

SPRIT OF THE PRESS.

EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS UPON CURRENT TOPICS—COMPILED EVERY DAY FOR THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

Concerning Washington Percentages.

From the N. Y. Tribune. The efforts of the Washington clerks to get twenty, or even ten per cent. extra pay, having been once more killed, we trust that now it may be allowed to stay dead. The clerks all took their present places with a distinct knowledge of what the salaries were. They entered into the contract with the Government to do certain work for certain pay, and most of them bored Congressmen and Secretaries for months to get the privilege of making this contract. Yet, if they find it oppressive, they have this advantage over other people who make bad bargains, that a sheet of paper and three minutes' writing can always secure them the means of instant release. We submit, therefore, to their own good sense whether they make a good figure spending weeks and months in unsuccessful lobbying for relief from this oppressive contract, when a letter of resignation in three lines would furnish perfect relief.

It has been a misfortune of the clerks that they have wasted their valuable time on an effort which they will never see again. Either they fairly earn higher wages than they are now paid, or they do not. If they do, the wages should be squarely and honestly raised to the just standard; if they do not, they add lack of decency to their lack of wisdom in converting themselves into chronic beggars for ten per cent. or twenty per cent. presents for a single year or session.

We do not ignore the speciousness, in some respects, sound pleas in favor of liberal dealing with the servants of the Government. But, aside from the fact that we can select better reasons for a display of liberality than a time when we cannot pay our just debts, we imagine that in Government service, as well as in all other kinds, the law of supply and demand may well be expected to exercise a large influence in fixing the rates of wages. The pay of the Washington clerks may be too low, though it is certainly much higher than the same average grade and amount of work command in this city; but so long as ten equally good men stand behind the chair of every clerk, ready to quarrel for its occupancy the moment he vacates it, a prudent employer, himself in the greatest pecuniary distress, would hardly think of raising the salaries. Gentlemen, be persuaded that this is a bad time for attempting to escape from the inexorable law which settles wages everywhere else. The supply of such work as you furnish in the Washington departments is enormously in excess of the demand. When we get the Civil Service bill we hope to raise the quality of your work, and reduce the number engaged upon it. Till then, at least, you must try to get along with a remuneration largely in advance of the average rate.

Mr. Wells' Report.

From the N. Y. Tribune. The Evening Post, in attempting to defend Mr. Wells, says: "After Mr. Wells' report was published, the Tribune insisted, day after day, that it was impossible to learn what amount of duty was collected on, for example, sugar, tea, and spices, and that Mr. Wells was interested in the result. The very information demanded concerning these leading articles is given in this report, in a note to page 25, and similar statistics of every article imported are given in minute detail in the official 'Commercial and Navigation Report' every year."

The information demanded is not given on "either of the sources referred to. The note on page 25 of Mr. Wells' report gives \$30,000,000 as the average receipts" from duty per annum. But it does not state the actual receipts for any year, nor what were the years taken to compute this average. On its face it possesses no statistical force. The official "Commerce and Navigation Reports" give the quantities and values imported only, and do not give what we asked of the Treasury Department—the amount of tariff actually collected on each article. We presume the Commissioner of Customs therefore certified the truth when he stated that such information was not in the possession of his own or the Statistical Bureau, and that these were the only places where it could be applied for. If the actual amount of duties collected on any article for any year is unknown, how much is Mr. Wells' estimate of the average amount for an indefinite number of years worth? While the Post is correct in stating that we have declared it to be "impossible to learn" what amount of duty is collected from any one article, it is in error in saying that we have asserted what sums they do amount to on sugar, tea, coffee, spices, etc. We have only compared the sums which the quantities imported, as given at the average rates named in the tariff act, as nearly as we could average them, would call for.

Dangerous Situation of Spain.

From the N. Y. Herald. The public advice from the Spanish peninsula continues to teem with indications of disquiet on the part of the provisional government and the people, while private letters, come they from what source or partisan they may, or from whatever portion of the country, bear unanimous witness to the general expectation of an early carnival of strife and blood. The Spanish nation is indeed in a situation pregnant with danger not only to itself, but to the peace of Europe. Those who view only the surface of things have been astonished at the spectacle recently presented, in the rapid and successful attempt against the last of the Bourbon throne and the peace which in the person of Isabella Second. But a deeper inspection of Spanish affairs and Spanish development will show a growth of ideas which for years have been sapping the foundations of a dynasty ruled by a policy that has been nothing more than a Bourbon graft upon the trunk planted by the crafty and false Ferdinand and Isabella during the closing years of the fifteenth century. The throne sank with the first touch of preparation.

The rail and the telegraph made their advent in the peninsula about the same time with the discovery of gold in California, and their construction and extension therein made little progress until the tide of wealth from the fields of the Pacific had begun to fill and stimulate the channels of European wealth and industry. Although at that time the government was nominally a constitutional monarchy, it was, in spirit and in fact, the flowering of the Hapsburg policy in the Spain of the sixteenth century, modified only by the family axioms of the Bourbons. Sessions of the Cortes were the exception, not the rule; and the Cortes was mainly governed by royal decrees. The military and privileged classes threatened the courts, while the people ate, wore and thought as did their forbears of three centuries before. With the rail, following and often preceding its advance, came an invasion of French cooks, tailors and milliners. New wants were created, industry and commerce found a new life; and, while the court thought it was changing only the cut and color of its

outward habits, the nation was changing its ideas. When the hour of ripeness came to the court corruption, the people, and even the army, were ready for the change, and the this shell of royalty was found as fragile as that of an egg. But, though Spain was all agreed to throw off its old forms, it was far from being agreed upon the new.

In this condition of things the provisional government was constituted of the three antagonistic elements which it comprised. The monarchial party claimed, and obtained the first place in the person of General Serrano. The advocates of a radical change, which might become republican or monarchial, as circumstances should warrant, received the command of the army for General Prim, and the judiciary was assigned to the advocates of a still more liberal class of ideas. The Government is constituted of nine members, equally divided between the foregoing mentioned theorists. Outside of government, which has not a majority for any policy, the advanced republicans, weak in organization, but strong in propaganda, and the reactionary or Church party, always well organized for action, but unpopular in its political tendencies and proclivities. To these conflicting elements in Spanish politics of to-day must be added others, which are the personal interest of the astute ruler of France, the remnant of the elder party of the house of Bourbon, and the new partisans of the younger or Montpensier branch. Under the new law of a free press in the peninsula each of these sets its journals, and is at this moment actively engaged in the promulgation of its ideas.

Surrounded by this state of intrigue and eavesdropping, the Cortes is called to meet during the present month to determine the new constitution of government and to nominate its head. From time to time it is stated, with an air of official sanction, that the provisional government is a unit on the question of monarchy, and even on that of the candidate for the throne, though the name of this personage is kept sedulously in the dark. But it is well known that new combinations are continually showing themselves within the several parties represented in the provisional Cabinet, and new intrigues are put in play. In this condition of affairs, and in view of the sturdy temper of the people, harassed as they have long been by misgovernment, and pressed to-day by destitution and hunger, it is scarcely probable that any party which may obtain control of the proposed new organization of government can be anything more than a fractional part of the nation at large. It will be surrounded by hostile elements, all interested in its early overthrow, and the history of the Spanish nation since the year 1808 has been slow to listen to an appeal to arms.

With this prospect in the early future, our Government need be in no haste to make negotiations in reference to Cuba, nor need the partisans of independence within the island fear that the opportunity will slip from their grasp. Spain will soon have her hands too full of her own affairs to be able to devote much blood or treasure to the defense of the "ever faithful isle," and like a ripe pear, it will fall of its own weight, through the natural line of independence, into the system of the Union. If Europe escapes unscathed from the danger which a general conflagration of ideas in Spain will bring to her, her monarchs and her Cabinets will be too happy in their own safety to care much which way Cuba falls or what becomes of it.

General Grant and the Democracy.

From the N. Y. Tribune. The World's endeavors to excite dissension between General Grant and the Republican majority in Congress are certainly persistent and from a purely party point of view may be deemed praiseworthy. It is to be regretted, however, that the World cannot take a somewhat broader view of the political future, and that the party it represents cannot find better grounds of hope for itself than in embarrassing and defeating the efforts of those who have control of the Government to restore peace, harmony, and general prosperity to the country at large. It is to be regretted, however, that the World starts with the assumption that General Grant will find himself, at the very outset of his administration, opposed by Congress; nay, it goes still further, and asserts that the relations of the two are already hostile, and that a "restoration of lost harmony seems unlikely." It is scarcely necessary to say that all this is imaginary; it is pure invention. Nothing whatever has occurred to give it a semblance of truth. That there is impatience, discontent on the part of extreme party men—those who are accustomed to consider themselves the rightful leaders of the dominant party, and therefore entitled to dictate its policy—with the neglect of General Grant to consult their wishes or inform them of his purposes, is doubtless true. We have evidence of this feeling on every side. But it is not the general feeling of the Republican party, in Congress or out of it, nor is it likely to become so.

It is quite true that General Grant was not the first choice of the self-styled leaders of the Republican party, as their candidates for President. If they could have followed their personal preferences, they would have put in nomination another man. Their objections to him lay in the fact that, politically he was not one of them, but had not been so identified with their purposes and plans, nor so thoroughly in sympathy with their sentiments and opinions, that they could either predict precisely what he would do, or count with confidence on his doing exactly what they might advise and direct. The feeling that he was politically unknown, and therefore politically unreliable, was very widely entertained, and very potent in the Republican party before his nomination. It found open expression through the very many of its radical organs, and from the lips of very many of its prominent men. But it could not prevent his nomination. It did not so far survive a calm survey of the exigencies of the case, as to permit any difference of opinion among the representatives of the party at Chicago as to the propriety of his nomination. In spite of all these misgivings from party leaders, he was unanimously and most heartily made the party candidate, and thus accepted and installed as the party leader.

The same result will follow, now that he has been elected. The distrust and hostility on which the World relies will disappear in presence of his administration, and there will be neither room nor reason for the conflict of claims which that journal so eagerly predicts. The day has gone by when the Executive or Congress can fancy that either has anything to gain by a contest for power in an administration which requires the best services of both. The World indulges its fancy in a muster of the forces by which General Grant is to carry on its imaginary war with the party which elected him, and the Congress which is to make the laws he will be sworn to execute. The army, it says, will be on his side. He will take care to have at his head men on whose personal fidelity he can rely. And he is much more likely, if driven to extremities, to "prove a Cromwell than a Lincoln," in the judgment of our Democratic contemporary. All this is the wild muttering of politicians troubled with bad dreams. There is probably not a man in the United States, in the army

or elsewhere, less under the influence of the personal ambition which alone could lead to such issues than General Grant. Nothing in his past career, nothing in his known character, nothing he has ever done, or said, gives the faintest color of decency to such speculations concerning his future course as those in which the World sees fit to indulge.

We do not expect that General Grant will govern his official action by the rules or requirements of party discipline; but we have no idea that he will so far depart from party principles or maxims as to provoke the distrust and hostility of the Republican party. He may not go so far, or so far or accept so promptly as party leaders may require, all that they may expect or demand at his hands. But that he will conform to all the leading principles and measures of the Republican party, and consult its sentiments and its interest, in all essential points of opinion and of action, we see no reason whatever to doubt. Nor is there the slightest reason to suspect that he will not rely upon that party rather than the Democratic, in all political matters, for support. As to the two, his past action and his frequent and emphatic declarations leave no room for doubt.

But we do believe that General Grant will look to the great body of the people, rather than to any mere party, for that support and approval without which a successful administration of the Government is impossible. The questions likely to arise and command most attention are not those upon which political parties have hitherto been most sharply divided. Indeed, now that the policy of reconstruction is substantially settled, very few of the issues which exist can exist hereafter. The political parties of the future will be created mainly by the policy which General Grant may adopt in his administration. And the danger which the World and its party has most to fear is, that he may draw to his support so large a portion of those who have hitherto acted with the Democrats, as to render the further maintenance of the organization of that party impossible.

Our South American Relations.

From the N. Y. World. It is true, as wise persons in Washington aver it to be, that Mr. Seward means to improve the "shining hour" of his return to private life in a semi-triangular tour throughout South America, his intention of his may perhaps explain his extreme anxiety to defeat General Butler's attempt to reduce our diplomatic expenses by cutting off some and cutting down others of our South American missions. Mr. Seward is in favor of "splendid governments." We dare say he keeps his famous "little bell" in a small blue velvet box, and contemplates it in the intervals of dining and diplomacy with a sort of proud and passionate sadness. And when his voice in the Cabinet shall have become, even as the clapper of his "little bell," an unwaged, silent, unconsidered thing, it will no doubt be a great consolation to him to pass from point to point of such comparatively unexplored regions as the South American republics, in a kind of "pleasant" tour of his official duties. Europe lives too fast a life and too crowded with sensations to make it worth his while to undertake a pilgrimage to the eastward. In London or Paris he could hope for nothing but a sort of tepid courtesy resembling the vivid delights of power no more than cold gruel resembles hot turtle soup. In Bogota or Quito, where nothing ever happens but a revolution or an earthquake, and both by reason of their multiplicity have come to be monotonous, and the arrival of the illustrious Mr. Seward could be very likely to be hailed with a general ringing of cracked church bells and a parade of parti-colored patriots in the plaza.

But, to the full development of Mr. Seward's content in such a tour, it would obviously be indispensable that he should find at Bogota and Quito some American functionary of a sufficiently elevated rank to make him a becoming pedestal for Mr. Seward to stand upon. Now, a Consul-General or a Charge d'Affaires is, at the best, diplomatically speaking, but a poor creature. He may do very well for his own purposes, but he is not exalted enough to make him a fit and proper herald for a Premier on his travels. Of course, if the question were as to putting off a few superfluous South American envoys and keeping Mr. Seward at home, or keeping the superfluous South American Ministers, and getting Mr. Seward to visit them, truth would compel us to say that there has been a time, and a long time, in our history during which it would have been wise to purchase Mr. Seward's protracted absence from our domestic councils at a much higher figure than that of the salaries of half-a-dozen Ministers Resident. But that time has passed, and as Mr. Seward is not likely hereafter to be more mischievous to us at Washington or at Auburn than he would be in Bogota or in Quito, we may eliminate this consideration from the question of what our South American diplomacy is worth to us.

The practical business test, which Mr. Seward himself pretends to be anxious that we should apply to the value of a minister, is decidedly favorable to General Butler's proposition. Mr. Seward thinks that we should have a minister in each of the South American countries in which England and France have ministers, on the ground that our commerce with those countries is larger than that of either England or France. Now, the truth is that, while we have Ministers Resident or Envoys in countries like Chili, Uruguay, Venezuela, Peru, and Ecuador, England and France are represented in those countries by Consuls-General and Charges d'Affaires. Yet our commerce with those countries is less and not greater than the commerce with them of England or France. Our whole import and export trade with Peru, for example, in 1867, amounted to but a little over one million dollars. During the same year the trade of England with Peru amounted to nearly 24,000,000, or 20,000,000, being twenty times as large as our own; while the Tableau Général du Commerce de la France puts the commerce of France with Peru for the same period at 52,700,000 francs, or more than 810,000,000, being ten times as large as our own. Uruguay in 1867 exported to Great Britain a value of \$2,200,544, and to France a value of \$2,405,716, against a value of only \$1,400,000 to this country. Chili, in which country Mr. Seward is particularly anxious that we should suffer the virtuous and discreet Klipatriek to remain as an envoy of the first rank, dealt with us in 1867 to the extent of \$2,710,000, exports and imports, all told, and including the trade of California as well as of our Atlantic ports. In the same year a British consul-general and charge d'affaires was found amply able to look after a British commerce with Chili amounting to \$21,488,000, while a French diplomat of the same rank satisfactorily protected a French commerce with Chili of \$4,492,000.

It is clear, it is not, in the face of these figures, that if ministers should be proportional to exports and imports, nothing can be more absurd than for the United States to insist on sending diplomats of a higher rank than England and France to Chili or Uruguay or Peru? But Mr. Seward's test is as incorrect intrinsically as it is in the applications he makes of it. The true measures of the powers with which the United States should clothe their

diplomatic representatives ought to be the political well as the commercial importance of our relations with the countries to which we send them, and our greater or less facility of communication with those countries. We send ministers of the first rank to England and France, because our political as well as our commercial relations with those countries are of the first consequence, though such of late years have become our facilities of communication with both of them, that the importance to us of maintaining in either a plenipotentiary representative has been greatly diminished. With the South American republics we have no political relations grave enough to make it worth while for us to maintain there representatives of equal rank with those whom we send to States which are constantly exerting a serious influence upon the current political history of our times, while such have become our facilities of rapid communication between those republics and Washington since California came into the Union and the Panama Railway was opened, that it is quite unnecessary for us to do more than maintain at two or three leading centres diplomatic agents of a respectable grade, competent to keep the home government accurately and promptly informed of what is going on about them, and to exert a general supervision over the decaying but still considerable intercourse of the United States with the southern continent.

This intercourse we say is "decaying." This is the lamentable truth. To take but a single example:—Our trade with Peru, which appears in 1864 at no more than a million of dollars, amounted in 1853 to more than five millions. In the same year, England did a business of less than 15,000,000 and France did a business of less than \$4,000,000 with the same country. Now, as we have seen, the English trade with Peru is more than twenty and the French trade more than ten times as large as our own. What we have lost, England and France have gained. If we desire to recover our ground, the way to do so is not to waste our money on diplomatic parades abroad, but to reform our policy and to change our rulers at home.

The Plums of the Alaska Cake.

From "Brick" Pomeroy's N. Y. Democrat. The radical press has been very adroit in hushing up all reference to the Alaska swindle, by which some lucky brethren of the God-and-morality party must have pocketed among them over two millions of dollars. A gentleman by the name of Martin declares himself ready to show the committee of Congress where all this sum went to. His story is, that a gentleman whose evidence may be forthcoming, called on Baron Stoeckl soon after the appropriation was made by Congress, and saw on the Russian Minister's desk a draft for \$1,000,000, and the Baron presented it to him for inspection. The gentleman asked what it was for, and on being told that it was to pay for Alaska, he replied:—"But this is only for \$5,000,000; I thought the United States were to pay \$7,200,000." "No," replied the Russian Baron, "that is all we asked for the territory—you Yankees got all the rest."

It is said that a gentleman employed in the State Department to translate documents from foreign languages made the discovery of a draft for \$1,000,000, and the Baron presented it to him for inspection. The gentleman asked what it was for, and on being told that it was to pay for Alaska, he replied:—"But this is only for \$5,000,000; I thought the United States were to pay \$7,200,000." "No," replied the Russian Baron, "that is all we asked for the territory—you Yankees got all the rest."

To an ex-public printer, \$500; to a near relative of the Great Commoner, \$10,000; to an ex-Commissioner of Penitentiaries, \$10,000; to the Washington correspondent of a New York radical morning paper, \$5000; to a Washington correspondent who writes on the list of names in the Herald, but who is known to be attached to a Cincinnati paper, \$10,000; to a conservative morning paper in Baltimore, \$20,000; to the Atlantic City correspondent of the same paper, \$5000; to a representative of the Jones family, \$10,000; to an Eastern Senator who had a hand in the Alaska swindle, \$10,000; and the Eastern member before alluded to as No. 1, \$200,000; to Eastern member No. 2, \$100,000; to a diplomatic agent, \$100,000; to \$300,000, and the great king of the New York lobby, who had the general management of the swindle, received the modest little sum of \$50,000.

This accounts for the business-like visitations of Thurlow Weed to Washington, about the time of the Alaska negotiations. And it will be remembered by the reader that there was a hint at the time that a near friend of the "Great Commoner," old Thad., had received a big plum out of the Alaska cake. The "conservative morning paper in Baltimore," which got a plum of \$20,000 weight, we suppose was the Sun, unless the astigmatic and wheezing old American could feel the lobby into the idea that it had a grain of influence with somebody. Which of the "New York radical morning papers" received the \$50000 plum? If it was the Tribune, we expect brother Greeley to make a clean breast of the dirty job, and tell us all he knows about it; but if it was the Times, or the World, the public will, we fear, never be any wiser than it now is on that subject. We must not look for repentance in such impudent sheets. There is but one Democratic paper which is down as having received a plum out of this alarming cake, and that has been sometimes accused of possessing an easy and pliable virtue in the seductive presence of gold.

The amiability, the decidedly more than sweet-tempered committee of Congress, which pretended to be investigating this fraud, are ominously silent—nay, indeed, foolishly so; for they ought to pretend to be doing something. They know how to cheat; lying is as easy to them as blowing in a pipe, or any other wild instrument; and they ought to at least keep up the appearance of seeking to find out where all the plums of the Alaska cake have gone to. As all these plums in reality belong to the American people, we find it our duty to demand that this tell-tale silence of the committee shall be broken. Of course, such patriotic, honorable gentlemen will tell the whole truth—of course!

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