DESERET EVENING NEWS.

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THE UNITED STATES AND CUBA.

The action of the Senate committee on foreign relations, in reporting favorably a resolution for recognizing Cuban independence, brings the United States closer to a foreign war than it has been for a long time. It makes the probability very strong for a rupture with Spain, and perhaps for more serious trouble before the affair is settled. As matters now stand there is the possibility that President Cleveland will take a firm stand and prevent this nation from becoming involved. But the temper of Congress seems to be to recognize Cuban independence whether or not President Cleveland favors such action at present; and if that is done then the President may bow to the popular will as expressed by Congress, although he may refuse and thus maintain peace.

What the moving cause is in the minds of Congressmen is a measure left to conjecture. It may be a general sentiment of sympathy for a people struggling for political freedom, added to a feeling of strong condemnation of Spain's methods; or it may be in consequence of the financial interests that are affected by the contest on the island; and it may be that the senators perceive that Spain cannot hold Cuba much longer and in dire distress may sell it to England rather than let it go under the influence of the United States; or that if Cuba frees herself a Mexican protectorate may be established there; perhaps a combination of these causes may be operating. In any event, there is no mistaking the fact that this government is on the verge of taking decisive action, in consequence be what they may. The President may block the way for a time, but it cannot be for long unless existing conditions change.

With the recognition of Cuban independence possible as one of the first events of the new year, a contemplation of the results of that action is foremost in the public mind. If it were the ordinary recognition that comes when a new government is able to assert itself, there would not be so much concern; for that would only mean that Cuba would have the same rights in American waters as Spain has; that she could find temporary refuge for her ships, could purchase supplies, or float bonds, or transact any business that a nation is able to engage in. But in this case the recognition of the United States means that this government must guarantee Cuba's independence—that her army and navy must be in service against the Spaniards on the island, just as it was in behalf of Texas in the war of 1845—for Cuba yet has no government to stand alone.

That Spain will enter into a conflict with the United States in case of the recognition, there is little doubt. It is the only hope the reigning dynasty has of retaining its place at the head of Spanish affairs; for a republic in Cuba means a republic in Spain—which the European nations do not look upon with favor. The republican movement is strong in Spain, and if Cuba is lost without a struggle with the United States, then the Spanish virtually will say the government that could not hold a colony against insurrection is not strong enough to rule. The result would be an upheaval, and a new republic in Europe. The royal house of Spain would submit to the hardest kind of a thrashing from the United States, if that would avert dethronement.

As to the outcome of a war between this country and Spain, there is no question from a neutral point of view. Unprotected as the coast of the United States is, comparatively, against a maritime power like England, it is amply guarded against anything Spain has the ability to do, and it would be easier for the United States to carry the war into Spain than for the latter country to make headway in this land. So the result must be in a foregone conclusion. But it is just probable that England and some other European nations might wish to say something when the United States is involved in war, and then the end is beyond the power of man to discern.

There are in this country a great many people who believe that the only road to good times is through a war. They would prefer that European nations should engage in it, so that would help trade on this side of the water; they are even willing for a little trouble with Spain, thinking that the sale advantage still would come to business here. This belief has something to do with the war sentiment, although not the chief moving power. The proposed action of Congress may bring about more of war than appears to immediate present. In any event it argues a situation of extreme seriousness which renders it possible that from the action of this government, growing out of a sympathy with Cuba would find earliest indorsement in the southern states and from there spread over the country, war may be "poured out upon all nations."

THE LANGUAGE OF OUR LORD.

Recent investigations to ascertain what language our Savior spoke, when on earth, establish the fact that it was Aramaic and not Hebrew, as once commonly supposed. Mrs. Agnes Smith Lewis, who some time ago discovered the ancient Syriac text of the four gospels in the monastery at Mount Sinai, in an article in The Century gives some reasons for this view.

There are, for instance, numerous Aramaic phrases in the text of the New Testament, represented as literal quotations from the sayings of Christ, such as "Ephphatha" (Be opened), "Talitha cumi" (Maiden, arise), and the cry of agony on the cross, "Eloi, eloi, lama sabachtani!" These names of places and persons are often given in their Syriac form, as "Bar" (son), instead of the Hebrew "Ben," to Bartholomew, Barabbas, Bar-Jesus, Bar-Jona, Barnabas, Bar-Timeus. There are further "Cepha" (a stone), "Boanerges" (sons of thunder), "Sapphira" (the beautiful), "Thomas" (the twin), "Martha" (the mistress), "Tabitha" (the gazelle), "Bethsaida" (house of fishing), "Nazareth" (watch), "Gethsemane" (oil press), "Golgotha" (place of a skull) and "Aceldama" (the field of blood), all of which are of Syriac origin. The words "mammon," "raca" and "abba" are also Syriac.

Another very strong argument is advanced. Mrs. Lewis calls attention to the fact that Semitic peoples delight in puns and assonances, or jingles of words. The Koran, for instance, derives much of its supposed sanctity from this cause alone. In the Syriac version of Christ's discourses, this peculiar Semitic characteristic is prominent, although it is, of course, lost in the translations. For instance in the saying: "He who committeth sin is the slave of sin," the words for "commit" and "slave" are but different forms of one word. A similar play on words is outlined in this passage: "I say to my slave do this, and he doeth it."

The practical importance of this question is seen in the interpretation of some difficult sentences in the New Testament. In the parable of the unfaithful servant in Matthew 24, it is said, "The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder and appoint his portion with the hypocrites." The objection is hardly available that in the parable the punishment seems out of all proportion to the offense. No Jewish householder would have cut a servant to pieces for the neglect of duty mentioned. In the Syriac found on Mount Sinai it appears that the word translated "cut in pieces" is a word which also means "divide or appoint a portion," and if this is the expression used by our Lord, the meaning is that the portion of the servant was appointed with the hypocrites.

Another of Christ's sayings, which by the way has caused much rationale among unbelievers and difficulties among theologians, is Matt. 8:22: "But Jesus said unto him, Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead." How can the dead bury the dead? The Syriac versions read: "Let the burier [i.e. the gravediggers or undertakers] bury their dead." The probability is that the young man in the gospel narrative, when asked to follow Jesus, suggested that he would like to stay at home, the other Jews, as long as his father lived and until he had paid his last filial duties to the remains, and that after that he would become a disciple; to which our Lord replied that the care of the mortal part in man was of secondary importance. A grave digger would attend that. The first duty was to preach the kingdom of God.

It seems likely, too, that if the point be established that the language daily spoken by the Lord and His disciples was the Aramaic it follows that we must suppose that at least some of the four gospels were originally written in this dialect, and that consequently the Greek copies now extant must be regarded as translations of earlier documents. This point will be thought of greatest importance for biblical criticism. A council held by Protestants in Switzerland in 1675 declared that the Bible "in the single and uncorrupted rule of our faith and life, by whose standard, as by a touchstone, all versions which exist, whether Eastern or Western, must be tried, and whatever they vary, be made conformable to it." But this was claimed, as far as the New Testament is concerned, for the Greek version. And this is substantially the position of the Protestants today. But if some of the gospels can be proven to be translations from earlier Aramaic versions, it is evident that they, not the Greek, would be the standard.

The old Aramaic language was, as far as known, originally spoken in Syria and Mesopotamia. It is the mother tongue of Chaldean as spoken in Babylon and of the later Aramaic, spoken in Syria. The Aramaic spoken at the time of our Lord in Palestine was no doubt a mixture of Hebrew and Syrian dialects. A newer form of this is still the ecclesiastical language of the Syrian Christians. Very early it produced a rich literature in ecclesiastical history and theology.

EVERGREENS AND THE HOLIDAYS.

An unfortunate proceeding is reported from the Capitol Hill grounds in connection with the holiday decorations for school buildings. It is stated that when the school teachers requested the pupils to assist to gather evergreens, etc., for decorations, some pupils went to the Capitol Hill park and tore and stripped the evergreen trees in a shameful manner. Many shrubs and young trees were torn up and destroyed, while others were so badly injured by having branches stripped off that they never can be made again to present a comely appearance.

There is not a thought that any teacher supposed for a moment that pupils would be guilty of such vandalism in responding to a request to aid in a very commendable work. If there had been a suspicion of the kind, none would be quicker than the teachers to warn against it. Now, however, the fact that the injury has been done, and that complaints are made of the wrongs being perpetrated in private gardens, presents an occasion for school teachers to explain that holiday decoration of public or private grounds is wholly reprehensible. If the guilty parties could be apprehended, salutary punishment might be inflicted; for the law prescribes a severe penalty for taking evergreens from City Creek canyon or from any of the parks, or from private grounds.

In this same connection a little public consideration of the subject of stripping the mountains for Christmas trees might not be out of the way. It is all right to have such trees; for the forests as well as fruits, vegetables, etc., are for the comfort and pleasure of man. But for the common welfare of this part of the country there should be something done to prevent indiscriminate and reckless cutting of the young pines and the consequent destruction of mountain timber. As matters now go, it will not be many years before not even "Christmas trees" will exist in the canyons near by, so ruthless is the destruction going on among the young timber.

BE NOT ENVIOUS.

A young man writing from a town in Morgan county asks the News if it is in harmony with the order of the Church for one man to hold several ecclesiastical offices in the same ward, for instance, superintendent of the Sunday school, leader of the ward choir, and president of the Deacons' quorum, when there is a number of other men in the ward holding the Priesthood, and just as capable of filling the offices as the one referred to, but who are not holding an ecclesiastical office."

The question is one which properly might have been submitted to the Bishop of the ward, where the inquirer could have received a more thorough explanation than can be given in a short newspaper article, to enable him to comprehend the principles connected with his inquiry; for every Bishop or other presiding officer ought to be ready to reply to such questions in the way of imparting kindly instruction, without sharp reproof. In reply to the correspondent, we will say that the holding of the offices named is not inconsistent with the Church order; and sometimes the placing upon one person even more offices may be a necessity of circumstances in a ward. When there is sufficient available material it is always better to distribute the offices so as to get as many workers as possible and to give everybody a fair chance to improve on the talents possessed; but in small wards circumstances sometimes make an extended distribution impracticable.

In the inquiry there seems to be a spirit of complaining because one person holds two positions—those of Sunday school superintendent and choir leader—in addition to his ecclesiastical ordination which is also possessed by others. Those two positions are not inconsistent with each other, and doubtless when the appointments were made the presiding officers considered the appointee the most suitable person for both places. Other suitable persons may have been there or may have come in since, but the one selected and acting will not be removed unless overworked, or for other good reason, or simply a desire for change or to gratify a combination of someone else for office ought not to be a moving cause. It is always a policy of wisdom to give worthy, competent persons responsible positions whereby can be manifest to their fellow beings; but such persons rarely find fault of others in positions—certainly position seems to help to encourage those who have a passing responsibility rather than to work the place themselves. Experience has shown that persons who are envious of others in positions such as those referred to, and would like to supplant them, either without the knowledge of the fact that there is much work and worry than temporal honor and glory in honoring such callings, or they are not competent of filling the places aspired to, no matter how high the estimate they place on their own ability.

People who allow themselves to grow envious of another's progress in places like those referred to, pursue a mistaken course; they injure themselves and others. It is better to cultivate the feeling that nothing is too good for the faithful, earnest worker in doing good, no matter if he holds a humble position and magnifies them; they should extend to him their aid, lend up his hands in noble work, and help him in every way as they would be helped themselves in a similar position. If they do this faithfully they may be sure their own light will not be hid under a bushel; but their talents and energy will be appreciated, and, whenever they are ready to occupy it, a higher place will be open for them. It is by seeking and bringing success to others that we achieve a like result ourselves; but the envious person who would supplant or retard another for his own advancement, or who builds on the ruins of that other's fall, will meet with defeat in the end. Help, and be helped; bless, and be blessed; measure encouragement and mutually preference to others, to receive like measure in return—this is the safer run.

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