

is bad, but these graphic recitals do not cut any large amount of pie with the relation to the problem you came here to discuss. You gentlemen will talk yourselves hoarse and drink yourselves merry here to-night, and then you will go home and come down to-morrow and work like the dickens for Number 1, and that is human nature."

Then I wiped my beetling brow and sat down.—Sauntering Silas, in St. Paul Dispatch.

THE MORAL OF THE WAR OF SECESSION.

A portion of the London Speaker's review of "Recollections and Letters of Gen. Robert E. Lee," by His Son. The review appeared in the Speaker of April 8, over the signature of D. C. Lathbury.

There have been few conflicts so gigantic as the American Civil War, of which it is possible, after an interval of only forty years, to write with the same sense that we are dealing with history, not with politics. The keenest sympathizers on both sides are at one upon the final character of the struggle. Whatever be the future of the United States, there is no chance that they will ever be reconstituted on the basis of State rights. It is this fact that makes it possible to review the issue decided in 1864 with a calmness which it is difficult to command in reference to some questions of longer standing. The merits of the controversy have a purely historical interest. Whatever life there may be in the principles which stand behind the words, "Federalists" and "Confederates" are to us simply names for extinct divisions of mankind. It is this circumstance that makes it possible to ask, Who would now be the worse if the "wayward sisters" had been allowed to "go in peace"? One answer to these questions can be given with perfect confidence. Though the conflict in its later stages was waged in behalf of the Negro, it is not the Negro who has benefited by it. All that the war has done for him is to raise him to the dignity of a Problem, and a Problem for which there seems no solution. In the South he is disfranchised and occasionally lynched. In the North he is being steadily pushed out of the occupations that were specially his own and without which he cannot retain his political status.

True, he is free, and being free he can no longer be sold or have his wife and children sold. And if the victory of the North had been the only road to emancipation the war would have had one solid result which might have been worth all the sacrifices made to secure it. But the economic forces

which were making for emancipation even before Secession would have been far more operative if the South had become a separate confederation, existing side by side with a watchful and critical North. Abolition was hastened by the war, but in the end the slaves would have been freed had there been no war, and their position when freed would have been happier, because they would have come to it without the aggravation of racial hostility which has followed upon abolition when imposed by a triumphant enemy. In a Southern Confederacy emancipation would have been deliberate and gradual. In the United States of to-day the Negro is a sufferer alike from the worst and from the best feelings of the Whites. He has to bear the hatred natural to men who see in him only so much property which has been taken from them without compensation, and the horror natural to men who see in possible intermarriages the eventual destruction of racial purity.

But what about the political position of the United States? There, surely, the result of the war has been wholly beneficial. How could they have become the Imperial Power they now are if they had been two communities instead of one? I admit that the Imperial idea which has lately taken shape in the United States would have been greatly checked by the success of the Confederates. But the Imperial idea seems to me to be valuable in proportion as it is the outcome of circumstances. If the British Empire lay within a ring fence there would be no place for Imperialism. Propinquity would do all that is necessary. It is the fact that the British Empire is scattered over the whole world, that between ourselves and our kinsmen are interposed not only the illimitable sea, but vast territories belonging to other Powers, that the tie of blood which unites England and the Colonies needs for political purposes to be expressed in a political term, that gives the Empire so prominent a place in our thoughts and our vocabulary.

But the United States lay under no such necessity. Had they but known their own good fortune, they were a self-contained and self-sufficing community. All that they could want for their material welfare was contained within their own frontier. They had no occasion for foreign conquest, scarcely even for a foreign policy. These advantages are really greater than anything which has been gained in Cuba or the Philippines, or can be expressed in Mr. Roosevelt's speeches; and they

would probably have been secured in perpetuity if from being one community the United States had become two. The Federal and the Confederate States would still have been more intimately connected with each other than with any third Power, and as the South would have been spared the ruin brought upon her by the war, she would have been more really one with the North than she is now or is likely soon to be. Cuba and the Philippines would have been left to themselves, and the United States would have been spared the responsibilities which conquest brings with it, even if its motive is benevolence rather than gain. From this point of view, then, the Civil War has been barren of advantage.

It may be objected to all this that no nation which respects itself can consent to treat its own existence as matter for argument. But however true this may be as a general rule, the origin and history of the United States necessarily made them an exception to it. They were in the first instance a voluntary confederation of sovereign States. They had come together for mutual protection, and in order to secure this they had voluntarily parted with certain of their sovereign rights. No provision had been made for the settlement of controversies affecting the continuance of the Union. The North took the absence of any such provision as conferring on the majority of the States the right to coerce the minority. The South took it as leaving to that minority the right to put an end to a compact which had ceased, by force of circumstances, to be the voluntary arrangement it had been in the first instance. Which of the two parties was right as a matter of Constitutional law is not now of much consequence, but as we look back to the War of Secession it may well seem that the Confederates were defending rights far dearer and more sacred than those which lay behind the Northern claim. They had been citizens of Virginia or South Carolina long before they had been citizens of the United States. Their history, their traditions, their social life, all dated from a time when they were separate colonies owing allegiance to no American authority other than their own governor and their own assembly. The tie which bound them to their State was a closer tie than that which bound them to the Union, and the appeal to the larger patriotism fell on deaf ears when to listen to it involved being false to their homes and their dead. The pity of it was that the choice should ever have been demanded of them.