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**LESLIE STEPHEN**

(1832-1904)



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Version 1

*The Collected Works of*  
**LESLIE STEPHEN**



*By Delphi Classics, 2026*

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*Collected Works of Leslie Stephen*



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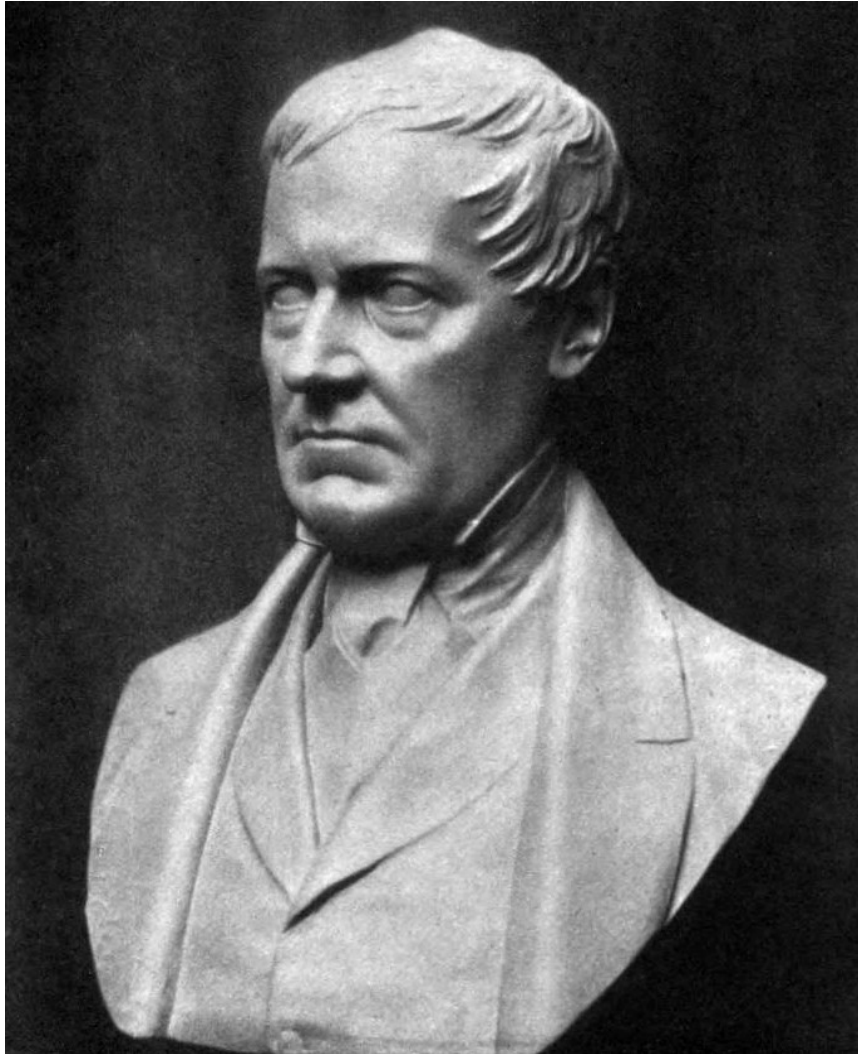
## The Books



*Kensington, London, c. 1840 — Leslie Stephen's birthplace*



*42 Hyde Park Gate, Kensington, London — Stephen was born at a house on Kensington Gore, later 42 Hyde Park Gate.*



*He was the son of Sir James Stephen (1789-1859), who served as the British Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1836 to 1847.*

## The “Times” on the American War (1865)



### A HISTORICAL STUDY

Born in Kensington on 28 November 1832, Sir Leslie Stephen came from a distinguished intellectual family. His father was Colonial Undersecretary of State and a noted abolitionist. The family had belonged to the Clapham Sect, the early nineteenth-century group of mainly evangelical Christian social reformers. At his father's house, he saw a good deal of the Macaulays, James Spedding, Sir Henry Taylor and Nassau Senior. Young Leslie was educated at Eton College, King's College London and Trinity Hall, Cambridge, where he graduated with a Masters degree in 1857. He was elected a fellow of Trinity Hall in 1854 and became a junior tutor in 1856.

Three years later, he was ordained, but his study of philosophy, together with his perception of the religious controversies surrounding the publication of *On the Origin of Species* (1859) by Charles Darwin, led to the loss of his faith in 1862 and in 1864 he resigned from his positions at Cambridge and moved to London. In his spare time, Stephen participated in athletics and mountaineering. He also contributed to the *Saturday Review*, *Fraser*, *Macmillan*, the *Fortnightly* and several other periodicals.

Published at the conclusion of the American Civil War, Stephen's first book was *The “Times” on the American War: A Historical Study* (1865). It is a sharp, 105-page critique of the London *The Times* newspaper for its consistently inaccurate and biased reporting on the conflict. Having travelled to the United States in 1863 to witness the war firsthand, Stephen returned convinced of the Union's (the North's) “righteousness”. He used this book to dismantle systematically English arguments that favoured the Confederacy. He accused *The Times* of “total ignorance of the quarrel,” claiming its coverage was not only inaccurate but “criminal” in its failure to properly inform the British public. In the essay, Stephen argues that the newspaper's portrayal of the Union as a “military despotism” damaged Britain's international reputation and poisoned its relationship with the United States. The text highlights the discrepancy between the newspaper's failed “prophecies” regarding the war's outcome and the actual reality that Stephen had observed in Virginia.

*The “Times” on the American War* was written during a period of transition in Stephen's own life; having recently resigned his clerical tutorship at Cambridge due to his growing agnosticism, he turned to “higher journalism” to make his mark on public debate. The book remains a significant primary source for studying Victorian-era media and British public opinion during the American Civil War.

THE "TIMES"  
ON THE  
AMERICAN WAR:

A HISTORICAL STUDY.

By L. S.

LONDON:  
WILLIAM RIDGWAY, 169, PICCADILLY, W.  
MDCCLXV.

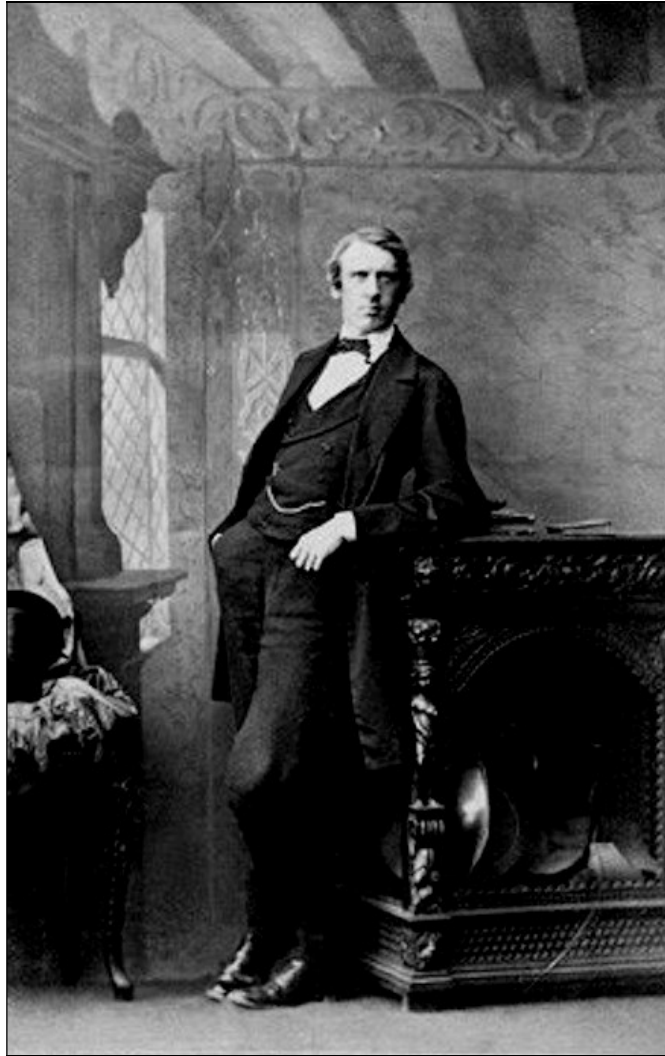
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*Price One Shilling and Sixpence.*

*The first edition's title page*

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*Stephen as a young man, 1861*

## I. — THE “TIMES” ON AMERICAN AFFAIRS.



IN DISCUSSING THE causes of the Crimean war, Mr. Kinglake gives a prominent place to the agency of the Times. He does not decide whether the Times was the master or the slave of the British people, whether it prompted their decisions, or merely divined them by a happy instinct. The coincidence of sentiment between the Times and common sentiment is explicable on either hypothesis. A story, however, is related by Mr. Kinglake, which, if it is to be accepted as authentic, would tend to clear up the mystery. The Times, he says, used to employ a shrewd, idle clergyman, whose duty was to hang about in places of public resort, to listen neither to the pre-eminently foolish nor to the pre-eminently wise, but to wait till some common and obvious thought was repeated in many places by many average men all unacquainted with each other. That thought was the prize he sought for, and brought home to his employers. Once in possession of this knowledge, they again employed able writers to enforce this opinion by arguments certain to fall upon willing ears. The Times was meanwhile regarded by ordinary men and women as a mysterious entity, a concrete embodiment of the power known in the abstract as “public opinion.” As Mr. Kinglake says, men prefixed to its name such adjectives as showed “that they regarded the subject of their comments in the light of an active sentient being, having a life beyond the span of mortal men, gifted with reason, armed with a cruel strength, endued with some of the darkest of human passions, but clearly “liable hereafter to the direst penalty of sin.” They supposed it, I may add, to be in possession of a political knowledge profounder than the knowledge of any private individual, if not than the knowledge of statesmen, and acquiesced in its arrogating the right of speaking in the name of the English people.

It is, however, notorious that no part of the power wielded by the Times is derived from any respect for its consistency or its unselfish advocacy of principles. And this follows naturally if we accept as substantially accurate the account given by Mr. Kinglake of the process by which its opinions are determined. A thought common to the great mass of the educated English classes must in all cases be a tolerably obvious one: if it refers to domestic matters which are familiar in all their bearings to the majority of educated men, it will probably be marked by shrewd commonsense; when thousands of Englishmen agree in thinking that the suffrage is unfairly distributed, or that trade is oppressively taxed, they are probably right. Their opinions are, at least, the result of an operation which may, without a palpable misnomer, be described as thought. In such cases, the Times, in concentrating their opinions into one focus, will adopt a policy which, if not resting upon very exalted considerations, is at least dictated by homely good sense, and not marked by utter ignorance. But the case is widely different when we come to foreign politics. English ignorance in such matters is proverbial. The name of America five years ago called up to the ordinary English mind nothing but a vague cluster of associations, compounded of Mrs. Trollope, Martin Chuzzlewit, and Uncle Tom’s Cabin. A few flying reminiscences of disputes about territory, and a few commonplaces about democracy, made up what we were pleased to call our opinions. Most people were as ignorant of American history since the revolution as of the history of the Chinese empire, and of American geography as of the geography of Central Africa. Our utterances on American affairs might have the external form of judgment; they were, in substance, mere random assertions about

unknown quantities. Now, the *Times*, by the law of its being, would have to be the mere echo of these sham decisions. The honest British public confidently laid down the law, like a Dogberry giving judgment in a Chancery suit, and the *Times* stood by as a skilful reporter to dress its blundering dogmas in the language of political philosophy. The British public talked about “Yankee snobbishness;” the *Times* translated its words into solemn nothings about “American democracy,” and the public thought it had said rather a good thing.

I wish to trace some of the consequences of this peculiar process, by which a newspaper transmutes our rubbish into a kind of Britannia metal, and obtains our sympathy because we have ourselves provided the raw material, and our admiration because it is worked up into such sparkling tinsel. The very first necessity for this dexterous shuffling is an affectation of absolute infallibility; a true account of the *Times* would run like Prince Henry’s description of Poins, “Thou art a blessed fellow to think as every man thinks, never a man’s thought in the world keeps the roadway better than thine.” But it would never suit our modern Poins to be praised for merely keeping the roadway; he must be credited with also pointing it out; and, to substantiate his claims of guiding the English people instead of merely divining the path which they will take, he must naturally affect more than mortal wisdom. His claim to be followed is that he is always right. And the *à posteriori* proof that the *Times* has been right harmonizes beautifully with this *à priori* claim to confidence. Everybody, it says, agrees with us; therefore we are right; everybody always has agreed with us, therefore we have been always right. The *Times*, like the figure-head of a ship, always leads public opinion; and, as we have always been following it, it must have been going in the same direction. The beauty of this is that the *Times* in arrogating infallibility and consistency contrives to insinuate delicate flattery to its constituents. No one can deny a claim to consistency founded upon perfect agreement with his own past opinions.

So far, then, the *Times* is only to be accused of passing off false gems for true, affecting all the time to be a profound and an honest connoisseur. But a little reflection will show, what this pamphlet is intended to illustrate by a striking example — namely, the danger to which this course exposes us. In our ignorance of the cause of some great foreign convulsion, we judge of it partly by the way in which it affects our interests, and partly in accordance with certain traditional prejudices. There must be something radically wrong in a war which affects our supplies of cotton; and we cannot credit a race who chew tobacco and wear bowie knives with any heroic virtues. Judgments really determined by shallow prejudices can only be supported by constant perversion of the facts. Ignorant people, even though they affect to be infallible, can pervert facts with genuine unconsciousness. They deduce their premises from their conclusions without the least guess that they are illogical. It is only necessary to fix the attention upon the set of facts that make for the side they have taken, and to shut their eyes to all others. Thus the next step of our infallible expounder of national opinions is to lay down authoritatively a theory, intended not so much to be accurate, as to serve as some justification for that which has come by a kind of accident to be the popular opinion. The evil which follows from this is obvious. The American naturally believes that the *Times* is, in fact, the authorized mouthpiece of English sentiment. He credits it with all the mysterious knowledge which it claims to possess, and assumes that in listening to it he hears the matured opinions of the most educated and reflective minds of England. Finding a complete perversion of his case, he naturally again attributes it to malice rather than ignorance. He cannot believe that such pretended wisdom covers so much emptiness; and he

attributes to wilful falsehood what is at worst a desire to flatter its readers, overriding a love of severe historical truth. Our American thus assumes very falsely, though very naturally, that the English people hate him, abuse him, refuse to see his merits, and knowingly accept the vilest caricatures of his purpose; he does not understand that we have stumbled into mistakes, and that our blunders have been pampered and exaggerated by our flatterers. He would naturally reply by abuse to our abuse; even if his own press had not already acted with as much recklessness and want of principle as the *Times*. And so the good feeling, for which should all wish, is hopelessly destroyed for a time.

In explaining the process more in detail, I hope I may render some slight service towards producing a better understanding. I cannot see the force of a late piteous appeal of the *Times* “to let bygones be bygones.” It is sufficiently impudent after abusing a man incessantly, and being mistaken in all you have said, to request him to forget all about it. “I have been spitting upon your Jewish gaberdine, calling you misbeliever, cutthroat dog, and other pretty names for four years; but now — I freely forgive you.”

This, however, I leave the *Times* to reconcile with its own lofty sense of dignity. I wish bygones to be bygones, as between the English and American peoples, for I think that each has misunderstood the other. The most effective way of securing this result would be to throw our Jonahs overboard, to upset the credit of the mischief-makers who have interfered between us, and to withdraw our countenance from the blustering impostor who has been speaking all this time in our name without any due authority. Two men sometimes quarrel because each has been barked at by his neighbour’s cur, and fancies that his neighbour has set it on. The best way of making peace is to prove that, after all, it is nothing but a dog barking.

## II. — THE “TIMES” AS A PROPHET.



IF A MAN may be pardoned for prophesying at all in political matters, he may be pardoned for making frequent blunders. No human intelligence can unravel the complicated play of forces by which the fate of nations is determined; and yet much may be learned from a man's prophecies. They show us by implication what view he takes of the present, though they may throw very little light on the future. If a man should tell us that Heenan was certain to beat Sayers because he had drawn first blood, we should set him down as a bad judge of prize-fighting. His prophecy would prove him ignorant of the very conditions of the noble art, or ignorant of the strength of Sayers' constitution. By quoting a few prophecies from the *Times*, it will, I think, be tolerably evident that it had completely omitted from its calculations some element which ought to have been taken into account. There is one other point to be noticed. The *Times* may reply to some of its adversaries — We both prophesied in the dark, and though your prophecy came right and mine wrong, that is nothing to boast of. This excuse will hardly serve to account for the fact that the *Times* has prophesied the success of the South as confidently as the success of the North, and for the further fact that it has always boasted of its consistency and foresight I will quote a few of its vaticinations.

*Nov. 26, 1860.* “It is evident, on the smallest reflection, that the South, even if united, could never resist for three months the greatly preponderating strength of the North.”

*April 30, 1861.* — It hopes that the certain failure of all “attempts at coercion will be discovered by the Washington Government soon enough to save the country from being drenched in blood.”

*May 9, 1861.* “The reduction of the seceding States is an almost inconceivable idea.”

*July 18.* “No war of independence ever terminated unsuccessfully except where the disparity of force is far greater than it is in this case,” and (July 19) “We prefer a frank recognition of Southern independence to the policy avowed in the President's message, solely because we foresee, as bystanders, that this is the issue in which, after infinite loss and humiliation, the contest must result.”

The character thus indicated of the philosophic bystander seeing things more clearly than was given to the foolish and pigheaded Northerners who persisted in going their own way, was perhaps that in which the *Times* most delighted to appear.

*Aug. 27.* — It appears in the same character, modified by a stronger dash of the profound philosopher. England, it says, might as well attempt to conquer France, or, indeed, better; for the Northerners are not (as we should, of course, be in the case supposed) agreed amongst themselves. The only parallel in history is the French invasion of Russia, but Napoleon had far greater resources than the North, and the South is far stronger than Russia. “We are in a condition to give advice,” which is, in short, for North and South to part friends. The *Times* never could learn, though incessantly burning its fingers, to keep clear of these dangerous historical parallels.

By the beginning of 1862 it had become still more confident January 14, 1862, it declares that this was a case “in which success was only possible with overwhelming odds; but here the odds were all on the Southern side.” As throwing some light upon this audacious assertion, I may quote the *Times* of September 24, 1862, where, in

anticipation of Maryland rising to join Lee, it says, that the South have at this moment more than half the total population on their side; and it makes a rough calculation, apparently in utter ignorance of the census, and certainly in the flattest contradiction to it, of the rival forces. There were, it says, twelve millions on the side of the North, nine on the side of the South, and eight millions “between,” who are now gravitating to the Southern side. Now, as in all the Slave States, including the Border States, which never left the Union, there are only just twelve millions, and as there are nineteen millions of distinct Northern population, the *Times* has here been cooking its facts in a manner quite beyond my powers of arithmetic. On April 30 it had spoken of a “dozen great territories, with eight million inhabitants, as warlike as any on the face of the globe.” September 30, it proved that the blockade must be ineffective and could only slightly raise the price of cotton. “If the war were only safe to last, we can imagine no surer way of making a fortune than by setting about to baffle its Custom-house officers and cruisers,” — a silly remark enough, because the chance of making a fortune necessarily implies a great risk, but illustrative of the predictive powers of the *Times*. Six months afterwards (March 8, 1862) it was engaged in proving that the blockade was already effective.

*Jan. 15, 1862.* — The *Times*, perhaps, culminated as a prophet “How long,” it inquired, “is this to last? Not long enough for the conquest of the South. Shall we give the volunteers two months as the period necessary to enlighten them as to the difference between paper dollars and silver dollars? It will be ample time. We need not give the contractors nearly so long..... The army of the Potomac will melt away in sensibly, or, if it be so unfortunate as to be down South, it will die away unfed and unsuccoured in the swamps of Secessia. The beginning of the end has come.” The *Times* announced that it was impossible to carry on war (that is, as it explained afterwards, “offensive war”) upon paper money; and a collapse would necessarily follow in two months. Truly, prophets should read history.

A singular thing now happened. The North perversely, and in utter disregard of the *Times*, took New Orleans, Fort Donelson, Newberne, Beaufort, and other places, and seemed to be carrying all before them. The *Times* at once showed, as I shall have hereafter to remark, several signs of conversion to their cause. For the present I need only mention its prophecies.

*March 31.* — It confesses with interesting frankness that all calculations (all its calculations) had gone wrong “on account of the unexpected and unastonishing resolution of the North, of which it would be unjust to depreciate the spirit, &c.” We failed to sympathize, “not that we sympathized with slaveholders or approved the wilful destruction of a great political fabric, but that we thought the fact accomplished and its reversal beyond possibility.”

The resources of the North have now begun to tell. They are twenty millions to ten, and can command the sea. (On July 21, four months later, they speak contemptuously of “the few shallow reasoners in this country, who are always telling us that twenty millions must in the end beat ten millions”— “a silly fallacy” which had received a practical refutation in McClellan’s defeat) The slaves had not risen, as was predicted. As for finances, “it is beyond all question that the North is getting on smoothly enough for the present” Still, if the South persevered, they must establish their independence.

*May 28.* “That the Federals have established an ascendancy in the field is beyond all question.”

“The whole story is a mystery as well as a marvel. It is almost as hard to believe what has occurred as to imagine what may ultimately happen.” To call a thing a

mystery is to make two assertions: one, that you don't understand it yourself; the other, that no one else understands it.

June 28. — After a long discussion of the war, it comes to the conclusion, “the superior numbers and resources of the North we look upon as certain in the end to prevail.”

Directly after so positive an assertion, and shortly after a declaration, that the whole story was “a mystery and a marvel,” I am not surprised to find the *Times* recover its complacency at a bound. McClellan's expedition was at a standstill.

July 3, 1862. “We,” it says, “have been right, and the North wrong in so many things that our opinion is at any rate entitled to consideration.”

“We” means England, with the exception of an insignificant minority, and, of course, as interpreted by the *Times*.

And for the next two years and a half, it prophesies with unabated vigour in the old direction. The only pause was during the spring of 1864, and is to be attributed probably to the Schleswig-Holstein difficulties which attracted the public attention.

I will give a few specimens, though many are unnecessary, as models of pointed, vigorous, and unfulfilled prediction.

Sept. 11. — The talk of putting down the rebellion, punishing treason, “putting down and crushing out rebellion, is mere verbiage.”

Jan. 17, 1863 (in answer to Mr. Bright). “We have committed the unpardonable crime of giving the Government of the Northern States credit for some good sense and humanity. We have predicted that sooner or later the North must see that its enterprise is hopeless, and that it must submit, as the mother country submitted eighty years ago. We have been mistaken thus far, not in the fortunes of war, not in our calculation of the Confederate strength or weakness, not in the cost of the war or “the condition of American finance, but in the one single hope that the Federals would see what all the world except themselves see.”

March 19. “They might as well try to save it (the Union) as the Heptarchy.”

The next is a very pretty specimen of the genuine *Times* mixtures; a little fine writing, a good deal of arrogance, and a spice of unmixed abuse all delivered from the “philosophical bystander” point of view.

May 28. — People “naturally asked whether the gentleman was to rule in the old world and the opposite character in the new. It is vain to look for those higher principles from which alone we might expect any settlement of the question. “... If they persist in the rule of might, there is only “one result, they will just annihilate one another. A miserable remnant, a ruined country, a relapse into savagery, and other evils unknown and inconceivable will be the only possible result...From *this vantage ground*” (that of the *British Constitution*) “we tell these poor drowning wretches that they have no chance whatever, but to forget their dream of infinite numbers, of boundless territory, of inexhaustible wealth, and irresistible might, and bow low like children to the teaching of “right. Let them just consider what they ought to do, and what ‘ought’ means, and have some chance of getting out of this difficulty without blasting a whole continent. We do not say this is an easy or altogether a pleasant course, but it is the “only course that does not lead to utter destruction.”

The poor wretches would not drown, but the *Times* was not disheartened.

July 21. “We forecast very naturally and pleasantly that as reunion is impossible, and the only object of fighting is to have the last blow, the winning side would be glad to make a kind and generous use of its advantage.”

Aug. 31. — We find the philosophic bystander again. “In every civil war the combatants have been blind to prospects that every bystander could foresee; and we

suppose this terrible and cruel struggle will linger on till the North has no means left to fight, "and the South nothing but freedom left to fight for."

Oct 19. — We come across a new and ingeniously accurate historical parallel. "It will be found as impossible to overwhelm the native levies of men of English race fighting for their lives and possessions" (a delicate periphrasis for slaves) "by any number of foreign hirelings as it was for Carthage with the greatest general the world ever saw at the head of her armies, and the wealth of the world at her command, to hire Gauls, Spaniards, and Numidians enough to break down the stubborn spirit of the less ably led Roman militia. A nation fighting for its liberty may not come victorious out of the conflict, but history affords no example that we are aware of, of an invasion "and subjection of a warlike people by an invader who scarcely ever was enabled to sleep on the field of battle and whose constant boast was not that he had routed his enemy, but that he placed his army in safety."

Dec. 24. "Yet, though we greatly underrated" (as is now evident) "the difficulties of the North, the opinion was almost universal that subjugation of the South was impossible. Even when the North has surrendered her liberty and beggared her finances, she will not be able permanently to hold these immense "countries and keep down their hostile populations on these terms." In the early part of 1864 prophecies became rare, as I have already remarked. Although the *Times* vehemently denied any value to the Northern successes, it probably felt that the taking of Vicksburg and the battle of Gettysburg had changed the aspect of the war.

Its spirits, however, gradually recovered, and it asserts —

May 3. "The present prospects of the Confederates in this fourth year of the war are brighter than ever before."

July 5. — The failure of George III. was not more complete "than that which the contemplation of affairs in the middle of 1864 shows us to have attended the efforts of the Federal Government."

The next is a specimen of a pleasant figure of speech by which the *Times* occasionally describes itself as "all Europe": —

Aug. 22. "The North must see that it is persisting in an enterprise allowed by all Europe to be hopeless, and proved to be so by events up to the present time.... In Europe we can only employ the lessons of this unnatural conflict to "confirm our convictions of the hopelessness of the war and the necessity of a speedy peace."

Sept 14. "*The public will admit that they have not been misguided by our comments. The great fact which we asserted from the first is now*" (six months before the end of the war) "*placed beyond the reach of controversy. We said that the North could never subdue the South, and the North has now proclaimed the same conclusion.*" (This refers to the Chicago Convention.)

Oct 10. "Ruin stares the Union in the face if the war is to be conducted by General M'Clellan, and if it be conducted by President Lincoln the result must be precisely the same."

Nov. 12. — The *Times* made an unintentionally good hit. "The subjugation of the Confederacy must be deferred by the most sanguine Republican to the spring of 1865."

Dec. 14. "To negotiation it must come at last, and the sooner the inevitable resolution is taken the better it will be for America and the world....We, the bystanders, "saw things more clearly than the actors, and we see them more clearly now."

*Feb. 22, 1865.* — After explaining that Americans suffer from a certain “monomania” of devotion to the Union, it adds:— “So long as that idol stands on its pedestal the war must rage on, and we see no prospect of its early termination.”

The *Times* was evidently not quite confident, however, and it endeavoured to effect a strategic movement, of which the nature will appear from the following extracts: —

*March 6.* — Sherman’s “unexampled successes” expose him to a serious embarrassment. “He takes these towns one after another, but they are no use to him when taken. He is experiencing a difficulty which was always foretold. The Federals have regained their military reputation; but, if the “South shall resolve to stand out to the end, they have made but little progress towards the conclusion of the war.”

Its spirits gave way for a moment, and it confesses, *March 8*, “The end is not far: the cause is simply bleeding to death.”

Once more it rallied.

*March 14.* “Everybody in Europe” (I have already explained that this is a circuitous formula for “we” in the *Times*) “thought that the military ascendancy which Sherman has at length established would have been secured by the North in a single campaign; but what, it was asked, would be done then? and that is the question before us now.” Or, as it says more fully in answer to a speech of Mr. Bright’s, —

*March 15.* “We thought that the North would instantly overrun the South, &c. &c. These things are only now “beginning to come to pass. They have come to pass much later and in a much less degree than we had anticipated; but then we thought, and still think, that the real danger and difficulties of the conflict would begin.... It remains to be seen “whether we are wrong in these anticipations. When we are shown to be so, it will be time to taunt us with our mistakes” (though it thinks Mr. Bright has made too many to throw the first stone). “At any rate, we are not yet convinced of our error, and need something more than Mr. Bright’s oracular assertion to prove it.”

Mr. Bright has quite a peculiar talent for striking flashes of nonsense out of the *Times*.

My concluding passage is not exactly a prophecy.

*April 19.* “The catastrophe seems complete, and in all its accessories calculated to impress people with a feeling that the work is accomplished, and that the civil war is really at an end.”

I lay little stress upon the fact, taken by itself, that the *Times* prophecies came absurdly wrong. But I say that its errors were of a class which, besides the ordinary measure of human fallibility, implies a total misconception of the conditions of the struggle. An astronomer’s prediction of an eclipse might fail from a mere arithmetical blunder; or it might fail because his calculation assumed a wrong configuration of the solar system. Thus the *Times* believed, or at least it occasionally asserted, that the South had actually greater resources than the North. It maintained that the North could not continue the war for two months, on account of financial exhaustion. In other words, it was as ignorant of statistics as of history. It failed to recognize the extraordinary resources of the North, or to remember that wars can be carried on with a depreciated currency. It is true that it contradicted itself flatly on both these points. The superior numbers and resources of the North were, as it said (*June 28, 1862*), certain to prevail; and as it kindly observed (*August 15, 1862*), “it is a mistake to suppose that money or credit, or tolerable supplies of food, clothing, and ordinary comforts are necessary to the work of cutting throats, blowing up trains, and burning houses;” in other words, it was driven to a paroxysm of abuse, by discovering that the Northern credit had not collapsed nor the war ceased on account of a suspension of cash payments. But the incessant predictions which I have quoted are doubtless

founded upon the assumptions of Northern weakness in resources and in credit, and they, therefore, imply an error, not merely in calculation, but in knowledge of the primary data.

The great mass of prophetic matter in the *Times* thus implied a false conception of the facts. But it was incapable of even holding steadily to one conception. Before the war began, and in the spring of 1862, its prophecies were diametrically opposite to its prophecies at most other periods. In the spring of 1864 it was neutral. The *Times*, in 1860, anticipated Mr. Seward's prophecy that the North would conquer the South in ninety days. In 1861 it prophesied that the North would abandon its attempts in sixty days. And (November 4, 1862) it endorsed Mr. Jefferson Davis's assertion that the war could be carried on in Virginia for twenty years after the capture of Richmond. Mr. Seward was wrong, and Mr. Davis was wrong; the *Times* had the curious felicity of combining both blunders.

The explanation of this doubtless is, that the *Times* had no fixed theory whatever. It looked on like an ignorant person at a game of whist, knowing nothing of the hands, and therefore crying out as each side took a trick or played a trump that it was certain to win the rubber. It would not believe that, in order to hold its own, the weaker side had played out all its strength, while the stronger had still its best cards in reserve. And thus, while the South was sinking in the final struggle, the *Times* became more confident than ever. Whilst Grant held Lee within the lines of Richmond and Sherman pierced the heart of Georgia, the *Times* was confidently pronouncing the war hopeless, and actually pluming itself in unconscious absurdity upon the confirmation of its sapient predictions. Like a man in a dark room, it knocked its head straight against the wall, without even putting out its hands to save itself.

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*End of Sample*