SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS UPON CURRENT TOPICS-COMPILED RVERY DAY FOR THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

Danger of Unwise Retreachment.

From the N. Y. Times

k It seems upgracious to criticize in any but an approving spirit the zealous efforts of the House in the direction of retrenchment and economy. Extravagance has so long prevailed in every department of the Government that the present disposition to cut down expenses of all kinds seems to merit cordial praise. The desire to save contrasts so strikingly with the reckless inclination to spend, that few are disposed to be censorious as to the manner in which the saving is effected. If only expenditures are largely reduced, we should be

And yet even in good works judgment is necessary. The best of deeds may be marred by a little indiscretion. Economy, to be real, must be lasting; it must be a reality, not a sign confined to the appropriation bills, signirying nothing. For the purpose of momentary effect, a deduction of thirty or fifty per cent. from the estimates furnished by the departments may be well enough; but as a measure of retrenchment it becomes a farce if, at the end of the year, the difference reappear in the form of a deficiency bill. Cutting down estimates amounts to nothing unless the sums voted be sufficient for the service they are intended to cover. The manner in which these things are done constitutes the difference between wise and unwise retrenchment. The danger now to be apprehended is that

of unwise work. In the hurry to make a good appearance, estimates are cut down summarily, without reference to probable requirements as estimated by the heads of departments. So many millions are asked for; thirty or fifty per cent. less is appropriated, and the difference is claimed as money saved. But if the wants of the department be not diminished in the same proportion, there will be no real saving; simply embarrassment of the Executive and an exemplification of folly, next year, when a deficiency bill comes before Congress.

The proper method to be pursued is manifest. It is the duty of the Appropriation Committee to confer with the departmental heads, with the view of reducing the estimates as much as possible. Any economy thus effected is genuine economy; the amount of the reduction is an amount gained. But this is not the course at present followed. Estimates are discarded; the departmental idea of what is wanted is repudiated; and zealous members, in the name of economy, urge appropriation bills which in many items are inadequate to the efficient performance of the duties required. The credit thus won will not stand; it will be followed, in due time, by dis-

appointment and disgust. The system is rendered more objectionable by its effect upon the operations and repute of the incoming administration. General Grant enters office voluntarily pledged to a policy of retrenchment and economy. Nobody doubts his determination to keep his promise. But even General Grant cannot perform impossibilities; he cannot make ten millions fill the place of fifteen. Vigorous honesty will accomplish much, no doubt, and on this quality the country relies. But the Government must be carried on-its essential wants must be satisfied; and if the moneys voted by Congress be insufficient for the purpose, deficiencies will inevitably occur, which

must next year be made good. We are not suggesting any unusual lati-tude in expenditures for the new administration. But it is entitled to demand fair play. And the measure of fair play, so far as payments go, is an intelligent estimate of what the public service needs, not the arbitrary decree of members intent upon earning popularity by a pretense of retrenchment.

The Supreme Court Decision. From the N. Y. Times.

The press, without distinction of party, discusses with evident satisfaction the recent decision of the Supreme Court, and predicts for it a wholesome influence upon the opinion and business of the country. The equity of enforcing the specific performance of coin contracts entered into prior to the war, the protection afforded to creditors under contracts of this nature now outstanding, and the security afforded for the future conduct of business on a specie basis without waiting for further legislation-are points on which the public judgment seems to be tolerably well established. No apprehension of embarrassment is expressed in any quarter. The construction that may possibly be put upon ante-war contracts, in which payment in coin was not covenanted, remains to be ascertained. But on the general question of coin contracts and their binding force, Democratic and Republican journalists write in a tone of respectful acquiescence in the conclusion of the Court, and with a good deal more than formal approval of the effect which the decision may be expected to produce upon the country. The impatience manifested by Senator Drake towards the authority of the Court, and the idea he suggested of resistance to its dicta, find favor nowhere.

The favorable bearing of the decicion upon the Legal-tender act doubtless contributes not a little to the opinion generally expressed. Although no direct reference is made by the Court to the question of constitutionality as connected with that act, the whole argument on which the majority judgment rests implies au admission in the affirmative. The reference to two descriptions of lawful money in circulation-the explicitness with which two forms of contract are specified, one payable in coin, the other in Legaltender notes-would be unintelligible except on the hypothesis that the Court concedes the constitutionality of the Legal-tender act. Some of our Democratic contemporaries exhibit a little chagrin in their comments upon this aspect of the decision, their prophetic reputation having been staked upon the opposite opinion. To the people, however, this is not the least significant or the least agreeable result of the case; for besides imparting an element of stability to business by doing what Congress has hitherto failed to do in the matter of gold contracts, it practically ends the controversy in regard to the constitutional validity of the greenback law. In both respects it is as timely as it is important.

The Ocean Yacht Race. From the N. Y. Revald.

When the cable telegram told us of Mr. Ashbury's acceptance of a challenge from the owner of the Sappho, we were rather astonished at the Englishman's idea of an ocean race. But it appears that something still more astonishing was in store for us. The cable telegram did Mr. Ashbury an injustice in making him propose a race that indeed was not contemptible, although it had nothing to do with the ocean. Its points were the Isle of Wight, the Eddystone light-house, and Cherbourg breakwater. Now, however, we the English papers that in this course Mr. Ashbury saw three races - races to test "the seagoing qualities" of yachts too. The three wise men of Gotham who went to | become so pressing that there will be less dis-

turers compared with the gallant yachtman who wants to go to sea around the Isle of Wight. But the measurement that Mr. Ash- themselves do not probably expect to com-bury stands by is the same whether it come | plete the entire expulsion of the Spaniard. by mail or the telegraph. It is Thames mossurement forever. A correspondent forcibly proposes that we also get up a measurement, ridiculously planned, to suit ourselves. Wshall call it the Erie Canal measurement. The Brie Canal is longer than the Thames, and deeper, too, in many places. By this system we propose to call the breadth double the depth, and this would make the Cambria four hundred tons to the Sappho's two hundred and ninety. Races shall not be made except on this measurement, and yachts of all nations that reject it shall be held as acknow ledging their inferiority by their refusal of our terms.

Mr. Boncicault on Originality. From the N. Y. Tribung, Boucleault and Horace, two names well calculated to lend distinction to each other, are happily brought together by the former gifted writer, the latter not being on hand either to cooperate or remonstrate, in a recent letter to the London newspapers. A question having arisen as to the originality of Mr. Robertson's new drama, School, Mr. Bouckault comes forward to prove, in the first place, that it is entirely and in every respect original; and in the second, that neither it nor any other 'legitimate', drama ought to be original. The advantage of Mr. Boucicault's championship in this matter is questionable, inasmuch as Mr. Robertson's plays have a way of taking care of themselves at the Prince of Wales' Theatre, while the only effort of the great sensational dramatist, at the same house, fell sick and died in its infancy, in spite of the most artful nursing. But that is a small affair. Mr. Boncicault's remarkable declaration that "the rules of 'legitimate' drama forbid originality absolutely and upon high authority," possesses greater interest. That this is his own opinien, he considers sufficient to establish the point conclusively; but, to clinch it, he brings Horace upon the stand, and makes him testify to the same effect. "Horace warms the dramatist," says Mr. Boucicault, "against original plats and hids him however of trains original plots, and bids him beware of trying to introduce original characters. He urges the poet to take old subjects and well-worn heroes, and not to wander from a beaten track in search of novelty." This is a capital example of Mr. Boucicault's well-known skill in adaptation. Horace does say something not wholly unlike this, and a dexterous turn or two, with a judicious "cut," is all that is needed to adjust it to the purpose of argument. This is what the poet really suggests. He first tells the Pisos that in choosing a new and unknown subject they must also take care to invent new characters, and to make them consistent throughout; and then he warns them of the difficulties of invention, and hints that the easier 'method is to select a plot or fab'e from Homer-which is somewhat different from distinctly forbidding original plots and original characters. If Mr. Boucleault could take the trouble to go on towards the end of the Ars Poetica, he would find Horace's views more precisely set down. He expressly praises Roman writers for scorning the aid of the Greek down. authors, and making effective use of home subjects, either in portraying the manners of high society (comedy), or in faithful representation of humble life (domestic drama). If people will hurl about the arguments of the old poets, they should prudently choose those which have not the boomerang quality of returning and rending unskilful throwers. For our part, we attach little weight to the Horatian maxims. If they were all strictly followed out we should have dramas in five acts only, we should be deprived of all scenes of animation and intensity, we should never be allowed more than three persons upon the stage at We once, and we should be pestered with the chorus. But Mr. Boucleault affects to think differently, and, this being the case, some friend should call his attention to the follow-

Olmitatores, servum pecus! ut mibl sape Bilem, scepe jocum vestri movere tumuitus.' or, as it may be freely translated, "O slavish herd of imitators, how often has your rubbish stirred my vexation and aroused my

ing lines, which may be found in an epistle to

Maccenas. In the light of the prodigious suc-

cess of After Dark, they have a charming

significance:-

The Campaign of the Cuban Patriots. From the N. Y. Tribune.

The military situation in Cuba, eliminated from the crowd of strange names and confused particulars in the daily despatches, may be briefly stated. A population of a million and a half, spread over an island eight hundred miles long, with a backbone of mountain fastnesses running through nearly its entire length, is almost unanimously in sympathy with the insurrection. The insurgent forces are constantly swelling, and they spring up in every unexpected quarter throughout the island. Against this disaffected population Captain-General Dulce is able to bring a force not numbering, all told, 25,000 regular troops, of whom whole regiments have already been demoralized by cholera and other diseases arising from the climate. He attempts to suppress the insurgent risings, but the places which his soldiers leave break out into insurrection before those to which they march have been reached. His most prominent commander in the field, Count Valmaseda, moves against Bayamo. Arrived before its smoking ruins, which the insurgents have abandoned, he hears of the outbreak at Puerto Principe, behind him. Turning thither, and skirmishing a little on the way, he reaches that city in time to hear of simultaneous risings at Espiritu Santo, Trinidad, and Nuevitas. Towards each in turn small bodies of troops are detached, but, before order is restored at either, we have popular commotions in Matanzas, risings at Cienfuegos, the American Consul at Trinidad leaving his office to join the insurgents, occupation of Tunas, seizures of telegraph lines and stoppage of mails throughout the whole central and eastern parts of the

In these occurrences may be read two signs, one favorable, the other not unfavorable, to the insurgents. The sentiment of revolt against their Spanish rulers is universal. The insurrectionary leaders develop no harmonious or comprehensive plan of campaign, beyond the effort to distract and wear out the raw, unacclimated Spanish troops, by a multitude of minor outbreaks. Cespedes and Quesada, the two conspicuous Creole chiefs, mean to avoid general engagements; to make no effort to burden themselves with the care of captured cities; to harass the Spanish troops by sudden appearances, and retreat, when hard pressed, to the mountains of the interior; to keep the standard of revolt raised throughout the whole island; and to take time for their ally. Three months more of such a campaign will bring the Spanish troops into the sickly sea-Meanwhile, the Cuban revenues of thirty-three millions a year, on which the Home Government so largely relies, will have been cut off, and the difficulties of the situation at Madrid may fairly be expected to have

sea in a tub were a splendid kind of adven | position to keep up the strain of a long effort | to the party that elected him. We have, | Cabinet office, which there is no certainty against Cuba. Then will be the Creole oppor-unity. Till then, Cespedes and Quesaia

It is evident that the Spanish authorities are thoroughly alarmed. They recall the tardy liberal concessions, and establish, in the name of the Provisional Government and free Spain, a rigor worse than that of the Bour-They issue, every day, fresh stories of the immediate arrival of two thousand, three thousand, four thousand reinforcements. They desert the eastern end of the Island en masse, and the column escorting the refugees to Havana is barassed by flying bands of the insurgents, hanging upon its flanks. They even suffer the transmission of a statement that Havana itself is almost in a state of

Those who have watched the progress of the Creole movement have long noted the absence of any appearance of an organized insurgent Government. This, as we now learn, they have in full operation, with Cespedes as Secretary of War, Quesada as commander in the field, and the Havana Junta in perfect cooperation. Ontside the garrisoned towns, they control the whole eastern half of the island: while the Captain-General controls simply the ground his troops stand on. The Western Jurisdictions seem to be more quiet only because the Spanish force there is stronger. Yet up to the very suburbs of Havana, insurrectionary outbreaks have occurred; an organized insurgent force is reported at Matauzas; and at last the patriots have dared to raise their heads even to the westward of Havana. A band three hundred strong is reported at San Autonio, and another so far west as at Colon.

Thus the little flame that four months ago raised its flickering light in the far East among the mountains about Bayamo, has swept throughout the entire length of the island, has girdled the capital and leaped to the westward beyond it. The cause commands every Cuban heart; it seems supported liberally by the Cuban purse; it brings emancipation in its train; and it is managed by men whose actions betoken sagacious plans and a thorough comprehension of their hindrances and their opportunity. We cannot doubt that their right to independence, thus wisely and bravely supported, will soon be established, and that the midsummer breezes will, for the first time in the history of the New World, bear aloft through the whole length of the fair island, from Baracoa to Nueva Filipina, and from the mountains clear down to the sea, the victorious banner of free

Our Diplomatic Relations with Cuba.

From the N. Y. Herald. The relations of our consular representatives in Cuba with the Spanish sutherities are far from cordial. The consular clerk, Mr. Utley, was recently arrested for seditious language. and is now in confinement, we believe. Mr. Seward declines to interfere, but simply asks a speedy and fair trial, if that were now possible. Since then the Vice-Consul, M. La Reintrie, a citizen of the United States, but of Mexican origin, requested of the Spanish authorities a passport from the island for a citizen of the United States who was a native of Cuba. The authorities replied by seizing the person named and throwing him into prison. The Vice-Consul demanded his relesse. The Spanish authorities refused with insult. Disgusted at the reply of Seward with regard to Utley, La Reintrie telegraphed to Seward that unless the Government insisted on the release of the prisoner by the Spanish authorities he should tender his resignation. Mr. Seward immediately telegraphed to the Vice-Consul that the first Havana steamer would bring W. F. Smith (General Baldy Smith) to relieve him. We are glad to see sturdy Baldy Smith go there. He has pluck and good judgment combined. We are sorry to see the Vice-Consul removed just what he ought to do. for doing utterly condemn the policy of Mr. Seward in refusing protection to our consuls. Foreign nations insult and even maltreat them with impunity. Seward simply says, in his coldlooded way, it is customary to throw the shield of national protection only about ambassadors and ministers. Consuls must shift for themselves. If this be the general principle, it is not the practice of Great Britain and France, and if it be persisted in by our Government with the apparent indifference and abject servility to other nations, the United States will be brought into just contempt in all foreign ports. We hope Baldy Smith will be the rugged and wide awake defender of the dignity of our flag, as in the war he was the courageous champion of its supremacy. His name has been sent to the Senate for confirmation as Consul-General at Havana, and the appointment should be immediately confirmed without reference to party politics or partisan feeling. The action of the Senate in this matter amounts to a definition of the attitude of the Government in relation to several thousands of American citizens now in Cuba in a position of great danger to their lives and fortunes.

General Grant's Cabinet.

From the N. Y. World. During the few remaining days that intervene before the 4th of March, the chief topic of speculation in political circles will, of course, be the composition of General Grant's Cabinet. Every newsmonger and quidnunc will have his hypothetical state, and eavesdroppers and retailers of gossip will be able to repeat, with more or less approach to accuracy, some things bearing upon this aubject which Generat Grant may have said in conversation. But as it is his avowed purpose to conceal his selections, even from the gentlemen he intends to appoint, he is quite as likely to say things to baille curiosity and put officious inquisitiveness on a false scent, as to inadvertently divulge what it is his deliberate purpose to conceal. When any particularly plausible conjectures are thrown ont, we may attempt to do our part towards contributing to public amusement by discussing them; but for the present, we prefer to consider the principles on which General Grant would naturally proceed in forming his Cabinet, if he is as wise and wary as his panegyrists would have us believe.

First, then, if General Grant is a man of sagacity, he will not break with the Republican party nor with its leaders in Congress. If he should do this he would render himself as powerless as Governor Seymour would have been, if he had been elected; more powerless, indeed, than Governor Seymour would have been, for had he been elected he would have had the moral support of a majority of the people to play off against Congress, while if General Grant breaks with his party, he cannot say that those who elected him laid upon him the duty of opposing the Republican policy. He would be regarded as a renegate by one party, without gaining the confidence of the other. The success of his administration will depend chiefly upon his ability to gain control of the Republican party, with a view to moderate and guide it. He wants his nominations confirmed; he wants his measures carried through Congress; he wants the machinery by which public opinion is influenced, to work smoothly and easily

therefore, no expectation that he will go outside the Republican party for a single appointee to any office, high or low.

As General Grant is certain to make up a Cabinet of Republicans, we do not see that anything would be gained by his showing a marked preference for that wing of the party which is called conservative. If he means to control the party, his Cabinet must consist of men who enjoy its confidence. We believe that he could make a more moderate and reasonable administration with a Cabinet of radicals than with a Cabinet of conservatives. He has got to humor the Republican party, as a wise physician humors the faucies of ar insane patient, as a means of controlling him. General Grant cannot alter the past; with a Congress so largely Republican he cannot procure the repeal of any of the favorite Republi-can measures. He may, therefore, as well make the best of them, and select as his advisers men who have powerfully contributed to their establishment. This would allay the fears and distrust of the party, and prevent its judg-ing his administration in a jealous, cavilling spirit. The Republican party will acquiesce in many things from a supposed friend, which they would not endure from a professed enemy, especially if they regarded that enemy as an apostate. A Cabinet of radicals, privately pledged to moderation, would have a better prospect of success than a Cabinet of avowed conservatives, inasmuch as the latter would not enjoy the confidence of the party and could not lead it. General Grant would probably have no difficulty in finding men of radical antecedents, who, for the sake of office and influence, would be willing to stop with what the party has already done, and promise their fullest cooperation in toning down the aggressive spirit it has heretofore exhibited. It is much better that he should do this thau provoke it to go great lengths by futile opposilion and defiance. His best stroke as a conservative tactician is to capture as many as possible of the radical leaders, and pledge them to moderate counsels. Secondly, if the course we have indicated

would be wire, it would be a mistake for General Grant to make up a Cabinet of experts. each in his own department, as some have supposed that he may. The general ability and political influence of the Cabinet are units as important as their special knowledge. Experts are reldom men of much sagacity or enlargement of views. They are exceedingly useful, often indispensable, as subordinates; but men of sound judgment and wide experience make better heads of departments, although these should of course be conversant with the affairs they are called to direct. Besides managing their departments, Cabinet officers should be capable of aiding the passage of administrative measures through Congress. They are in constant intercourse with the committees of Congress, whom they supply with information; and if they are able and sagacious, they can exert a great power in moulding the legislation of the country. The chief Assistant Secretaries should be experts, for their duties do not extend outside the walls of their departments; but the Secretaries themselves are brought into constant intercourse with leading members of Congress, and should be sapable of rising out of the atmosphere of a department, and taking broad views of public questions. If General Grant should put a mere soldier at the head of the War Department, a mere naval officer at the head of the Navy Department, a mere statistician or political economist at the head of the Treasury Department, and fill all the places in a similar way, it would need no prophet to predict the failure of his administration. Its success depends nton its ability to centrol men and influence public opinion, and these are the fauctions, not of experts, but of statesmen. It would be hought ridiculous in England to fill the leading places in the Cabinet with men who were merely capable of conducting the interior busitheir several offices. The more special knowledge the head of a department possesses, of course the better; but unless he possesses a great deal else, he will play a very insignificant part in the administration. A Cabinet wholly made up of such men would soon become a butt of derision.

Thirdly, supposing General Grant to act on the principles we have suggested, it would be easier to conjecture whom he will exclude from his Cabinet than whom he will appoint. He will probably not appoint Charles Francis Adams Secretary of State, although that statesman is better qualified for the duties of the office than any other man in the country. But the fact that the average feeling of the Republican party towards Mr. Adams cold or hostile would prevent his adding any effective strength to General Grant's administration. Probably General Grant desires to do nothing which Mr. Adams would not cordially approve, and if an administration were not dependent on Congress and public opinion, there could not be a more admirable selection. But General Grant would find it less difficult to make moderation popular, if he selects party favorites as his instruments and coadjutors. Mr. Adams would be looked at by the Republicans with jaundiced eyes, whereas a radical doing precisely the same things would be judged with candor and indulgence. The same remark will apply, though with less force, to Mr. Fessenden, who, next to Mr. Adams, is the fittest selection General Grant could make in point of qualifications. Mr. Fessenden has given a strong support to the reconstruction policy and the general measures of the party; but his opposition to imprachment and his supposed conservative leanings cause the party to look askance at him. He and Sumner are not on speaking terms, and Sumner is certain to be the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations throughout General Grant's term. In foreign affairs the Senate is very potent, as all treaties require its contirmation; and the machinery of government would be a good deal out of gear, if the two most influential persons counected with this great branch of the public service were virulent personal enemies. As General Grant must naturally despise Sumner, he may give the office to rescenden notwithstanding this objection. But it is next to certain that he will not offer it to Mr.

Adsing. If the exclusion of Mr. Adams is certain and the selection of Mr. Fessenden doubtful on the grounds we have indicated, we suppose there can be no probability of the appointment of Commissioner Wells to the Treasury Department, Mr. Adams and Mr. essenden are statesmen, fitted to exert lnence in every respect, if they but enjoyed the full confidence of the party. Mr. Wells is merely a statistician. He might manage the interior of the department well, but he would exert no influence outside of it, and would not strengthen the administration. The Treasury Department can probably have the full advantage of Mr. Wells' special qualileations in some other position than at its head; and as General Grant would naturally ovet for his administration influence, not solation, he needs a very strong and experienced statesman in this, the most important of all the departments.

Experts at the head of the War and Navy Departments would neither strengthen him nor benefit them. If an officer of the army in his favor. He can expect none of these nor benefit them. If an officer of the army advantages if he places himself in opposition or navy resigns his commission to take a

that he would held till the end of General Grant's term, he would make a very foolish exchange, unless he is resolved to abandon his profession for other reasons. And there are no army or navy officers who would add anything to the political strength of General Grant's administration, or could aid him in carrying favorite measures through Congress. Civilians in those places could at all times command the advice and counsels of the officers of their respective departments; so that whatever may be the value of their knowledge as experts, it is equally available whether they are in the Cabinet or out of it.

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