

Evening Telegraph

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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1869.

THE OECUMENICAL COUNCIL.

During the present week the Oecumenical Council assembled at Rome, and commenced its deliberations amid imposing ceremonies. The expectation that arrangements would be made for the prompt publication of its proceedings has proved fallacious, and the order forbidding the reporter of the London Times from entering the Papal dominions indicates that only partial accounts, or such versions as have been duly revised, amended, and expurgated, will from time to time be given to the world. Grave temporal as well as spiritual questions will be considered, and if free debate is permitted, some of the discussions can scarcely fail to be very animated, so that general readers have no slight cause to regret the determination to prohibit full contemporaneous reports. The peculiar constitution of the council necessarily gives it a strong disposition to sanction any doctrine the Pope may wish to promulgate, and yet there are strong symptoms of opposition, arising from various causes, in various quarters. One class, for instance, contends that the council possesses the power to consider any subject connected with the welfare of the Church; that it can decide in favor of any reform which may be suggested by any of its members; or, that, in other words, it possesses a right to originate measures, similar to that which Napoleon has recently granted to the French Assembly. This is one of the rights for which Father Hyacinthine contends, in conjunction with no inconsiderable number of other liberal Catholics. But it has apparently been overruled in advance, and the zealous supporters of Papal power concede to Pius IX. and his immediate counsellors not only the privilege of defining the subjects of discussion, but, in a large degree, the power to dictate the decisions of the council. Intervened with this dispute is the vexed question of the infallibility of the Pope. It is commonly reported that attempts will be made to affirm the undeviating correctness of his opinions on temporal as well as spiritual affairs, and thus to make his word a law from which there is no appeal. It is believed, however, that a considerable portion of the ecclesiastics in attendance will bitterly oppose this pretension, and stoutly maintain that, while his opinions on temporal affairs must be judged, like those of other potentates, by their intrinsic merits, he is, in some classes of spiritual subjects, liable to be overruled by general councils.

The importance of the impending controversies is greatly increased by their apprehended bearing on the civil affairs of Catholic countries, and of countries which, like the United States, embrace a large Catholic population. If the doctrines enunciated in the Syllabus of Errors are carried out to their logical conclusion, religious liberty must be totally destroyed, and Church and State must be everywhere united on terms dictated by Catholic ecclesiastics. And yet there is not at this moment a single important nation willing to submit to such a decree. Even Italy now rejoices in her new freedom, and but a few months ago one of Victor Emmanuel's ministers announced, officially, that the Italian Government would not permit any action of the council to "trespass upon the laws of the kingdom and the rights of the State." A similar attitude has been assumed by Spain and Germany. France will scarcely consent to belie her past history by making concessions which even Austria, Italy, and Spain refuse to grant. The ecologist reference to the council which appeared in Napoleon's late address to the French Chambers is probably due to the fact that he shares the wish of the Archbishop of Paris that it may become a truly reformatory body instead of a reactionary assemblage, and that he was anxious to exert all his influence to give it this direction.

In the face of hostile decrees from Catholic Governments, it is difficult to understand how any substantial benefits are to be derived from the formal promulgation of ultra Papal doctrines. In some cases they would doubtless prove as inefficacious as the bull against the comet. But a fear is expressed that they would foment insurrections and lead to religious wars. This danger is probably exaggerated, but still it is not without foundation. If the programme presented to the Oecumenical Council is adopted in its entirety, intolerance will become a fundamental part of the revised creed, and pretensions will be set up which will compel many communities to decide between unqualified submission or active resistance. The final issue of such a conflict, in this age, can scarcely be doubtful, but it is within the bounds of possibility that it may engender much bitter strife and bloodshed.

THE LOOKOUT OF MEN is General Spinner, the indomitable watch-dog of the Treasury. During the time that he has held his present position, the money transactions of the Treasury foot up an aggregate exceeding \$4,000,000,000, yet not one cent has been lost to the people, all the discrepancies that have been detected having been so insignificant that they have been made straight by the persons responsible for them. This is not less creditable to General Spinner than it is gratifying to the people with the handling of whose money he has been entrusted. Other officials whose responsibilities have been nothing in comparison have been unable to present such a balance sheet, and we are inclined to believe, with the genial Treasurer, that it is not all "mere luck."

THE RIGHTS OF WHITE MEN. The National Executive Committee of Colored Men of the United States has issued an address to the people of Liberia, to which we respectfully call the attention of our Democratic contemporaries. This document is an earnest and philanthropic appeal in behalf of the white population of the young African republic. The gist of the argument is that, in the opinion of the intelligent colored men of the United States, the whites have some rights that black men ought to respect even in Africa, and the people of Liberia are treated to strike the word "white" out of their Constitution, and to repeal the laws that disfranchise persons who may not have a visible admixture of black blood in their veins. This address shows at least that the black men of the United States are willing to do as they wish to be done by, and they suggest very forcibly that the people of Liberia, because they have the power to do so, cannot proscribe others without virtually acknowledging that their former oppressors were blameless in proscribing them. It will certainly be a glorious day for Liberia when this advice is adopted and the rights of white men are freely acknowledged. Then the most uncompromising Democrat in our Fourth ward can emigrate to Africa, if he wishes to better his condition, and will be received with open arms by his black brethren on the Liberian shores. He will be permitted to take out his naturalization papers and to vote at all the elections just as freely as if his face was as black as the ace of spades; and if he behaves himself he will undoubtedly be quite as much respected as if his blood were pure Congo, without any "visible admixture." We hope sincerely that the Liberians will heed the counsel of their American brethren, and make haste to remove the reproach that now rests upon them by the proscriptive clauses of their constitution. The time has passed when such enactments can be allowed to exist in a free country without discredit, and Liberia will make a decided advance and win the applause of mankind when she ceases to discriminate in her laws between white and black.

THE PAUPER QUESTION IN ENGLAND. The material assistance rendered to the poor of London by the late Mr. Peabody presents a startling contrast to the brutal treatment which they receive at the hands of the officials who are paid for the special purpose of ascertaining and relieving their wants. Altogether, there are thirty-eight different Boards of Guardians of the Poor in the English metropolis, and more than fifteen hundred officials of all grades connected with the administration of the laws for the relief of the poor, their salaries amounting in the aggregate to over half a million of dollars. The compensation received by the chaplains, physicians, and clerks frequently amounts to \$2500 per annum, with lodgings and rations in addition. Yet, despite these facts, the poor of London are in a sordid plight that those of any other great city in the civilized world. Greenwood, the "Amateur Casual," has given us vivid sketches of the harshness of treatment to which they are subjected, and the London papers have been filled for months past with accounts of the corruption in which the poor-law officials are steeped, more especially in the parish of St. Pancras. In England poverty is a profession. There are tens of thousands of miserable wretches who are born to beggary as their only birthright and solitary calling through life. The evil is so great that it may justly be regarded as characteristic of the English nation; and one of the most difficult tasks which demands the attention of the Liberal government is the answering of the question as to how this vast pauper multitude can be lifted out of the mire and transformed into a class of respectable, useful, and law-abiding citizens. The solution of this problem will be as great a triumph for Mr. Gladstone as the overthrow of the great Church iniquity in Ireland; but it is a triumph which demands the exercise of even a higher grade of statesmanship than sufficed to bring about disestablishment.

JERSEY IN JEOPARDY. The women of New Jersey have been holding a convention at Newark during the week, in the interest of the female suffrage movement. By the women of New Jersey, in this connection, we mean, of course, a few of the strong-minded and weak-headed sort, who kindly consent to do the talking and agitating for the thousands of sensible women whose home duties and privileges content them. Years ago, before the question of female suffrage was thought to be worthy of serious attention on the part of either men or women, the latter were permitted to vote at a certain class of elections in New Jersey; and it is said that, although but few of them took advantage of the privilege, these few made the most of it, and not content with casting one ballot, smuggled into the box as many different tickets as they could, making changes in their dress between each assault upon the polls, to facilitate their double dealing. The Newark suffragists have not only heard of these sharp practices, but they have also ascertained, in some mysterious way, that their right to stuff the ballot-box has never been legally taken away from them, and hence they propose to organize associations throughout the State with the object of enforcing their alleged rights and securing the election of Congressmen and Assemblymen who will advocate their political equality with the sterner sex. We will risk the assertion, however, that there are not now living in our neighbor State one hundred women who endeavor to do their full duty in all the relations of domestic life that have a particle of sympathy for the schemes which have unsettled the wits of the old women who have been holding the suffrage convention at Newark.

THE FOREIGN COMMITTEE of the lower house of Congress would seem to be an excellent school of diplomacy. It is reported

that, when their report on the Paraguayan difficulties is presented, it will sustain the action of our naval officers on the Brazilian station, and, at the same time, fully justify the course of ex-Minister Washburn. Precisely how the committee will contrive to blow hot and cold in the same breath we are not informed, and when the secret is revealed it will certainly be one worth knowing.

THE USES OF ALASKA. There is probably in the mind of every American citizen a vague but positive idea that the "manifest destiny" of this nation is to possess at some future time the entire continent, with all its insular appendages. Our territory is already immensely out of proportion to our population, but then we are growing fast, and need room to expand; and there is no good reason why we should not realize our dreams of empire at the earliest possible day. It would not only be gratifying to national pride, but there would be many great and definite advantages, if the United States owned the entire territory from the North Pole to the Isthmus of Panama, but we really are not in such need of the country to the north and south of us, nor are the advantages to be derived from its ownership so great, as to warrant the expenditure of much ready money for the sake of obtaining control of it. Mr. Seward managed to get over seven millions of dollars out of our impoverished treasury for the purchase of one of the most undesirable and unpromising sections of the continent, and the results of his Alaskan land speculation have not been so gratifying as to encourage any further operations in that direction.

The appearances are that Russia has realized all the solid advantages of Mr. Seward's bargain in the shape of a good round sum in hard cash, and the people of the United States have listened with interest to all the reports from our new territory, hoping that it might realize at least some of the expectations formed of it from the glowing accounts of its climate, mineral wealth, and magnificent timber that were circulated about the time of the consummation of the purchase. Alaska, however, has not come up to expectations, nor does it seem likely that it ever will. General Thomas, in his report of operations in his department, states that he sees no prospect of the country being settled up. The climate is too rigid, and there is too much rain and too little sun for agriculture. Most of the military posts have gardens attached to them, in which are raised turnips, radishes, lettuce, and other watery vegetables. Potatoes of moderately good quality can also be raised, but they will not keep for any length of time, and the moisture of the climate is so great that these vegetables, and barley, oats, wheat, and other grains, will not ripen or come to maturity. General Thomas states that comparatively little land is suitable for agricultural purposes at all, and that the summer, though pleasant while it lasts, is not long enough for successful farming. The timber is of the finest quality, and in many places conveniently located, but the supply in Oregon, Washington Territory, and British Columbia is equally good, and much better situated for a market.

Unless we abandon this territory to the Esquimaux and the wild animals, confessing to the world that we have foolishly thrown our money away, it will be necessary to retain a military force there to support the authority of the United States. This is anything but pleasant to the unfortunate soldiers who are thus banished from civilization; for the probabilities are that, with the exception of a few traders, they will be the only white inhabitants of Alaska. This raises the question, however, whether the territory could not be utilized as a penal settlement. Our prisons and penitentiaries are crowded with offenders who are a charge to society, and whom it would be very desirable to get rid of, if possible. If our soldiers can stand the climate of Alaska, our criminals would be subjected to no improper hardship if transported there and forced to labor hard to earn their bread and keep themselves warm. The prospect of banishment to such a place would undoubtedly have a most wholesome influence in the prevention of crime, for those disposed to offend against the laws could readily be made to understand that this would be a real punishment, and that, once landed in Alaska, it would be no easy matter to get away again. This subject is certainly worthy of attention, at least as a means for getting a partial return for the money Mr. Seward inveigled us into spending.

EXIT PORTER. VICE-ADMIRAL PORTER has been ordered away from the Naval Academy, and Commodore Worden has been assigned to the position of superintendent of that institution in his place. This is a change that no one who has the good of the institution at heart will regret. It is notorious that the Naval Academy is very far below West Point in scholarship, discipline, and in every other respect, while the pretensions of its graduates are very frequently in an inverse proportion to their attainments. Vice-Admiral Porter is one of those men who think that the navy exists solely for the benefit of the particular class of officers to which he belongs, and during his administration as superintendent he has encouraged to the utmost that aristocratic sentiment that is the bane of the naval service, and he has done little or nothing to raise the standard of efficiency. He understands exceedingly well the art of blowing his own trumpet, and he has managed to keep himself before the public and to exploit abroad what he esteems the peculiar merits of the Academy, but without convincing the people of the country that the institution is all that it should be. If this officer had imitated the modesty of merit that is characteristic of General Sherman, Lieutenant-General Sheridan, and Admiral Farragut, he would possess vastly more influence than he does, but his excessive desire for notoriety has impressed the public that he is a good deal of a humbug, and his performances during the last nine months, especially as factotum of the

Navy Department, have done incalculable injury to himself and to the naval service. It was certainly high time that Vice-Admiral Porter should be relieved from duty at the Naval Academy, for since the 1st of March he has given but little of his time and attention to the institution. Instead of devoting himself to his legitimate duties, he has been engaged in pushing all manner of schemes in behalf of a certain "ring" of officers who assume to be the navy.

It is certain that the performances of Porter at the Navy Department have not given satisfaction. The position he occupies there is an exceptional one, not sanctioned by law, and both in and out of the service his influence has been thought to be most injurious. If the Secretary requires advisers he has his chiefs of bureau, who ought to be capable of giving him all proper instruction and assistance in his duties; and if it is necessary to have an officer in charge of the Secretary's conscience, the best plan would be to abolish the position of Secretary of the Navy altogether, and place the department entirely in the hands of naval men who will do the work and take the responsibility. That any good would result from such a change as this no one believes, and Admiral Porter has proved conclusively that he for one has not the right kind of ability or the unbiased judgment necessary for the proper administration of the Navy Department. Since he has been in the position of right-hand man to the Secretary, the Navy Department has been made the object of ridicule by all sorts of eccentric schemes and projects; and the best thing that can now be done with Porter is to assign him to some sphere of duty for which he is fitted. It was a good move to get him out of the Naval Academy, and it will be a good move to get him out of the Navy Department, where he has no right to be, under the existing arrangements.

THE GOVERNMENT PRINTING. In the Senate, Mr. Anthony, chairman of the Committee on Printing, in presenting a report from that committee, stated that he intended to call the attention of Congress at an early day to the necessity of a reform in the whole business of the public printing. When it is remembered that, according to the recent report of the Superintendent of the Government Printing Office, \$1,335,531 were expended during the year ending September 30, 1869, in carrying on that establishment, the people out of whose pockets comes the money which is thus disposed of will be likely to second heartily the effort of Mr. Anthony in bringing about a reform. It is true that the establishment of the Government printing office has caused the saving of hundreds of thousands of dollars every year, besides resulting in a much superior quality of work than was produced under the old contract system; but there is still a broad margin of absolute waste left on which Congress can operate in the interest of economy. A vast majority of the documents which emanate from the Government press are utterly worthless, and for such of them as are of any value the persons who desire them should be obliged to pay at least the cost of production, except in comparatively rare cases. When Congress sees fit to abolish the iniquitous franking system, these documents will no longer be in such demand as they are at present, and the first and most sensible step towards bringing about a reform in the printing business would seem to lie in this direction.

AGRICULTURAL LABORERS IN ENGLAND.—The commissioners appointed to investigate the condition of agricultural laborers in England have made reports, which give some idea of the rural districts. Much of the lighter work is done by women and boys. In the north county of Warwickshire women get from sixpence to twopenny a day, and the Irishwomen are said to be very efficient laborers. Boys get from one shilling and sixpence to three shillings a week. With board, boys' wages begin at thirty shillings—seven dollars and a half in gold—a year. The cottages are miserably unhealthy and demoralizing. In Worcestershire laborers get small wages—nine shillings to thirteen shillings a week—and are only found in either of which they drink from two to six quarts a day. Nearly all the men are drunken, and men drunk on cider generally abuse their wives. The cider is also said to be a cause of the prevailing rheumatism. In sixty-three parishes in Staffordshire twenty-five per cent. of the cottages had only one bedroom, "and nine per cent. contained a family with three children, or more, living in that one bedroom." In Shropshire the cottages are described as infamous, "tumbledown and ruinous, not water-tight, very deficient in bedroom accommodation and in decent sanitary arrangements. On some estates the laborers herd in the open villages; while on many others cottages are to be found belonging to the owner of the soil, which are a disgrace to any civilized country. With regard to education, it is reported that large numbers of children who need instruction are left without it, partly, it may be, from lack of school accommodation, but still more from lack of proper interest on the part of the parents. The condition of the peasantry, in no part very satisfactory, is deplorably low in the hill country of the south-west. Wages are low, the hours of labor are long, agreements between employers and laborers are uncertain, and the system of privileges and of part payment in beer and cider prevails. And there, writes a correspondent, are the rich central counties of England, where the country is one great garden of beauty and the land pays immense revenues to its lordly proprietors. The following paragraph from a recent number of the London Times shows how some of the people of Devonshire live:—"The head of the family is an old man, and he is the owner of thirty acres of land. On this property he has no house, but in a barn, without windows or floors, he, his wife, his son, his daughters, his married, and a numerous progeny reside. There is scarcely a vestige of furniture in this dilapidated building, and the manner in which those people live is of the roughest, coarsest, and even savage-like character. A pit dug in the centre of the barn serves for the dormitory in which the members of the family sleep, with the exception of two of them. These two are a daughter and her friend, and they sleep in a hayrick in an adjacent field. To the clergyman of the parish and the neighbors they behave in the most shameful manner. They sing obscene songs when the reverend gentleman passes; they perform the most disgusting and nameless acts when he is in the company of ladies; and those who are obnoxious to such things, with stones and mud as they go by their wretched domicile. In the summer they may be seen in the fields at work almost in a state of nudity. Depredations in the neighborhood are frequent. Gates and gate-posts, and other objects of utility, often disappear, and threats of violence are common. We may add that members of the family have been several times convicted of offenses. And yet these people continue their savage habits to the annoyance and disgust of their neighbors, treating the remonstrances of the clergyman with mockery, ribaldry, and obscenity, and setting the rules of civilized life at defiance.

—Thomas Brand, of Effingham, Ill., put some powder in his stove to blow the soot out of the pipe. Since then he has been blind.

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Every facility will be given customers or visitors to inspect our goods, and to fully satisfy themselves that now is their BEST OPPORTUNITY TO SECURE BARGAINS IN FINE CLOTHING.

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