelligencer, under date the 13th December last, I find the following:

"Deprecating any extension of the territory of the United States beyond its present limits as an evil, in itself of great magnitude: protesting against it, under any circumstances, for the sake of the interests of the States of the Union, both old and new, which are, in our opinion, deeply involved in it," &c.

I pray you to note that. I ask you to observe distinctly how the matter stands. It avails not to argue, with our opponents, the question of right to annex. It is idle to substantiate to them, from the pages of international law, or the dictates of common sense, the legal independence of Texas. These outworks carried, there is a barrier beyond; towering far above them; standing untouched, if they were levelled to the ground. It is not an extension of our national domain ou its southwestern frontier, it is ANY extension, which our opponents deprecate. It is not Texas, as such, they reject; they would reject equally a country in any other latitude, peopled by any other race, bearing any other name. They protest not against annexation, for that it may increase and perpetuate slavery; they protest against it, as in 1803 they protested against the purchase of Louisiana, "under ANY circumstances."

Is the whig party wrong in this, their great objection? *As* whigs, I am not prepared to assert that they are.

Rome, in the heyday of her power, added province to province; and this extension of her territory but seemed to hasten her decline and fall. The mad ambition of Alexander sufficed to conquer half a world; yet, within a year after his death, the overgrown empire purchased by the blood of millions fell to pieces, it seemed, from its own weight. Are these to be held as beacon-lights foi us, in the present juncture? If ours be a government like that of Rome under the empire, like that of the Macedonian conqueror, undoubtedly yes. If it is fated gradually to approach such a character, still, undoubtedly yes. Or if, like Mexico, we are at last settle down upon Centralism; if the rights of the States are to be stolen peacemeal, and the central power here invested with their spoils; if this city of Washington is to dispense, as did the mistress of the world from her seven hills, all laws to govern our land; nay, without proceeding so far, if all doubtful powers in the constitution are to be assumed as lawful; if the sphere of federal legislation is to be gradually increased; if we are to interfere with commerce, favoring under the name of protection, one section of our country, by taxing the industry of another; if, closely connected with our government, there is to be a central money power, stronger in these days, and therefore more dangerous to liberty, than a standing army; if the checks which the wisdom of revolutionary days incorporated in our constitution, to arrest the hot haste of party, in its flush of power; if these restricting checks are to be swept away; in a word, if the progress of our federal policy is to be from the less to the more of legislation; then reject Texas, abandon Oregon, add not, by treaty, one acre more of Indian lands. Nay! if such is to be our policy, our Union is far too large already; it ought never to have been permitted to overpass the Alleghanies.

But will such be the progress of legislation among us? Ought it to be? In follawing out, from age to age, the story of the ceaseless struggle between the Privileges of the few and the Rights of the many, forth from every page, blazoned on the experience of every nation, shines forth the great truth, that overmuch legislation has been the curse of mankind; and that law has become, (alas, how few the exceptions!) a weapon of aggression rather than an ægis of defence. As we read, we feel that the protection of government has been overpaid for by its intermeddlings, and that the people might well, in the words of the Cynic philosopher, tell the Alexanders of the world that the only favor they asked of them was—to stand out of their sunshine!

Men are not wise and good enough to dispense with law. Would that they were! Government, like medicine, is to us a necessary evil. There is such a thing as the depotism of anarchy; and a king is not indispensable to a reign of terror. The practical question is, how many of the Sybilline leaves of legislation we may safely burn, yet leave the remainder more valuable than was the entire code.

From the fate of past delusions we may determine the trendings of future reform. When a miner sinks his shaft and strikes a productive vein of ore, it is his practice first to follow it so far as to observe its leading direction: then, emerging to the surface, with that observation for his guide, he sinks, at remote distances, other shafts, confident that he will again arrive at the object of his search. So with the rich and hidden lodes that stretch away into the great mine of Progressive Improvement. Guided by an observation of their past course, we may predict where an after generation will find them.

But the principle of progress in legislation has hitherto been from the more to the less. If we compare the statutes and constitutions of Republican America with the laws of Monarchical Europe, it may surprise us to discover how much of the difference between them consists in—omissions. And of the after-thought of Revolutionary law-givers—of the thirteen articles that form the amendments to the Federal constitution—nine, at least, are of a negative or restrictive character; circumscribing, within narrower limits, the province of legislation. So in older countries and in former ages. All the important provisions of Magna Charta are prohibitory. A freeman shall *not* lose property or life by the monarch's decision; a traveller shall *not* be prevented from leaving the kingdom or returning to it at pleasure; the king's servants shall *not* arbitrarily seize the property of his subjects. Even the minor privileges secured at Runnemede are of a similar stamp; as witness one characteristic of those times, namely, that a baron's widow shall *not* be compelled to marry, if she prefer to remain single. So, again, of the Habeas Corpus Act, called by Blackstone "that second Magna Charta and stable bulwark of liberty," of which the provision is, in substance, that a man shall *not* be confined in prison on mere suspicion. All of these were rude efforts to narrow down the sphere of government. And still, even in later years, the same principle prevails. Throughout Europe—but especially in England, that half-liberal mother of Republics—religion and the press have for centuries been struggling against the interference of law; with partial, but positive success. And commerce, if at some distance, has been gradually following their footsteps. All proceed in one direction; all tend to one goal.

From such facts the inference is, that in our Republic, as elsewhere, we shall gradually govern less; that the province of our federal legislation will contract as territory expands. If it does—and that it will the past may vouch—safely, yes, most beneficially may this Union and its blessings spread over the entire continent of North America; each independent State secure in its own separate sovreignty, and but increasing by its accession, the wealth, the power, and the safety of the Great Confederacy.

I shall notice yet another objection. It is, that annexation brings, in its train, the scourge of war; while, by refusing to annex, we obtain, surely and permanently, the blessings of peace. Let us sift this matter a little.

Two paths are open before us. The one to declare, as most righteously we may, the legal independence of Texas; to act boldly on that declaration; to accept what not a government in Europe, if similarly situated, would dream of refusing, the proposition twice already made to us, that we should receive again Texas within our borders; and then—as all men and all nations must, be their conduct ever so scrupulous—to abide the consequences. The other—ah, *that*, we shall be told, is the path of safety and of peace! At its entrance, it may be; many a path of danger and of death has a fair and pleasant entrance. Let us look to the end. Say that we reject Texas, and leave her and Mexico to settle their quarrel. Very well. By so doing, we soothe the insolence of Mexico, and quiet the jealousy of England. This is satisfactory. England makes a free trade treaty with Texas: extending over that republic (as the phrase is) her "Protectorate." Let that pass! Mexico relieved from all apprehensions of war with us, proceeds to carry into effect the inhuman threats she has made against our Texan neighbors. Is that to pass, too!—Before we enter this same path of peace, let us look a little in advance, and settle which is our way out. Mexico has formally, publicly, officially warned the Texans to evacuate their country; and declares, that if they refuse, every one who shall be guilty of the *crime* of being found anywhere in Texas, three miles from her western frontier, shall be put to death. Is that, in this nineteenth century, incredible? It is *true*. Witness the orders of Gen'l Woll, as officially communicated by our Secretary of State, carrying out the provisions of Santa Anna's decree of June 17; a decree, which forbids all quarter to the Texans, under penalty, to the officers non-complying, of the loss of their commissions. Here is the black record:

"ORDERS OF GENERAL WOLL.

"HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY OF THE NORTH, MIER, June 20, 1844.

I, Adrian Woll, General of Brigade, &c. make known—

1. The armistice agreed on with the department of Texas having expired, and the war being, in consequence, recommenced against the inhabitants of the department, all communication with it ceases.

2. Every individual of whatever condition, who may contravene the provisions of the preceding article, shall be regarded as a traitor, and shall receive the punishment prescribed in article 45, title 10, treatise 8, of the articles of war.

3. Every individual who may be found at a distance of one league from the west bank of the Rio Bravo, will be regarded as a favorer and accomplice of the usurpers of that part of the national territory, and as a traitor of his country; and after a summary military trial, shall receive the above punishment.

4. Every individual who may be comprehended within the provisions of the preceding article, and may be rash enough to fly at the sight of any force belonging to the Supreme Government, shall be pursued until taken or put to death."

The orders are plain as language can make them. The crime is being found in Texas. Every individual from the fact of his being so found, is to be held and deemed to be "a traitor of his country;" and, as such, monstrous as it may seem! all—for there is no distinction made or hinted at—EVERY human being there found, is, after summary military trial, to suffer a traitor's death!

In comfortably pursuing our path of peace and of safety, these "Orders" meet our eye. Are we to pass them by. To notice them might breed a quarrel. Have we a right to notice them? I suppose the next question will be, whether we have a right to fire on the pirate's flag, or to thwart his good pleasure, when he bids his victims walk the plank, and consigns them to a watery grave. But, if needs be, we may find proof, that the law of nations does, in some cases—and this is one—permit us to follow the dictates of mercy and justice.

In every civil war, as has been already shown from Vattel, international law requires both parties to "observe the common laws of war, the maxims of humanity, moderation and honor." What are these laws? Let Vattel inform us.

[Mr. O. here read from Vattel's Law of Nations, book iii, chap. 8, in relation to the rules of war among civilized nations—that in a battle quarter is given to the defeated; that women, children, feeble old men, and sick persons, though liable to be taken prisoners, are not to be maltreated, much less put to death—and that other nations may interpose to prevent such inhuman barbarity.]

But the threat is idle, it has been said; merely meant to intimidate; too horrible to be fulfilled. If the blood shed on the plains of Goliad had a voice; if the walls of the Alamo could speak; would they vouch for it, that Mexico is too tender-hearted to keep her word? The treaty of capitulation with poor Fannin was formally drawn up and *signed* by both Mexican and Texan officers: yet the morning of Palm Sunday saw four hundred disarmed men marched out and shot down, like beeves in a slaughter house. From what has been we are justified in deciding what will be.

But still, if these threatened crimes are committed by Mexico, where do we find warrant to arrest them? That too, shall be forthcoming. It would be very strange if it could not be found. Of what use is a law without a penalty? Of what avail the law of nations, if nations are not authorized to see it obeyed. So decides Vattel:

* * "All nations have therefore a right to resort to forcible means for the purpose of repressing any one particular nation who openly violates the laws of the society which Nature has established between them."—VAT. PRELIM. p. lxix.

Here, then, we have the law and its application. Mexico has openly violated, and declared her purpose, in aggravated form, again openly to violate, the holiest laws of civilized society. By so doing, she justifies us in resorting to force for the purpose of repressing her. Shall we do so? It is not always expedient to avail ourselves of a right. We are not bound to become the Don Quixotes of the age, and sally forth to redress all the grievances of the civilized world. That has never, so far, been the policy of our country. Greece and Poland had more or less of our sympathy, and that was all. We assumed not to decide on the British doings in Affghanistan, or to judge the conduct of the opium war against China. But Texas is our next neighbor, and was once under our special guardianship. We are, to employ the law phrase in its strictest sense, her nearest friend. To us, if to any nation upon earth, she has a right to look for succor and protection. Shall we forsake her now?

If such be our decision, it behooves us, as prudent men, fully to digest our plan and trace to its final consequences.

Say that we remain inactive and neutral, and suffer things to take their course, What happens? Just at this moment Mexico is embroiled at home. But her