

" AMERICAN COMMERCE.

" We also see a like division in each party upon the question of the re-establishment of American commerce, crippled and almost destroyed by the hostile acts of Great Britain during the rebellion, most vividly illustrated at the breaking out of the war between Prussia and France, when the President, as an administration measure, by a formal message recommended that our merchants have liberty to purchase the iron steamships of the belligerents which might be otherwise locked up by blockade in their ports to be navigated under our flag, thus give employment to our sailors, and to cheapen the transportation of our exports. We then saw the singular spectacle in Congress of leading Democrats, one, an old Whig abolitionist, representing the Democracy of New York city striking hands with the Republican tariff men of Maine and Pennsylvania, as well in the Senate as in the House, to talk against time so that the waning hours of the session might expire, to prevent the passage of a Republican administration measure to relieve American commerce. Thus we have seen that upon quite every issue that once divided the two great parties, either differences exist among their partisans or that each party has substantially changed its ground, one upholding that which the other formerly denied, the other denying that which it had asserted.

" ENGLAND AND THE ALABAMA QUESTION.

" We have also seen that the Republican party has adjusted all the questions raised by the war, so far as they affect the internal polity of the government, and so far as itself is concerned. There now remains to it only to adjust the great international and foreign questions that were evolved by our late terrible civil contest. And as we have reconstructed the States lately destroyed by the rebellion, so we should reconstruct our commerce, likewise destroyed in the same war. As we have adjusted the claims of our citizens for damages done in the war by our own Government, so far as we have thought them just and equitable and not tainted with rebellion, so we should now adjust the claims of our citizens and the claims of our nation upon those nations who took advantage of our crippled condition to show a hostile spirit; followed by unfriendly acts. The chief offender against the national dignity and honour in this regard is the Government of Great Britain. True, imperial France was quite as early in the recognition of the belligerent rights of the rebels, quite as unfriendly in its spirit—in its attack upon the neighbouring republic of Mexico; but in the latter it failed to do us any injury, and the former was followed by no act of which we could justly complain. No rebel cruiser was fitted out or entertained and refitted in any French port. No pirate was let loose by Napoleon to prey upon our commerce. Upon what are popularly known as the *Alabama* claims I entertain some views of the grounds upon which they may rest different from those usually put forth as the basis of our grievances. I do not now, nor should I ever, propose to argue the question whether England was too early or sufficiently late in her recognition of the belligerent rights of the South. I hold, with the President, that the question of time for recognizing the belligerency of contending parties is one to be settled by each nation for itself, and no other nation has any proper ground for complaint of that determination. Nor do I care to examine whether the *Alabama* and *Shenandoah* might or might not have been kept in port by more vigilance or increased activity of the British law officers, or by more stringent municipal laws. Admit, for the sake of the argument, that in that regard Great Britain did each act in conformity with the laws of nations. Yet it will not be denied that afterwards the *Alabama* and *Shenandoah* were received in British ports, their officers fêted, toasted and dined, and the vessels refitted, provisioned and supplied with the necessary means of continuing their warfare upon our commerce, which was clearly a violation of international laws. Nor will it be denied that the Government of England was bitterly hostile to the Union during the whole prosecution of the war, and was only restrained by her fears of the results, and not by love of the United States, from actively taking sides in that contest by acknowledging the Confederacy. No man can doubt that her Government heartily desired that her only successful commercial rival should be crushed. Nor can we look upon the consolidation of her provinces upon the north of us into a new nation called a Dominion, from which unchecked raids were made upon our defenceless borders while the war was raging, as other than a hostile movement, designed to cripple us, in case the South should be successful, by creating an unfriendly nation on the north of us, to be in accord with a hostile nation on the south. By the valour of our soldiers and the