

EDITORIALS.

WHOSE OX IS GORED NOW?

THE *Baptist Weekly* gives an account of the conversion of three young ladies and their father from the Episcopal Church to the Baptist faith, and the determined opposition of their relatives to their baptism. The *Weekly* speaks of the "terrible responsibility of interfering with the religious rights" of these persons to the extent of "forbidding their connection with a Baptist church," and asks:

"Do we live in America? Is this the land of religious liberty? Can such tyranny exist unrebuked in the nineteenth century, and in this land of civil and religious liberty; or will public opinion demand that every one shall be permitted to enjoy the right to worship God according to the dictates of conscience?"

To which we respond, the Baptists have joined all other religious bodies in the country in urging Congress and the Courts to exercise this very species of tyranny against which the *Weekly* now complains. It was all right when used to put down "Mormon" religious liberty, but all wrong if it interferes in the least degree with Baptist religious liberty. One mightier than any sect or party or government or Court has said "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again," and the Baptists as well as other denominations will find that it holds true with societies and nations as well as individuals. The *Weekly* should remember that the whole "Christian" fraternity have been rejoicing over the judicial decision against the "Mormons," that while religious opinions are free, religious acts may be suppressed. Is not baptism a religious act?

AERIAL AND GOVERNMENT TELEGRAPHY.

SOME time ago we referred to the achievements of Professor Loomis of Washington, D. C. with his system of aerial telegraphy. That gentleman is still pursuing his investigations and conducting experiments, the principal field of his operations being in West Virginia.

Aerial telegraphy is based on the theory that at certain elevations there is a natural electric current by taking advantage of which wires may be wholly dispensed with. He claims to have telegraphed eleven miles by means of kites flown with copper wire. When the kites arrived at the same altitude or reached the same current, communication by means of an apparatus similar to the Morse instrument was easy and perfect.

Professor Loomis says he has recently discovered that the telephone can be used for this method of communication as well as telegraph instruments, and of late, he has done all his talking with his assistant 20 miles away by telephone, the connection being entirely aerial. He claims to be able by this method to telegraph across the ocean; this however remains to be proven. But his experiments are exceedingly interesting, and are not unlikely to develop an entirely new and much superior system of general communication than the best now in use.

Connected with this subject is the question of governmental control of the telegraph, which has several times been agitated in this country, and which has been put to the test in Europe, not however very much to the encouragement of the advocates of the measure on this side of the Atlantic.

A statistical table giving the receipts and expenditures of European telegraphs for the year ending Dec. 31st, 1877, as compiled from official reports, shows, that of the following named countries, there were only four in which the receipts exceeded the expenses, viz: Germany, Austro-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, France, Norway, the Netherlands, Portugal, Roumania, Russia, Sweden and Switzerland. France, Roumania, Russia and Switzerland, being the only ones of the above number wherein the receipts were in excess of the expenditures, the telegraph in the remainder being maintained at a loss during that year.

This is pretty conclusive evidence, that when under the con-

trol of private corporations, the telegraph is a much better paying investment than when run as a government appendage.

FAMINE AND PESTILENCE IN BRAZIL.

ALTHOUGH we are living in a day of railroads and telegraphs, when the chief news of the world is brought to our doors every day, events of vast magnitude transpire about which we know little, or the real significance of which does not impress itself upon our minds. In the great variety of items presented it is not strange that most of them attract only passing attention, and few remain stamped upon the mind, nor that some which are of a startling character should be overlooked or glanced at as of trifling importance.

We make these remarks in view of the terrible calamities in northeastern Brazil, about which we gave some particulars a few weeks ago. The fearful nature and extent of the famine and pestilence Ceara are but little understood. The public have been informed that people were dying in that province from hunger and disease, but the horrible details have not been given until quite recently, and only brief notices of the scourge have appeared in the newspapers.

The New York *Herald* of the 14th inst. contains an elaborate account, filling nearly seven columns of close print, written by a correspondent on the spot, describing the fearful sufferings of the famine-stricken people and the awful condition of the smitten country. From this it appears that the region of the famine is that part of Brazil known as the Sertao, which is principally a rolling plain, about 500 miles in width, stretching westward from the coast, between the Parabyba and St. Francisco rivers, and containing about 2,500,000 inhabitants. The chief locality of the distress is the province of Ceara, with a population of 900,090, the capital of which is Fortaleza, the general population of which is about 25,000.

The people in the Sertao are mostly very poor, as there are no manufacturing interests, and the land is chiefly owned by a few white proprietors, the great bulk of the population being a mixture of blacks, whites and Indians. Agriculture and stock-raising are the usual pursuits, and these are dependent upon the winter rains, for there are no permanent rivers in that district, and in the dry season, when the grass is withered and the trees leafless, holes have to be dug in the beds of streams for water for the use of man and beast. When the winter months are rainless, the drouth brings extreme distress, for the people are improvident, and live from hand to mouth, one season's crop being consumed before another can be raised.

The early months of 1877 were dry; the grass dried up, there were no leaves on the trees, the cattle were moaning for water and the people began to suffer for food. The large stock owners commenced killing their cattle to save the meat and hides, and the peasants begged for a morsel of flesh and dug such roots as the country afforded, which were unwholesome, and some of them poisonous. Then they began to flock into the larger villages and towns. In the provinces of Ceara, Piahuí and Rio Grande people began to die of hunger as early as May. The blazing sun scorched up every vestige of vegetation. Little towns with a normal population of two or three thousand became crowded with from fifteen to twenty thousand, while Fortaleza had 70,000 famishing wretches camped in its vicinity by the close of the year. Girls sold themselves for bread, men banded together as robbers and committed depredations, provisions of all kinds rose to prices unreachably by the poor, private charity failed to meet the tremendous demand, and the starving emigrants in trying to reach other provinces dropped dead by the way by hundreds.

The year 1878 opened dry and without a ray of hope. The country was blasted, the cattle destroyed, the cotton and sugar business dead, no crops, no water in the river beds,

200,000 refugees camped around the towns, no money in the provincial treasury, small-pox added to the famine. The following letter from a government commissioner at Granja, a little town near the sea coast will give an idea of the situation and his picture will serve to portray the scenes at other places:

"As I pen these lines I am tormented, almost deafened by cries, imprecations, tears, groans of a people driven wild and agonized by famine, nakedness and disease. A thousand at a time, they beg a morsel for the love of God, for the divine pity, that they may save for a moment some child torn by hunger. A grave woman, pushed about by the people, begs to save herself from the monster that devours her to save the child in her womb. Another cries for broth for her husband, who is prostrated, almost inanimate by that worst of diseases, famine. Another shows her bony body, with hardly rags to cover her nakedness—a horrible sight. Another begs help for her husband, her son, her brother, all dying together. One just cried to me, 'Help me for the five wounds of Christ! I am falling.' This one says, 'Senor, listen to me, who am dying with my children.' She cries, groans, curses; but what can I do? there are many; there are many, alas! Thousands who would have help at once. And how shall I help them when I have no resources? Eight days ago the commission bought provisions and arranged money on the faith of the government, which had promised resources. But these have not come. We can do nothing, and the people are cursing us. 'They give only to their favorites,' the crowd says, and then they cry fiercely, 'You have food for us; give it at once!'

As the months crept on and no rain except useless showers came down, the horror intensified. The *Herald* writer says:

"Then the whole bewildered, famine-stricken, panic-wild crowd came rushing down to Fortaleza and the coast cities. Without food for the road, naked, sick, dying, even as they fled from death—every man for himself. Children striving vainly to keep up with their parents, crying as they roll over the stones, with bleeding feet and skeleton bodies, walking, crawling along, begging where no one could give—for how could a man support thousands. They were famished when they started. Three, four, five days they held their way. Then they fell by the roadside and groaned and died. Some pitying hand, perhaps, threw a handful of earth over them, but, for the most part, each was too busy with his own safety to care for others. So our human brothers died."

Horrible stories are told of children devouring rats, cats, dogs, carrion and refuse, while authenticated statements are made of infants being boiled and eaten by their starving parents! One hundred and fifty thousand people perished. Small pox attacked the dirty, homeless, naked people, and they were tumbled into holes dug in the sandy soil, from a dozen to twenty in a pile. The stench arising from the porous ground was nearly unbearable, and strong men died from asphyxia while digging trenches to bury the dead. The *Herald* correspondent visited the spot where 20,000 bodies were thinly covered up in these horrible pits, and could scarcely bear the scent for five minutes.

The natural query will be, what did the government of Brazil do while the famine was raging. We regret to answer, much of the time nothing. The provincial governments of the afflicted districts did what they could, but the general Government at first treated the matter as an exaggeration, but after a time voted a credit of \$1,000,000 for a million starving people! And while the great exodus was going on, there were two government storehouses at Fortaleza full of provisions. In January a new ministry was formed which found a deficit in the treasury of \$40,000,000 but at once furnished aid. Paper money was issued, food and clothing supplied, emigration made easy, and along in July, labor provided for the refugees in cleaning streets, working on government storehouses, and in building a railroad from Fortaleza to Pacatuba—35 miles.

But the evil consequences of supplying food and raiment on the pauper principle were here manifested. After a few weeks relief the

people settled into a condition of mendicancy and idleness, and would not work when able. They drew their rations and spent their time in laziness. If work had been made a condition of supplies for the healthy, great public improvements might have been made with the money given away in "charity," and the people would have been the better for it. But at the latest accounts they had increased in flesh but not in health, and to add to the horrors of the situation, a disease similar in all respects to the black plague in Europe had broken out, being fatal in its attacks after twenty-four hours.

The effect of such a famine and pestilence are, one province—Ceara—utterly ruined, its population reduced from 900,000 to 400,000, and the death rate still enormous, and probably 300,000 deaths in other provinces not fully reported. This awful mortality is said to exceed anything known in the history of the world, bearing in its worst period a higher ratio to the population than that of the great plague of London, or any of the famous pestilences of the Old World.

We have refrained from giving many of the horrible details related by the *Herald* correspondent, and have only alluded to the subject that our readers may obtain some idea of the terrible scourge which has visited one small district of country in South America. What with plague, pestilence, famine, earthquakes, war, rumors of war, and various troubles that are causing commotion in the earth, we may well reflect upon the sayings of the Savior in regard to the tokens of His coming; and those who are wise will discern the signs of the times, prepare themselves for the tribulation at hand, and take care to be watchful and ready for His appearing.

GOVERNMENT versus STATES RIGHTS.

THE *National Citizen* for February is a double sheet full of well written articles and interesting information on the Woman Suffrage question. The minutes of the Convention at Washington, in which the lady Delegates from Utah participated, are given at great length, and a prominent feature is an address by Mrs. Matilda Joselyn Gage on "United States Rights vs. States Rights," which is reported in full.

It is a very able paper, and shows, among other points, that the doctrine of State Rights was not of Southern origin, but started in New England, and that Calhoun learned its principles, not in South Carolina but at Yale College in Connecticut, from Professor Dwight, and in the law office of Theophilus Parsons in Massachusetts.

Mrs. Gage attempts to prove that the United States have created several classes of voters, and argues from this their right to confer the suffrage upon women. We think the lady is a little mistaken in her position. As Chief Justice Waite, of the U. S. Supreme Court, decided in the case of Minor vs. Happersatt, "the United States has no voters." But Mrs. Gage claims that while this is the theory, yet "the United States has practically endowed whatever class it pleased with the suffrage." In proof of this she cites the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments to the Constitution, the neutralizing effect thereof upon a statute of New York establishing a color property qualification of \$250, the restoration to the franchise of amnestied rebels, the provision that a foreigner must be one a citizen or declare his intentions before he can vote, and the law giving foreigners who have served in the army and been honorably discharged, the right to vote. Summing these up Mrs. Gage says, "Thus at the time of Judge Waite's decision, we clearly had four classes of United States voters; the black man, the amnestied man, the naturalized man, and the foreigner who fought in the Union Army."

It is strange that as clear a thinker as Mrs. Gage should fall into so grave an error. The United States, in passing the laws severally alluded to, did not make a single voter in either of the classes enumerated. There is no United States law giving foreigners who fought in the Union Army, or any one else, "the right to vote." All the provisions

referred to relate to citizenship alone, with the exception of the Constitutional Amendment declaring that the right to vote shall not be denied or abridged on account of race, color, etc. And it should be understood that this does not create voters, it simply forbids race distinctions being connected with the suffrage. The United States declare who shall be citizens, the States provide who shall be voters. Citizenship does not imply the suffrage, else women would be voters all over the United States on the same terms as men, for a woman is a citizen just as much as a man. An infant born in the United States is a citizen equally with an adult, but no citizen can vote until 21 years of age.

The United States have created several classes of citizens, but have passed no law prescribing the qualifications of voters, because the power to do this under the Constitution does not belong to Congress, but to the State Legislatures. The Fourteenth Amendment does not create voters. It simply removes a disability. It does not touch the property qualification imposed by the New York statute, but only wipes out the color line. If that law provided a tax qualification of \$250 on all male citizens, neither Congress nor the Constitution would touch it. But the provision referring specially to colored citizens was made void by the Fourteenth Amendment, this and nothing more, so far as that law was concerned.

We are as much in favor of woman suffrage as its lady advocates, and must say we have never heard or read a sound and substantial argument against it under American institutions. But we think the views of some of its supporters only weaken their cause, and that errors will never strengthen any system or give weight to any pleas that may be advanced, no matter how able and brilliant may be the advocate. We therefore point out this mistake of the talented lady from whose speech we have quoted, not as a blow from an enemy, but as support from a friend, for truth will win in the long run, and all error must yield.

And we consider it important that the Constitutional right of the PEOPLE to frame their own local laws in relation to the elective franchise should be generally understood and everywhere maintained, for there is a growing tendency to centralize power in this government; to concentrate in the hands of a few the rights and privileges of the multitude; to increase the national and lessen the local authority, and give to the Federal Government that which of right belongs to the States. This is a movement backward, a retrogression towards the monarchical and despotic system against which the fathers of our country arose in their might, and it is the duty of every lover of freedom and popular rights to do his part in maintaining the liberties of the body of the people.

TELEGRAPHIC NOTES AND CURIOSITIES.

A SINGLE message from Afghanistan to the London *Standard* recently, is said to have cost six hundred pounds—about three thousand dollars.

The American District Telegraph Company of New York City, an organization for the purpose of doing a general message and letter delivery, has so complete a system that fifty thousand letters addressed to all parts of the city can be delivered in one hour.

The London *Pall Mall Gazette* in an article on English Government Telegraphs, shows that in the year 1871 the revenue on each million messages was over ninety thousand pounds as against less than seventy thousand pounds during 1878, this without diminution in the charge. This doesn't show flatteringly for the advocates of Government or postal telegraphs.

By the use of the microphone in connection with the seismograph, by an Italian professor, the vibrations of the earth at Vesuvius have been rendered audible. The seismograph permits an attentive observer to note the vibrations of the ground; by aid of a microphone transmitter and a telephone receiver the ear can now perceive the tone of these vibrations, or, so to speak, the palpitation of the earth.