

THE COLLEGE PROFESSORS AND FREE SPEECH.

"O freedom, first delight of human kind!"

Under an arbitrary or despotic government, the enjoyment of political liberty is impossible. But, in the United States of America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, celebrated in song and story as a country where one is subject only to fixed laws, and defended by them from encroachments upon natural or acquired rights, we had always supposed that every citizen was able to follow his own impulses, desires or inclinations, and that he was "free to fling whate'er he felt, not fearing, into words."

But a decided change has taken place in public opinion of promiscuous free speech since the United States has become an influential factor in the foreign policy and politics of Europe; and a very recent indication of this change is well worthy of consideration by cosmopolitans and lovers of true freedom. The story is a remarkable one, and, lest we should do injustice to our good Republican neighbours, we prefer to let one of their leading journals state its cause of quarrel with the learned college professors of a boasted land of freedom. The New York "Journal of Commerce" says:—

"A few days ago there was a meeting in Chicago in the interest of the armed enemies of the United States, and Professor Laughlin and Professor Hale of the University of Chicago made the leading speeches on that occasion, and said a good many things that they had better not have said. Now it is announced that the University authorities have issued a circular to the faculty indicating the propriety of their guarding their overworked mouths on public occasions. Prof. Hale indignantly asks: "If we cannot talk on national questions, what can we discuss in public?" We respectfully suggest to him that it is not necessary for him and his colleagues to discuss anything in public except the things that they are supposed to be masters of. Prof. Hale is a very eminent teacher of Latin; it is only as such that he is in the faculty of the University of Chicago, and if he were not in that faculty he would not probably have been asked to address the meeting of Filipino sympathizers. It was his relation to the University of Chicago, which rested exclusively upon his knowledge of Latin, that afforded him an opportunity to denounce the government of his country, and he could not but compromise the institution in some degree by what he said.

It is no great hardship to a man whose only claim upon the public attention is his connection with the public service or a public institution to remember that he has no right to misrepresent or to compromise the institution of which he is a very small part. He has no right to go before the public in his official or representative capacity and then insist on his right to express himself in his individual capacity. The latest announcement of the University authorities is that the professors may say what they please, but they must not be understood to speak for the University; they must be held to express only their individual views. But Professors Laughlin and Hale would not have been invited to speak for the Filipinos but

for their connection with the University, and no university can escape being compromised if its professors are socialists or populists or sympathizers with a public enemy."

So the college professors are not at liberty to open their "overworked mouths" on any national question, and this very prominent New York paper cruelly and somewhat offensively suggests that the learned men who are entrusted with the education of the youth of a great nation should not discuss anything in public "except the things that they are supposed to be masters of." What is to be said of the fitness of Professor Schurman for his special mission to the Philippines?

But if the college professors think otherwise, assuredly they may not be blamed. We should be sorry to see them encouraging sedition, treason or rebellion against the Government of the land they live in. At the same time, it becomes a matter of the most serious nature if the recent revolution of history in the United States has not only destroyed the Monroe doctrine, but has swept away the liberty of free speech in a great country. We decline to subscribe to the belief of the New York journal that simply because national questions form no part of his college work, the professor has no right to utter in public what is in his mind. We prefer to regard this journalistic effort to gag the "overworked mouths" of the college professors as a new and devilish scheme whereby, for political reasons, it is hoped to prevent those mouths from giving utterance to noble thoughts in noble language, to avert the possibility of the masses being impressed by the views of the educated thinkers among them.

No college is likely to be hurt by the occasional appearance of one of its professors in the role of an exponent of educated public opinion; and the course pursued by the New York "Journal of Commerce" in seeking to restrain Professor Hale from expressing sympathy with the people of the Philippines is not consistent with the reputation of a liberty loving journal. However, we are pleased to note that the writer of the article we have taken the liberty to review admits that he is not quite prepared to advocate the complete muzzling of the learned professions. We find he prefaces his attack upon promiscuous free speech by saying: "It is of course a delicate question how far the right of a college professor to utter **everything** in his mind is to be restrained, but it can hardly be denied that some restraint ought to be applied to professors if they do not have enough sense of propriety to exercise it voluntarily."

Of course, some restraint ought to be placed upon any thoughtful, learned man who talks to his countrymen on national questions in the language of truth. Such a man is dangerous to practical politicians, and useless for party purposes, and must be gagged without further delay.