

SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

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

OBEY THE LAW.

When a prudent business man, in the ordinary course of his affairs, finds himself with a large surplus in hand, not needed in his regular transactions, what does he do with it? If he has no very high interest, he is likely to delay for an hour an effort to use his surplus cash in discounting his notes.

The United States owe twenty-one hundred and eight million dollars, on which it has heavy interest to pay in gold. Meanwhile it has, unused and unneeded, in its Treasury, eighty millions of gold. That Secretary of the Treasury will best discharge the duties of his great office who so manages the money at his disposal as to make it go the furthest in meeting the Government's obligations.

On this statement alone the case might rest. But there is another fact to be taken into the account. Here in Wall street this debt, on which we pay heavy gold interest, is selling at a discount of about fifteen dollars on the hundred dollar bond. That is to say, in spite of the recent sharp advance, eighty-five of the gold dollars now lying idle in the Treasury will buy an outstanding note of ours which calls for a hundred gold dollars, and which bears onerous interest.

But it is objected that the Secretary is forbidden to take the obvious course which plain business principles would dictate by this unfortunate clause, finally forced into the Public Credit bill.

"None of the said interest-bearing obligations not already due shall be redeemed or paid before maturity, unless at such time United States notes shall be convertible into coin at the option of the holder, or unless at such time bonds of the United States bearing a lower rate of interest than the bonds to be redeemed can be sold at par in coin."

We deny the force of the objection. Here is a clause in the original Legal-tender act of February, 1862, not in conflict with the above, and not repealed:

"All duties on imported goods shall be paid in coin, or in the legal-tender paper, as may be specified in a special fund, and shall be paid as follows: First, the payment in coin of the interest on the bonds and notes of the United States; second, to the purchase or payment of the interest on the legal-tender of the United States, to be made within each fiscal year after the first day of July, 1862, which is to be set apart as a sinking fund, and the interest of which shall be paid in the manner provided for the purchase or payment of the public debt, as the Secretary of the Treasury shall from time to time direct."

We do not now ask that the bonds shall be "redeemed or paid." In our judgment that would have been wise; but contrary counsels have prevailed, and the law has been made to forbid it. What we do ask, and what the above unrepented law makes the absolute, imperative duty of the Secretary, is that he use his surplus gold for the purchase of the interest on the entire debt of the United States, to be set apart as a sinking fund, the interest of which shall in like manner be applied to the purchase of the public debt.

The "entire debt of the United States" amounts to twenty-six hundred and thirty-six millions. Of that amount the law not only allows but commands the Secretary to buy up in open market twenty-six millions, to be set aside in the Treasury as a sinking fund. We call upon Mr. Boutwell to obey the law.

FRANCE AND EUROPE—WAR POSSIBILITIES. From the N. Y. Herald. It is only a few days since we gave it as our opinion that the Franco-Belgian trouble might result in some such complication as should prove dangerous to the peace of Europe.

We have not long to wait without receiving encouragement to our view of the situation. Prussia, we said, was so deeply concerned in the settlement of this Belgian railway question that Prussia could not be indifferent, and that a hitch in the proceedings was not only possible but probable. The hitch has come. The negotiations had so far satisfactorily proceeded. A few days ago we learned that M. Frere-Orban had returned from Paris to Brussels, and was satisfied with the result of his mission.

Now we learn from a cable despatch that the negotiations for a commercial conference between France and Belgium have been suspended. What does it mean? It is hard to think that we can mean anything else than that the two powers have differed as to the questions to be submitted to the proposed conference. We know that France has been making heavy demands; and the presumption now is that France has asked so much that Belgium has been compelled to stand upon her dignity and refuse. It such be the fact, then we may rest assured that, in spite of the unqualified advice given by the London Times, Belgium has known her duty, and that she has good reason to conclude that beyond a certain point she cannot go on the sympathy and support of both Great Britain and Prussia.

Another telegram of the same date, informing us that the Prussian Ambassador at Paris had been instructed to thank the French Foreign Minister for the pacific and friendly expressions which he had in the French Chamber, does not in the smallest degree affect this view of the case. It means wise and cunning diplomacy—a little bit of the Jesuits that is all.

What with this and other important foreign questions demanding attention; with the restless condition of the French people, and the municipal elections in immediate prospect, the French Emperor has certainly trouble enough on hand. Napoleon, in fact, is now in a critical, perhaps the most critical, condition in which he has found himself for many years. Interests, apparent or real, pull in different directions. How to yield, or rather how to act, is not so easy a decision. It is now some years since December 2, 1851, and Frenchmen have had a fair chance of coming to a conclusion as to the merits or demerits of Napoleonism. That Napoleon the Third has done great things for France no one can deny. Prosperous at home and respected abroad are old phrases which have often been used, in very absurd connection, during the reign of the third Napoleon; they have not been wholly meaningless. With all the drawbacks that may be made, France is a power with which no other power feels it safe to go to war.

There have been many and even serious Napoleonic blunders; but while France, under this man's rule, has sustained some diplomatic defeats, she has sustained no defeat on the field of battle. This, however, does not fully state the case. France, under Napoleon, has gained some of the most splendid field victories of modern times. It is understood that Napoleon the Third has gained somewhat in political liberty.

It is at the same time true that France is not satisfied. Republicans are still in opposition and Orangists are still dissatisfied, while the legitimists are as stubborn as ever. The true of the different sections, but it does not cover the whole difference between Napoleon and the French people. Much as they have prospered at home and much as they are respected abroad, the French people think that they are not what they ought to be—not what they once were, not what they believe they ever should be. There is grumbling all over France because in some important respects they are the least free of all the European nations, and there is grumbling because the name of France abroad is not sufficient to compensate for this disadvantage at home.

France is not a big enough terror abroad—not contented enough at home. This is Napoleon's trouble. This is the difficulty which confronts the Government at the forthcoming elections. No man knows the situation half so well as Napoleon himself. He knows he has made the best of many and serious difficulties. He knows also that he has made some mistakes. But he knows that in the circumstances he has done his best to do other than he did. He is con-

vinced that the bulk of the French people are satisfied that all things considered, their destiny is safer in his hands than in the hands of any other. The rebellion of Zouave gives us a key to Napoleon's present thoughts. The workmen on his side, he knows he can control the elections. By this last move he has secured the workmen, and unless we greatly mistake, the elections will result in a grand Ministerial triumph. We can have no war until after the elections. If the result of the elections is to the Emperor's mind, it will not be wonderful if the Empire again makes peace. If, however, the elections do not result to the Emperor's entire satisfaction, it is not at all impossible that a bold effort will be made, by means of a foreign war, to destroy all opposition inside the empire. The Emperor has a magnificent army, which is spoiling for a fight. He will not refuse to use it, if to use it will serve his purpose.

THE REFORM OF THE CIVIL SERVICE. From the N. Y. Times. Senators Carpenter of Wisconsin and Abbott of North Carolina have been moving in the matter of the civil service. We do not know that they propose, nor how far they are influenced by any desire, to reform it, but certainly they are not moving in the right direction. Mr. Carpenter's resolution requesting the heads of departments to furnish the names of the employes of the Government, with a view to ascertaining what States they are from, and who had them appointed, thus obtaining the amount of "patronage" enjoyed by each Senator and Representative, appears to have been made in the interest of disappointed office-seekers and unfortunates. The influential members will take good care to smother this resolution, and it is one not worthy of consideration, and it is one, save as indicating a very unworthy spirit in our great States and law-givers, and, we fear, the hopelessness of the civil service reformation.

But Mr. Abbott's amendment is one that we are sorry to see disgracing the Journal of a Senate of this enlightened day. We sincerely trust that the Senate will not, as Mr. Abbott asks, declare as its opinion that "the distribution of official patronage, not embraced in local offices in the State, should be made, as nearly as may be practicable, according to representation and population; and that, to confine patronage to any particular portion of the States or sections, either wholly or partially, is unjust and injurious."

There can be no honest or able civil service such as this country needs provided on any such ridiculous principle as the distribution of offices according to representation and population. It is even more absurd, if not more unprincipled, than the old Democratic practice of the distribution of Government offices as spoils to the victors; his party justified Mr. Marcy in rejecting the local office which he held, then the Government will secure a very inefficient, if not a very corrupt, set of servants. Mr. Abbott's resolution repeats an old heresy which we hoped we had been educated to discard; we are satisfied that the good sense of the people will lead them to reject the false and dangerous principle of strengthening their position in their States by imposing incompetent servants on the General Government, and who sustain themselves with their party at home by endangering the party at large by obstructing and weakening the administration.

CANADA AND THE ALABAMA CLAIMS. From the Chicago Tribune. Senator Chandler has continued his previous theme, with material modifications and embellishment, by a characteristic speech, proposing that the Government of the United States offer to Great Britain to accept the Dominion of Canada in full settlement for all our claims against Great Britain arising out of the deprivations of her pirates. The object of this plan is that if it is not payment, leave the Canadas alone for a few years, cease shaking your fist at them, and they will seek annexation of their own accord. In other words, we shall get them for nothing. Senator Chandler's scheme is a man had caught a wily old plunderer robbing his sheep pen, and should offer to compromise by marrying his daughter. He seems to overlook the chief point in the problem, viz.—That the population of Canada are entitled like ourselves and like the people of England to exercise self-government. They are not mere chattels, to be sold like quoadron slaves to pay the debts of their parent. At present, and for many years, they have exercised this right as fully as perhaps any people on earth, and as fully, at all events, as they could under the authority of England's nominal, barely sufficient to extend over the Canadas the protection of the British name. They have no debt except that incurred for their own internal improvement, and their taxes are excessive. The only objection to their annexation is increasing and will continue to increase, unless killed off by the speeches of thoughtless and inconsiderate persons like Chandler. The annexationists of the maritime provinces are a strong and aggressive party, and they are already making an impression on the Canadas. Assuming, however, as we safely may, that the consent of Canada is at present wanting, Mr. Chandler's proposition becomes one of the most undemocratic propositions ever uttered in a Republican Senate. It embodies a denial of popular rights as blind and arbitrary as have characterized the ages, now supposed to be past, when brute force was the sole law of nations.

We recognize the fact that about six-tenths of the trade of the Canadas is with the United States; that her real industrial welfare is now almost as vitally affected by the laws we pass at Washington as by those they pass at Ottawa. But, if, despite these facts, the Canadian people are not prepared for annexation, it would be an act of extrajudicial ravishment to barter away the right of her people to govern themselves after their own preference, in payment for injuries which she had no share in committing, whatever might have been her sympathies. Hence every proposal having in view the consummation of such a wrong is an insult which binds, instead of promoting, the growth of a sentiment in Canada in favor of union with this country.

The time is past when the right to govern people is the proper subject of bargain and sale for money. We have bought the jurisdiction over large tracts of territory now incorporated into the United States, but it has been either where most of their people were American and desirous to cast their lot with ours, or where there were few people of any kind.

Light as the taxes on the Canadian people, their amount for two years is equal to the entire value of the vessels destroyed by the Alabama. It is only by going behind the mere value of the vessels destroyed and making a claim for the general injuries to our commerce, and for supporting prolongation of the war, that we can arrive at a sum of sufficient magnitude to call for a cession of territory, were the people of the acquired territory in favor of the act of cession. We do not believe that any data exist whereby such damages can be estimated with a precision that would justify a cession of territory, justify a recovery in a court of justice. If these English cruisers had been strong enough to fight our blockading squadron, or help to open the blockade and let in supplies to the Rebel forces, there would be ground for saying they prolonged the war. But so long as the Rebels got their re-

quired supplies, they would have kept up the fight on the land had not a single English cruiser gone on the sea. The damages from this source, and from the injury to our commerce, could as easily be estimated at fifteen hundred millions of dollars as at one hundred millions; this is the very best proof possible that they are wholly incapable of being estimated at all.

They amount to a grave national outrage, for which none seem prepared to present to suggest the most appropriate remedy, or even to say whether the remedy should be in the nature of apology or indemnity, or both. In making our demand upon England for the wrong to our sovereignty in her acts of recognition and of sympathy with the Rebellion, it is fair that we should remember that England as well as America was a house divided against itself. Both swayed between contending parties, and while Russell hastened to facilitate our Rebellion, he did not do half so much to heal and end as our own President Buchanan and Secretary Floyd. If in the international sense the act of a party in power is to be taken as the act of the whole nation, then all England took part in the act of premature recognition of the Rebellion. But England might well point us to the messages of President Buchanan, denying that the Government had any power to coerce a seceding State back into the Union, and ask us if we can reasonably expect their cabinets to understand that the Union would be maintained in a manner in which our own President had declared it could not be maintained.

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