SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

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

Private Properly at Sea in War-The From the N. Y. Times.

Mr. Vernon Harcourt was no doubt well sased to seize the opportunity for a diver-Mon which Mr. Johnson's Manchester speech afforded him. Mr. Harcourt has long been busily engaged in undermining, by his logic regarding British responsibility for the Alabams, the high esteem and respect he had previously built up in America by his support of the cause of the Union against the cause of the insurrection. One happy chance for diver-gion he had, and used, when "recognition of Rebel belligerency" was dragged in by head and ears as the foundation of our pecuniary claim for the Alabama's ravages; another he now enjoys in the remarks let fall by Mr. Johnson regarding the hoped for immunity of

private property in time of war.

But his second diversion is not so happy as his first. It was no difficult matter to show two sides to the question of considering England's recognition of the Confederate States as the fons et origo of our suit for the liquidation of specific damages caused by a single class of war casualties. But, when it comes to this second affair, what does "Historicus" make out? He diverges from the field of legal decision into that of private or individual opinion, and gives us, in place of his customary erudition, very general and inexact assertions to the effect that the ameliorating tendency of war cannot be applied to

the protection of private property at sea. The new doctrine is, as our readers know, that international law ought to protect private property at sea, as Mr. Johnson somewhat generally, but intelligibly, presented it, "private property upon the ocean, during war, shall never be subject to capture-men may be killed upon the land and upon the ocean in battle, but the merchant will go his own way unharmed." This doctrine, we may add, has been forced upon the attention of jurists by the mercantile community of the world, which comprises some of the acutest thinkers as well as the most influential citizens and resolute legislators of all commercial nations. Mr. Harcourt, in his late letter to the

London Times, rehearses the view he expressed at Birmingham last autumn, namely, that "it is idle to attempt to put an end to the horrors of war except by preventing war itself;" and that, as the wanton destruction of private property at sea is one of the horrors of war, it cannot be prevented. "When the dogs of war are once slipped from the leash," he says, "I have very little faith in moderating their havoc." And, in brief, his theory is, that we should make war so terrible, and especially so injurious to commercial wealth, that "the most powerful and influential interests may be banded together to discourage it." We confess frankly our astonishment at

hearing the enunciation from such a source of such a doctrine; we fancy it was the controversial and syllogistic reasoning, rather than the rich historic knowledge, to say nothing of the philanthropic sentiment, of the writer which projected it. On the same ground we are under obligations to take backward steps in civilization, and reduce war to Indian butchery; and whereas by degrees certain conceded usages of humanity have, under the influence of Christian nations, become binding "laws of war," whose trans gression is severely punished even in their own troops, by all civilized nations, our intelfigent international jurist has "no faith in moderating havoo." On the dootrine of "Historious" we must go to medieval times and savage isles for our exemplars in warfare, and take as our teachers not Washington and Wellington, but the Thug and Sioux. Whoever is conversant with the history of warfare, from earliest to latest ages, will see how civilization and intelligence have redeemed it from being a wild carnival of blood and booty, wherein the wanton sacking of cities, the putting of prisoners by the thou-sand to the sword, the outrage of women, the slaughter of infants, have borne conspicuous parts. Did these horrible atrocities ever lessen the frequency of war? Let the Palatinates of history bear witness.

Should "Historicus" reply that he does not seek a retrograde toward wanton destruction of life and the means of life beyond the present rules of civilized war, we may properly insist that he then abandons the fundamental hy-pothesis of his argument; for it is merely a further mitigation of such horrors as have already been mitigated by international agree-ment, that is now under discussion.

Mr. Harcourt, in the next place, and independent of his general theory, takes the ground, inferentially, that neutral property at sea is entitled to no more immunity than neutral property on land, which latter gets in prac-tice none at all. We repeat, in justice to this able writer, that this argument is only "in-ferential;" but so much it certainly is; and it comes out during his overthrow of a windmill that he sets up, namely, that "the most popular argument for protecting private belligerent

lar argument for protecting private belligerent property at sea is that private belligerent property on land is protected."

We shall not go into the side issue which "Historicus" raises by disputing this alleged proposition of his opponents. What we say, on the contrary, is that the two cases are essentially different. It is difficult, and probably impossible, to protect from capture "private belligerent property on land;" but the reason is because it is so often difficult to restrain the needs of food and forage in an restrain the needs of food and forage in an army; to discriminate between real and pre-tended "farmers" and guerrillas in a hostile region; to decide when the products of lands or factories have or have not been carried habitually to the campa of the enemy. The facts are different on the sea. Is Semmes' seisure of ships' chronometers to be put on a par with Sheridan's destruction of the wheat-fields regularly reaped in season by Early's columns? Is the burning and scuttling of whale-ships, armed with no more serviceable weapons than harpoons to be likened to weapons than harpoons, to be likened to Sherman's destruction of houses containing extra shot-guns and cavalry bridles, or even to his seizure of food and forage out of barns?

For ourselves, we ask first to have it demonstrated that merchant ships, without arms, without contraband of war, and obviously pacific in intent, cannot be determined beyond doubt to be peaceful commercial vessels, and as such protected, before we give up the hope that the amelioration of warfare may at some day reach and shield them. We shall concede as necessary a right of search; a right of destruction on discovery of contraband of war, or on discovery of hostile intent or use; we might even, if necessary, concede a right in the war-ship to supply its own needs, in war, or on discovery of hostile intent or use; we might even, if necessary, concede a right in the war-ship to supply its own needs, in order to meet the argument from analogy in hostile armies; but there is something different from wanton destruction designed purely to increase the horrors of war. There will still be ships enough left to protect, after these exceptions, in the commerce of all pastions.

That is what "Historious" argues.

The Administration of General Grant- |

From the N. Y. Heratd. The rush of hungry patriots to Washington on the wild hunt for office startles even the managing politicians whose followers these hungry patriots are. General Grant, however, accustomed to dealing with large bodies of men on a short notice, sustains the pressure with the coolness of an old campaigner, and takes his own time in parcelling out the loaves and fishes. Meantime our attention is called to the more important responsibilities and duties of his position. We expect under his administration, in the development of the incalculable resources of the United States, an epech of progress, prosperity, and power without an example in the records of any people on the face of the globe. We have had reasons to fear a financial orisis and collapse from the mismanagement of the Treasury, and reasons, also, to fear, from these and other causes, such demoralizations and dis-orders in our body politic as might bring upon ns political as well as financial bankruptcy; but we look now for brighter days and better It is yet too soon to pass judgment upon the

capacities of the new Cabinet in the work of retrenchment and reform; but there are two departments which have already gone vigoronsly to the task before them. We refer to the War and the Navy Departments. The experienced and efficient men assigned to the professional business of these departments have commenced with the will of new householders preparing for a wedding in the family and a bridal reception. General and special orders affecting the reorganization and reduction of the army and the pruning down of useless expenses have already been sent to every section of the country. It is contemplated within a short time to reduce the aggregate rank and file of the army in active service from forty-five to twentyfive regiments—or say from forty-five to twenty five thousand men—and in this and other ways to cut down in a twelvemonth the expenditures of the War Office to one half the last annual budget of the Secretary. This is good. And in the Navy Department we have evidences of similar activity with the pruning-knife. Indeed, it is said that Admiral Porter, in direct charge of the reform bureau, is turning the department upside down and inside out, and that Grandfather Welles would even now be shocked at the innovations made in the brashing away of the dust and cobwebs of many years' accumulation, and in the clearing out of old and useless lumber. At the same time Secretary Borie, off on a little journey, leaves posted about the walls for the information of placehunting interlopers this facetious inscription: -"There are no vacancies in this department." He has no time to waste upon office

We see, then, that in the War and Navy Offices it is the purpose of the new managers to reduce personnel, machinery, and expenses to the margin of a fair peace establishment. Let it not be inferred, however, that this means peace under Grant's administration, right or wrong. It means only that while peace prevails our amny and navy may be razeed to the peace establishment of a mere police force on land and water. Why not, when, under President Grant, from the men, materials, appliances, and inventions of our late civil war, he could within six weeks muster the most formidable army in the world and a navy that would be a terror to any navy? The inaugural very clearly shows that while General Grant means to ask nothing that is not right of foreign powers, he intends to submit to nothing that is wrong. So the War and Navy Departments under him are to be organized for the exigency of war, while reduced as to the expenditures of an assured, enduring peace.

But how is it with the other departments-Here a different order of things seems to prevail; here the politicians appear as if in full possession, and the wild hunt for office is in full blast, on Marcy's debasing motto that "to the victors belong the spoils." There are not in this demoralizing exhibition any very encouraging signs of "economy, retrenchment, and reform." But when this unseemly rush of spoilsmen and this degrading scramble for places at the public crib grading scramble for places at the public crib shall have somewhat abated, we expect that General Grant will take a look into the practical working of these departments, and we expect that if they are found wanting upon the test of economy and retrenchment, he will apply the rule of his address to the Congressional committee announcing his election. tion-the rule of dismissing at once any member of his Cabinet when found incompetent or nussatisfactory. The Commissioner of Internal Revenue, an officer second only in his great responsibilities to the head of the Treasury, comes also within this category.

The Post Office Department has been turned over to Mr. Creswell deeply in debt or behind-hand; the Interior Department has been turned over to General Cox awfully mixed up with rings of Indian-cheating contractors and railway land speculating rings, and all sorts of Territorial schemes and jobs; the Treasury Department and its appendages of the internal revenue service have become a scandal to the Government and a burden to the reople too heavy to be much longer endured, and all in consequence of the thieving whisky rings, tobacco rings, gold and stock gambling rings, and other rings of sharpers and plunderers too numerous here to specify. All these abuses, frauds, and corruptions in all these departments, it is the duty of the officers in charge to rectify, and General Grant says that reform is his fixed purpose. The heads of the departments ithen, will do well not to forget this; for if found deficient they must by the President be removed, and because even for their deficiencies he will be held responsible to the country.

The Difference Between Civil Administration and Military Command.

From the N. Y. World. If the Presidency be regarded merely as an administrative office, having no higher duties than to execute such laws as Congress has enasted, or may enact, there may seem a closer resemblance between it and the command of great armies than really exists. Both the civil and the military office are positions of superintendence; both offices have to deal with many subordinates and multitudes of details; and the administrative details of both may seem to require a superior capacity for business. But it must not be inferred from these points of similarity that success as a general betokens the kind of administrative ability required in a President. As soon as we begin to look more closely into the matter we shall find that, in the nature of the duties, there is no real resemblance. When General Grant was in active command of an army, his business did not consist in

certain, and full, as to leave little place for discretion, and that little to be exercised by the officers themselves, and not by him. He may appoint them, but he has no authority to chalk out what they are to do when appointed. But in the exercise of military command, it was quite the reverse. It was General Grant's chief function as a military commander to out out work for his subordi nates, and direct the course of their daily activity. He neither raised his troops nor ap-pointed their officers. All regimental and company officers (except in the small regular army) were appointed by the Governors of the States in which the regiments were raised; the brigadier-generals and other officers by the President and General Grant could merely higher select particular officers among his subordi nates for this or that particular service; and neither in the Army of the Potomac nor at the West did he ever assign a dozen officers to different commands from those in which he either found them, or to which they were promoted in the ordinary course of the service. His duties as a general consisted in planning and superintending campaigns, the instruments of which were created to his hands. When he came East, he found the army which he marched against Richmond already organized; General Meade continued to command it; the corps and division commanders remained nearly the same, and no changes were made in officers of a lower grade. But now that General Grant has come to the Presidency, his chief duties, as an administrative officer, consist in the appointment of officers whose duties are so carefully prescribed by law that he can give them no order of any kind, either directly or through the heads of departments. It is easy to perceive, from this statement.

that General Grant's experience as an administrative officer in the army had no tendency to fit him for the administrative duties of the Presidency. The one position was no sort of training for the other, their duties being so wholly unlike. If General Grant had had the appointment of all his own subordinates in the army; if he had taken them mostly from men who were not in the army and with whom he had no acquaintance; if the applicants for each position had been as numerous as they are in civil offices, and had been as per-sistently and impudently backed; and if, after he had appointed them, he could give them no order, and never interfere except to remove them for inefficiency or misconduct, then his administrative duties in the army would have been similar to those which devolve on him as President. More of General Grant's time as President will be consumed in listening, to representations and counter-representations bearing upon appointments to office than he will bestow upon all the other duties of his new position. His acquaintance with the civil service is not sufficient to enable him either to form a very accurate judgment of the requirements of particular offices, or of the filness of particular men to fill them. He has thus far proceeded like a novice; and, beginning already to feel his incompetency and stagger under his unmeasured burdens, he has avowed his intention to take refuge behind the heads of departments and members of Congress. His Cabinet he has appointed himself, after much floundering; and although there are one or two good names in it, it is, taken as a whole, the weakest and most inexperienced ever appointed by any President. Con-sidering what a botch he has made of a thing so simple, where the number of officers is so small, and all men competent for them are well known, there is no likelihood of wise selections for the sixty thousand places in the civil service. It is not surprising that a mere army officer should have blundered so egregiously, for there was obviously nothing in his past duties which trained him for the performance of his present duties. While General Grant will hereafter receive recommendations from the heads of departments and members of Congress, it is understood that he reserves to himself the ultimate decision on all appointments, for the purpose, we suppose, of preventing anybody from holding office who is not zealously de-voted to him, and who will not, when the proper time comes, favor his reclection.

A Desperate Device.

From the N. Y. World. The announcement that General Stoneman has issued an order directing the removal of all State officers in Virginia who will not or cannot take the test oath, or iron-clad, by the 18th prox., may not seem of any considerable public significance, and yet it is. To show how, it is necessary to state that this order-is superinduced by that resolution of the Fortieth Congress which decreed that thirty days from date thereof no person should hold any civil office in either of the States of Vir-ginia, Mississippi, and Texas, unless said per-son could take the oath prescribed in the act of July 2, 1862, or had been relieved of his disabilities under the so-called fourteenth amendment by a two-thirds Congressional vote. At the time this resolution was under discussion, we indicated that it was part of a deliberate attempt to build up, by the persuasive power of office, a radical party in the South of better material than has heretofore gone to constitute that organization. Feeling that the negroes were losing confidence in the carpet-bag men, and yet seeing it to be all-important to hold this black balance of power as a set-off to the growing aversion of the North, the radical leaders some time since hit on the plan of securing weak and venal Southerners to take charge of the negroes and bring them up, in conjunction with such whites as they might influence, to the support of the party. The means of purchasing such leaders lay ready to the hand in the various State offices, and this resolution in question was therefore passed, to sequester, as it were, the civil esta-blishment of these States into a corruption

It is perfectly well known to Congress that these State offices cannot be filled by test-oath men, and indeed it is not desired by that body that they should be. The test-oath is merely the means of forcing the present incumbents to apply for a removal of disabilities of the contract o ties, and this removal is only to be obtained on a pledge of support to the radical party. If the official will give this pledge and prove his sincerity, he is to be allowed to remain; but if not, then down comes the oath upon him out he goes, and in his place comes a

"reliable" man. In Virginia, the offices thus to be utilized number some three thousand; in Texas and Mississippi, near two thousand each-or about Mississippi, near two thousand each—or about seven thousand in all. Now, seven thousand "white-washed Rebels," scattered in every county in these three outlying States, would be quite an effective corps of officers to marshal the negroes to the polls in the reconstruction elections yet to come; and not only useful thus, but likewise as a standing advertisement to death not man in every other tisement to flesh-pot men in every other Southern State that office was to be had by Southern State that office was to be had by adhesion to the radical party. With this as the programme, General Stoneman's order indicates the first step to an attempt at its accomplishment. That such a design should have been conceived, or be now in process of execution, betokens, we cannot but think, a very considerable degree of weakness in the radical party. Men do not seek reinforcements tilt they need them; and this wild

scheme of buying Southern support indicates beyond all doubt a deep-seated conviction among the radical leaders that there are causes at work to operate a most serious defection in their Northern ranks. Of course, they would not own it; it is the part of strategy to keep up a tremendous drum-beating and marching and countermarching where the lines are slim. But one thing is certain: Grant would not have bid for scalawag support in the appointment of Creswell, and Congress would not now be utilizing Southern State offices, if there was not something wrong in the North. The rogues are losing ground, depend upon it.

Retrenchment Must Be Had.

From the N. Y. Tribune. Washington reports affirm the existence of a persistent pressure upon heads of depart-ments by members of Congress for places wherewith to reward needy constituents. In so far as these demands involve merely the supersedure of ins by outs, we do not regret it. "Rotation in office" is generally wholesome, even to those who disrelish it. No department clerk who is worth his salt ought to wish to remain in office more than four years at furthest. Let young, active, energetic workers be appointed to clerkships; let each understand that he is to be retained but four years, and be admonished to save at least one third of his earnings from the outset; let him go out with the administration that appointed him, having saved the means wherewith to start in some private business (settling and working a quarter-section of public laud, if he can do no better); and let the next brood follow in the footsteps of its predecessor. We believe this best for service and servants alike; for, though there are doubtless a few clerks and higher officers in the departments whose rare capacity or special knowledge it would be difficult to replace, yet so many tend to become fossils the moment they fancy themselves fixtures, that the public interest would be decidedly promoted by a general clearing-out as often as once in four years. We do not object, therefore, to wholesale changes; we only insist that the Secretaries shall be allowed ample time to familiarize themselves with the machinery of their respective departments and the merits of their subordinates before they are required to make But more urgent even than this is the re-

nirement that the number of clerical and other Government employ és shall be greatly reduced. That number was necessarily swelled by the exigencies of war; it has since been reduced. but not nearly so much as it should be. Half the assistant assessors, collectors, etc., of in-ternal revenue that were absolutely required when we had taxes on everything, from a baby's first garment to an old man's shroud. ought now to suffice, since more than three fourths of the articles subjected to war taxes have been wholly relieved from impost. Yet we know that, where assessors and collectors have discharged subordinates, under general orders from the Treasury to retrench, members of Congress have interceded at Washington and obtained their restoration. This must come to a full stop, and the wheel must revolve in the opposite direction. Three per cent., at furthest, should assess and collect the internal revenue, and we hope it will soon

be made to do so. As to the customs, we judge that twentyfive per cent. of the present cost of their col-lection ought to be saved, and that this city should contribute her full quota towards the reduction. It ought not to cost nearly one Bight Drafts and Maturing Paper collected at per cent. of the money collected here to collect it: but it does. If we could only dispel the prevalent illusion that the public service is a political almshouse, wherein the lame, and the halt, and the paralytic, are to be fed and fattened at the public cost, the needed reform would be easy. But almost every one bas a brother, or cousin, or son, or nephew, who doesn't seem to know how to take care of himself, hence is presumed admirably calculated to officiate as a guardian of the public interests and welfare. "To the victors belong the spoils of the vanquished," is the scepted maxim, and we submit, only pro-testing that it is not the people and their treasury who are rightfully vanquished. Let the winning party have its pap; but let no dime of it be lavished on a hungry partisan who cannot, or does not, give value received for every dime he fobs, and let the fewest officers that can do the work suffice; and in one must be retained or appointed who can do but half work, let him be content with

half pay. It is the crying evil of our day that working for the public pays better, or is supposed to pay better, than working for yourself. The famer's or the mechanic's son would rather be an inspector of customs or policeman than inherit his father's business and follow it. The soil is neglected and often deserted, because those who should cultivate it fancy they can do better as tide-waiters or post-office clerks. The laws and the policy which beguile them into that delusion have very much to answer

We pray the Secretary of the Treasury and the Commissioner of Internal Revenue to appoint as assessors and collectors men who will promise to reduce their subordinates to the lowest practicable figure, and stand by them in so doing, no matter who may remonstrate and insist on making the revenue service a gigantic soup-house. Now is the time to re-trench: if a "new broom" does not "sweep clean," it were absurd to expect an old one to do it. Begin the work of reform by pledging every assessor and collector to reduce his force to the ntmost on or before the first of July next, when the new fiscal year will open; and, having incited good resolutions, take care that they be faithfully adhered to.

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