

Judging only by the present attitude of parties it might be supposed there was no difference of opinion among the American people, but that we were all in harmony on every subject of national thought. No strife appears between parties, no opposition of principles; but party activity is all given to striving which one may outdo the other by going to greater length in the assertion of some common and accepted view of public policy. Such definite issue as we have hitherto had, in which one grand division of the people said absolutely yes, and the other as absolutely no, to some proposition, does not exist. Here is the case of Cuba before us. It is the present vital topic and the only subject of national deliberation that has arisen in the Presidency of General Grant. If we suppose the President studying party utterance to know how on this subject he may shun the advice of those desiring the failure of his government and best act in sympathy with his supporters, we must suppose him in a sore puzzle; for on one hand are the democrats, who, coming together to say their bitterest thing about him, can ejaculate no worse gall than that he delays the recognition of Cuba to take his holiday, and on the other are the republican orators of the last session of Congress denouncing Spanish dominion in the island with fluent energy, and the whole republican press that regards recognition as a foregone conclusion, and seems only to wait that the government may open its eyes on an inevitable necessity. On the Alabama claims there is the same agreement. No democratic orator in his extravagance against England will state our case more strongly than did the radical Sumner, and the Fenian democrats themselves are not more positive for the rights of American citizens abroad than are the strongest republicans in the Senate and the House. Here is even the radical doctrine of negro suffrage that the democrats are taking to as if it were their own invention.

How are we to explain this nullity of political difference? Are we so near to the standard of national right as our century sees it? Have we so purged our social system of evil that there is no grand vice, no gigantic iniquity, oppression or injustice for the destruction of which the enthusiastic and earnest will gather on one side with resolute will, and the interested assemble on the other for equally resolute defence? For differences that are merely political the people do not care. A subject to go deep with them, to take hold of the very life, must have in it an appeal simply to the good or bad of human nature. And a people having such a history as ours and bred as our people have been, with revolution in the very fibre of the brain, acting less from tradition and precedent than from philosophic standards of right, will stop at no extremity in the plucking out an abuse though protected by all law and consecrated in the prejudice of generations. Just in proportion as a people bestir themselves with energy in view of great argument so are they passive and indifferent to small disputes and permit these to fall to professional mongers of such ware. In this is the explanation of our present position. Slavery was an evil so great that by comparison with it we seem to be

without a national injustice. Since the Revolutionary War all our political agitation has had more or less direct reference to slavery, and in the last thirty years it was the one topic that was under everything. Having accomplished the destruction of that institution the people have dropped out of the political arena and are already brooding an onslaught at some other part of our system that, perhaps, is not yet recognized as an evil. Our grandfathers, be it remembered, were quite satisfied with the humanity of slavery. Meanwhile the platform-makers and orator puffs have the field, and these merely follow one another up and down the gamut of political dispute in appeal to popular favor.

Our political contests will for some time partake of this auctioneering character of higher and higher bids of successive party leaders on the same subject. In England we see Disraeli and Gladstone agreeing in the necessity of reform. Disraeli takes Gladstone's place by adopting his politics and Gladstone gets it again by promising more than he had ventured upon before, only, perhaps, to be outbid by Disraeli in the future. We are moving in the same line. In this system there is always the guarantee of a certain social progress, since party leaders, caring mainly for place and power, stand on their good behavior before the nation, and, studying the wishes of the people, endeavor to secure them, even though they point toward honesty in office. In the present agreement of all parties on the main points of our foreign policy, as the recognition of Cuba, the status of our citizens abroad and the Alabama claims, those especially interested may see that it is the opinion of the shrewd ones of both parties that nobody can go so far in the assertion of our right on these points as to be beyond the people, and this may warn those who would take sides against us on these points that they would have to oppose the American people as a unit.