

AMERICA
BEFORE EUROPE.

PRINCIPLES AND INTERESTS.

BY

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TRANSLATED FROM ADVANCE SHEETS, BY

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counsel it, and to aid it to become better. Supported by us, it would have proceeded without hindrance to its end; not to immediate abolition, as has been pretended, but to certain abolition, through the growing preponderance of the North, through the abrogation of odious laws, through the inevitable and progressive suppression of slavery, confined within a continually narrowing circle. On the day that it was decided that it should no longer increase, slavery would have begun to die, yet it would not have died a death of violence—gently, tranquilly, by pacific and Christian means, the redoubtable problem would have been resolved, for the common safety of the North and the South, the whites and the blacks.

We did not desire this. To desire it would have been to quit the beaten track and depart from the precepts of false policy. A most impolitic policy in any case; for, to speak only of our material interests, it has endowed us with the civil war which is desolating America, ruining the cotton production, and calling forth sufferings in our Old World which will go on increasing. If the South had known in advance that it could not count on us, it is not probable that it would have attempted an insurrection. At all events, this would not have been of long duration. It deludes itself less than people imagine; it knows the strength of the national Government, and is not ignorant that resources will ere long be lacking to the insurrectional government at Richmond. Even its victories have never given it the audacity to take a single step in advance—its plan is to secure time for Europe to intervene. Europe needs its cotton, Europe is at its mercy, Europe is about to aid and recognize it, Europe will seize on the first pretext that offers; she will break the blockade and impose peace. Take away these convictions from the South and you will cause the

weapons to fall from their hands. Suppose Europe, for a moment, not to exist, and America to be a duelling ground in which no one can interfere, and you can no longer imagine possible a continuance of the struggle.

Four months will suffice for the reduction of the South, from the day that it shall have ceased to count on Europe. It is said that Mr. Seward has more than once expressed this conviction. I believe it to be well founded, as well founded as that noble complaint in the last message of Mr. Lincoln: "Every nation distracted by civil war must expect to be treated without consideration by foreign powers."

What is it, then, that has gone wrong among us? Simply that we have been lacking in youth of heart. Instead of asking on which side were justice and liberty, we have hastened to ask on which side were our interests, then too on which side were the best chances of success. It seemed to us that this rebellion without a pretext was not without a future. From this we had not to go far to find in it some appearance of right. And thus it is that, after having protested for the acquittal of our conscience against the "crime of slavery," after having declared (the thing is granted) that slavery is detested by those who, moreover, never fail to serve it, we have refused to the generous impulse of the North that spontaneous, cordial, and, as it were, naïve support which would have decided all questions on the spot.

I have long been acquainted with those declamations against slavery which never end in any manly action, and I know them for what they are worth. The orators who labored to maintain slavery in our colonies, all commenced by an almost abolition profession of faith; and later still, at the time of the importation of free negroes

in gaining acceptance in Europe, and which it is high time to refute. Have we not been persuaded, or very nearly so, that slavery had nothing to do with the quarrel of the North and South? Have we not been made to believe that the South, in seceding, availed itself of its right? Has not the impossibility of conquering the South been raised to the rank of an axiom? Has not that been determined on the spot in the name of Europe, which America alone is in the position to decide; namely, that the South, even though conquered, cannot be brought back to the Union?

I do not misunderstand, as will be presently seen, the complex character of this last question. Neither do I misunderstand the importance of the interests which rest upon the policy of governments. **Do those who speak in ironical terms of calico and cotton forget that behind cotton are men, women, and children—miseries already great, and which will go on increasing? Do they comprehend the significance of the words—deficiency of raw material, restriction of markets, stoppage of manufactories, discharge of workmen, diminution of wages? As for me, I hope that the feeling of the rights of the negro will never make me close my eyes to the sufferings of the white man. These sufferings, I may say, have not ceased to weigh for a year past upon my saddened imagination, and not the least evil, in my eyes, of the attitude adopted by Europe, is that of having prolonged the manufacturing and commercial crisis by avoiding to discourage the rebellion.**

One would have said that Europe leaped with joy at the thought of rending the United States in twain. From the first moment, she seemed to cling to this idea and to be unwilling to renounce it. That the scheme may per-

haps be realized, I have no wish to deny. Men who fear a republic of a hundred million men may be tranquil; whatever is too large must necessarily fall apart. Those who fear that a portion of the country may be maintained in the Union by force alone may reassure themselves; a territory representing in surface one-half of the United States will not be kept garrisoned; if the Southern people really wish to separate, their wishes, expressed in a legitimate manner, will not fail to prevail, and this for the excellent reason that no person in the world would succeed in opposing them. But these are not the questions which the present crisis has put to us Europeans. When a friendly government, attacked against all right, attacked in the name of an odious principle, fulfils the simplest of its duties in suppressing the revolt, the only question raised is this: "Shall right prevail over injustice, and liberty over slavery?" Later, I repeat, after the suppression of the reign of terror which rules in a portion of the South, it will be time for free America to examine whether the tendencies which prevail in some of the States do not constitute, in default of a right, a sort of political necessity to which political wisdom should know how to submit.

For my part, I have no opinion to give; although I have followed the progress of ideas and facts, in the South as in the North, with all the attention of which I am capable, I cannot say in what measure the wish to set itself apart will subsist in the future, when the South shall have laid down its arms; when it shall know that Europe detests its flag; when it shall have learned to comprehend that the ruin of its cultures, begun by war, will be completed by isolation; when it shall have likewise learned to comprehend that its slavery cannot long survive in any case; when it shall have again beheld the ancient nation-

al colors, the Stars and Stripes ; when it shall have found itself again in contact with brothers in country, religion, and blood ; when it shall have been called to resume its place and part in those institutions which are an instrument of union because they are an instrument of equality, in those institutions which neither recognize nor create any but citizens, and which know no subjects, so that the vanquished of yesterday finds himself the equal of his victor.

As things stand now, to settle the question of separation as has been done, needs either a clairvoyance which I do not possess, a rare indifference with respect to slavery, or a hatred of America which seizes on the first occasion to satisfy its longings. **There are some minds, enlightened in all else, upon which America produces the effect of a nightmare ; they ask to be rid of it at any price ; what wounds them in it is not only the real and serious evil which appears therein under various forms, but also, and perhaps chiefly, the good, the brilliant, the superior sides of the United States**—that energetic Christianity, those self-sustaining churches, that absence of administrative tutelage and centralization, that individual liberty, those small armies and small expenditures (I speak of the American ideal, changed for the moment, but which will, I hope, soon return) which are the astonishment and sometimes the scandal of the Old World.

The fact is that from the first instant we *decided* instinctively, and in some sort authoritatively, that the separation was definitive, that the South would attain its end, and that there must be henceforth two rival republics. This decree rendered in Europe, can alone explain the constant misunderstanding which has existed during a whole year between us and America. On taking it into account, every thing becomes clear—our obstinate refusal

of the infamous cause defended by the latter, the conviction of their final success, the condemnation of the repressive measures directed against them, beginning with the blockade intended for their reduction? From the moment that we began to wish for the separation, we aided it—that is certain. Shall our assistance become effective and direct? Shall we leap over the interval which still separates us from official recognition and intervention? This depends on the movement of public opinion which the affair of the *Trent* has just called forth. If it acquire the proportions of a true moral awakening, if the opposition which Lord Palmerston and the *Morning Post* have just encountered in their path spread more and more, if the party in sympathy with the United States and liberty complete its uprising, the old traditions of hatred inherited from George III. and Chatham, must resign themselves to return to the shades.

However this may be, it is evident that the real centre of the American question is to be found now in Europe: it is at Paris and London, not at Washington and Richmond, that the essential resolutions are taken on which depend the future of the United States. This is a serious reason that we should watch over ourselves, for our responsibility here is immense. I shudder when I think with what lightness we amuse ourselves by carving up America. There will be two Confederacies, or rather three—that of the North, the South, and the West! Such are the speeches that we carelessly throw out! How do we know that our witticisms may not become weapons in the hands of the champions of slavery—in the hands of the enemies of all the causes that we hold most dear!

It will be found at a given time that, to discourage good and encourage evil, a great political crime will be attempted; the idea of an impious war with the United

States, a war made to add to their generous sufferings, a war in which Europe risks appearing supported by the friends of slavery, will gain acceptance. The first energetic act of the Old World, its first message to the New, will be an ultimatum. Such is the support which we will lend it at the darkest, the most glorious hour of its history, and Europe will be the sender of this message.

Europe. My readers will understand why I have adopted this collective term. There has been a European policy in opposition to that of America. Despite the differences which have sometimes succeeded in gaining ground between our policy, for instance, and that of England, unity has always triumphed, and the two governments have continued to go on together. As to the other powers, if we except Russia, which has adopted an independent and sympathetic course toward the United States, they have hitherto appeared to consider England and France as their natural representatives in this crisis. England, upon the whole, has had the chief part and the chief responsibility; through the ties of every kind which unite her to America, through the importance of her navy, through her enormous consumption of American cotton, and still more, perhaps, through the special competency conferred upon her by the services which she has rendered to the emancipation of the negroes, she was evidently more deeply interested and implicated in the conflict of the North and South than any other nation. Her resolutions should have and have had a preponderating influence. It will be proper, consequently, to examine them more closely, and to this duty I devote the second part of my work.

Meanwhile, I take a more general standpoint, which is also true. **In speaking of Europe, without particular-**

izing France and England, I gain the advantage of warding off many complicated and actually insoluble questions. I need no longer ask whether it has been England or France that has sought to ensure the triumph of a system having the recognition of the South for its end, and the inefficiency of the blockade for its means. We accuse the English, the English accuse us in turn. In default of official documents, it is impossible to decide with certainty which is right. I prefer to believe, till proofs are furnished to the contrary, that neither is right. It seems to me more probable that public opinion has had a great share in the evil with which governments are unjustly charged. The real criminals, once again, are ourselves, the whole world, European ideas, which, instead of openly taking the part of the North, have let themselves be persuaded to adopt the theories of Charleston, and to proclaim the secession of the Slave States as lawful, beneficial, and final.

ply that of irritating this people by a measure which will wound them in the most sensitive part, but of introducing a measure which will produce a state of perpetual antagonism.

The policy recommended by the friends of the South is nothing less, let us not forget, than the rule of Europe in America, by which I do not mean any mingling of Europe in American discussions. No, I am not one of those who believe that the Monroe doctrine should remain intact amidst the conflicts of the nineteenth century. I believe in the frequent intervention of Europe in America and of America in Europe; I believe in the future entrance of the United States into the concert of great powers; I believe, in fine, that electricity and steam have overthrown many artificial distinctions, and that it will daily become more difficult to live in isolation. But I believe at the same time—and this question will be discussed with all the care it deserves in another part of my work—I believe that there should be neither European supremacy in America nor American supremacy in Europe. Nations are no longer in a state of pupilage, and pretensions of preponderance will soon cease to be tolerated anywhere.

It is certain, as we have seen, that such pretensions lie at the bottom of the policy which we are urged to practise. “The separation ought to prevail! We have decided that you are not in a condition to terminate it! You shall fight no longer! At least you shall only fight in such or such a manner!” Such is the language which is dictated for our use; and as men are laboring to secure, by artificial means, the foundation of a State which could not live of itself, and which will always stand in need of the protection without which it would not have been born, it thence follows that European influence, and al-

Would it not comprise the progress of liberty, the Gospel, and civilization? Is it quite sure that governments founded by distant intervention would have as much solidity and hope for the future?

France, I think, would not have to grieve at such an event. Why should she grieve more at another event often announced with a feeling of dismay which I am incapable of comprehending? "The United States," it is exclaimed, "will some day pretend to meddle in the affairs of the Old World, and to figure in the concert of great powers!" Well, if this should be, what reason would we have to put on mourning? There is no such thing as distance to-day; and since Europe meddles with America, America may meddle with Europe. The solidarity of interests is real; is there a principle in opposition to that manifested by facts? Is it quite sure that the concert of great powers was completed in ten or twenty years, beyond the possibility of introducing the United States therein? Ought policy to live by fictions, or to seek realities?

If the greatness of the United States is not of a kind to trouble France, it can no more disquiet England.

I am well aware that I here encounter prejudices and traditions which contradict my theory. It seems, at first sight, that since the American navy may be useful to us, it may, by logical deduction, be injurious to the English.

I do not deny it; I even confess that, in the event of separation, the protectorate of the South will probably belong to Great Britain; according to all appearances, an agricultural republic will be formed there, wretched doubtless, and unceasingly menaced; but the products of which, whatever they may be, will be at the disposal of the English.

And I speak of communities, I leave aside all that concerns the individual salvation. It will not be useless, however, to cast a glance into the depths of the soul, and to seek there, there also, the characteristics of this supreme crisis, which is the crisis of uprising. They know something of it, who have tasted the sufferings and the ravishing delights of faith. They know what rocky paths are travelled, what sufferings are passed through, what continual struggles are carried on within us from the moment that we begin to see ourselves as we are, and to feel the necessity of internal reform.

Ah! it is with nations as with individuals. The peoples who make progress are the peoples of suffering and combat. Noble sufferings, glorious combats, without which uprising is impossible! No, I will never consent to rank among disasters, the bloody victories of humanity; it would be to veil the moral side of history. In spite of all the weeping voices which lately joined in a concert of lamentations, I congratulate Americans on having willed the cure with its necessary conditions; on having recoiled neither before the bitterness of the remedies, nor the sharp pain of the operations, nor the transient despondency which precedes and paves the way for the reestablishment of strength. I should doubt their uprising, I acknowledge, if they had not passed through weakening and the chances of ruin.

What an immense step America has just taken! Between the presidency of Mr. Buchanan and that of Mr. Lincoln, there is the distance of a social revolution. The sons of the Puritans are slow to move; but once set in motion, they go forward, and nothing stops them. Can there really be souls cold enough not to rejoice at the thought, that the time in which we live is that of the