

THE SATURDAY READER.

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"HALF A MILLION OF MONEY."

written by the author of "Barbara's History" for *All the Year Round*, edited by CHARLES DICKENS.

NOTICE.

ALL the back numbers of the *READER* are now in print, and we shall be happy to forward them to any subscribers who may need them to make up their sets.

Any person getting up a Club of five will be entitled to a free copy of the *READER*, during the existence of the Club; and if a yearly Club of ten, to a free copy of the paper, and a handsomely bound copy (two volumes) of Garnett's *History of Canada*, which is published at \$3.00 by R. Worthington, Publisher and Bookseller, next door to Post Office, Montreal.

ENGLAND AND THE UNITED STATES.

WILL IT BE WAR?

THERE are rumours from over the ocean of war between the United States and England. We cannot believe in such an event, especially as the consequence of disputes about the destruction of American vessels and property by the cruisers of the late Southern confederacy. At the worst, the question is one for negotiation, and not for arbitrament by the sword. Similar claims made by the American Government against France and other European nations were not settled until after years of refusal and delay; and the same was the case with respect to claims of the same kind advanced by the United States against several European governments. Our republican neighbours are generally allowed to be a pretty shrewd people in matters wherein their individual interests are concerned; but in public affairs they are often supposed by foreigners to do exactly what they ought not to do, when the question admits of doubt. In short they are expected to act on the principle of "the rule of contraries," in such cases. We have a different

opinion of them. We are of opinion that in all their dealings, private or public, they look sharply after their own profit as much as any people in the world. The common belief among Englishmen is that their wish by day and dream by night is to go to war with us. We do not mean to say that there is not much of ill will not only expressed, but felt, by many Americans against England, or perhaps it were more correct to say, against Englishmen; nevertheless that feeling is not quite the dominating passion which it is so often described to be by our travellers and newspaper scribes. We have heard and read of the injustice of which the United States were guilty in attacking England in the very agony of the great struggle with Napoleon in 1812. But some of us do not know, and many of us choose to forget, that there had been bitter provocation on our own part, and considerable forbearance on theirs, for some years previous to the breaking out of hostilities on that occasion. No one will accuse Captain Basil Hall of having cherished any special love for Americans or American institutions; indeed, after he published his well-known work on the country, he was accused of being the libeller of both, which he was not. Now, Captain Hall, who served on the North American station immediately before the war of 1812, has expressed his astonishment at the patience with which the merchants and shipmasters of the United States bore the conduct of British officers in interfering with their trade in the most annoying manner, of which he mentions several instances. It is a mode of proceeding which the one country would in these days no more pursue than the other would permit. But, be that as it may, our business is not with the past but the present. Can we for a moment imagine that, just emerged from a struggle that has left them laden with an enormous debt, with their commerce in a feverish state which may end either in disaster or renewed vigor, with their revenue in anything but a satisfactory condition, with the rebellion in the South only just extinguished in the blood of its inhabitants, with everything to gain by peace and nothing to gain by war, but the satisfaction of a blind hatred; is it to be imagined, we say, that under these circumstances, the government of the United States is seeking a cause of quarrel with England? We repeat our unbelief in the report. They may make demands for the redress of real or supposed injuries; but they are well aware that they are not in a condition to attack a first rate power like England. A proverb of somewhat doubtful wisdom says that an unsuccessful insurrection strengthens a government; but if so, it weakens a nation. The thousands of men slain, and the millions of property destroyed, in the recent civil contest have not surely added to the strength of the United States. They have other business on hand than to go to war. They have to reorganise and conciliate the South, to re-establish their commerce, to get back their shipping, and to cultivate their farms

so long left waste by the absence of their owners on the battle-field. We agree with those who insist that the true sentiments of the American people are not to be found in the windy declamation of stump speeches or in the sensational columns of such newspapers as the *New York Herald*. We are too apt to judge our neighbours by these superficial symptoms, rather than by the sober second thoughts which really influence the administration of the country, and direct its policy. To the Englishman more particularly the American is an enigma which he in vain attempts to solve, and he contents himself therefore with deciding that he is unintelligible, just as Lady Mary Montague explained the eccentricities of the Hervey family by declaring that mankind consisted of men, women and Herveys. After Mrs. Trollope's famous book on American manners appeared, and other English travellers had written similar works, a noted American author published, by way of rejoinder, a satire which he styled, we believe, "John Bull in America," in which he described a cockney travelling in the United States. Among other adventures, in which the caricature is clever but over-drawn, the Londoner once finds himself benighted on a prairie, and obliged to seek refuge in a lonely shanty, inhabited by a wild looking Yankee and his family. He is hospitably entertained, but passes the night in great tribulation and fear, expecting to be murdered in his sleep, if he were to indulge in that balmy luxury. Departing next morning, and having rode some few miles, he saw his late host pursuing him and making signs that he wished to speak to him. This added wings to his flight; but at last the owner of the shanty overtook him, and—handed him his watch, which he had left behind in his confusion and terror. This, of course, is marked with the exaggeration of caricature; but are we certain that we, ourselves, do not often take an equally false view of the American character? We freely admit that they are a clever, sensible people; but still, there is no absurdity of which we do not consider them capable. For instance, we think that in the existing position of their affairs, they are ready to rush into a war not only with England but with France as well. They tell us so themselves, will be the response. But it must not be forgotten that those among them who thus speak and write are no less impatient to "fight all creation," to destroy all the navies of Europe by the use of monitors that cannot cross the Atlantic, and to sever Ireland from the British Empire by means so ludicrously inadequate to the proposed end, that derision at the folly of the attempt is lost in pity and amazement.

If all mankind, minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.—*Jno. Stuart Mill, M. P., on "Liberty."*