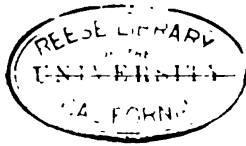


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POLITICAL AND SOCIAL.

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M.DCCC.LXXXIX.

CHARLES SUMNER'S ALABAMA SPEECH.

To Editor of "Morning Star," May 11, 1868.

SIR,—Americans in this country urge me to express publicly my judgment of Mr Sumner's recent speech, which I lament to hear has aroused a hostile feeling among those who were the best friends of the United States during the war. May I hope that your columns will not be too full to admit my letter.

I find in his speech nothing new; nothing beyond what was in his great speech of Sept. 10, 1863, on "Our Foreign Relations." Of the two speeches that was the more excited and exciting. He evidently was apprehending that we might enter war against the North voluntarily, besides the danger of the pirate ships rendering war between us inevitable. I then justified Mr Sumner's tone, as well as his arguments, *in the interest of peace*. Cicero, in reproving the violent language of Roman tribunes, says that after all it tended to make the national struggles less dangerous: for when the people found that their official protector would speak up for them, they felt it needless to take matters into their own hands. So, the evils which the United States were suffering from England being felt in wounds and blood, death and impoverishment, no dissimulation on the part of American statesmen could do anything but exasperate. It tended to soothe them, when men like Charles Sumner showed to England her injurious conduct and her sin. I hold this to be nearly true now, but less intensely. I regret that it has been forced on Mr Sumner to repeat somewhat less vividly the same bitter complaints. But I cannot see in his speech any menace of war, direct or indirect, or anything to denote that he does not look on the thought as horrible, and as an utterly absurd remedy for the past. In the close he says: "I know it is sometimes said that war between us must come sooner or later. I do not believe it. But if you say, *it must come*, let it be later, and then I am sure it will never come. Meanwhile let good men unite to make it impossible." I am told that an English newspaper which was strongly with President Lincoln during the war, comments on this to the effect,

“Well, then, if we find that war must be, let it be at once, and let us have done with it.”

Mr Sumner discerns that the treaty patched up so hastily by Mr Reverdy Johnson would make exasperation chronic and intractable: for it would stop the mouths of American diplomats against further demand or complaint, and it would give redress for no wrong but the smallest part of what was endured. Therefore it would leave a permanent sore in the public, a permanent topic for agitators who have not the responsibilities of statesmen. That the treaty has been rejected in the Senate by fifty-four to one, ought to show Englishmen how entirely Mr Reverdy Johnson failed to represent the national feeling. Every fact connected with his conduct here shows that he represented the South, not the North. He was very candid. It was our fault, if we did not understand his tendencies. Mr Sumner quotes testimony that the Confederate Loan went up from zero to ten, as soon as it was ascertained that the treaty was signed; it being believed that its words will cover the demand of those British subjects who have suffered loss by lending to Mr Jefferson Davis, President of the rebel South. It does not seem to show in us much coolness of judgment to treat as “a menace of war” the decisive rejection of a treaty negotiated for a President and by a Secretary and Ambassador, whose interest and sentiments are *not* those of the North. The North it was which suffered from our fostering of its malignant enemy,—the enemy of justice, freedom, and civilization.

But there is a matter of fact which Sumner neglects,—a fact which I suppose few of us know. I learnt it only last year accidentally from the Report of the Paris Anti-Slavery Conference of 1867. In it is printed an elaborate memoir by the Hon. John Jay, on Emancipation in the United States, which is really a historical Review. It states (p. 102) that in April 1861 the Secretary of State (Mr Seward), writing in the name of President Lincoln, advised all the American ministers in Europe,—and the European Cabinets hastened to accept the Assurances,—that the President, *so far from rejecting, willingly accepted the doctrine*, that the Federal Government could not reduce the seceding States to “obedience by conquest;”—an avowal which was promptly responded to by proclamations endowing the Slave Power with belligerent rights by sea. That our Government acted very wrongly, is my belief, as deeply as Mr Sumner's, and I admit that we have to suffer for errors or misdeeds of our rulers. But

so must Americans suffer from any blunders and stupid policy of their Presidential Cabinet. When Mr Seward went out of his way so needlessly to tell our Government that Mr Lincoln had no right to constrain the South, any friends of freedom and right within our Cabinet were thereby paralysed. In the face of Mr Lincoln's confession, they had no power to resist others who inferred that when Mr Lincoln tried to do what he himself said he had no right to do, the South had a right to resist him; therefore, it was proper for us to recognize their right. Well may Mr Seward now wish to close the discussion, if to continue it will fix upon *him* the chief blame of that recognition of belligerency which Mr Sumner justly treats as the primal cause of mischief.

Mr Sumner, alas! has plenty to say against us; but unless the Hon. John Jay misquoted the despatch, I no longer see how a reasonable man could expect a Royalist Government not to declare the combatants equal, when the President volunteered to tell us that he had no right of coercion. The Hon. John Jay says, that *at last* the American people, *step by step*, brought their Cabinet round to a sense of its duty and dignity. Well! so did our people happily at last bring our Government round, Adversity taught Mr Lincoln; a sense of danger perhaps taught Lord Palmerston something. Mr Sumner unavailingly asks for expressions of *regret* and *contrition*. Without a total change of men in power, such expressions could not be sincere. We should show ourselves a very excitable people, if we make much of the fact that an Ambassador who has a Southern heart has failed to carry with him the approval of the North in the treaty which he negotiated. I hope better things.