

SPRIT OF THE PRESS.

Editorial Opinions of the Leading Journals upon Current Topics—Compiled Every Day for the Evening Telegraph.

AN INTERNATIONAL COURT OF ARBITRATION.

From the N. Y. Times.

A good cause is often only injured by sophistical arguments. A change in international law which shall give the world the benefit of a permanent "Court of Arbitration" between nations, is exceedingly desirable. In supporting this reform, however, a speaker in this city recently urged that a similar court had been established in America between communities which are quite as populous and powerful as many States and Kingdoms in Europe—referring to the formation of the United States Supreme Court—to adjudicate differences and disputes between the States of this Union. He compared the territory of Texas with that of Sweden, and the wealth of our separate States with the resources of individual Kingdoms or States in Europe; and he argued that if States so powerful as ours, with different occupations, and often different races of men, are willing to submit all their differences and quarrels to a court of arbitration and implicitly abide by its decisions, then surely the second-rate powers of Europe might be expected to abide by the decisions of a court they should themselves form. And if they were willing to construct a court of arbitration and submit to its sentence or adjudication, then certainly other and greater powers might do the same.

This argument, presented with much gravity, and with an imposing array of comparison in figures of population and wealth, seems to us very like special pleading. Our States are not sovereign, like the European; they have not a past history, each of hostility to others, and of independent existence. There is no difference of creed between them, or jealousy of old struggles, or racial diversity of interests. Above all, they have come from the same source, speak the same language, history, and character. The Government itself sprang from the people, not the States. And our court of arbitration was but a part of our Government, formed by the people to adjudicate on a more important class of cases—not an arrangement between sovereign States, whereby they sacrificed their independence for the sake of a reasonable arbitration in their disputes. Any other theory of the Supreme Court or the Federal Government would justify secession.

A nearer analogy to our court would be the formation of a Supreme German Court in the new Empire or Confederacy of Germany. The very obstacle in Europe to such a court is precisely what we escape here. Our people are one, and we have uniform laws and the same government. No jealousy now prevents a perfect submission to the decisions of our court. But to suppose that Sweden and Switzerland and Denmark can come together and agree to a binding code of laws, as easily as New York, Pennsylvania, and Illinois, is to ignore the real difficulties in the way of a most necessary reform.

The obstacle which first strikes the mind against the formation of an International Court in Europe is the difficulty of securing obedience to its decisions when formed. It is said:—We had an International Court in regard to Luxembourg; in regard to the neutralization of the Black Sea and the integrity of the Danish Duchies; and of what use were its agreements? Each member of the High Court does now as it likes. We admit the weight of the objection. But all progress in the relation of nations is a result not so much of force as of public opinion. There is nothing to prevent the Germans treating their French prisoners any differently from the way in which the Romans used to treat the Carthaginian prisoners—murdering or making them slaves—except the general opinion of Europe. There is probably nothing now to prevent Germany swallowing up Denmark or Belgium but the silent decisions of that High Court which even Bismarck dreads—the general opinion of the civilized world. This opinion—the voice of common sense and universal justice—has become partly embodied now in laws which have no Sheriffs to execute and no universal judges to pronounce. International law has no force behind it except the opinion of mankind. It commands no posse, controls no constable, calls upon no soldiery. It sits silent among the nations, dispensing its verdicts of justice and reason, restraining revenge and passion, softening the horrors of war, controlling popular passion, guarding the prisoner and captive, protecting the weak, shielding the wounded, and defending the rights of the peaceful and the neutral; and for all this, it has no power except the sentiment of the civilized world. If its verdicts or decisions are despised or disobeyed, the only redress is that the complainant or the injured should take the law in their own hands, and inflict their own punishment.

Now it is conceivable that a solemn congress of all European nations, meeting and forming a formal court of arbitration, with definite rights and a precise mode of procedure before it, agreeing that no quarrel should come to blows till it had been submitted to this court, and its decision had been rendered; that is conceivable, we say, and not improbable, that such a court might, even without force, come to have in Europe somewhat the weight which international law has now. It would embody the opinion of the civilized world. In a doubtful case, an ambitious potentate or an ambitious people might not venture to rush to arms directly against a verdict given by so wise, imposing, and impartial a tribunal. At all events, the waiting for a decision would give time for calm consideration, and for that sober second thought to which even ambitious rulers are not always indifferent. It is also among the possibilities of the future that the terrible fruits of Europe might agree to guarantee such a Supreme Court the force necessary to execute its decisions and thus check sudden and unprovoked wars. A reform such as this, as the abolition of slavery looked fifteen years since, apparently far in the distance. Still an idea founded on justice and humanity needs only time—its ultimate victory is certain.

THE NEW PUGELLE.

From the N. Y. Tribune.

Disappointed in De Paladines, France seems to have found a new leader in a bold man of Tours. It is indeed a most inconsistent to think of Garibaldi marching to victory under the banners of a miracle-working enthusiast, and the same people who called De Paladines a traitor because he at-

tended a military mass taking their wackie inspiration from the visions of a devotee; but many strange things have been witnessed in France during the last five months, and stranger still may come to pass before the invaders are home again across the Rhine. There was an humble imitator of the historic Joan some weeks ago at Orleans; but she turned out to be rather a commonplace young person, who neither rode horseback, nor carried a flashing blade, nor made prophecies; she only rallied the people by a certain feminine eloquence, and then turned them over to the recruiting sergeant to practise the goose-step and the manual of arms in the ordinary prosaic fashion. The Maid of Orleans soon faded from the public view; the Maid of Tours came to be a different and more romantic sort of creature. Born in the pious parish of Ars, where the whole population—thanks to the reputed miraculous powers of the Cure M. Vianney—have lived for years in an atmosphere of supernaturalism, believing that Heaven daily interposed to heal the sick, to straighten the deformed, to feed the starving—hearing strange voices in the air, and seeing strange and beautiful visions, and encompassed all the while by crowds of pilgrims who came in thousands to this place to be cured of their ills, or to ask spiritual counsel of the humble seeress who passed all his days here in the service of the poor, it is only natural that from childhood she should have witnessed miraculous sights and been the heroine of wonderful legends. She was in service at Tours when the Virgin appeared and ordered her to proceed to Paris and deliver a certain message to General Trochu. The girl consulted her mistress; the mistress consulted the cure; the cure consulted the bishop; the bishop gave the young woman his blessing, and bade her do as the vision had commanded.

This far there is nothing extraordinary in the story. We dare say scores of excitable young French girls have believed themselves the depositaries of some divine commission, and have dreamed wild dreams, and in moments of spiritual exaltation seen unreal sights and fancied that Heaven meant them to animate and direct the defenders of their country. But this case derives its interest from the fact that so many comparatively prudent and sober people share the delusions of the obscure serving-maid, and believe that God has really chosen this means of testifying His displeasure with Bismarck and conveying to the protestant French the promise of His assistance. The Union of Tours puts implicit faith in the young woman, visions and all, and gives us some curious particulars about the nature of her message. Precisely what she should say to General Trochu was not to be revealed until she arrived before the gates of Paris. There "a matron of respectable appearance" would meet her and explain the errand in full. The narrative goes on to assure us that the girl accomplished her journey and saw Trochu. We are told little about her mysterious communication, except that she announced the recovery of Orleans (which she could not then have known by any human means), predicted a successful sortie to be followed by depressing news, and declared that the Kaiser would never re-enter Berlin.

This account would have been more satisfactory if it had explained how the holy maid got through the Prussian lines (where miraculous visions would not have been of much use to her), and why the saints of the Roman calendar should take such excellent care of a nation which has just broken off a concordat and is understood to be not very devoutly inclined towards the Roman Church. But with all these defects, it finds plenty of believers and devotees in Tours and Paris, are wonderfully encouraged in consequence. We may ridicule it—as of course we shall—but the curiously exalted state of the public mind in France which welcomes such delusions is certainly strangely like the noble but unreasonable enthusiasm which gave birth to the crusades—a temper in which a people is capable of any sacrifice or any generous impulse, and entirely blind to common considerations of prudence and sound policy. People in this feverish delirium, when they are beaten, do not deal with them the way in which the principles of military science are entirely at fault. It is impossible not to admire their elevation of spirit, even while we grieve at their folly; but we should not forget that enthusiasm will not keep off defeat forever, and the disaster, when it can no longer be concealed, is all the more crushing in consequence of the resolution with which the people have refused to forego it.

SAVINGS BANKS AND LIFE INSURANCE COMPANIES.

From the N. Y. Sun.

The proceedings just taken against the Great Western Mutual Life Insurance Company can hardly fail to set the large body of life policy-holders among us to some very serious thinking. If a company which a year ago reported itself as perfectly solvent and possessed of an unimpaired capital, as the Great Western Mutual, confessedly has done, lose in the subsequent twelve months not only its whole capital, but an amount equal to twenty-five per cent. of that capital in addition, the inquiry may well be made as to the prospective soundness of all companies engaged in the same business. Of course there must be some of them worthy of confidence, and these latter ought not to suffer from the mismanagement of the rest; but how are their customers to know the difference? No one but a most expert accountant and financier can draw conclusions worth anything from the mass of figures presented by the officers of these institutions; and, admitting that their statements are honestly made up, they are perfectly valueless to ninety-nine out of a hundred people who are interested in them. The whole thing has the air of a huge confidence game, in which the policy-holders pay their money on trust; and as no claim arises on their policies till after their death, they can never know whether they are swindled or not.

It really looks as though the old-fashioned system of putting money in a savings bank was, after all, the wisest method of investing one's surplus earnings; that the newer and apparently more profitable fashions of insuring one's life. Where a man is engaged in some dangerous business, or is in delicate health, the life insurance provides for his family in case of his premature death; but in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he will leave them quite as much money by investing, year by year, in a savings bank, the amount he would pay as premiums, besides the advantage of always keeping it under his own control. As the Mississippi boatman remarked, he is not playing a game in being lost; he would rather win. He can keep watch of his investment from day to day, and protect himself by withdrawing it if he sees anything that awakens his apprehension. But if he insures his life, he is practically without any remedy except that of losing all or nearly all he has already sunk by refusing to sink any more.

This is a good time of the year to consider this subject. The season of the year has just begun during which deposits in savings banks may be made so as to draw interest for the ensuing six months. An industrious, economical man, who is in the receipt of an income ever so little beyond his actual necessities, cannot do a better thing than to select some reputable incorporated savings institution, managed by officers whom he knows favorably, either personally or by reputation, and opening an account with it. Many a dollar which he would otherwise waste will find its way to this place of deposit, and he will be surprised and delighted, after a very short time, to find how much the aggregate of these dollars will amount to. And if, by and by, he finds a more profitable way of investing his accumulations, he can take up the whole of them not only undiminished, but with interest added. Only try it, and see how it is for yourself.

PARIS NOT YET BOMBARDED—TROCHU'S TACTICS.

From the N. Y. Herald.

Our special despatches from Versailles enable the reader to form a clear idea of the military situation before the French capital. Our correspondent, writing on the 29th ult., reports that the expected bombardment had not begun at that date. As a consequence of this dilatoriness the German troops were becoming dissatisfied. It appears, however, that the failure to bombard Paris from a distance which will probably protect Paris from a storm of shot and shell for some time yet. The Germans have not a sufficient number of siege guns at hand, and they have been compelled to concentrate such as they have at one particular point, with the object of capturing or silencing one or more of the forts. But before they can accomplish this they must overcome obstacles which, at the present moment, appear insurmountable. Altogether, our correspondent is of opinion that the French forts will give the German batteries full employment to keep them from doing much injury to the investing line. It is true that the effectiveness and calibre of the French guns have probably been overrated; but granting this, the fact remains that while the Germans may finally succeed in reducing one or more of the forts, it will only be after a severe struggle.

This exposition puts a somewhat different feature to the situation before Paris than the previous reports had given it. In addition, it appears as if all the German armies in the open field have been thrown on the defensive. Prince Frederick Charles must now passively oppose Chanzky's army, contenting himself with preventing the French from approaching too near the besieged capital. All operations in the provinces are thus suspended until Paris falls. General Von Moltke has evidently decided that the most important thing for the Germans to do is to compel Trochu to surrender. Paris is regarded as the open field have been thrown on the defensive. Prince Frederick Charles must now passively oppose Chanzky's army, contenting himself with preventing the French from approaching too near the besieged capital. All operations in the provinces are thus suspended until Paris falls. 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