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SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1866.

Precedents without Power.

EVERY now and then certain views held, or said to have been held, in the earlier days of the Rebellion, by the late President Lincoln and other men who were then among the leaders of the Republican party, are brought forward by our conservatives with great gusto as authoritative upon the practical questions now before the country for discussion and settlement. Thus we have just now a letter from ex-Attorney General Bates in regard to the erection and admission of the State of West Virginia, in which we are assured that Mr. Lincoln's Cabinet all "considered an ordinance of secession a mere nullity in law and politics, and rebellion a personal crime, punishable by law."

Now, it may as well be admitted at once,

that at the outbreak of the Rebellion neither Mr. Lincoln, nor any of his advisers, nor indeed the country at large, had any just idea of the character of the struggle upon which we were entering. Mr. Seward pronounced it an affair of ninety days; Mr. Lincoln thought seventy-five thousand soldiers sufficient for the emergency; while people generally imagined that the war would be of brief duration. It is also a fact that the war was not conducted on any consistent and well-maintained theory. At first we refused to regard the Rebels captured in arms as prisoners of war. The army was theoretically regarded as a sort of huge posse comitatus, and the captured Confederates as civil prisoners, to be tried by the courts of law. But this idea had to be abandoned long before the war was over. At first, and for a long time, we refused to exchange prisoners with the enemy, lest some theory should thereby be damaged; but we had to come to it at last. At first it was proposed to close the ports in the Kebel States by a simple proclamation that they were no longer ports of entry; but we found that that scheme would not work, and were obliged to resort to a regular blockade. So, too, it may be quite true that in 1861 Mr. Lincoln's Cabinet were all agreed upon the theory set forth by Mr. Bates; but we find that as soon as this theory began to be pressed into the service of the Rebels-just as it is to-day-the Supreme Court of the United States overthrew it. In the prize cases decided in 1832, this very theory of the nullity of secession in law, and the mere personal character of the crime of rebellion, was brought forward to save some property captured in North Carolina from a professedly loyal man, from confiscation. But the court held that in organizing the Rebellion the States had acted as States. and had made all their inbabitants public enemies, so that their property was liable to capture and confiscation. It was a sound, common-sense decision, and is the law to day. filt was quite natural, perhaps, in the outset, to say that secession was a nullity; but when we saw the seceded States banded together n a hostile confederacy, raising mighty armies, holding undisputed sway of almost the entire South, threatening Washington, invading the North and menacing the very existence of the Government, then these fine-spun theories of secession being a mere nullity, and none of the States being out of the Union, had to be given up. Facts were too strong for theories. It was seen that secession had done something, that the Rebel States had not only taken themselves as civil corporations out of the Union, but that they had actually ex pelled the United States from nearly the entire territory of the South, so that only the most strenuous exertions would enable us to regain what we had lost. For four years we fought to restore the power and authority of the United States over the territory which had been violently wrenched from us at the outset by the torces of the Rebellion. Secession was unlawful, but it was actual. If it was null in law, it was potent in effects. The Rebellion was unconstitutional, but it was real. The Southern Confederacy, though unrecognized at the Courts of the established nationalities of the earth, was still a mighty power within its own limits. It raised vast armies and kept them in the field, armed them with effective weapons, supplied them with food and clothing, and made them a powar in the day of battle. It took us four years to overthrow it, and cost us a half million of lives and four thousand millions of dollars to accomplish the work. These are rather wonderful effects to be ascribed to nullities as their cause.

The truth is, that in dealing with such questions as are now before the people, we must not shut our eyes to facts. Theories are good enough in their way, but the idea of bringing up a theory long since exploded. overthrown by the Supreme Court, and hastily adopted, if at all, at the very beginning of a terrible struggle, whose character and extent were but dimly apprehended, to control our action now, is unstatesmanlike and absurd to the last degree. So far as West Virginia is concerned, we believe there was a sort of mimic conformance to what would have been the constitutional method, in a time of peace, of erecting a new State from a part of the territory of an old one; but we apprehend that our right to erect it really stands more firmly on the ground that

Virginia had rebelled, and lost her status as a State, and so her territory was at the rightful disposal of the nation, than upon the assumption that the sham which was then called "Virginia" had any real or solid existence, or could give a proper assent to the erection of a new State within what had been the boundaries of the old State of Virginia.

The Dearth of Ministers, and Its Causes. THE decrease in the number of persons entering the Christian ministry is a fact which is beginning to attract general attention. We find it a matter of complaint on the part of all the denominations. An increasing number of churches are unsupplied with pasters, and the catalogues of the theological seminaries present meagre lists of candidates for the sacred office. So general an effect must have a sufficient cause. What is it?

We cannot suppose that religion itself is losing its hold upon the popular mind. Such a fact would be one of the gravest significancy. But we see no reason to suppose that it exists. On the contrary, we see many things which lead us to believe that Christianity never had more power over the masses of the people, never more thoroughly penetrated all the avenues of society with its influences, than now.

Nor do we believe that there is any real diminution of respect for the office or functions of the ministry. Good preaching is as much in request now as it ever was. Able and talented ministers find no difficulty in securing hearers; and the truly conscientious, faithful, and devoted pastor is still looked up to with reverence by the community.

We should be sorry to ascribe this decrease of candidates for the ministry to any fault of our voluntary system of religious support. The experience of this country as to the effects of the separation of Church and State has not hitherto seemed to militate against the best interests of Christianity. On the contrary, it has built them up and strengthened them. Nowhere has the Church been more active or aggressive; nowhere has it more thoroughly reached the masses; nowhere has it more successfully carried forward those great enterprises of Christian benevolence that are a distinguishing feature of our times than in the United States, and under the voluntary system.

What, then, is the cause of the decrease of ministers? The most obvious reply is that the ministry is poorly paid. It is a fact that no class of professional men, of equal talents and cultivation, are so poorly paid as ministers. Aside from the salaries of a few pastors of the wealthier churches in our cities, the support afforded to ministers is of the most meagre and unsatisfactory character. It is no uncommon thing to find a faithful, earnest, and talented clergyman, who has spent seven or eight years of his life, and a small fortune. in preparing for his profession, working on a salary smaller than that received by a banker's clerk. It should be remembered that the most of ministers at the present day are men of education; and in many of our denominations a preparation is required of them, embracing a course of study, additional to that required for a business career, of at least seven years. We estimate that there are but few of our thoroughly educated ministers who have not spent, in addition to these seven years of time, from three thousand to five thousand dollars in getting their education. It is quite evident that their pay is not at all proportionate to this outlay; but that, perhaps, is not to be looked for. The ministry is not expected to be a lucrative profession. Motives of gain to induce men to enter it would not be desirable. But neither, on the other hand, ought the minister to be expected to sail all his life along the desert coasts of poverty. If he is not to be a millionaire, certainly he ought not to be a pauper. He has a right to demand, and the nature of his work requires, that he shall have a fair and reasonable support-such a one as shall relieve his mind of all undue anxiety for the maintenance of himself and family. How can any minister compose eloquent and instructive sermons when his flour-barrel is empty, his coal-box unsupplied, and his children's shoes out at the toes? How can he soar to things heavenly, when things earthly are so persistently and unpleasantly thrust into his face? To expect eloquence, depth of thought, patient research, or any great degree of spiritual-mindedness under such circumstances, is to expect impossibilities.

Everybody knows that during the past five years the cost of living has doubled. How many ministers have had their salaries doubled? And how can those who barely made both ends of the year meet before the rise, get along and support their families now? Many churches are guilty of an injustice towards their ministers that the members themselves would be slow to perpetrate in their own private business.

One reason for the meagre support of ministers, especially in our country towns, is the unnecessary and improper multiplication of churches. One may find in almost any country village of fifteen hundred or two thousand mhabitants, four or five different churches, each with its minister, each poorly attended and feebly supported. If the number were diminished one-hat, the cause of religion would be the gainer thereby. The remaining churches would be better supported and attended; they would be able to employ a more efficient class of ministers, and the Christian work would be better done. Our different denominations act very foolishly and culpably in this matter of founding new churches in little towns already amply supplied with religious organizations. Feeble, sickly, halt-supported, pauper churches, always begging for outside help, are thus multiplied, not to make aggressions upon the world but to steal away members from other denominations, and to divide a support already too limited for those dependent upon it. Missionary funds expended upon such enterprises as these are worse than wasted, for instead of building up one strong church, they help to make three or tour feeble ones in the same place. The present dearth of ministers will probably kill off a good many churches that have been founded just in this way. It will be a blessing if it does. No denomination has a right to plant a church in a place slready supplied with all the churches it can support. If we had fewer churches, better attended, better kept up, and with a better paid ministry, the Christian work would be more prosperous in all its departments.

We have no fear that the ministry is about to be abandoned. The law of supply and demand will operate here as well as elsewhere. As soon as there is really any need for more ministers they will be forthcoming.

The Threatened Difficulties in Baltimore. Ir we can believe the various statements made by the Baltimore newspapers, and take their opinions as exponents of the popular feeling in that city, we must have grave fears lest the scenes of New Orleans are to be re-enacted in the Monumental City. Situated as we are, beyond the circle of local excitement, we see more cause for alarm than those who reside in the midst of party passions, and learn to consider all hostile utterances as idle threats. From all indications, unless some modifications in the course of the contending parties take place, we would not be surprised to see our sister municipality the victim of lawless riots, the scene of wilful murder. The difterences of opinion which threaten to thus turn the peace of our neighbor into discord, are not generally understood outside of the mere local excitement. We would, therefore, speak dispassionately of the casus belli.

The elections in Baltimore are conducted by judges and inspectors appointed by the Police Commissioners. This Board is composed of members elected by the Legislature in joint ballot. They are sworn officers, and must, in conformity with their onths, execute the laws and conduct the election in the manner prescribed by legislative enactment, If the action of the Legislature be wrong, the fault lies entirely with that body; but until such is the decision of the judiciary, the Commissioners are bound to carry even an illegal law into effect. Previous to the opening of the present year, the Legislature passed an ordinance forbidding any one to vote at the coming election except such as had been registered in 1865. The object of the enactment was evident. The vast number of Marylanders who had been serving in the Rebel armies had returned to the State. They came back in regiments. They outnumbered the loyal population. They brought with them others from the South, and the entire State was inundated with this Rebel element, which would undoubtedly be able to carry the State in November, were they allowed to exercise the right of suffrage.

This law, legally passed by both branches of the Legislature, and signed by Governor Swann himself, is now the supreme rule of ction in Maryland. It is part of that law which the Commissioners had sworn to exeeute, and whether it was legal or not was not for them to decide. The Rebels, maddened at thus being shut off from the power of once more ruling the State, denied that the law was constitutional. At this stage of the proceedings, before any legal examination of the subject had settled the question, the Attorney-General of the State, the first law officer of the Commonwealth, expressed an onivion in its favor. The Commissioners, at the last municipal election, acted under it refused Rebel votes, and the election was overwhelmingly in favor of the Republicans.

Rendered desperate by their defeat, the Rebels apply to the Government to remove the Commissioners and appoint Rebels in their place. They claim that the law gives such power to the State Executive, and ask him to exercise it. Whether it does or does not we do not know. He, however, summoned the Commissioners to appear before him, and they have not as yet responded. Such is the simple statement of facts. If they succeed in inducing him to remove the Commissioners and the Commissioners refuse to acknowledge the legalty of what they doubt his right to do, the streets of Baltimore may yet again be drenched in blood, and loyalists once more sacrifice their lives to the fury of the Rebels.

The returned Confederates far outnumber the loyal, and they may need aid from other States. We earnestly deprecate any such fearful proceedings. We are law-abiding citizens. The duty of every good American is to obey the law. It is like the old days of Kansas, if we are to have the system of colonization in order to shed blood. "We would none of it." The Democracy threaten to send reinforcements from Pennsyloania. The Lancaster Intelligencer makes the following threat, which is endorsed by the Democratic organ of our city:-

"All the manhood in the whole mass of three hundred thousand Democratic voters will be thrown into the contest at a moment's warning For the right of a free ballot they will gladly do battle whenever and wherever the issue of arms shall be joined against it. Should the contest begin in Baltimore, two-thirds of the whole fighting material of Pennsylvania will respond to the call of the President with a promptifude never known in all the annals of war. Yes! Pennsylvania will be ready, fully ready."

We guess that the Union men of Maryland will not feel much fear at the threatened invasion. Who are the men who would go under the flery call? All the deserters, cowards, and skulkers during the war. We do not tremble or turn pale at the thought of an army of such men as supported Heister Clymer. If they come to colonizing, there are two who can play at that game, and we do not think that the Democracy, after meditation, will conclude that it would be advisable.

But we most heartily deprecate any such violence. Let the law be obeyed; let it be followed in all cases. But there is no need that there be any imposition submitted to. Let the matter be submitted to the Attorney-General of the State, as there is no Supreme Court now in session. Let his decision be followed, and the disgrece of riots in a Northern city be avoided.

The Camp-Meeting Outrage near Baltimore. A RIGID and impartial investigation has been made by the United States military authorities into the late outrage upon the colored people attending a Methodist camp-meeting near Baltimore. General Gregory, who conducted the investigation, concludes his report as follows:-

"From a careful reading of the whole testi-mony, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that the riot was—first, an attack upon the colored people; and, second, a deliberate tempt to break up the camp-meeting of the Methodist Episcopal Church, on account of the alleged anti-slavery sentiments of its ministers and members.

Through to Fort Riley.

On the 15th instant, the Union Pacific Railway, Eastern Division, commenced running through trains regularly to Fort Riley, Kansas, a distance of more than four hundred miles due west from St. Louis. Two hundred and fifty miles additional of the road have been put under contract, to be completed during the year 1867.

"GRIFFITH GAUNT."-We publish on our eighth page to-day an extended review of wriffith Gaunt," which takes the only possible ground of criticism, and condemns the work as most immoral. As the book is the sensation of the day, the review will repay

The Opera Last Night.

THIRD APPEARANCE OF RONCONI AND KELLOGG. Orispino e la Comare was given in better style last evening than on the previous representation. The audience was the largest and most fashionable of the season, and the enthusiasm was marked. Signor Ronconi was excessively funny, and sang with more force than upon any previous occasion. He was applauded and encored in almost every scene. His triumph in the "Cobbler" was complete.

Miss Clara Louise Kellogg received a perfect ovation. Her strong and sweet voice seems to improve continually. Her acting last night was superb. She is growing to be the pet of our pera-goers.

Miss Fanny Stockton, we are pleased to announce, sang the part of "The Fairy" in much

better taste. The music was rendered quite brilliantly last evening, and the artiste was the recipient of many favors from the audience. Miss. Stockton sang and acted with more spirit than usual, and in this way rendered the whole opera mere pleasing than upon the previous representation. Antonucci and Bellini, the rival bassos, were,

as always, admirable in their roles, and were immensely cheered by applause in the grand in the third act, which was repeated for an encore. amid the most demonstrative enthusiasm. Band, Dubreuil, and the rest performed their

roles in an acceptably clever manner, On Monday evening, Meyerbeer's grand romantic and spectacular opera of L'Etoie du Nord will be given with a great cast, including Kellogg, Hauck, Natali-Testa, Stockton, Anto-Bellini, Mazzoleni, Baragli, Banfi, Fossatti,

On Tuesday evening the very heavy Ernani is announced.

The Bateman Concerts.

Mr. H. L. Bateman announces a series of five grand operatic concerts in this city, to take place at Musical Fund Hall. The first entertainment of the series will be given on Monday evening next, Mr. Bateman's experience in musical matters is well known, and he has never yet falled in any enterprise.

For the present season the following distinguished artistes are announced as the principals of Mr. Bateman's troupe:-

Prima Donna Assoluta-Madame Parena. Prima Tenor di Forza-Signor Brignoti. Buffo Basso-Signor Ferranti. Basso Contralto-Signor Fortana. Pianist-Mr. S. B. Mills.

Violin Soloist-Signor Carl Rosa.

This entire troupe is under the direction of Mr. J. L. Hatton, the famous London composer and chef d'orchestre.

The programme arranged for Monday evening is a brilliant and attractive one, and introduces all of the artisles named above in favorite arias, solos, etc.

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