

# CHARLES SUMNER.

## HE IS INTERVIEWED BY A LADY.

What He and She Said—They Talk About Finance, Cuba, the Nigger, Alabama Claims and Annexation—Charles Dodges the Female Suffrage Dogma—"Too Many Other Big Things to Attend To"—The Lady's Ideas of His Fixing Up and Hints as to How Improvement Might be Made.

WASHINGTON, March 5, 1870.

You have had lots of the interviewing business recently. Almost everybody of note has been put through a course of interrogatories by one or other of the male Bohemians, and one would think that the business was about pretty well played out by too much usage. But I have a new notion, which I will explain thus:—I have a female friend who looked in upon me the other morning. She is a writist and a talkist of some considerable ability. She wields a pen that has made not a few people smart (not in the sense of improve), and as for her tongue, the only way to get a proper estimate of that organ is by a practical test some day or other. She is a politician, too, and a diplomat and, although young in years, can discourse learnedly about parties and finance and knotty points of our foreign relations in such a style as would astonish Premier Fish himself. You often may see her in the Senate or House gallery taking notes. One day I said to her, "Why don't you write me a sketch some day or other?" to which she quickly responded "I will."

When she called upon me the other day and said, "You asked me to write you a sketch. Upon what subject? Tell me, and I'll do it, if possible," I was just a little bit surprised.

She said, "You needn't wonder a bit. I'm in earnest."

"How would you like to interview somebody?" said I.

"Well, now, that is just one of the things I would not fancy. But who is to be my victim, or who do you intend shall be?"

"What would you think of Sumner?" I said.

"Sumner?" said she, in some surprise; "Sumner! Goodness me! of all men in the world, that Sumner! Do you know, he is the very man of all others I shouldn't like to interview. I don't know him; I don't like his looks in the Senate. There is something about him not attractive to me. But what do you want to get out of him?"

"Oh, you can ask him whatever you like, for that matter," I answered.

She remained silent for a few seconds, then commenced to laugh a little, and finally broke out merrily into—

"Well, upon my word, I believe I can muster up courage and impudence enough to undertake the thing: I will; I'll do it."

And she went and did it right off.

And here is her report of what took place, in her own language, just as she wrote it out, unchanged, *verbatim rel litteratim rel punctuatim*:—

Senator Sumner Interviewed by a Woman.

A pleasant, matronly looking colored domestic answered my ring at about ten o'clock this morning.

"Is the Senator in and disengaged?" I inquired, endeavoring by an unconcerned manner to convince myself that interviews with the "greatest Roman of them all" were as frequent and informal as the public might be led to suppose characterizes the political and social intimacy of a large New England journal.

"Yes, miss, he is in, but engaged with a gentleman. Take a seat in the library," and, sending up my card, I resigned myself to a quiet survey of the Senator's library, such as could well be comprehended from an easy chair that invited occupancy near the entrance from the hall. "Ah! a jewel of a place," an Irishman would have exclaimed. Cozey, luxurious, artistic and intellectual, lined with books and illuminated with pictures, engravings and photographs, and also with two or three paintings in oils. The carpet of green velvet was spangled over with small solitary designs in scarlet, shading out into white. The windows were heavily draped with lace, under folds of green brocade. A parlor opened from the library that looked akin in point of all comfortable appliances. What does the Senator read? The bookcase nearest me was devoted entirely to the poets. The heroic anthems and stately strains of the old time singers may have lent a helping hand in fashioning the lofty and scholastic rhetoric of their owner. I had waited but a moment or two when the domestic returned.

"Mr. Sumner says, will you walk up to his room?"

I answered in person, and, finding the door to his sanctum wide open, stayed my steps involuntarily before entering. Being at once observed by the senator he arose, bowed, and, motioning to an easy chair not far removed from his desk, asked me to be seated. A gentleman was in deep conversation with him on the Chinese question, tangled and mysterious as that may be, which elicited the expression of great regret from Mr. Sumner upon the death of Mr. Burlingame, whose relations with China had been of such a valuable and successful character. This conversation continued for some minutes, which gave me opportunity for photographing the Senator and his surroundings personally.

Mr. Sumner reverses the adage that "distance lends enchantment to the view," for he is vastly more pleasing in his appearance in a personal interview than as seen from the galleries of the Senate Chamber. His hair, very abundant and well glorified with the hoary element, gives evidence of having a character of its own, distinct from the disciplining power of brush and comb. The refinement of his life and kindness of his heart are easily discerned in the outline of his face, while in the Senate Chamber the power and obstinacy of the man hold prominence over both. His dress is gray, with a long wrapper of gray cloth lined with scarlet and frugally ornamented with a narrow braid.

### THE SANCTUM.

Here, even more than in the library or up the stairway, the walls of which are hung with dim and ancient looking paintings, suggesting old masters and commanding reverence, the picture mania holds higher carnival. The hanging committee of the National Academy of Design might here learn something of the science of economizing space. Everywhere, except flat on the floor and on the ceiling overhead, pictures are given a place. On the doors, sides and fronts of bookcases, on the walls, over mantel and desks, not an available space remains unappropriated. No paintings are here or pictures in color; all are engravings from steel, with, perhaps, a few photographs. Portraits of men in robes of state, in cowl and gown, in worldly and clerical garb of all ages and phases of eminent life. Then there are engravings of historical legislative assemblies, of noble structures, of marvellous architectural achievement, the world over, such engravings as tempt the taste of the cultivated in the best art stores of Europe. But nowhere nor anywhere did a woman's face smile at me or frown at me from the simple walnut, gold rimmed frames all around me. Men, men, men everywhere; hard, eager, intense, scholarly, scientific, business and statesmanlike, done up in steel and caught with a trick of the sun with the sunshine left out. It is generally conceded, I think, that the Senator has an eye for womanly beauty, and recognizes without aid the difference between ordinary looking women and the "splendid creatures." But according to what rule of art does he execute such masculine clairvoyance as here demonstrated? Would it not be a splendid stroke of policy on the part of the woman's rights movement to enter his lair some Senate-keeping afternoon and substitute in lieu of Jerome Napoleon's face that of piquant Anna Dickinson, and supersede some old monk's and alchemist's with the salutary one of Lucretia Mott, the classical face of Mrs. Stanton, the businesslike but kindly one of Miss Anthony, or the modest, womanly appealingness of Lucy Stone? They might not possibly win for their cause the weighty eloquence of his speech by their united excellences, but they might disturb the serenity of his conscience on this matter, which would be one consolation.

But there were other things than pictures there—an open coal fire, and books and papers and pamphlets on racks, in cases, on the floor, on and under tables, on desk and sofa. The carpet of Brussels, in geometrical patterns, evinced precision. The large rug in Turkish colors and design bespoke indulgent luxury. A small bronze clock ticked softly on the mantel, closely surrounded with bronze ornaments and small objects of vertu. The furniture was of black walnut, the windows were shaded with Nottingham lace, subdued at top by lambrequins of crimson reps, and plain and illuminated transparencies leaned against the windows. There was no odor of cigar smoke, and, despite the litter of literature, an air of tidiness and snugness prevailed throughout.

At length the gentleman visitor arose to go, and went. Then turning to me, with an expression of wondering curiosity and good humor irradiating his countenance, the Senator signified his willingness to listen to what I had to say.

"There are several topics, Senator," I began, "of much general interest now, that I would like to hear you express your views upon. Perhaps the most vital one at this moment to the country is the financial question. You undoubtedly have an idea how the affair is to be best solved?"

SUMNER—Yes, it is a question of great moment, and I have prepared a speech upon that subject which I deliver in the Senate this morning. It will probably occupy an hour, and if you can attend you will obtain a more comprehensive knowledge of my views than I can well give you now.

"I am glad to hear it, Senator," said I. "There are diversities of opinions in regard to the Cuban struggle that might be harmonized if a better understanding of circumstances prevailed."

SUMNER—Very true. Very much ignorance prevails in regard to the relations of the United States toward Spain and Cuba, and much disaffection is

manifested toward the administration because it does not acknowledge the belligerency of Cuba.

"Your sympathies are with the Cubans, are they not?" I asked.

SUMNER—My sympathies are always with all people struggling for independence. The time has gone by for Spain to exercise her past dominion over Cuba.

"Upon what ground, Senator, do you oppose the recognition by this government of the Cuban struggle? What, indeed, must they accomplish for themselves in order to be acknowledged as belligerents?"

SUMNER—They have everything to accomplish as yet. They have an army, a camp. There is an insurrection in the interior of the island. But they hold no city nor town of note. They have no port. It would be quite absurd for us to grant them belligerent rights under such questionable circumstances. The insurrection, in point of importance, might be compared to the trouble given us by the Seminole Indians chieftained by Osceola. But that is longer ago than you can remember. They were encamped in the glades of Florida, and it was with difficulty and great expense that they were overcome. But Great Britain had no idea of extending to them the rights of the laws of war. Perhaps it would be better to compare the disturbance in Cuba to the depredations committed in Russia by roving bands of Circassians on the borders of Euxine Sea.

"In case the United States should acknowledge the belligerency of Cuba would you apprehend positive difficulty with Spain?"

SUMNER—It is possible Spain would wage war against us.

"Has she power to do us much harm?"

SUMNER—No doubt but that eventually her efforts would suffer defeat; but not until incalculable harm were done our commerce. In discussing this matter with a gentleman not long since I made an estimate of the probable damage we should suffer (in case of war with Spain) at five hundred millions of dollars, and he thought my estimate a low one, placing his estimate at a thousand millions. And in either case it is quite evident that Cuba does not merit from us the incurrence of such expense, to say nothing of the human lives that would necessarily be sacrificed.

"A conversation held with you by some newspaper correspondent not long since upon this subject discloses some facts of note in regard to the relation of Spain to Cuba and an adjustment of the difficulties between them. Is that reported interview to be relied upon?"

SUMNER—I did not read it, but was told that an interview had been reported by some one purporting to have been given by previous invitation and the like. I can only say that the report was a sheer fabrication, no such interview having been had and no such assertions were by me authorized. I am really made angry at times by the things I am made to say in the newspapers; but it is quite impossible for me to read them all and correct the false impressions conveyed. (The Senator alluded to the Bohemian organ.)

"In regard to the future of the Africans, Senator, do you think the election of colored men to high offices, as in the case of Revels, will become a fixed fact?"

SUMNER—That will depend entirely upon their education and capabilities. As I have told the colored people, it lies within themselves. At present I see no reason why their future election to positions of trust and honor will not be of frequent occurrence.

"I suppose none of the Senators who never, never would sit in legislation with a negro have resigned?"

SUMNER—No, no one has resigned yet—a light smile passing over his face and a bit of irony creeping into his voice.

"There is considerable talk about the annexation of territory to our country. Do you deem an extension of our borders advisable, and would our present system of government continue to prevail as satisfactorily as now?"

SUMNER—I know of no reason why it should not.

"Even now, Mr. Sumner, it is the opinion of many that the interests of the Pacific States are so opposed to those of the East that a breach will ensue, and the government be divided with the Rocky Mountains as dividing line."

SUMNER—I apprehend no such danger. I believe the republic to be immortal and the Pacific Railroad a bond binding the East and the West indissolubly.

"In the possibility of annexation of Canada or Mexico, which do you think most desirable?"

SUMNER—That of Canada, because of the likeness of the people to ours. You will find Canadians very much as we are. But if you should visit Mexico you would find but little in common between us and Mexicans. They are not harmonious as a nation, and a union with them we need not be particularly anxious about. The annexation of Mexico will probably occur quite as soon as it is desired.

"Speaking of Canada reminds me of our English difficulty, is there any solution as yet of the Alabama claims question?"

SUMNER—Nothing has been developed of late.

"Do you expect a satisfactory settlement of the affair?"

SUMNER—Yes, I hope for one.

"Senator, there is another subject that has interested us in the past, and does doubly at the present time. And that is suffrage—what it should be based upon. Now that everybody, Chinese included, are likely to have a hand in governing us as well as being governed by us, does it not seem to you that something more than citizenship should be required for the endowment of the elective franchise?"

SUMNER—Perhaps you are thinking of an educational basis. Desirable as that might be, it is quite inexpedient, considering the course we have pursued towards the people of the South. It is possible that in the future some regulations may be made in regard to the exercise of suffrage more rigid than now attain, without a conflicting of duties. But that is something that time only can decide.

"What is your opinion of woman suffrage, Senator?" The question was put innocently enough, but it was evidently regarded by Mr. Sumner as being exceedingly funny. He did not laugh outright, but his face blossomed into a full blown smile. He looked about the room as if half expecting the advent of a small army of the strong-minded, ran his fingers through his hair, changed his attitude perceptibly, and seemed to be electrified with a full charge of good humor. I was hoping for something wonderfully gratifying to write to the *Revolution*. It was possible for him to say that he expected to sit in the nation's councils with Mrs. Stanton. On this topic he was non-committal as a tombstone.

"I don't think much about the possibility of it," he ventured. "So many other things consume my attention. What do you think of the early achievement of the efforts being made to obtain it?"

"Oh, sir, I suppose the very general discussion of the question omens success, either partial or entire. I am obliged to you, Senator, for this interview."

SUMNER—Not at all, Miss—. Good morning. Perhaps I should not have cut short this interview so abruptly had he not turned from a Senator into a Yankee. I was not prepared to be questioned, especially upon a subject in which I was so much in the dark. Retreat was the better part of valor, and, halting a moment in the hall to look at a statue—a woman in marble—I left with a softer place in my heart for the great Senator than all of Lent spent in the senate gallery would have produced.