

From the Boston Watchman and Reflector.

Letter from Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, on War between Britain and the United States.

Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, Dec. 14, 1861.

MY DEAR WATCHMAN AND REFLECTOR,—I venture to write you, although I fear my letter will not be at all acceptable, and possibly you may see fit not to print it. You are quite welcome to put it into the waste-basket, if you think best to do so, and all I ask is that you will kindly publish every word, or leave it alone. We know not, as yet, what answer your government will return by the messenger dispatched from our shores, but our Christian ministers are laboring with diligence and earnestness to cool the war spirit, and all good men are hopeful that the peace will not be broken. May the Lord our God avert the terrible calamities which must attend a conflict between two nations so nearly allied, so kindred in religion, in liberal institutions, and in blood. Be assured that all our churches will pray for peace, and should it be broken politically, we shall feel that spiritually we must have fellowship with all our brethren, be their nationality what it may, for there can be no war in the one body of Christ.

Constantly reading your very excellent paper, I have looked upon it as a fair exponent of the feelings of the godly in the North, and I assume that I am not far wrong in the supposition. Well, then, I am sorry that you feel as you do towards England, and yet more troubled am I at the general feeling in this country with regard to your government. When your present conflict began, our whole nation, with a few worthless exceptions, felt an intense sympathy with the North. I met with none who did not wish you well, although there were some who feared that the struggle would be far more severe than you expected, and a few who suspected your soundness on the main question. We prayed for you, and hoped that the day of emancipation for every slave was fully come. I move among all classes, and I can bear witness that there were premonitions of a coming excitement and enthusiasm, such as that produced by Garibaldi's Italian campaign, so long as the idea had currency that you would contend for freedom, and our interest only flagged when that notion was negated by the acts of your leaders. Right or wrong, we have now ceased to view the conflict from the slavery point of view. Whose fault is this?—What have your statesmen done? Or, rather, what have they left undone? They have shown no interest in emancipating the slave. Principle has been thrust into darkness, and policy has ruled the day; and the consequence has been a long and disastrous war, instead of a dashing and brilliant victory. With "Emancipation" as your watchword, your empire would, ere this, have been safe and glorious. The Union safe, or at least, the North more than paramount. You would not have needed any of our sympathy, but you would have had it to the utmost degree of enthusiasm. Our young men, and our old men too, talked like soldiers, and wished they were with you to fight in freedom's hallowed strife. Your avowal of abolition would have made us delirious with joy, for the freedom of the slave is a religion in England from which there are very few dissenters. But the universal conviction in England is, that the leaders of your government care nothing about slavery, and that they make you fight for empire and not for freedom.

You say in your issue of Nov. 28th, "The higher classes in England are friends of the South, while the people stand by our government." Neither of these sentences has any truth in it. I speak what I do know, when I say that our public sympathy with your government is clean gone, not only with the higher classes, but more thoroughly and completely with our people. Our populace, to a man, have ceased to respect the truckling policy which controls you, and I believe they would speak far more harshly of you than the richer classes care to do. It is no one's business here which of you conquers, so long as slavery is not at issue. That was the key to the British heart, it has been discarded, and we remain unmoved, if not indignant spectators, of a pointless, purposeless war. My whole heart and soul wished you God speed, until, like all the rest who looked on at your awful game, with an ocean between us to cool the passions, I saw clearly that only extreme peril would compel your leaders to proclaim liberty to the captives. That trial you have had, do the right, and your trouble will be over.

We cannot love the South. They are not and cannot be our natural allies. We have few bonds of relationship there, and no commercial ties which we would not rejoice to sever. Even if a spasmodic interest should be excited by your violation of our flag, yet we never can have any hearty union between our people and the slaveholding South. Cotton, I confess, is a great bond, and the stoppage of its supply is a serious calamity, but as far as I have seen, our people had made up their minds to bear hard times patiently, in the hope that slavery might cease. I believe that our people would sooner pay a tax for emancipation, or bear the stoppage of their trade for the sake of the slave, than for any other motive under heaven. But we are disappointed. A noble opportunity has been frittered away. Halting between two opinions has ruined the cause. The friends of Africa are sick at heart. Your government has fooled you. It dared not do the right for fear of consequences. It courted useless friendships and tried to buy them with hesitations and compromises. Had it but dashed at once into the "irrepressible conflict" all civilized nations would have honored the courage and decision which would run any risk sooner than allow the barbarous and diabolical crime of

slavery to fester in your constitution. But your rulers must be driven to virtue, for even when upon the verge of it, they start back alarmed. Why was Fremont silenced? What power is that which leads your Cabinet to be so fearful to commit itself upon the point of slaveholding? Why leave your most powerful weapon to rust upon the shelf? Have you no means of pressure by which you can compel your rulers to find their senses and give up their vacillation. To hesitate is to court disaster, to decide is to overcome.

No one can fail to admire your loyalty, but surely some of you must have had stern difficulty in enduring such protracted temporizing. Be loyal still, but constrain the President and his council to be loyal to your public feeling, which I hope is sound at heart. Will not the slave question soon be made the point in issue? For your own sake will you not let loose the black tempest from its chains of darkness? I earnestly pray that in all thoroughness, the cause of freedom may be taken up boldly and at once; and I am sure that with our usual unanimity we shall return to our natural position towards you, viz., that of unfeigned sympathy and hearty good-will. You may reply that this is of no value. I reply, that you are a little angry, and therefore I will plead that it may be of service to your kinsmen and brethren in England, and to the world at large, therefore win our love for our sakes if not your own. It may tend to produce a healthier feeling between the two nations, if it be fully understood that the people of England deprecate the idea of a quarrel with you, and sincerely desire unbroken and profound peace, but the blood of the Old Saxons is as fully in our veins as in yours, and no Englishman feels any sort of fear of you, your fleets, your armies, your expeditions to Canada, or any other enterprise you may set on foot. We neither despise your weakness nor dread your strength.

But why should there be a fight at all?—What good can come of it? Could not every end be answered by arbitration better than by blood? In the presence of heathen and popish nations wherefore should two protestant powers disagree? It will be a crime, a treason against Heaven, a despoil of the cross of Christ. We are co-operators in every good work, and in some we willingly yield you the palm, but wherefore should we differ? Why, above all things, should we be made to kill each other against our wills? We have both had our sins towards the sons of Ham, let us bear the brunt together, you the war, and we the evils of blockade. Do you hasten to proclaim "liberty," and we on our part, if we be not permitted to interfere with affectual aid, will endure patiently the necessary stoppage of trade, will rejoice in your successes, and never even dream of your being repulsed.

We both seem to be drifting most ridiculously, but most lamentably from our proper positions. Our place is at your side in a great moral conflict, yours is it to make that conflict moral.—We have all a thousand dear friends in either hemisphere; some of us have brothers on each side, and even children in both nations. We must get out of this quarrel somehow, without a rupture, and in my heart, I believe that your proclamation of emancipation will do it. How can we be your enemies if you are the friends of the slave? If our government should attempt to aid the South for the mere sake of cotton, (which they would not do, for at present ours is the most popular of all governments; and feels the most readily the motion of public sentiment,) thousands, yea millions of us, would abhor the selfish and unhallowed combat, and it could not last.

The scales are trembling in the balance. May your voices cry aloud for peace and liberty.—Some few words of reconciliation, a little mutual forbearance, deaf ears to irritating newspapers, and a noble publication of freedom to the captives, and the two nations will be sworn friends. O Lord, grant it may be so. Never did prayer rise more heartily or earnestly to heaven's throne. I pray you join in it with your fervent "Amen."

Now, Messrs. Editors, I do not write this as though my individual opinions were of any value in America, but because I know that the truth in these matters may ultimately be for the best.—My letter on slavery excited so much ill-feeling, even in the North, that I did not see the use of my further correspondence, but this is duty, therefore I do it.

With heartiest affection to believers in the North,

Yours, most peacefully and honestly,
C. H. SPURGEON.

The Editor makes some "comments on the foregoing" the gist of which is contained in the following extracts:

"With all deference, we think Mr. Spurgeon, and others in sympathy with his views, mistake what is practicable, and in the range of their just hatred against slavery, what the government of the United States, as such, may rightfully undertake."

"The administration must first possess and exemplify the power to push back and repress rebellion, before it can practically touch the case of the slave. Our first necessity is signal advance and victory, and these once assured, the sinews of slavery are cut, and a dread Ichabod will be written upon the whole future of African bondage. This, we believe, with a multitude—namely, the general government itself—is the true state and bearing of this whole question. Would that good men on both sides the Atlantic might so accept it—understand that the first business now to be done, and which is enough to tax the whole moral and material energies of this great people, is to crush out effectually and forever, or holy rebellion. That done, slavery is doomed, and will never more lift its hydra head to dominate over the free people of this continent."

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

The London Times and the Provincial Press on the Rebellion.

It is not greatly to be wondered at, that, outside the American Republic, their present intestine strife is somewhat imperfectly understood. But, Mr. Editor, residing, as I have been for sometime past in one of the New England States, and endeavoring to look at the Rebellion, as a British subject from an American—Southern as well as Northern stand-point,—which I submit that a just comprehension and estimation of that Rebellion demands of us, I have been astonished and ashamed, that in reputed anti-slavery England and her North American Colonies there has been so much fraternizing with the South.

Without further analyzing this strange affinity just now, I hold that the Editors of our Provincial Papers are responsible in part, for the practical sympathy, now so extensively prevalent among us, with a rebellion, of which a distinguished Doctor of Divinity—than whom it is not easy to find, in this biased age of ours, a man of broader sympathies, more dispassionate views, or catholic spirit, not long since remarked; "But I hope and pray that the good people of England and the Provinces will not forget that this rebellion is wholly in the interest of slavery, and, if successful, will prove a dreadful blow to freedom and civilization everywhere. To speak now only of Nova Scotia, some of her "good people" have temporarily "forgotten" that, appalling fact; and, in part unquestionably, this is due to the anti-Northern tone of our press. It has with some justifiableness been asked: "Who believes the press?" Yet who does not believe it so far as, consciously or unconsciously, to allow his opinions and sympathies to be materially modified, if not moulded by it? The daily and weekly issues of the press have very much to do with this plastic process. But to the point in hand, I have been impressed and somewhat chagrined not only at our practically Southern leanings in this Rebellion, but also that our Provincial papers have been quoting so frequently from the London Times and the New York Herald—two notorious representatives of extreme views, and to a great extent not merely unreliable, but seditious organs. That a moderate, sensible, article not very rarely gains insertion in the former paper, is no more strange than true. But are not some of the volleys of the "English Thunderer" confessedly prepared by unprincipled, and venal men, by expelled or unsuccessful members of Parliament &c.? I have certainly heard, or read statements to that effect, which I regarded as entirely worthy of credence. But hear what a calm and able writer in the Christian Review (a Baptist periodical, edited with much ability, known as such to a few of the readers of the Messenger,) says on this point: "To the allegations of the 'English Thunderer' we are not careful to return an answer;" also the language of the dispassionate Editor of the time-honored Boston Watchman and Reflector; "The London Times should not be received as the exponent of English sentiments, nor the rant of the New York Herald, as the type of American feeling;" again, "We should make allowance for the long and artful efforts of secession-leaders to warp the public mind, and for the wilful statements of journals believed to be in rebel pay." As to the N. Y. Herald, it is probably known to you, Mr. Editor, that only a few months ago that vile sheet was industriously scattering seeds of secession indiscriminately North and South fostering the Southern Rebellion by its mercenary assertions of the prevalence of treason to the Federal Government in the North; and was restrained from such pursuit of "filthy lucre" only by a band of outraged men (call them a mob, if we choose, a noble mob,) who, having surrounded the office of the Herald, were about to demolish the concern, when the Editor, without delay, came forward, made due verbal acknowledgments, declaring himself henceforward a radical supporter of the Federal Government, and accordingly the next day issued his paper in strongly Northern colors. How much, pray, is the broad cast "rant" of that paper worth now? I regret to know that the Editor of the N. Y. Herald is a "renegade foreigner," and to be compelled to fear, as true what I have heard, that Mr. Bennett is by birth, a Nova Scotian.

These remarks about the Herald, Mr. Editor, have been suggested by a paragraph or two in the Messenger of the 11th ult. where, after quoting from the Boston Christian Era, the following sentences: "If England really sympathizes with rebellion and is seeking occasion to interfere with American affairs, the late arrest will

admirably serve her purpose. But it will affect the destiny of nations as no other war in the nineteenth century has done" (the last sentence of which I heartily accept),—after extracting the above, from a truly worthy paper, you proceed to couple it with a "blood-thirsty effusion" or two from the New York Herald, and close up your Editorial with the general comment: "Such counsellors are no friends of the Union. They had better finish their work in the South, we think, before they talk about going Northward." I confess to the possession of little personal sympathy or patience with the paying of such regard to a paper, which, while it may be "one of the most extensively circulated papers of the States," yet, according to the New York Chronicle, "represents no class of society and influences no opinions," and which, for its stigma of but recent mercenary sympathy with the Southern Rebellion, deserves to be ranked with the ten or dozen original leaders of the Southern Confederacy, as applicable to whom the following fearful stanza has lately been quoted.

"Is there not some hidden curse,
Some chosen thunder in the stores of Heaven,
Red with uncommon wrath! to blast the man
Who seeks his greatness in his country's ruin?"

Now it is not to be expected that the masses of our people receive weekly into their houses many issues of the press, Home or Foreign.—But the Editors of our papers are presumed to have access, by way of exchange, to various English and American, as well as Provincial periodicals,—certainly to other papers than the "English Thunderer" and the New York Herald. As to American dailies or weeklies, there is at the present time a whole New York World to draw from,—a paper which probably contains the most important, the most calm, and reliable, views of American affairs, to be found in the secular press. I am not designedly dictating what papers are entitled to a fair share of Provincial Editorial patronage; but pardon here one other allusion of this kind. In regard to the religious press of our American neighbors, I not long since read, in the Boston Watchman and Reflector, (issued by our denomination), a sermon, pronounced by others than myself, as well worthy of entire insertion in the Christian Messenger, as exceedingly desirable to appear in its columns at the present time, even though the publication of that discourse should be distributed over the first page of two or three issues of the Messenger, as a hopeful enlightener of our readers in regard to the true character and probable results, present and future, of the civil war among our neighbors. It of course was not preached on a Sabbath, but on a Thanksgiving occasion, from the text: "Though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." I wish I could reproduce and place in the hands of all Southern-Rebellion sympathizers among us, not only that sermon, but also two or three other articles now prominent in my memory, as having appeared in the W. and R. for example, an eminently impartial and thorough discussion of the Southern Rebellion, contained in a letter, written in England, but by a distinguished American historian, also an article on the Rebellion, in the July No. of the Christian Review, which the Editor of the Watchman and Reflector deemed worthy of a wider circulation, and reproduced in two successive numbers of his paper.

Before stepping out from under the Press, I wish to record my humble but decided opinion that the English Correspondent of the Messenger made a very contemptible remark some weeks ago, when he characterized the civil calamity now prevalent in the neighboring Union as a "silly war." That, if I remember correctly, was the word he applied to it. It shows him to have possessed at that time a very inadequate and unworthy comprehension of what he was talking about.

In another letter he allowed himself to make a statement which was certainly somewhat wide of the truth. I, of course, do not, accuse him of a wilful falsehood, but he ought to have informed himself better of the facts in the case, before he represented the Northern army as so bad off for leaders as to compel the Federal Government to implore the assistance of foreign military Generals; your correspondent referring, in his remarks on this subject, particularly to a rumor then current about Garibaldi. Now it is altogether probable that our Northern neighbors were in no ordinary sense gratified with what seemed for a time a truthful prospect, viz: that Garibaldi, having caught, as he undoubtedly had, the true ring of the cause of the North, and feeling his noble heart throb responsively to it as to Freedom's call, might lend even his personal presence and skill to the defence of their cause. And it is not less probable that, after the receipt of such intelligence, some correspondence was held between him and the Cabinet at Washington, as to his proposed willingness to aid