

**AMERICAN OPINIONS ON
THE
"ALABAMA": AND OTHER
POLITICAL QUESTIONS**

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American Opinions on the "Alabama": And Other Political Questions by John W. Dwinelle

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JOHN W. DWINELLE

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PREFACE.

THE author of the following pages has just completed a long tour of several months' duration in Great Britain and Ireland, and in most of the countries of Europe. Among his many chance companions of travel, his country and its institutions became the frequent topic of conversation. Various grave charges were brought against the people of the United States, and these charges were not always consistent with each other. It was said that we were not content with being Republicans ourselves, but were political propagandists, always waging a crusade of opinion upon other peoples' institutions; that being Republicans we ought never give the support of opinion to Imperialism in France or to monarchy anywhere; that we had unjustly aided to overthrow the late Mexican Empire; that we ought to condemn what was denounced as the tyrannous despotism of Prussia; that we ought to sustain by opinion the efforts to attain to German unity of nationality under the lead of Count Von Bismark; that our originally pure republican institutions had been corrupted by foreign immigration, which had also destroyed our unity of nationality; that although we had a free press ourselves, we approved oppressive restrictions upon the press in France and Germany; that our public men were corrupt, and our judges venal; that mob-law prevailed unchecked and unpunished in our country; that we had organized a

legislative war of labour upon capital, and yet wished to exclude the poor labourers of China from our country; and that our Government, having itself proposed a Treaty with the British Government by which all claims for violation of international neutrality during the late Civil War in America could have been amicably settled, had itself with bad faith repudiated the treaty. Almost everywhere it was taken for granted that the Government of the United States was a pure democracy, with machinery of the most simple sort, and in which the will of the majority received at once a free, unchecked, and absolute expression. To these charges and representations, the writer made such answers as seemed fitting, upon each occasion, and with such success, that the gentlemen to whom they were addressed, were pleased to say that a large class of readers in Europe would be glad to see the substance of them set forth in a succinct publication. Hence the origin of this essay, which was begun and carried forward to a point where it exacted demands beyond the leisure and strength of the writer. Its further preparation was then intermitted, and it would probably never have been published, except for the following considerations.

After all that has been said on the so-called *Alabama* question, two facts are very evident to a careful observer. —*First*: that the sentiments of the people of the United States on the subject have never fully reached the British Public. Senator Sumner's speech on the proposed Treaty has been criticised, reviewed, and triumphantly answered, it is said, but it is believed that it has never been published in Great Britain in any mode so as effectively to reach the public, either in full or in a satisfactory epitome. While of the other arguments used on each side of the

question in the People's Great Debate, there has been but little or no expression. *Secondly*: the British Public seem to honestly entertain impressions which are wholly unfounded, as to the nature of the proposed Treaty, the condition of the controversy, and the present attitude of the United States. Journalists, and other gentlemen, of undoubted candour and veracity, frequently say that "the British Government has done all it could to settle the controversy, and has failed." But it will be seen, by an examination of the Treaty itself, and from the declarations of the eminent British Statesman who assisted in preparing it, that it does not embrace, nor was it intended to embrace, any claim whatsoever of the Government of the United States upon the British Government, for its violation of international neutrality during our late Civil War. It is also said, that in the recent diplomatic correspondence between Mr. Fish, Secretary of State of the United States, and Lord Clarendon, the latter has presented "a complete refutation" of all the propositions of the American Secretary. Now, the principal proposition of Mr. Fish, and one which lies at the bottom of the whole controversy, is this: that the British Government cannot defend its violation of international neutrality, on the ground that its own municipal laws were defective: that it was bound to have domestic laws equal to its international duties. But to this proposition, Lord Clarendon, in his able forensic despatch, which is said to be a "complete refutation," makes no reply, nor even the slightest allusion. And, finally, it is commonly supposed that the demands for reparation by the United States commence with, and include, the consequences of a premature acknowledgement by the British Government

of the belligerency of the Confederate States: whereas the message of President Grant, and the despatches of Mr. Fish show, that the present Government of the United States not only has not made any such demands, but has expressly forbore to make them, even while insisting that such premature acknowledgement manifested an antecedent unfriendliness, which gave a specific colouring to the negligence of the British Government in the *Alabama* matter.

In the hope that the following pages may have some effect in producing a correct appreciation of the present condition of the controversy, they are given to the public. A third part has been partly prepared, to which what is now published, would form an appropriate introduction; but there is no present probability that it will ever be completed.

It is hardly necessary to add that the Author makes this publication entirely of his own motion, and without consulting any person whomsoever as to the propriety or expediency of doing so.

LANGHAM HOTEL,

London, January, 1870.

PART I.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

It is not only convenient, but even necessary, to clear the way to our main topics, by discussing certain matters directly, rather than incidentally. To many this discussion may seem wholly or in a great part unnecessary. To others it will appear indispensable to a proper comprehension of the subject.

DEFINITIONS.

The term British is applied to the aggregate population of Great Britain and Ireland. The term Anglo-Saxon is rejected, as not being sufficiently descriptive. The term British American is applied to the aggregate population of the United States of America, which is assumed to be such either by origin or by political affiliation. The general term American is rejected as not being specific. The term British American, as above defined, is inaccurate, because it excludes other British races in North America; but, restricted by definition, must serve the present purpose. The thirty-eight million citizens of the United States do not yet possess a collective adjective which expresses their nationality.

POLITICS is the science of human government. INTERNATIONAL POLITICS concern the relations and conduct of nations towards

each other. MUNICIPAL POLITICS is the relation and conduct of a particular state towards its citizens or subjects, and their relation and conduct towards it. In a lower and restricted sense, the term politics is often applied to parties existing in a particular state, representing diversity of opinions upon political questions. The term will be here generally employed in its larger senses; if in the other, the fact will be sufficiently obvious.

WHAT IS GOVERNMENT?

Government is both a science and an art. It is a science, because the moral and economical principles upon which it ought to be administered are capable of being easily ascertained, and precisely stated. But in their practical application these propositions become complicated with various conditions, so that they lose their abstract character, and become concrete; and then government becomes an art. These conditions are various: such as those of geography, climate, race, traditional habits, education, and the like. It will not be doubted, at this time, that the climate of Greece had much to do with the development of her peculiar institutions; nor that the political character of England has been in a great measure the result of her insular position; nor that the political necessities of France have for the last hundred years been greatly determined by populations outside of her borders.

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

In the United States we are republicans, and we prefer that form of government. It is suited to our habits, for we have been republicans from the beginning. We were first planted there two hundred and fifty years ago, as a few scattered settlements or towns along the Atlantic coast, having no connection, and but little communication with each other. These