## SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

Editorial Opinions of the Leading Journals Upon Carrent Topics—Compiled Every Day for the Evening Telegraph.

THE INFIDELS' CONVENTION. From the N. Y. World.

We have rescued the feeble fly which flut-tered in the "Convention of Atheists, Infidels, and Secularists," at Philadelphia, from the oblivion that awaited it, and have embalmed it in the amber of the columns of the World, for the purpose of pointing a very obvious moral. For forty years or more a little knot of professed Infidels in the United States have labored hard and spent their money freely in persistent efforts to disseminate their opinions. They have kept alive a weekly newspaper, the Investigator, pub-tished at Boston, and edited by Mr. Abner Kneeland; they have printed and circulated books and tracts; they have formed clubs and societies and established libraries; and now, when they call a convention to see what can be done to prevent an "entire cessation from public demonstration" of what they term "the liberal cause," the appeal is answered by "seventeen persons, including one lady," and they unite in giving the most doleful accounts of "the feeble condition" of their "cause." One of the speakers said that he could find no one in Philadelphia who knew that such a convention was to be held, and he felt, when he saw that only seventeen persons had come to attend it, that he might say "the dead have come to bury the dead." The secretary of a "central committee" reported that for "pamphlets sold" during the year only five dollars had been received, and that the most that could be said of the labors of the committee was that they "had not been entirely useless." Another speaker said that, despite all the efforts to the contrary, there was a "frightful increase of supersti-tion;" that "the clerical power was on the increase;" and that "a gentleman who is as radical an atheist" as the speaker himself "is building a church at a cost of \$60,000," and would laugh at any one who asked him for \$50 for "the liberal cause." In short, the story was that atheism and infidelity were on their last legs; and all that the convention could do in the hope of reviving them was to agree to make a desperate effort to raise \$1000 to pay a lecturer for a year.

Now, the moral of all this is patent. The atheists and infidels have failed because they have attempted to tear everything down and build nothing up. They have contented themselves with negation and have refrained from affirmation. They have proposed to take everything away and give nothing in return. They ask men to give up their Bible, to abandon the faith of their childhood, to forget the lessons learned at a mother's knee, and intertwined with the sweetest and holiest associations and remembrances, and in exchange to content themselves with a string of cold and barren negations. "What we ask you to resign are superstitions," said the atheists. "They may be so, but even superstition is better than nothing," was the reply of almost every one. Of course, there may be a much higher reason than this for the miserable failure to which the infidels confess; it may be said that Heaven frowned upon them and that Providence brought their schemes to naught; but the failure is sufficiently accounted for by the reason we have assigned. A glimmering of this truth seems to have forced its way into the minds of some of the dolorous seventeen. "Some think we should go to work and build np a scientific positive system," said one of the speakers. Another speaker said that he believed that "the mind which gathered up scientific facts and communicated them to the people" "was calculated to do ten times more good" than "the mind that wanted to tear down the superstitious faiths encumbering the world;" but the result of the discussion was that it was better to still labor at "clearing away the rubbish." Well, even "rubbish" is better than nothing. If you ask a man to resign his belief in the immortality of his soul, in the sense in which theologians understand that phrase, you must offer him something in exchange for that belief, or he will refuse to part with what he may confess may be an illusion, but which is still a pleasing and a comforting thought.

While atheism and infidelity have thus been withering away, all over Christendom, constant, palpable, and ever-increasing progress has been made by those schools of thought which take affirmation instead of negation for their basis, and, while placing no limit to the range of scientific and positive truth, nor denying the possibility of the existence of truths which cannot yet be demonstrated, ask for belief in nothing which cannot be positively proved, and demand implicit faith for whatever can thus be demonstrated to be positively true. From the pulpit ever and anon comes a voice of complaint and warning concerning the increase of skepticism in the land: but, the Philadelphia convention Itself being the witness, atheism and infidelity, so far from increasing, have scarcely a foothold in the country, havidg a name to live but being dead. The truth seems to be that, between the religion of the churches on one hand and the religion of free science on the other, there is no room left for the infidelity of the eighteenth century-harsh, cruel, cold, and barren negation of everything and affirmation of nothing. What may be the religion of the future-whether it may be that of the mother of all the Churches as she now is and as she always has been; or that of this Church transformed or developed into harmony with modern ideas; or that of Protestantism, with its now conflicting and jarring sects fused into one harmonious body; or the religion of science, denying nothing that may yet remain in the unknowable, but holding fast and practising upon all that can be proved to be within the known; what is to rule the minds and the hearts of the men of the future cannot yet be prognosticated: but that it will not be the religion of denial and of negation, the infidelity of Voltaire, Paine, and the Philadelphia convention of seventeen, may be set down as certain.

EXTRAORDINARY NAVAL MOVEMENTS -HAVE THEY REFERENCE TO CUBA?

From the N. Y. Herald. The unusual activity of the Navy Department and extraordinary movements of war vessels are not without cause, or they indicate precautionary steps, at least, to meet some particular or possible contingency. The question naturally arises whether all this has not reference to Cuba and the policy the Government is about to pursue with regard to that island. It is certain there can be no other reason for these movements; for there is not the least probability of trouble, either at home or with foreign nations, except that which might possibly arise with Spain relative to the Cuban question. Not that we believe or that the Government thinks there would be reason to apprehend war with Spain should the United States recognize the belligerent rights

the event of our Government resolving on such a policy, would impress the Spanish Gov-ernment with a sense of the determination of the United States, and the futility of using force to restrain the action of this country. Indeed, instead of leading to war, the display of such power and preparation for war is the way to prevent it. We conclude, then, that the activity in naval matters—the order for the Miantonomah to be ready for sea, the ordering into commission and fitting out rapidly of the Swatara and two other vessels, the sudden transfer of stores and army supplies to the Albany, with orders for that vessel to sail immediately for Cuba, and other important movements-indicate that the Government is about to take a decisive course on the Cuban question, and in favor of Cuban

independence. Months ago General Sickles, our Minister at Madrid, told the Spanish Regency officially, in that famous note which created such a stir in Spain, that public opinion in the United States would soon compel his Government to recognize the Cubans. He wrote what he was instructed to write, and what, as an experienced and astute public man, he knew to be true. The Spanish Government has been forewarned, and must expect such action on the part of the United States. It knows the irresistible power of public opinion in this republic, and it has really more reason to thank the administration for great moderation in delaying to recognize the Cubans so long, and that against the popular will, than to be surprised or offended at recognition now. There is no cause of war in such an act, nor do we imagine Spain would be foolish enough to make it so. She cannot even subjugate the Cubans. Indeed, they have been gaining strength all along and are stronger to-day than ever, in spite of the armies and fleets of Spain. What, then, could Spain do in a war with this mighty republic? She could not land an army, and if she could it would be instantly annihilated. Her navy would be swept from the ocean, and as to any damage she might do us by letters of marque to privateers-which would be very little-we could do far more to her in the same way. We could extinguish Spanish commerce and deprive Spain of her remaining colonies. Such a conflict would be child's play, comparatively, to the United States.

But it is folly to talk of war: the Spanish Government has not the money or other means for such a Quixotic undertaking. Should Prim and the other leading men of Spain be insane enough to suppose they could reunite the people and consolidate their power by war, they would be much mistaken. Ignorant as the Spanish people may be, they must know that war with the United States would only bring overwhelming disaster to them. The factions which are now rending that unhappy country would become more active and stronger, and the horrors of civil war would be increased and continued. Nor could Spain hope for any assistance from the European powers. None, no, not even France or England, would lift a finger. They know too well the power of this country, and the interests they have at stake would prevent their interference. None of these powers will ever again meddle with American affairs unless driven to do so on their own account and to protect their own honor and interests—a contingency which is not likely to occur till the future reveals far greater complications than can be foreseen at present. All the talk of European sympathy and aid for Spain on this Cuban question is exercise, have something heroic in them; and balderdash. There need not be and will not they lift him so much above the level of ordibe any war about Cuba, though the United States should not besitate to renognize the Cubans and to take any other action to secure their independence, even at the risk of war.

If we'be right in our conjecture that the naval movements referred to indicate the speedy recognition of Cuba by the Government, the views we have expressed frequently as to the President's sympathy for and purpose regarding the Cubans will be confirmed In spite of the weakness and timidity of the Secretary of State on this question, and the Spanish influence operating upon him indirectly through those near him and related to him, as well as through certain newspapers and Washington correspondence under the same Spanish influence, we have never doubted that General Grant would in due time take this matter in his own hands and | beaten (he refers to the election which has show a vigorous and determined policy. Any other course would be in direct opposition to the broad and national views of the President, to the republican and generous impulses of his nature, to his love of liberty, to his ardent patriotism and desire for American progress and the aggrandizement of his country, and, in fact, to his whole character and history. He has been waiting, probably, for the assembling of Congress or till he could confer with the representatives of the people before taking decided action in favor of Cuba, and in the meantime has faithfully executed the neutrality laws, though acting against his own sympathies, so that there should be no stain upon the national honor. Now, however, as the members of Congress begin to reach the capital, he learns what their sentiments are, and, if we mistake not, is preparing to re-commend and take a bold course worthy of this great republic. The unanimous expression of the House of Representatives at the close of the last Congress in favor of Cuban recognition will be reiterated, no doubt, with much more force by both houses as soon as Congress meets. The President will then have the full support of that body, and the administration will find itself acting in harmony both with the representatives of the people and public opinion. From all the signs of the times, we think the belligerent rights of the Cubans will soon be recognized and the independence of Cuba secured.

THE ENGLISH PREMIER AND THE LATE GEORGE PEABODY.

From the N. Y. Times. The Lord Mayor's dinner is an occasion on which it becomes necessary for the Prime Minister of England to make a long speech without saying anything. The city of London has, in its time, made great sacrifices on behalf of the government-more than once it has melted down all its plate in order to provide some ready money for impoverished monarchs. It consequently has become a tradition of the government to keep on good terms with the "City," and on the day when a new Lord Mayor comes into office, which happens on the 9th of November every year, the chief Ministers of State condescend to eat some turtle soup and green fat at the Mansion House, in the presence of a crowd of gaping aldermen and their wives. In return for this hospitality speeches are exacted from the guests, and as the Prime Minister is rarely willing to announce a definite policy for the first time at one of these civic feasts-although Sir Robert Peel once made an exception to the rule-he usually endeavors to tickle his audience with straws. Few men are so competent to construct an endless tangle of or independence of Cuba, but if such a step be contemplated by the administration precau-tionary measures to meet even a contingency unrivaled talent for prolixity. A Lord Mayor's so unlikely are proper. Besides, a powerful dinner, therefore, presents no difficulties to

naval force in the neighborhood of Cuba, in | him. We saw by his speech on Wedesday that he produced "windbags" one after the other. with a rapidity which Lord Palmerston could not have excelled.

All that the Premier said in reference to Ireland we may set aside as so much talk, intended to satisfy his hosts without retarding the process of digestion by calling their intellects into play. His reference to this country is of greater interest, because it is less encumbered by the manifest effort to avoid the revelation of Cabinet secrets. Mr. Gladstone once more avows the most cordial feelings towards the United States, and we have no doubt we shall find, when the full reports of his speech reach us, that he awakened a sympathetic response in declaring that the recollection of Mr. Peabody ought to make England more anxious than ever to preserve friendly relations with America. We need scarcely say that in England the name of Mr. Peabody is a "household word," and even the poorest of the poor know that he is an American, and honor him not only as a benefactor, but as a representative of his countrymen. The working classes generally, and the unemployed poor, have never shared that jealousy of America which the middle and "upper" classes have at times entertained, of which Mr. Roebuck was the fitting spokesman, and which led Mr. Gladstone himself to declare in 1863 that "Jefferson Davis had made a nation." He has since confessed that "he took more upon himself than he ought to have done" in making that aunouncement, and there is no reason to quarrel with his later expressions of opinion in reference to the United States.

Mr. Gladstone is especially happy in his eulogy of Mr. Peabody when he says that he has "taught us the most needful of all lessons-how a man can be master of his fortune, and not its slave." This must always be the most instructive feature in the history of Mr. Peabody's life. He gave away the greater part of his wealth while he still had health and strength to enjoy it-for it is only within the last two years that his constitution seemed to collapse. Last summer he was able to go on a fishing excursion with Mr. Bright. He believed that he had formed a plan for doing good to a vast number of people, and he was anxious to see the work egun in his lifetime. His native nobility of character, his unselfishness and self-denial -for even the voice of envy and detraction can never say that he spent his money upon himself-have won for him greater honors in England than have ever before been paid to a private citizen of foreign birth. From the Queen to the pauper, all classes have united to pay respect to his memory. Mr. Gladstone is quite right in saying that incidents of this kind do more than all the cumbrous devices of diplomatists to promote a right understanding between nations.

THE HEGIRA OF VALLANDIGHAM. From the N. Y. Tribune.

We have never been an intemperate admirer of Mr. Vallandigham. Indeed, if we had wanted for purposes of exhibition a politician in whom every objectionable quality appeared in its highest state of development, we should have "gone for" that gentleman without the slightest reference to expense, and should defiantly have challenged the universe to match him. The patient and unwearied fatuity with which he has bumped his head against stone walls for the last seven or eight years, and the cheerfulness which he has maintained throughout that depressing exercise, have something herole in them; and nary traiters as to entitle him to curious and scientific attention. Until recently there seemed every reason to apprehend that he would occupy the remainder of the century in this fruitless concussive proceeding-that he would continue to bump his not very wise head against very solid obstacles, a spectable of pity to the gods and of wonder to mau-kind. But he seems inclined to withdraw that globose and sorely-contused organ from

further employment of the sort.
At least, he has written a letter which permits us to indulge that anticipation. In it he says that he has been almost entirely withdrawn from politics for the past year; that in his opinion the questions of to-day will not be the questions of 1872; that the position of leading men will be by that time greatly changed; that if the Democratic party is taken place), it doesn't signify; inasmuch as seven successive years of that penitential experience have made them used to it; but if it should win! However, as it didn't win. we may omit mention of the consequences which Mr. Vallandigham thought would result from that event. The letter altogether signifies that the writer is tired of letting empty buckets into empty wells and drawing nothing up, and that, as he has not found treason a paying business, he is going into liquidation. It is well: a back seat and a little pause of silence will do him a world of good. We are not in the councils of his party, ut we think it can spare him. He has been the bee in its bonnet, the fly in its honeypot, the bull in its china shop, the lonkey amid its cabbages. We would colerate him through other zoological and entoselogical symbols, if we could think of any which were appropriate. Those we have emloyed only feebly shadow forth the nuisance o has been to his people. If we were of them se should try to get up a general jubilee to celebrate his retirement from active political life. apparent that his purposes of evil were but that he has done has been to lead his party to defeat time after time and to impose upon its national creed a few odious dogmas, which of themselves are sufficient to account for its repeated overthrow. Provincial constituencies are apt to accord first-class henors to second-class capacities, and it is possible that they may have done so in the case of Mr. Vallandigham.

If we could discern in his letter distinct evidences of penitence, even a single orotund and articulate peccari, we should shrive the man at once, and send him some rudimentary treatise setting forth the duty of a citizen to the State. A diligent perusal of some manual of the sort might in time make a patriot of him, in which case we should gladly welcome him to the Republican ranks, and would, so far as we could, cons gn to oblivion that page of history upon which it is little likely that he will ever look back with pride. But we have no distinct evidence that Ephraim is not still wedded to his idols. If he is, it is matter of general felicitation that he has gone into the wilderness to worship them.

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