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From the London Athenæum.

CAPTAIN MAURY ON AMERICAN AFFAIRS.

The intellectual voices of America have scarcely yet been heard on the great question of Secession and Civil War. These questions having suddenly acquired for ourselves a deep and mournful interest, readers will be glad to hear the opinion of a scientific man who is neither a partisan nor a politician. Capt. Maury's views are expressed in a letter to Rear-Admiral Fitz Roy, but they are in fact addressed to the scientific men of England:

RICHMOND, Virginia.

My Dear Admiral—Since this nefarious war was forced upon us, my hands have been busy in preparing for it; and I have not had either the time or the opportunity to let my friends and former fellow-laborers on your side of the water know what is become of me. My country was torn; the Union was gone; a number of States had renounced it. In this breaking up of our once happy and great Republic, it became me to take sides. The path of duty was clear; and here I am.

Pray, now, my friend, bear with me, while from the Southern stand-point, I explain to you the real nature of those influences which have led to this early disruption of the American Union: You recollect that I told you when in London in November, when these difficulties were just beginning to loom up abroad, that all the right was on our side. You could not understand it then, for your information was derived chiefly through the Northern press. Few people in England, I believe, ever read a Southern newspaper: led astray by the apparently just but really one-sided statements and teachings of the Northern press, your people were induced to look upon our troubles and the complaints of the South merely as the empty ravings of a political party that had been turned out of power. The South, by some means, it was held, ruled the Government from the beginning; it had lorded over the North—and now that the North, having its patience worn out, had, by constitutional means, taken the power into its own hands, the South was simply acting the part of a spoiled child, or the overgrown boy, who had been allowed to play with a borrowed toy until he believed it his own, and who, when at last it was taken away and restored to its rightful owner, disturbed the family with his childish ravings. Such seemed to be the light in which the affair was looked upon generally in England and on the Continent—and such evidently was the light in which the Yankee press held it up to foreign view. But the real difficulty is one of another sort; and the causes out of which it has sprung are old and deep-seated. They are partly physical, partly industrial, partly social, and partly political; they have been cumulative.

The New England States are manufacturing, seafaring and commercial; the Southern States are agricultural. The most profitable labor in this country was the agricultural labor of the South. Your own commercial statistics prove this, for they show that about three-fourths of the national exports consisted of agricultural products of the South.

Here, then, were two sections of the country so invested with physical conditions, that labor in the field was very unprofitable in one; very profitable and highly remunerative in the other. Yielding to these conditions, the laboring man of the North, to earn a living, found it easier to go to sea than starve at home; while his fellow at the South found it easier to gather "enough and to spare" from the teeming soil and genial climate of his own sunny South. Therefore, at the formation of the Government the two sections presented themselves, one as seafaring, with fishing as its chief occupation; the other as agricultural.

But soon the Yankees came up with representations of this sort—Fishing is a poor business, said they, it doesn't pay; but fishing ought to be encouraged for national purposes; therefore, let us not only protect Yankee-caught fish in our markets against the fish caught by the English, Dutch and French, but let us give the New Englanders a bounty on all fish that they can catch. In other words, let us tax this agricultural business of the South which is so profitable, for the benefit of our fishermen, whose business, if left to itself, won't pay. And so annually large sums of money were taken directly out of the public treasury, ostensibly, but originally and really from the pockets of the Southern planter, to pay the New Englanders for catching fish for their own uses. This went on many years under the plea that these fisheries were a nursery for seamen, and unless American seamen were fostered in such a nursery, the nation, it was said, could not have a navy. But when it was obvious that we could get seamen in abundance without drawing upon any such nursery, the South sought, but the North steadily and persistently refused, their assent to a repeal of the Fishing-bounty Act.

The South held that in the eyes of the Federal Government all citizens were equal, that all the States stood on the same footing, that the Union was formed, not for individual, but for the common good, and that Congress had no right to tax any citizen or class of citizens for the benefit of another. The Federal compact required taxes to be equal, and all citizens, labors and industry to be taxed alike. It was as much the duty of Congress to foster, encourage and protect the industry of South Carolina as of Massachusetts—of one State as of another. Such was the Southern doctrine, and such were the teachings of the Fathers. But the country went on growing and prospering, and there was simply from the South a protest against this heresy.

Finally, in 1812, to protect Northern interests, and to vindicate the commercial rights of New England—for the South had neither ships to be searched nor seamen to be impressed—we went to war with old England. The New England States ignobly backed out of that way, and left the others to bear the brunt of it.

With peace there arose a school of protectionists—men who unwisely said, "Let us not depend upon John Bull any more for anything whatever; let us henceforward do our own manufacturing, our own fetching and carrying. But, to enable us to do these, we must encourage and protect the workshops and artisans of New England. And as the agricultural labor of the South is so very profitable, we may charge it with the support of this New England interest also. They have stood annual bounties to our fishermen for years, and we *guess* they will stand protection for awhile." Political Economists may say what they will, but legislate and theorize as they may, they cannot without robbery make any branch of labor profitable which is not self-sustaining; to make such industry profitable, somebody must pay; and as a rule, the money must come out of the pockets of those whose business is self-sustaining. But protection in this instance, they said, was only required to set this manufacturing business in New England on its legs; that it would soon be able to stand alone, when the power of protection might be withdrawn. So the South yielded, and consented again to be taxed; but, this time, the tax was under the form of a tariff, not of a bounty, though in the end it was the same, for it had to be paid by the self-sustaining labor of the country, and that was chiefly at the South.

New Englanders are proverbially sharp, keen and "cute;" so having once tasted of the treasury pap through cunningly devised tariff bills, they soon discovered that heavy expenditures from the Federal treasury would necessitate high tariffs; then they went for an extravagant government, and engineered with Congress for large appropriations. To create demands upon the national purse, they established navy yards where they were not required; built forts where they were not wanted; erected lighthouses where they were not needed; and actually studded the Northern seaboard with establishments of this sort, while the whole Southern coast, from the Capes of Virginia all the way round to the mouth of the Rio Grande, in Texas, was but badly lighted, though the navigation along the Southern Bays is most difficult and dangerous. There is also along the Southern coast a half finished fortification here and there, and, as for a navy yard, there is not one in which there could be found any of the usual facilities either for building or repairing, and neither of these operations could be performed except for double cost. As for lighthouses, compare those of the Florida coast with those of New England, and you will better appreciate the force of those remarks. Pray look at this somewhat attentively, for it is one of the points of difficulty in the quarrel, that is not apt to be perceived by one outside the national family circle. Though neither the sole nor the chief cause, it is, nevertheless, one of the many aggravating influences which helped to make it.

Along the coast of the Northern States and within the distance of about 250 miles, they have no less than four magnificent dock-yards, where millions of public money are annually expended. But along the Southern coast from Cape Hatteras to the Rio Grande, a distance of nearly 2,000 miles, the South has but one navy-yard, and that only in name, for no vessel has ever been repaired there; and as for building, though it has been established about forty years, the first vessel constructed there has yet to be commissioned into service. In case of disaster to a man-of-war in the Gulf of Mexico or the West Indies, she has to go to a Northern ship-yard to be repaired and paid off. This is only another one of the many 'cute little Yankee tricks to which the Northerners have resorted to get the public money disbursed among them. As a rule, the great mass of the public expenditures were made in the North, not in the South, so that the Southrons found themselves doubly taxed—taxed first for the benefit of the Northern manufactures, and next, in the disbursement of the public funds, denied an equal participation in the benefits accruing therefrom.

Thus fostered, pampered and petted, the Northerners began to think themselves altogether superior to the Southrons, for, said they, "look at our shipping and commerce, behold the beauty and magnificence of our cities, mark our workshops and railways, contrast them with the like at the South, and then say if these are not the evidences of a different and a better people, the indications of a superior race?" With this they took up the notion that they could not associate with us in the common territories because of our slaves. We held slaves when they sought our alliance. They knew that, for they kidnapped them in Africa, they and the English brought them over in their ships and sold them to us. But, notwithstanding this agreement, the Constitution and their obligations under it, they announced a "higher law," and pronounced their agreement with us under the Constitution "a covenant with hell." Will these people keep faith any better with money-lenders when debts pinch? With this temper in the Northern heart and mind, the Federal Government found itself seized with a vast extent of unpeopled lands, the common property alike of all the States. Much of it had been given to the Federal Government by the Southern States for the benefit of the Commonwealth; some of it had been acquired from the Indians by treaty and purchase—and some had been bought from France, Spain and Mexico—but all was paid for out of the common treasury. Into these territories the North now insisted that the Southerners should not go unless they left their slaves behind. To this the South said "nay," for, continued we, these lands belong as much to us as to you; they are the common property of all the States; the Federal Government is only the trustee in the matter; it is bound to manage them for the good of the whole; it cannot discriminate between the heirs. Look at the deed and title and constitution, and you will see that we have the same right to go and settle upon these lands with our servants as you have with your "helps" and apprentices, or with your oxen and asses. But in reply they began to preach about their new-fangled doctrine of a law more sacred and binding than oath on the Holy Evangely—and tell us that our slaves, if carried into a territory, would be degrading to them. Thus by mere force of numbers they voted us out of our lands, and appropriated them to speculation and their own purposes.

These public lands, instead of a blessing to the Government, have proved a curse; they have had more to do in hastening on the present unhappy state of affairs than people generally are aware. They have given to the country an apparent prosperity, by attracting to it hordes of emigrants from abroad, who, with their money, their industry and their policy, imparted to the Republic a progress in wealth and population which astonished the world. Puffing up the people with national vain-glory, the prosperity of the people induced them to overlook all else, and ascribe everything to our peculiar form of government and to Yankee enterprises. These emigrants, with their votes, have often turned elections—Before they had come to understand our institutions, their voice has had controlling influences with the Government. The public lands have caused the fall of the Republic while yet in the vigor of youth, by means of the policy which, within the last thirty years, has been pursued with regard to them. Up to that time, the practice was to organize them slowly into territories, to admit them sparingly into market, and so to regulate the settling of them up as to prepare for their reception into the Union in pairs—one State with slavery and one State without slavery, always together. This was done until the number of States had been increased from thirteen to thirty, and the Union consisted of fifteen States with and fifteen States without slavery.

The reason for this practice is obvious. It is found in this consideration:—In the Senate, every State was entitled to two votes, and no more,—though the free States, by virtue of this land policy, and consequent more rapid increase of their population, had acquired the ascendancy in the Lower House; yet, so long as they were equal in the Senate, it was impossible for one section to combine for unfriendly legislation against the other, for all laws required for their passage concurrent majorities in each House. The House might be unanimously in favor of a measure, yet it fails to become a law if there be in the Senate even a majority of 1 against it.

General Washington, in his virtue and wisdom, had warned the people against the danger of dividing the country geographically into sections. They might and had arranged themselves into parties; but these were irrespective of parallels of latitude, isothermal lines, or the "peculiar institution." A division of parties by geographical lines, if it should take place, would, the fathers of the Republic saw, be most liable to take place on the Slavery Question. Hence, for two generations the policy was religiously adopted, and rigidly pursued, of equalizing the number of Free and Slave States, and preserving that equality in one branch of the Legislature. The law also forbade at least the immigration of slaveholders with their slaves, from Brazil, South America, Cuba, Jamaica and elsewhere; but it encouraged the immigration of free white persons from all parts of the world.

Under these laws, the Free States increased in population more rapidly than the Slave States; for the emigrants generally, being anti-slavery in their opinions, preferred to settle in the Free States? Therefore, the growth of these in population was greatly assisted by the tide of newcomers from Europe, while that of the Slave States was left to its own natural increase. Yet, nevertheless, Congress, until a quarter of a century back, was slow to organize new territories on the anti-slavery side of 36° 30', or to open up the lands in these for settlement; and in order to preserve this equality of numbers between the States—pro and anti-slavery—the public lands were brought so sparingly into market that the receipts therefrom were not more than sufficient to pay the expenses thereof. Such was the case until about thirty years ago. About that time, and in an evil hour, this wise policy was abandoned, and the people were tempted by the Government out into a sea of speculation upon the public lands such as the world never saw. Under it it the laws of naturalization were relaxed. Ireland was drained of her increase, and all Europe was initiated, persuaded and tempted to come and help us to subdue, occupy, and replenish the magnificent wilderness of America.

In a single year the sales of the public lands, which had never reached more than $3,000,000, went up to $26,000,000. Land scrip and warrants were dispensed like waste paper. Every man who had ever served as much as two weeks in war had land for a farm given to him. Besides Bounty lands to the soldiers and sailors of every war, donations of public lands, by millions of acres in the single grant, were made in the new States, or given to individuals and corporations, to aid in the construction of railways and canals and a variety of other enterprises. Companies for the sale of these lands were formed on both sides of the Atlantic. Drummers, to beat up purchasers, went out into all parts of Europe. Listening to their representations, and yielding to temptation, a throng of living souls, such as has been rarely seen, was put in motion for the wilds of America. The extravagants of the Mississippi scheme were realized.

Such a tide of emigrants soon swelled the population of the new territory to the number required to entitle it to one representative in the popular branch of Congress. Thereupon the new territory was admitted into the Union as a free, sovereign and independent State; it was, consequently, received into the Senate upon an equality as to votes and political power with the oldest and most populous of the original States. Instead of dividing this free territory out into large States like Texas, it was divided into States only about one-fifth as large; consequently, the balance of power in the Senate could not be maintained long under the stream of in-flowing population from abroad, nor could it last a moment after parties had arranged themselves according to sectional lines. As soon as this balance was destroyed, the issue was made; and with eighteen free States, as they are called, to fifteen that recognized African slavery, Lincoln, at the head of a sectional party, was brought into power regularly, according to the forms of the Constitution, but upon a platform entirely subversive of it. Thus the land policy hastened the destruction of the Union, by unwisely calling into play political powers that were bound to throw the Federal machinery out of adjustment. Nor is this all; it led political economists into error, and induced the world to ascribe to the so-called "indomitable energy and enterprise of the New England people" what, in the reclaiming of a wilderness, belongs really to a host of European emigrants.

The Northern Congress has imposed a direct tax upon its people of $30,000,000. Our Congress has taxed us for $20,000,000 to pay principal and interest on our debt. We at the South cheerfully and willingly submit to this tax, and every cent of it will be promptly paid. But, mark my word, the Northern people will be slow to put their hands into their pockets for this "rail-splitter" as Abe Lincoln is called. Nevertheless, he may squeeze a portion of this tax out of them, but if so, it will be only a portion, and that will come with such writhings, grins and protestations that he will never attempt to "raise the wind" again by any such process. But when the pinching time—the pay day—does come, will not the same motives which induced his people to proclaim a "higher law," and to denounce certain provisions of the Constitution as a covenant with hell, induce them to repudiate this debt, principal and interest, which he is now seeking to create for his wicked purposes? I can not but think so. Their faith was pledged to stand by the Constitution; yet, the moment they felt the Constitution operating as a restraint upon them, they violated it. Will they be more faithful to their promise to pay? Will they not after the money is borrowed and spent, be more likely to turn upon the leaders and say, "This debt was created by a doubtful authority at best; it was created in the name of the United States, when there was no longer any such Government; it was created to support a war which the Constitution does not recognize, all this was known to you when you made the loan? Therefore, we won't pay." This debt, principal and interest, these Northern men will repudiate together for already the war is beginning to be unpopular with the masses. Enlistments go on slowly in the North. The people are hanging back. It is worthy of remark, that almost every prisoner we have taken from them professes himself to have been deceived. He was entrapped into this war, and if he is ever permitted to reach home again, he will for one keep clear of any more such scrapes. Such is their language.

But after the public lands and the enormous influx of foreigners upon us had destroyed the checks and balances of the Government, the cry of the "irrepressible conflict" was raised in the North. Either, said their leading but deceitful statesmen, we must overrun and overturn the institutions of the South and root out slavery, or the South will impose upon us its negroes. Upon this the Northern or "Free States," as they are called, combined. Exceeding us in number of States and polls of people, they drew a geographical line, and formally divided the country into sections—North and South. This act, lawfully determined, placed; according to the forms of the Constitution, the whole Federal machinery—Executive, Legislative and Judicial—in the hands of a faction formed of fanatics, and banded together for the purpose of making war upon our rights, our property and our liberties.

The end and aim of that Constitution was to "establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity." The Federal machinery having fallen into such hands, and the Constitution having thus wrought out a failure, my noble, my gallant, my native State, speaking through her people in convention assembled, resolved to assert that precious right, which, though inalienable, and formally admitted so to be by all the States, yet, to prevent cavil, she had, by express declaration, and I have already shown, reserved to herself when she first joined the Federal Union. And that right was the right to withdraw from it.

Though not so mighty in numbers nor so rich in warlike supplies as the enemy, we are eight millions of people thrice armed, in and that our quarrel is just. Fighting for our homes we are mighty in battle. In mere lust the enemy is fighting for power and conquest; we, for firesides, the graves of our fathers, dear life, and all that is precious to the heart and to civilization. Our cause is holy; theirs, hellish. We cannot, we will not, be subjugated.

The contrast is frequently drawn by our old men between the conduct of the English in the war of 1812 and the conduct of the hordes of Lincoln now. The English invaded us, but respected the property, and regarded the rights of unarmed citizens. The same counties have been invaded by Lincoln. He has devastated and laid them waste, and for what? Why, simply to compel us to submit to his governance. Suppose he should succeed, would not success overturn the whole fabric of the Constitution? The Republic was founded on the consent of the governed.—Failing in this, it is no longer either a Republic or any other form of government that has at its foundation the will of the people. It is a tyranny. We want nothing of the North. We choose not to submit to Northern domination; we are fighting simply to be let alone, and to be permitted to govern ourselves in our own way.

The South presents the remarkable spectable of an army having in its ranks the first men and best talents of the country. To subdue or conquer such an army is simply an impossibility; for its soldiers are fighting for all that makes life dear to them. I fight with a price upon my head and a halter around my neck. Not I alone, but every man of mark or substance among us. Lincoln's men are not made of such stuff; for they are for the most part mere hirelings, and their armies in battle are strengthened by no such hope, and moved by no such fears as those which inspire us. They talk of a reconstruction of the government and a re-union of the people. Simply, and in a few words, reannexation to the British Crown is more possible.

I very much desire that the friends of free government in Europe should be correctly informed as to the true state of things with us: for your information being chiefly derived through our enemies, it is of course one-sided, and generally, also, it is not only erroneous, but wilfully mendacious. The papers at the North that plead our cause, or dare tell the truth about the war, are suppressed by Lincoln's mere *ne jubeo*. A large majority of us, they would have you believe, are opposed to secession and this war. Saving some of the Western counties of this State, and a few in East Tennessee, I have never known the people so united upon any subject. The women, if possible, are more enthusiastic than the men; they are of one mind; and the clergy are as earnest as the women.

In the week the clergy are, of their own free will, drilling and being drilled to arms; their churches are given up to the women, who, with needles and sewing machines, congregate there to make clothing for the soldiers. On Sundays, from the pulpit, the holiness of the war and the righteousness of our cause are preached to the people. In battles, you find clergymen amongst the foremost of the fight. We have on our side a bishop for a general; holy divines for colonels, majors, captains and soldiers in the ranks. Never was a people more united and in earnest than the people of the Confederate States are at this moment.

Yes, you have heard something, too, of our starving—of our inability to produce breadstuffs and provisions enough for our own use, &c. To make you believe that would be requiring you to renounce your belief in physical geography, for that shows that within the Confederate States we have the finest of climates; our lands are unsurpassed in fertility; we are a grazing, and a farming and a planting people. Educated in the South, I never saw a beggar until I entered the navy and went to New York. Such is the habitual abundance that the very few poor who are found among us are provided for without calling on the people for poor-rates. Our Southern laws recognize no such tax.

The staples of Georgia are cotton and rice; yet the Census shows that, according to population, Georgia furnishes as much wheat as New York—and New York is one of the wheat-growing States of the North. Never have the grain crops of the South been more abundant than they now are. The blockade of our ports, admitting it to be effectual, would not interfere with us as to any of the necessaries of life. It may cut off our supplies of tea and coffee, and the various articles of merchandise that we have been accustomed to receive from abroad; but this does not amount even to a privation for we submit to these wants as a self-denial and a discipline that is all for our good.

THE SUMTER.—The gun-boat Iroquois and ship Shepherd Knapp, sailed from St. Thomas, W. I., on the 16th December, in search of the Sumter.