

THE CONFEDERATE DIPLOMATISTS AND THEIR SHIRT OF NESSUS.

A CHAPTER OF SECRET HISTORY.



LN revolting against the Union in 1860 the Southern States were greatly influenced by the expectation of substantial support from Europe, and especially from the large cotton-spinning powers of England and France. These states must have cotton or a famine—thus reasoned the Confederates; cotton they cannot have without both slavery and peace, therefore they will wink at slavery and will soon find a pretext for intervening in some form for peace, which, as most of them were sufficiently infatuated to believe, meant the independence of the South. It is not rash to say that but for the confident expectation of transatlantic aid the war would not have broken out when it did, if ever. The South was singularly unanimous in the conviction that cotton was king in Europe as well as in the United States, and that an interruption of its supply would be so serious in its consequences that a new republic, where cotton was to be king and slavery its cornerstone, would be welcomed into the family of nations as the surest possible guaranty against the recurrence of such a disaster.

For a time the theory gave promise of yielding the fruit expected of it. The idea had been quite successfully propagated in Europe during the earlier stages of the war that slavery had nothing to do with bringing it on, but that the Northern States were animated simply by a lust for power and territory, while the South were only defending their homes and families from ruthless invaders. Even Earl Russell went so far in one of his public utterances as to say as much, and that the subject of slavery was not to be taken into account by foreign statesmen in their dealings with the belligerents. The noble earl lived to change his opinion, and the Southern leaders discovered before the war closed that their most formidable enemy was this of their own household. They were made to realize, with a cruel distinctness, that, with a constitution and a public opinion which made slavery the one institution within their borders which was too sacred to be debated, the one institution which neither the

people of the Confederate States nor their delegates in legislative assemblies or in national or State conventions could meddle with, they were fatally handicapped for the struggle in which they had embarked. They could not throw this Jonah into the sea, for it was their only pretext for rebellion; to retain it on board was inevitable shipwreck. The abolition of slavery meant peace and union at once, and, as a logical consequence, their success in war meant the perpetuation of slavery—that and nothing else. This in due time became apparent to the people of Europe, where the prejudices against chattel slavery were even stronger and more universal than in Massachusetts; nor could this conclusion fail to acquire control in the councils of the European powers—willing as they mostly were to see our Union go to pieces—the moment they began to look about for a plausible pretext for intervention. They found that in whatever direction they put out their hands to help the Confederates they became in spite of themselves the champions of slavery. This was inevitable, but its results the Southern people would not or could not see. They had an idea that the prejudice against slavery was confined pretty much to the puritans of New England and a few cranks of Exeter Hall. Having been brought up in the midst of it, it was incomprehensible to them, or at least to most of them, that a man of a sound mind should find anything revolting in the “peculiar institution.”

In selecting John Slidell and James M. Mason as commissioners to further their interests abroad, the Confederates were also most unfortunate. The names of both were associated in Europe with every scheme for the nationalization of slavery that had been presented in Congress since the annexation of Texas.

Slidell while representing the State of Louisiana in the United States Senate was the counselor and abetter of the filibustering expeditions of Lopez in 1849 and 1859 for the wresting of Cuba from Spain, with a view to the enlargement of the area and political representation in Congress of the slaveholding States.

In December, 1857, Walker, with a band of filibusters, was captured by an American vessel of war under the command of Commodore

Paulding, just after landing at Punta Arenas on the coast of Nicaragua, of which state he purposed to take possession, having once before landed in Nicaragua with another force, whence, after a warlike occupation of some months, he was expelled. Soon after Commodore Paulding made his report to the government the political associates of Slidell in the House of Representatives, under his inspiration, made a report disapproving of the conduct of Commodore Paulding in arresting Walker and bringing him a prisoner to the United States. Through the same filibustering influences Paulding was threatened with censure, while Walker was not only not convicted, as he should have been, and dealt with as a pirate, but was allowed to go at large to plan other predatory schemes upon the peaceful neighbors of the United States, until arrested by the hand of Providence.¹

It was through Slidell's influence that Soulé, also of New Orleans, was sent out to bully Spain into the sale of Cuba to the United States, and with Buchanan, then our minister to England, and John Y. Mason, then our minister to France, instructed to unite in the declaration of the conference at Ostend in 1854, that "the acquisition of Cuba was a political necessity for the United States, to be accomplished by whatever means, fair or foul, might prove necessary."

In the following session of Congress Slidell offered a resolution in the Senate directing the President of the United States to give notice to the European powers bound together under the treaty for the suppression of the slave-trade that after one year from date the United States would cease to be a party to that treaty, and would no longer maintain its quota of vessels upon the coast of Africa.

Failing to secure the adoption of this resolution by Congress, whereby he had contemplated a reopening of the slave-trade, he and his partisans, using Mr. Buchanan, then President, as their instrument, bullied England into a practical renunciation of the right of visit and search of suspected slavers bearing the American flag, and into the admission that the flag alone was conclusive and final evidence of nationality.

The effect of this was that, during the succeeding twelve months, more than a hundred vessels were ascertained to have been fitted out and employed for the slave traffic, and not one convicted by the courts until the accession of Lincoln and the appointment of a new régime of prosecuting attorneys.

Slidell was also one of the parties who took a prominent part in securing the repeal of the

Missouri Compromise, by which it was intended to open all the Northwestern territory to slavery.

Not content with the impulse given to the African slave-trade by England's practical abandonment of the right of visit and search, in the session of 1858-59 Slidell introduced a bill to place \$30,000,000 at the disposal of President Buchanan to be used in negotiating the purchase of Cuba.²

Mason was a party to all the measures for the extension of slavery that Slidell ever proposed or advocated. He was a member of the Senate committee on foreign relations and signed the report in favor of giving the President the \$30,000,000 to bribe and traffic for Cuba, and in his speech, made the day the report was presented, reiterated the declaration of the Ostend conference, that "the acquisition of Cuba was for the United States a political necessity."³

He was one of the authors of the fugitive-slave law of 1850, which made it a crime, punishable with fine and imprisonment, to harbor, feed, or give shelter to a fugitive slave, even in States where slavery was prohibited by law.

He was one of the inquisitors who besieged poor John Brown in his last hours to extort from him information by which other citizens of the North could be convicted of participating with him in the scheme for freeing the slaves in Virginia which cost him his life.

Mason, who was commissioned by the Confederates to represent them in England, had not been in London six months before the possibility of his being of any use to the cause he represented was at an end. Snubbed by Earl Russell, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, and only tolerated by Palmerston, then Premier, the question of recalling him was seriously considered as early as the fall of 1862. The average school-girl of sixteen was about as well qualified as Mason to cope with the bankers of London and Paris, the only foreign powers with which he seems to have had any intercourse or negotiations that amounted to anything. It is not easy to see how any minister, and least of all a minister of Mason's mental, not to say moral limitations, could earn his salary near a government that would not see him, nor pay any attention to anything he wrote, nor listen to anything he was instructed or inclined to say. To withdraw him from England at that time, however, and leave Slidell in France, who was already setting the eggs out of which it was expected a navy for the Confederate States was to be hatched, was attended with some inconvenience which Benjamin thought it better to avoid. Hence the following letters, the

¹ Reports of committees of the House of Representatives, 1st Session 35th Congress, Vol. I., 1857-58.

² Senate Doc., 2d Session 35th Congress, 1858-59.

³ "Congressional Globe," January 24, 1859, p. 538.

earlier one to Mason, and the latter to Slidell.

Benjamin to Mason.

(No. 8.)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
RICHMOND, 28th Oct., 1863.

HON. JAMES M. MASON, etc., London.

SIR: . . . It is gratifying to perceive that you had, as was confidently anticipated, reviewed your impressions, and determined not to withdraw from London without the previous instructions of the President. Your correspondence with Earl Russell shows with what scant courtesy you have been treated, and exhibits a marked contrast between the conduct of the English and French statesmen now in office in the intercourse with foreign agents eminently discreditable to the former. It is lamentable that at this late period in the nineteenth century a nation so enlightened as Great Britain should have failed yet to discover that a principal cause of dislike and hatred towards England, of which complaints are rife in her Parliament and in her press, is the offensive arrogance of some of her public men. The contrast is striking between the polished courtesy of M. Thouvenel¹ and the rude incivility of Earl Russell. Your determination to submit to the annoyances in the service of your country, and to overlook personal slights while hope remains that your continued presence in England may benefit our cause, cannot fail to meet the warm approval of your government. I refrain, however, from further comments on the contents of your despatches till the attention of the President (now concentrated on efforts to repair the ill effects of the failure of the Kentucky campaign) can be directed to your correspondence with Earl Russell.

I am, sir, your obdt. servt.,

J. P. BENJAMIN, Secretary of State.

Benjamin to Slidell.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
RICHMOND, January 15, 1863.

HON. JOHN SLIDELL, etc., Paris.

SIR: . . . It is not to be denied that there is great and increasing irritation in the public mind on this side in consequence of our unjust treatment by foreign powers, and it will require all the influence of the President to prevent some explosion and to maintain that calm and self-contained attitude which is alone becoming in such circumstances. We should probably not be very averse to the recall of Mr. Mason, who has been discourteously treated by Earl Russell, were it not that such a step would have so marked a significance while you remain at Paris as would probably cause serious interference with the success of the preparations, now nearly completed, for the purchase of the articles so much needed in the further prosecution of the war. If the re-

pulse of the enemy at Vicksburg in addition to the terrible slaughter of his troops at Fredericksburg prove insufficient to secure our recognition, the continued presence of our agents abroad can only be defended or excused on the ground that the necessities of our position render indispensable the supplies which we draw from Europe, and which would perhaps be withheld if we gave manifestation of our indignation at the unfair treatment which we have received.

I am respectfully, etc.,

J. P. BENJAMIN, Secretary of State.

As already intimated, the two men who were sent abroad to negotiate European alliances for the Confederate States, more than any other two men in all our republic, incarnated everything that was most intolerant, aggressive, and offensive in the institution of slavery. With them slavery was not a disorderly social condition to be tolerated only for its incidental conveniences, or for the grave inconveniences of exterminating it, but an institution to be admired, cultivated, and propagated for its intrinsic merits and fitness. The fame of their opinions had gone before them all over the world. As a matter of course they had not been long in Europe before they were brought to book. Mr. Mason got his first lesson at a dinner at Lord Donoughmore's,² a thorough-paced old Tory and ready for anything that would contribute to bring the American republic to grief. Here is Mason's account of this lesson in a confidential note to his chief. The sentiments of the hard-hearted old peer were so shockingly philanthropic that Mason made his communication "unofficial," doubting the propriety of allowing such heresies to go upon the files of the Confederate Department of State.

Mason to Benjamin.

(Unofficial.)

24 UPPER SEYMOUR STREET, PORTMAN SQUARE,
LONDON, November 4, 1862.

DEAR SIR: The contents of this note I have thought had better be unofficial, and thus not to go on the files of the department, unless you should think otherwise; and yet the matter, it seems to me, should at once be brought under the consideration of the President, that we may be ready when the time arrives.

I have the strongest reason to believe, when, after recognition, we shall come to the negotiation of the ordinary treaty of "amity and commerce," this Government will require, as a *sine qua non*, the introduction of a clause stipulating against the African slave-trade. Although I well

¹ It is a curious coincidence that on the very day that Benjamin was commending to Mason the "polished courtesy of M. Thouvenel" Slidell in Paris was writing to Benjamin an account of his first interview with Drouyn de Lhuys, and saying, "After the first interchange of courtesies, I said that I had been pleased to hear from various quarters that I should not have

to combat with him the adverse sentiments that had been attributed to his predecessor in the Department of Foreign Affairs (M. Thouvenel), with what degree of truth I did not permit myself to appreciate."

² Donoughmore's name is recorded as a subscriber for ten of the bonds of the Confederate cotton loan.

knew the pertinacity of England on that subject, yet I had supposed that the voluntary act of the Confederate States Government, inhibiting this trade by the enactment of the constitution when the government was first established, would have satisfied England to be passive at least in her future intercourse with us. I have now great reason to apprehend the contrary.

Some few days since I dined with Lord Donoughmore, who was president of the board of trade during the late Derby administration, and will hold the same, or a higher office, should that party come again into power—a very intelligent gentleman, and a warm and earnest friend of the South. In the course of conversation, after dinner, the subject came up incidentally, while we were alone, and he said I might be satisfied that Lord Palmerston would not enter into a treaty with us, unless we agreed in such treaty not to permit the African slave-trade. I expressed my surprise at it, referring to the fact that we had voluntarily admitted that prohibition into the constitution of the Confederate States, thereby taking stronger ground against the slave-trade than had ever been taken by the United States; that in the latter it was only prohibited by law whilst in the former not only was the power withheld from Congress, but the legislative branch of the government was required to pass such laws as would effectually prevent it.

He said that was all well understood, but that such was the sentiment of England on this subject that no minister could hold his place for a day who should negotiate a treaty with any Power not containing such a clause; nor could any House of Commons be found which would sustain a minister thus delinquent, and he referred to the fact (as he alleged it to be) that in every existing treaty with England that prohibition was contained. He said, further, that he did not mean to express his individual opinions, but that he was equally satisfied, should the Palmerston ministry go out, and the Tories come in, such would likewise be their necessary policy; and he added that he was well assured that England and France would be in accord on that subject.

I told him, in reply, that I feared this would form a formidable obstacle, if persisted in, to any treaty; that he must be aware that on all questions affecting African servitude our government was naturally and necessarily sensitive, when presented by any foreign power. We had learned from abundant experience that the antislavery sentiment was always aggressive; that this condition of society was one with which, in our opinion, the destinies of the South were indissolubly connected; that as regarded foreign powers, it was with us a question purely domestic, with which our safety required that none such should in any manner interfere; that, of course, I had no special instructions on the subject, but I thought I knew both the views of our government and people; and that (to express it in no stronger term) it would be a most unfortunate thing if England should make such a stipulation a *sine qua non* to a treaty. I said, further, that I presumed it might be averted, by recognizing mutually the fact that

such a stipulation was not properly germane to a treaty purely commercial; and thus to be laid over as a subject for future negotiation, if pressed. He still maintained as his belief, that no matter who might be in power, it would be insisted on in the first treaty to be formed.

A few days afterwards Mr. Seymour Fitzgerald, passing through town, came to see me. I had known him very well, and during the late session of Parliament had seen a good deal of him. He is a man of ability and influence, was Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs in the Derby administration, and will take the place of Lord Russell, it is supposed, should the Conservatives again come into power; and he, too, is an earnest and sincere friend of our cause.

I told him of my conversation with Lord Donoughmore, and of my surprise at the opinion he entertained. I regret to say that Mr. Fitzgerald coincided fully with Lord D. in these opinions, not as his own, but as those which must govern any ministry in England.

We shall therefore have this question to meet, I take for granted, at the time and in the manner suggested.

I do not ask for any definite instructions in regard to it, but only bring it thus unofficially to the notice of the President and yourself.

Very respectfully and truly yours,

HON. J. P. BENJAMIN.

J. M. MASON.

Mason professes surprise at the nature of the conditions which his Tory friends assured him must form a part of any treaty with the Confederate States to which the Queen's signature could be attached, but it is far more surprising that any American statesman who had reached his age could have needed that information. But the way in which the Confederate diplomatist sought to turn this obstacle was even more surprising still. He says to this representative of a nation of abolitionists that "the antislavery sentiment was always aggressive"; "that this condition of [Southern] society [with slaves] was one with which . . . the destinies of the South were indissolubly connected"; and, finally, that it was a question purely domestic, with which no foreign power could with safety interfere. To understand the effect of such language upon any representative Englishman we should try to imagine the moral effect upon the American Antislavery Society of the late fire-eater Toombs attempting to call the roll of his negroes on Bunker Hill.

At the very time that Lord Donoughmore was saying check to the slavery apostolate in London, Jefferson Davis was receiving what should have been regarded as a more impressive warning from a source that could not be suspected of sentimentalism. Among the agents sent out to Europe at the beginning of the war was William L. Yancey of Alabama, who had sought and fairly won the

reputation of being the champion fire-eater of the country, and who contributed the only piece of pro-slavery rhetoric that seems likely to survive the rebellion, in proclaiming at its beginning the necessity of "firing the Southern heart." The object of his mission, in conjunction with Dudley Mann, was to take advantage of the reverse sustained by the Union army at Bull Run to secure the prompt recognition of the Confederacy by England and France. He returned in a few months, running the blockade at Sabine Pass. "When he arrived in New Orleans," said my informant, who saw him and from whom I had the facts I am about to recite, "he was the most broken-up, demoralized, and wretched-looking man I ever saw." He went to the St. Charles Hotel, then kept by Mr. Hildreth, afterwards manager of the New York Hotel, and immediately sent for William E. Stark and Pierre Soulé. The latter from being a noisy Unionist had been persuaded, by his appointment to the office of Provost Marshal, to fly the colors of the Confederacy. To escape observation and interruption, Yancey, Hildreth, Stark, and Soulé then went out to a restaurant to dine. While absent it leaked out in some way that Yancey had returned and was at the St. Charles, so that when the party returned they found the large domed reception hall of the hotel thronged with people, who no sooner recognized Yancey than they called upon him to address them. He reluctantly mounted the structure which occupies the center of the hall under the dome, "appearing to be the very embodiment of disappointment and despair." He said in substance that he did not bring them glad tidings from over the sea; that Queen Victoria was against them and that Prince Albert was against them. "Gladstone we can manage," he said, "but the feeling against slavery in England is so strong that no public man there dares extend a hand to help us. We have got to fight the Washington Government alone. There is no government in Europe that dares help us in a struggle which can be suspected of having for its result, directly or indirectly, the fortification or perpetuation of slavery. Of that I am certain."

In a day or two Yancey left for Richmond, where he is presumed to have made substantially the same report to the Confederate authorities. He died in about ten days after his arrival. His information, which deserved to be heeded, and if heeded would have led to negotiations which would have promptly led to a termination of the war, had about as much effect upon the lunatics at Richmond as reading the riot act or the Ten Commandments would have upon a pack of wolves. They knew not the time of their visitation.

While Mr. Benjamin and President Davis were chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancies suggested to their English commissioner by his Tory friends as well as by their own agent, a gentleman from Florida had proposed to Mr. Benjamin that the slaves should be drafted into the army and compelled to fight for the deliverance of their masters from the chains of the old Federal Constitution. To this proposition Mr. Benjamin wrote a reply which for its length is certainly one of the most important contributions ever made to the literature of slavery.

Among those who have never enjoyed the advantage of studying the "peculiar institution" *in situ*, this letter is likely to beget a suspicion that the affection of slaves for their masters, and for the relation in which they stood the one to the other, have been somewhat exaggerated by the slaveholding apostolate.

The extent to which the conversion of a man into a slave reduced his value as a national asset in the time of war or civil disorder — was it ever better stated or more effectively illustrated?

Benjamin to B. H. Micon.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
RICHMOND, August 18, 1863.

BENJAMIN H. MICON, Esq., Tallahassee, Fla.

DEAR SIR: I have received and carefully read your letter of 10th instant. It is a subject which has awakened attention in several quarters lately, and which is of an importance too great to admit of its proper treatment within the limits of a letter, nor have I at this moment the time necessary for discussing it at length. With many and obvious advantages, such as you suggest in your letter, there are very grave practical difficulties in the execution of any general scheme of employing negro slaves in the army.

You know, of course, in the first place, that the President has no authority to initiate such a scheme — that it must be devised and matured by Congress. Whether Congress would advise it I know not, but let me suggest hastily a few of the difficulties.

1st. Slaves are property; if taken for public service, they must be paid for. At present rates each regiment of 1000 slaves would cost \$2,000,000, at the very least, besides their outfit, and the government would become a vast slaveholder, and must either sell the slaves after the war, which would be a most odious proceeding after they had aided us in gaining our liberties, or must free them, to the great detriment of the country.

2d. If instead of buying, the government hire them, it would stand as insurer for their return to their owners; it would be forced to pay hire for them besides their outfit and rations; and it would have to pay hire according to the value of their services on a fair estimate. Now negro men command readily \$30 a month all through Virginia. How could we possibly afford such a price, and what would be the effect on the poorer classes of whites in the army, if informed that negroes were

paid \$30 a month, while the white man receives only \$11?

3d. The collection and banding together of negro men in bodies, in the immediate neighborhood of the enemy's forces, is an experiment of which the results are far from certain. The facility which would thus be afforded for their desertion in mass might prove too severe a test for their fidelity when exposed to the arts of designing emissaries of the enemy, who would be sure to find means of communicating with them.

4th. It is far from certain that the male slave population is not doing just as valuable and important service now as they could do in the army. A nation cannot exist without labor in the field, in the workshop, on the railroad, the canal, the highway, and the manufactory. In coal and iron mines, in foundries and on fortifications, we could employ the total male slave population that could possibly be spared from the production of supplies for subsistence. This is the appropriate field for negro labor, to which they are habituated, and which appears at first sight to be altogether less liable to objection than to imitate our enemies by using them in military organizations.

I have not thoroughly studied the subject, but throw out these suggestions as food for thought, although they have probably been considered by you already. On one point, however, I think all must agree, and that is, the absolute necessity of withdrawing all male slaves from any district of country exposed to the approach of an enemy. This is a military precaution which commanders in the field may lawfully take, and to which I shall invoke the attention of the proper department.

Far from deeming your letter intrusive or improper, I see in it nothing but an evidence of patriotism and desire to serve your country, but of course I required no proof that you could not entertain any other sentiments.

Very truly and respectfully, etc.,

J. P. BENJAMIN.

In other words, a negro's labor, in the judgment of the Confederacy, was worth more than a white man's, and therefore his service in the army would be more expensive and his death would prove a greater loss than a white man's.

It was a matter of "absolute necessity" to withdraw "all male slaves from any district

¹ On the 12th April, 1862, Mr. Benjamin wrote Mr. Mason at London: "I have arrived at the conclusion that the interests of the Confederacy require a more liberal appropriation of the funds of the department in our foreign service. With enemies so active, so unscrupulous, and with a system of deception so thoroughly organized as that now established by them abroad, it becomes absolutely essential that no means be spared for the dissemination of the truth and for a fair exposition of our condition and policy before foreign nations. It is not wise to neglect public opinion, nor prudent to leave to the voluntary interposition of friends, often indiscreet, the duty of vindicating our country and its cause before the tribunal of civilized men. The President shares these views, and I have therefore, with his assent and under his instructions, appointed Edwin de Leon, Esq., formerly consul general of the United States at Alexandria, confidential agent of the department, and he has been supplied with

of country exposed to the approach of an enemy." It goes without saying that soldiers who have to be withdrawn at the approach of an enemy would not make a very formidable army. How this absolute necessity is to be reconciled with the negro's alleged devotion to his master is one of the things which Mr. Benjamin failed to explain, doubtless because among slaveholders it was too elementary a topic to be discussed in a state paper.

Mr. de Leon, another missionary of the Richmond government, who was to enlighten the European public through the press with his twenty-five thousand dollar burners,¹ was not long in satisfying himself that "against a rooted prejudice and a preconceived opinion" against slavery which the Confederacy had to contend with in England "reason and argument are powerless," and he advised that no further attempt to secure recognition should be made through their commissioners, but that they should stand on their dignity and let other nations sue them for recognition.

Meantime he would feed the hungry and thirsty in England and France with "Visits to Southern Plantations by a Northern Man," and with "the utterances of Northern opponents of the Lincoln administration, such as the Woods of New York and Mr. Read of Philadelphia."

In fact Mr. de Leon writes as though he thought the Confederate States would get on quite as well without the assistance of any of its commissioners in Europe, an opinion which very few now on either side of the Atlantic do not share, though Mr. de Leon would have felt differently upon the subject, perhaps, if he had been one of the commissioners. Here is De Leon's political evangel.

De Leon to Benjamin.

PARIS, 19th June, 1863.

HON. J. P. BENJAMIN,

Department of State, Richmond, C. S. A.

SIR: . . . The mutual endearments which have passed between the Lincoln and Russian

twenty-five thousand dollars as a secret service fund, to be used by him in the manner he may deem most judicious, both in Great Britain and the Continent, for the special purpose of enlightening public opinion in Europe through the press. Mr. de Leon possesses to a high degree the confidence of the President as a man of discretion, ability, and thorough devotion to our cause. He will bear to you this despatch, and I trust you will give to him on all occasions the benefit of your counsel, and impart to him all information you may think it expedient to make public, so as to facilitate him in obtaining such position and influence amongst leading journalists and men of letters as will enable him most effectually to serve our cause in the special sphere assigned to him. . . .

"I am, sir, very respectfully, your obdt. serv't,

[Signed]

"J. P. BENJAMIN,

"Secretary of State."

despotisms have greatly edified and surprised the European world and have embarrassed not a little the democratic friends of "the model republic" who are rabid partisans of Poland. To cover their chagrin they have revived the old cry of slavery, the real *bête noire* of the French imagination.

In England too the same claptrap has been revived, and to counteract it I have caused to be republished and widely circulated the pamphlet which you will receive with this despatch, "Visits to Southern Plantations by a Northern Man" — republishing a French version also in a very widely circulated paper. To affect the public sentiment of England free use has been made of the utterances of Northern opponents of the Lincoln administration, such as the Woods of New York and Mr. Read of Philadelphia. I have caused to be republished, with an introduction written by myself, the very outspoken sentiments of the latter gentleman to the Northern Democracy, and its circulation has done much good. A copy of this also is sent you. Almost incredible as it may appear, the slavery question is more of a stumbling block to our recognition in France than in England, for it is really and truly a matter of sentiment with the French people, who ever have been more swayed by such considerations than their cooler and more calculating neighbors on the other side of the Channel.

From the hour of my arrival here until to-day the same thing has been repeated over and over again by persons connected with the government and enjoying the confidence of the Emperor — "France cannot take the lead in acknowledging the Southern Confederacy without some promise for prospective emancipation." The same statement was made by one of our warmest friends in the French ministry, and one nearest the Emperor, — Count de Persigny, — but three days ago, and M. de Lesseps says the same. It is vain to tell them how utterly impracticable such a proposition must be, and that the Southern people never would consent to purchase recognition at the price of such a concession of wrong-doing as it would imply; the answer is always the same — "Well, then, the feeling of our people compels us to make the condition."

Against a rooted prejudice and a preconceived opinion like this reason and argument are powerless, and the concessions demanded would deprive the gift of all value if recorded, besides humiliating us to the level desired by our enemies. Therefore it is that, despairing of removing by diplomatic efforts the calculating selfishness of England and the sentimental repugnance of France, I have counseled, and now reiterate the suggestion, the entire suppression of the attempt made through accredited commissioners in Europe for recognition, waving the question of the heavy expenditure thereby incurred, and placing the matter on the footing of self-respect and true policy. I may add also that in the opinion of influential and sagacious French statesmen such a step would produce a most favorable impression on the public sentiment here, which responds to such appeals. Very respectfully,
EDWIN DE LEON.

After reading this suggestion of De Leon for mitigating the diplomatic representation of the Confederacy in Europe, it is not surprising that a pretext for relieving its author from his costly duty was soon found. He was regarded by Slidell from the first rather as a spy upon him than as an auxiliary, and that they would not get on harmoniously together needed no prophet to foresee. Besides, De Leon's curiosity got the better of his judgment, and he fell into the habit of opening Slidell's despatches, a practice eminently fitted to strain the relations between these "high concocting powers." In less than six months after De Leon's suggestion reached Richmond his head was in the basket. Writing of this matter to Slidell on the 28th of January, 1864, Mr. Benjamin says:

Your No. 50 despatch in relation to Mr. De Leon bears nearly the same date as my despatch to you on the same subject, and requires no special remark. While appreciating the motives which induced your forbearance from complaint, I cannot but think that the department ought to have been apprised earlier of the facts related in your despatch, especially as to his opening, without the slightest warrant of authority, the sealed despatches addressed to you and committed to his care. This fault was of so very grave a nature that it alone would probably have sufficed to put an end to Mr. De Leon's agency, and we should have thus been spared the annoyance of the scandal created by the interception and publication of the objectionable correspondence which caused his removal.

How mysteriously slavery seemed to increase the friction in every part of the Confederate machinery!

President Davis did not reply as promptly as he might have done to his English commissioner's despatch of November 4, in relation to the antislavery clauses with which it would be necessary to decorate any treaty of alliance of the Confederate States with Great Britain. Perhaps he thought no people so intelligent as the English really cared whether their cotton was grown with free or slave labor, or whether their ships trading with Africa brought away negroes or elephants' tusks; perhaps there was not entire harmony of opinion upon the subject among his advisers; perhaps deference to Mr. Mason's notification that he needed no instruction influenced them. Whatever may have been the reason, several months elapsed before the Richmond Government was agreed upon the instructions it should give to its commissioners. In January, 1864, it finally sent to the commissioners the following despatches, the first unofficial and the second official:

Benjamin to Mason.

(Unofficial.)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
RICHMOND, January 15, 1863.

HON. JAMES M. MASON, etc., London.

DEAR SIR: Your unofficial communication, inclosed in despatch No. 20, was duly received. We are greatly surprised at its contents, but the suspicions excited abroad through the numerous agencies established by the Northern Government, of our intention to change the constitution and open the slave-trade, are doubtless the cause of the views so strongly expressed to you by Lord Donoughmore and others.

After conference with the President, we have come to the conclusion that the best mode of meeting the question is to assume the constitutional ground developed in the accompanying despatch, No. 13. If you find yourself unable by the adoption of the line of conduct suggested in that despatch to satisfy the British Government, I see no other course than to propose to them to transfer any negotiations that may have been commenced to this side, on the ground of the absence of any instructions or authority to bind your government by any stipulations on the forbidden subject, and the totally unexpected nature of the proposition made to you.

If the British Government should persist in the views you attribute to it, the matter can plainly be disposed of to much more advantage on this side, and it may very well happen that that haughty government will find to its surprise that it needs a treaty of commerce with us much more than we need it with Great Britain. Of this, however, I am sure you will allow no hint to escape you.

Very respectfully, etc.,

J. P. BENJAMIN, Secretary of State.

Benjamin to Slidell and Mason.

Circular.

(No. 12.)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
RICHMOND, Jan'y 15, 1863.

HON. JOHN SLIDELL, etc., Paris.

SIR: It has been suggested to this government, from a source of unquestioned authority, that after the recognition of our independence by the European powers, an expectation is generally entertained by them that in our treaties of amity and commerce a clause will be introduced making stipulations against the African slave-trade. It is even thought that neutral powers may be inclined to insist upon the insertion of such a clause as a *sine qua non*.

You are well aware how firmly fixed in our constitution is the policy of this Confederacy against the opening of that trade, but we are informed that false and insidious suggestions have been made by the agents of the United States at European courts of our intention to change our constitution as soon as peace is restored, and of authorizing the importation of slaves from Africa. If therefore you should find in your intercourse with the cabinet to which you are accredited that any such impressions are entertained, you will use every proper effect to remove them;

and if an attempt is made to introduce into any treaty which you may be charged with negotiating stipulations on the subject just mentioned, you will assume in behalf of your government the position which, under the direction of the President, I now proceed to develop.

The constitution of the Confederate States is an agreement made between independent States. By its terms all the powers of government are separated into classes as follows, viz.:

1st. Such powers as the States delegate to the General Government.

2d. Such powers as the States agree to refrain from exercising, although they do not delegate them to the General Government.

3d. Such powers as the States, without delegating them to the General Government, thought proper to exercise by direct agreement between themselves contained in the constitution.

4th. All remaining powers of sovereignty which, not being delegated to the Confederate States by the constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively or to the people thereof.

On the formation of the constitution, the States thought proper to prevent all possible future discussions on the subject of slavery by the direct exercise of their own power, and delegated no authority to the Confederate Government save immaterial exceptions presently to be noticed. Especially in relation to the importation of African negroes was it deemed important by the States that no power to permit it should exist in the Confederate Government. The States by the constitution (which is a treaty between themselves of the most solemn character that States can make) unanimously stipulated that "the importation of negroes of the African race from any foreign country other than the slave-holding States or Territories of the United States of America is hereby forbidden; and Congress is required to pass such laws as shall effectually prevent the same." (Art. I., Sect. 9., Par. 1.)

It will thus be seen that no power is delegated to the Confederate Government over this subject, but that it is included in the third class above referred to, of powers exercised directly by the States.

It is true that the duty is imposed on Congress to pass laws to render effectual the prohibition above quoted. But this very imposition of a duty on Congress is the strongest proof of the absence of power in the President and Senate alone, who are vested with authority to make treaties. In a word, as the only provision on the subject directs the two branches of the legislative department, in connection with the President, to pass laws on this subject, it is out of the power of the President aided by one branch of the legislative department to control the same subject by treaties; for there is not only an absence of express delegation of authority to the treaty-making power, which alone would suffice to prevent the exercise of such authority, but there is the implied prohibition resulting from the fact that all duty on the subject is imposed on a different branch of the government.

I need scarcely enlarge upon the familiar prin-

ciple that authority expressly delegated to Congress cannot be assumed in our government by the treaty-making power. The authority to lay and collect taxes, to coin money, to declare war, etc., are ready examples, and you can be at no loss for argument or illustration in support of so well recognized a principle.

The view above expressed is further enforced by the clause in the constitution which follows immediately that which has already been quoted. The second paragraph of the same section provides that "Congress shall also have power to prohibit the introduction of slaves from any State not a member of, or Territory not belonging to, the Confederacy." Here there is no direct exercise of power by the States which formed our constitution, but an express delegation to Congress. It is thus seen that while the States were willing to trust Congress with the power to prohibit the introduction of African slaves from the United States, they were not willing to trust it with the power of prohibiting their introduction from any other quarter, but determined to insure the execution of their will by a direct interposition of their own power.

Moreover, any attempt on the part of the treaty-making power of this government to prohibit the African slave-trade, in addition to the insuperable objections above suggested, would leave open the implication that the same power has authority to permit such introduction. No such implication can be sanctioned by us. This government unequivocally and absolutely denies its possession of any power whatever over the subject, and cannot entertain any proposition in relation to it.

While it is totally beneath the dignity of our government to give assurances for the purpose of vindicating itself from any unworthy suspicion of its good faith on this subject that may be disseminated by the agents of the United States, it may not be improper that you should point out the superior efficacy of our constitutional provision to any treaty stipulations we could make. The constitution is itself a treaty between the States of such binding force that it cannot be changed or abrogated without the deliberate and concurrent action of nine out of the thirteen States that compose the Confederacy. A treaty might be abrogated by a party temporarily in power in our country at the sole risk of disturbing amicable relations with a foreign power. The constitution, unless by an approach to unanimity, could not be changed without the destruction of this government itself; and even should it be possible hereafter to procure the consent of the number of States necessary to change it, the forms and delays designedly interposed by the framers to check rash innovations would give ample time for the most mature deliberation and for strenuous resistance on the part of those opposed to such change.

After all it is scarcely the part of wisdom to attempt to impose restraint on the actions and conduct of men for all future time. The policy of the Confederacy is as fixed and immutable on this subject as the imperfection of human nature permits human resolve to be. No additional

agreements, treaties, or stipulations can commit these States to the prohibition of the African slave-trade with more binding efficacy than those they have themselves devised. A just and generous confidence in their good faith on this subject exhibited by friendly powers will be far more efficacious than persistent efforts to induce this government to assume the exercise of powers which it does not possess, and to bind the Confederacy by ties which would have no constitutional validity. We trust, therefore, that no unnecessary discussions on this matter will be introduced into your negotiations. If, unfortunately, this reliance should prove unfounded, you will decline continuing negotiations on your side and transfer them to us at home, where in such event they could be conducted with greater facility and advantage, under the direct supervision of the President.

Very respectfully, etc.,

J. P. BENJAMIN, Secretary of State.

How Mason was affected by Benjamin's instruction to have no unnecessary discussions on the slavery clause introduced into his negotiations, and the alternative proposal to transfer the negotiations to Richmond, is not disclosed in his official correspondence, though it may be imagined, and indeed it may be inferred from the following paragraph in a despatch from Benjamin to Mason, written August 4, 1863, only seven months after the despatch last cited.

The perusal of the recent debates in the British Parliament satisfies the President that H. B. M.'s Government has determined to decline the overtures made through you for establishing, by treaty, friendly relations between the two governments, and entertain no intention of receiving you as the accredited minister of this government near the British court. Under these circumstances the President requests that you consider your mission at an end, and that you withdraw with your secretary from London.

Mr. De Leon was not the only person employed to enlighten the public mind of Europe at the Confederacy's expense. There were besides one Henry Hotze, a literary soldier of fortune, whose chief theater of action was London, and James Spence, who was a merchant in Liverpool. They too found that the pro-slavery banner could not be successfully flown in Europe. Spence was innocent enough to write a book in behalf of the Confederates in which he presumed to denounce slavery in good round terms. He also got Hotze and other partisans of the Confederacy to recommend the Richmond Government to appropriate some money to circulate it, and also to make its author a sort of foreign correspondent of the State Department. The following letters from Secretary Benjamin will show with what success. They will also show how Earl Russell compromised his character as a gen-

tleman, in the secretary's estimation, by snubbing this hybrid London commissioner.

Benjamin to Henry Hotze.

(No. 13.)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
RICHMOND, 9th January, 1864.

HENRY HOTZE, Esq., London.

SIR: . . . Your appreciation of the tone and temper of public opinion in France in your Nos. 29 and 31, although not in accordance with the views of the other correspondents of the department, concurs entirely in the conclusion to which I had arrived from the perusal of the principal organs of French journalism. It has been impossible to remain blind to the evidence of the articles which emanate from the best known names in French literature. In what is perhaps the most powerful and influential of the French periodicals, "La Revue des Deux Mondes," there is scarcely an article signed by the members of its able corps of contributors which does not contain some disparaging allusion to the South. Abolition sentiments are quietly assumed as philosophical axioms too self-evident to require comment or elaboration, and the result of this struggle is in all cases treated as a foregone conclusion, as nothing within the range of possibility except the subjugation of the South and the emancipation of the whole body of the negroes. The example of San Domingo does not seem in the least to disturb the faith of these philanthropists in the entire justice and policy of a war waged for this end, and our resistance to the fate proposed for us is treated as a crime against liberty and civilization. The emperor is believed by us to be sincerely desirous of putting an end to the war by the recognition of our independence; but, powerful as he is, he is too sagacious to act in direct contravention of the settled public opinion of his people, while hampered by the opposition of the English Government.

I fully appreciate the wisdom and prudence of your suggestions relative to the distinction which ought to be made by the press and by our government between the English Government and people. You will doubtless have observed that the President's message is careful (while exposing the duplicity and bad faith of the English cabinet, and Earl Russell's course of abject servility towards the stronger party and insulting arrogance towards the weaker) to show no feelings of resentment towards the English people. The sentiment of wrong and injustice done to us, of advantage meanly taken of our distresses, of conduct towards our representative in London unworthy of a man possessing the instincts of a

1 The mildest view of chattel slavery which Mr. Spence dared present to the English people, whose sympathy for the Confederacy he was trying to secure, may be gathered from the following paragraph, which is taken from his book entitled "The American Union," p. 131: "In fact slavery, like other wrongs, reacts on the wrong-doer. Taking the most temperate view of it, stripping away all exaggerations, it remains an evil in an economical sense, a wrong to humanity in a moral one. It is a gross anachronism, a thing of two thousand years ago; the brute force of dark ages obtruding into the midst of the nineteenth century; a remnant of elder dispensations whose

gentleman, all combine to produce an irritation which it is exceedingly difficult for the most temperate to restrain, and Earl Russell has earned an odium among our people so intense as to require the utmost caution on the part of those in authority to prevent its expression in a form that would be injurious to the public interests. At the same time we have not failed to observe and to appreciate at its full value the warm and generous sympathy which the intelligent and cultivated classes of English society have exhibited towards us in no stinted measure.

Your remarks in relation to Mr. Spence have been carefully weighed. You have perceived with your usual acuteness the exact embarrassment under which we labor in dealing with this gentleman, whose ability and services to our cause are recognized to the fullest extent. But Mr. Spence must be regarded in one of two respects — either as an English gentleman entirely independent of all connection with our government, and therefore at full liberty to express his sentiments and opinions about our institutions and people; or as an agent or officer of this government, and therefore supposed to speak with a certain authority on all matters connected with our country. In this later aspect it could not be permitted that he should make speeches denunciatory of its policy or institutions. No man can reconcile the exigencies of these two positions, and if connected with the government, Mr. Spence must of necessity forego the expression of his individual opinion on points where they differ from those of the government which he serves. Now this is precisely what I understand Mr. Spence is unwilling to do. I send you inclosed an answer to a letter he has written to me, which you may read before sailing and forward it to him.

I am, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

J. P. BENJAMIN, Secretary of State.

Benjamin to James Spence,

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
RICHMOND, January 11, 1864.

JAMES SPENCE, Esq., Liverpool.

SIR: . . . I feel some embarrassment in replying to your observations on the subject of slavery, but will be entirely frank in what I have to say. I freely admit that, as a private gentleman entirely disconnected from this government, you could not, consistently with self-respect, conceal or color your true sentiments on this or any other question in which principles are involved. It is also quite probable that the fact of your entertaining the opinions which you profess renders harsh spirit was law, in conflict with the genius of Christianity, whose mild spirit is love. No reasoning, no statistics, no profit, no philosophy, can reconcile us to that which our instinct repels. After all the arguments have been poured into the ear there is something in the heart that spurns them. We make no declaration that all men are born equal, but a conviction — innate, irresistible — tells us, with a voice we cannot stifle, that a man is a man, and not a chattel. Remove from slavery, as it is well to do, all romance and exaggeration, in order that we may deal with it wisely and calmly, it remains a foul blot, from which all must desire to purge the annals of the age."

your advocacy of our cause more effective with a people whose views coincide with yours, and it would be folly on our part to request the aid or alienate the feelings of those who, while friendly to our cause, are opposed to the institutions established among us. On the other hand, it appears to me that candor requires on your part the concession that no government could justify itself before the people whose servant it is, if it selected as exponents of its views and opinions those who entertain sentiments decidedly averse to an institution which both the government and the people maintain as essential to their well-being. The question of slavery is one in which all the most important interests of our people are involved, and they have the right to expect that their government, in the selection of the agents engaged in its service, should refuse to retain those who are in avowed and public opposition to their opinions and feelings. I answer your appeal, therefore, by saying that, "as a man of the world," I would meet you on the most cordial terms without the slightest reference to your views on this subject; but that, "as a member of a government," it would be impossible for me to engage you in its service after the publication of your opinions.

While therefore it would be most agreeable to me to receive from you at all times any communications of facts, views, or opinions which you might be good enough to send to me, and while such communications would be very valuable from you as a private gentleman, my public duty compels me to forego the advantage of establishing an official relation between us, although quite sensible of the value which would result from such relation.

I am, with great respect,

Your obedient servant,

J. P. BENJAMIN, Secretary of State.

Looking back to these letters written a quarter of a century ago, the infatuation of these Richmond statesmen seems to have approached, if it did not reach, the stage of dementia. They depended for the success of their revolt, as they confessed, upon the sympathy and cooperation of two powerful European states, in neither of which could be found a single statesman who would have dared to speak of slavery in any public assembly except in terms of abhorrence. Yet, in full view of this notorious fact, they proclaimed in an official note that they could accept the services of no one who was publicly identified with the antislavery opinions proclaimed by Mr. Spence. The man who should refuse to go down stairs because he was unwilling to accept the services of the law of gravitation would scarcely be a more fit subject for a commission of lunacy.

Mr. Dudley Mann, whom President Davis sent to Rome to convert the Pope, was also pleased to take the Richmond view of Mr. Spence's efforts to place the Confederates with their backs to the sun. He deprecated the

efforts of Mr. Spence, and such as he, to de-africanize the issue. He called it keeping up the slavery agitation in the following letter to Benjamin, dated some twenty days after Benjamin's letter to Spence was written, and after its purport had transpired in England. The time is significant, because Mann was a courtier, and since his interview with Pio Nono he had been indulging aspirations. Though two of a trade can rarely agree, Mr. Mann would probably not have written so harshly about Spence if the latter's efforts to put the Confederates on "praying ground" in England had been approved of in Richmond.

A. Dudley Mann to J. P. Benjamin.

40 ALBEMARLE STREET, LONDON,

January 29, 1864.

SIR: . . . Herewith I transmit the prospectus of the "Southern Independence Association of London." British subjects undoubtedly have the right to do and say what they choose, as relates to any influence which our country can exercise over their doings and sayings, but it is lamentable to perceive that our professed and — as I am inclined to believe — well-disposed friends have committed themselves to the keeping up of an agitation against the cherished institution of the States composing our Confederacy, even after our recognition. Exeter Hall itself could do nothing more hurtful to our general interest. We have no conditions to make with Englishmen or with England as respects the active management by ourselves of our own internal affairs. Rome required nothing whatever in this regard. My explanations to the Sovereign Pontiff upon the subject were satisfactory to him, and he did not, in the slightest manner, allude to the matter in the letter which in virtue of his eminent position he wrote to the President.

It is supposed, but whether correctly or not I cannot undertake to say, that Mr. James Spence is the author of the offensive paragraph — the same gentleman who has the reputation of being, *par excellence*, the British champion of our cause. Personally I do not know this individual, who is represented as one of high worth of character, but I have always had a horror of would-be champions of public causes. Their zeal for success, often for their own selfish glorification, is most frequently unsustained by the prudence of sound common sense.

In the cast of the committee there are very elevated, and to myself several truly dear, names; but I would be willing to endure the pain of severing my social relations forever with those who bear them if I could conceive that they were capable of connecting us with an unceasing antislavery agitation. It is scarcely possible that each of the members of the committee perused the prospectus. Mr. Gregory, I know, has been, as well as others, a long time absent from the metropolis. I have the honor to be, sir, etc.,

A. DUDLEY MANN.

Hon. J. P. BENJAMIN,
Sec'y of State, C. S. America, Richmond, Va.

The following is the offensive paragraph which so wounded the sensibilities of Mr. Mann. It is the closing paragraph of the circular of the Southern Independence Association.

This Association will also . . . in particular steadily but kindly represent to the Southern States that recognition by Europe must necessarily lead to a revision of the system of servile labor unhappily bequeathed to them by England, in accordance with the spirit of the age, so as to combine the gradual extinction of slavery with the preservation of property, the maintenance of the civil polity of the true civilization of the negro race.

Mr. Mann is pleased to contrast the politeness of the Pope in his treatment of the slavery question with the officious indiscretion of "would-be champions of public causes" in England. "My explanations to the Sovereign Pontiff . . . were satisfactory to him," says Mr. Mann.

As the views of the Papacy on the question of slavery are interesting at all times, and its opinions at the time of Mr. Mann's writing were especially so, let us see what were the explanations which Mr. Mann submitted, and what were the views that proved so satisfactory to his Holiness.

In his letter to Benjamin, giving an account of the interview at which he presented the letter of Jefferson Davis to Pius IX., Mr. Mann says :

His Holiness now stated, to use his own language, that "Lincoln and Co." had endeavored to create an impression abroad that they were fighting for the abolition of slavery, and that it might be judicious in us to consent to gradual emancipation. I replied that the subject of slavery was one over which the government of the Confederate States, like that of the old United States, had no control whatever; that all ameliorations with regard to the institutions must proceed from the States themselves, which were as sovereign in their character, in this regard, as were France, Austria, or any other continental power; that true philanthropy shuddered at the thought of the liberation of the slave in the manner attempted by Lincoln and Co.; that such a procedure would be practically to convert the well-cared-for civilized negro into a semi-barbarian; that such of our slaves as had been captured or decoyed off by our enemy were in an incomparably worse condition than while they were in the service of their masters; that they wished to return to their own homes, the love of which was the strongest of their affections; that if, indeed, African slavery were an evil, there was a power which in its own good time would doubtless remove that evil in a more gentle manner than that of causing the earth to be deluged with blood for its Southern overthrow.

His Holiness received these remarks with an approving expression.

Considering how much space Mr. Mann devoted to the exposition of his own views in this interview, the compactness of his report of the wary old pontiff's reply is disappointing. The envoy favors Mr. Benjamin with his own speech verbatim, but when it is the Pope's turn we are only told that the interviewer's speech was received "with an approving expression." What that expression was is left to the reader's imagination. That a smile at Mr. Mann's simplicity was a part of it may safely be assumed. The Italians are famous for their unwritten speech; for their inexhaustible store of shrugs, exclamations, and gestures, which sometimes mean a great deal, but which cannot be parsed nor subjugated to the rules of grammar. It would not be strange if Mr. Mann, who had never been in Italy before, had failed to gather up all the fragments of meaning that had fallen from the pontiff's lips with his "approving expression," as he certainly did misconceive the tenor and import of the Pope's written communication to Jefferson Davis, with which he had been intrusted. Nor did he seem to have duly weighed the import of his Holiness's inquiry whether *it might not be judicious for the Confederates to consent to gradual emancipation.*

In his first interview with the Emperor of France in July, 1862, Mr. Commissioner Slidell also encountered the slavery question, but his mind was put at ease upon that subject as readily as Mann's was by the Pope and very much in the same way.

"He asked me," said Slidell, "whether we anticipated any difficulty from our slaves." I replied that they had never been more quiet and more respectful, and that no better evidence could be given of their being contented and happy. This was the only reference made to slavery during the interview, but to Slidell's divining spirit it was conclusive.

How the Arcadian picture here given of the slaves in the South was to be reconciled with the scenes of bloodshed and rapine which we were told were to follow their liberation is one of the problems which the emperor does not appear to have invited Mr. Slidell to grapple with.¹ Perhaps the slaves were as contented and happy as Bluebeard's last wife when she saw the dust and heard the clatter of the hoofs of her brothers' horses, and for similar reasons.

It is a curious fact that none of Mr. Davis's diplomatic representatives in Europe ever seemed up to this time to have entertained

¹ Benjamin, not long after this interview, in a tirade against the Union people, addressed to Slidell, charged them with exciting slaves to murder their masters. If anything can demonstrate the predestination of the African for slavery, it is the fact here stated, if fact it be, that they could be excited to murder masters who made them so happy.

the thought of conciliating public opinion in Europe, on which they knew from the very beginning of the war that their success depended, by sacrificing slavery or even by treating it as second in importance to any other political right or privilege. What is yet more curious, until the Confederate Government had returned to the gases in which it had its origin these gentlemen seem to have counted confidently upon a conversion of the world to their views. This is the burden of the very last official communication on this subject penned by Commissioner Mason. It ran as follows:

Mason to Benjamin.

(No. 1.)

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF THE CONTINENT,
16 RUE DE MARIGNAN, PARIS.
January 25, 1864.

The HON. J. P. BENJAMIN, Secretary of State.

SIR: As some evidence that we have earnest and active friends in high position there, I inclose a circular recently issued by the "Southern Independence Association of London," and which fully explains itself. With most of the members of the committee I have a personal acquaintance, and am, with many of them, on terms of intimate relation. As of like character, I inclose also another circular, just issued at London, under auspices of which I am fully aware, by a society for "Promoting the Cessation of Hostilities in America," which also discloses its object. It is important to note that both these movements are purely of English origin; their promoters have indeed freely consulted with me, but not until after the respective plans were devised and to some extent matured by themselves. They are really, as they import, views of Englishmen addressed to the English people, and in this light is to be received the concluding paragraph in the circular of the "Southern Independence Association of London." My attention has been called to it by more than one of my countrymen hereabouts, to whom my answer has always been: it is a view presented by Englishmen to their own people, and it is not addressed to us; it remains their affair, and for which we are in no manner responsible.

In my conversations with English gentlemen I have found it was in vain to combat their "sentiments." The so-called antislavery feeling seems to have become with them a "sentiment" akin to patriotism. I have always told them that in the South we could rely confidently that, after independence,—when our people and theirs became better acquainted by direct communication, when they saw for themselves the true condition of African servitude with us,—the film would fall from their eyes; and that in meantime it was not presumptuous in us to suppose that we knew better than they did what it became us to do in our affairs. . . .

I have the honor to be, sir, etc.,
J. M. MASON.

Though the thought of sacrificing slavery for success does not seem to have entered the

minds of the diplomatic representatives of the Richmond Government, the logic of events was not so completely lost upon the ruined and suffering people at home. On the 20th of June, 1865, Mr. Duncan F. Kenner of Louisiana called at the United States Legation in Paris to take the oath prescribed by the President in his amnesty proclamation of the 29th of May. In communicating the record of the oath to the Secretary of State the minister added:

Mr. Kenner left with me the memorandum of which Inclosure No. 2 is a copy, and he wished me to say that while he had yielded to the pressure of public opinion about him so far as to cast his fortunes with the enemies of his country in the late rebellion, he is now satisfied that the whole movement was a mistake, and he is anxious to be restored to the privileges of a citizen of "the United States." He also hoped for a favorable decision as early as possible, as his family, now in Louisiana, stand in pressing need of his protection.

The memorandum referred to as Inclosure No. 2 ran as follows:

Mr. Kenner is a native of Louisiana, where he has constantly resided. He is fifty-two years of age, passed. He has never held any office or position of any kind under the Federal Government. He took no part in bringing about secession, never was a member of any meeting or convention gotten up for the purpose of inducing the State to secede from the Union. Was educated in the South, and had been led to believe that in the double relation of citizen of the United States and citizen of Louisiana he owed allegiance first to his native State. Acting under this conviction, when the State of Louisiana seceded he followed her destiny, and was subsequently elected a member of the Richmond Congress. The class of exceptions in the President's proclamation under which he comes are Nos. 1 and 13—under No. 1 as a member of Congress, and under No. 13 as having property estimated over \$20,000 in value.

In January he succeeded in passing through the military lines and came to Europe, in the hope of being joined by his family, who are still in Louisiana. Hence his being here at the present time.

PARIS, June 20, 1865.

Mr. Kenner, in the last paragraph of the foregoing memorandum, assigned one of the reasons correctly for his being in Paris at that time. There were others, which he naturally did not assign, but which have a most interesting relation to the subject under consideration.

Kenner was a member of the Confederate Congress. He had long been satisfied that it was impossible to prosecute the war to a successful issue without a recognition of the Confederacy by at least one of the maritime powers of western Europe, into the ports of which the

Southern States might carry their prizes, make repairs, and get supplies. He was also satisfied that they would never secure recognition or any substantial aid so long as the foundations of their projected new empire rested on slavery. He communicated these views to President Davis. The President asked what he had to propose in the premises. He said he wanted the President to authorize a special envoy to offer to the governments of England and France to put an end to slavery in the Confederacy if they would recognize the South as a sovereign power. The President consented to submit the suggestion to several of the leading members of the Congress, by some of whom it was roughly handled.¹

They protested that the emancipation of the slaves would ruin them, etc. Mr. Kenner told them that he and his family owned more slaves, probably, than all the other members of the Congress together, and that he was asking no one to make sacrifices which he was not ready to make himself. The result of the consultations was that Kenner himself was sent abroad by President Davis, either with or without the confirmation of the Senate, with full powers to negotiate for recognition on the basis of emancipation. As soon as he received his commission he took a special train to Wilmington, N. C. On his arrival there he found either that the blockade was too strict, or that there was no suitable transportation available from that port, and returned at once to Richmond, determined to go by the way of the Potomac and New York. When he mentioned his purpose to Davis, "Why, Kenner," he exclaimed, "there is not a gambler in the country who won't know you. You will certainly be captured." Kenner had been one of the leading turfmen in the South for a generation. "I am not afraid of that," said Kenner. "There is not a gambler who knows me who would betray me. I am going to New York."

Being a very bald man, Kenner provided himself with a brown wig as his chief if not only disguise, and proceeded on his journey. By hook and by crook he finally reached New York and drove to the Metropolitan Hotel. Here, discovering that the waiters were colored, and that there were too many chances of some of them knowing him, also that ex-

Senator Foote of Mississippi, who had deserted the Confederates, was residing at this hotel, he sent a note at once to Mr. Hildreth, then managing the New York Hotel, and an old and trusty friend, saying that he wished a certain room on the lower floor and north side of the hotel made ready for him, and named the hour that he might be expected, adding that he could not sign the letter, but was a friend. At the time named he went to the hotel and directly to the room he had ordered. The fireman was preparing a fire. While at his work at the grate the door opened, and in walked Hildreth to see who his "friend" and new lodger might be. Upon recognizing Kenner he exclaimed, "Good God!" He was checked from continuing by observing Kenner's fingers on his lips. They talked upon indifferent matters until the fireman left, and then Hildreth asked Kenner what could have brought him to New York at such a time. "Do you know," said he, "that it is as much as your life is worth to be found here?" "I am going to sail in the English steamer on Saturday," said Kenner, "and I wish to stay with you quietly until then. You can denounce me to the government if you choose, but I know you won't." Kenner did not leave his room till he left it in a cab for the steamer. His meals were served in his room by Cranston's personal attendant.

As soon as Kenner arrived in London he sought an interview with Palmerston, to whom he unfolded his mission. Palmerston said that his proposition could not be entertained without the concurrence of the Emperor of France. "With the Emperor's concurrence would you give us recognition?" asked Kenner. "That," replied Palmerston, "would be a subject for consideration when the case presents itself, and may depend upon circumstances which cannot be foreseen."

Kenner went to Paris and had an interview with the Emperor, who told him he would do whatever England was willing to do in the premises, and would do nothing without her.

Kenner then returned to Palmerston to report the Emperor's answer. During his absence, the news of Sherman's successful march through the South had reached London. Palmerston's answer to him was, "It is too late."

John Bigelow.

¹ The writer was informed that the proposition was debated in the Congress, but he has not succeeded in finding any record of such debate. Mr. Ben C. Truman, speaking of Robert Toombs of Georgia, in a communication to "The New York Times" of July 24, 1890, said, "Toombs believed that if the South had

made the abolition of slavery a part of its policy it would have had England and France on its side, and that the Confederacy would have succeeded."

If the South had made the abolition of slavery a part of its policy there would have been no war, and the Confederate maggot would never have been hatched.