

The Pacific Fleet.

The destination of the squadron arming at Norfolk, remains a close secret. Doubtless Commodore Perry is to sail with sealed orders to be opened in latitude 0° , and longitude 360° , in order that curious sovereigns at home may be left in wholesome uncertainty as to the doings of these their wiser servants abroad. We are not sure that precedent is convenient for this sort of business. In war times, when the object of a naval expedition may be defeated by publicity, it has been the practice to preserve the utmost secrecy attainable. The very commander knows nothing of his destination or duty, until he is a thousand leagues at sea. The landsmen see the last sail vanish at the horizon in blissful ignorance, as to whether zephyr or boreas shall bear back the first-tidings of its whereabouts. Palos was as well informed upon the route and pausing places of Columbus, as the watchers of a departing expedition against Walcheren or l'Orient. But the present are piping times of peace. Even the chivalrous campaigns of Carvajal are suspended. Our intercourse with European despotism is of the most cordial character. The National, and, indeed, *Mosaic* meekness displayed in that direction must prove infallible preventives of strife; a guarantee against the most distant possibility of offense. Individual cases in Cuba hardly claim sufficient attention as yet to require negotiation, or a thought of martial interposition. The Eastern sky is cloudless. The broad Atlantic offers, on none of its intramundane shores, an enemy to conciliate or subdue. Congress foregoes its constitutional right to declare war collectively, and modestly confines its combative propensities to pugilistic Representatives and Senators within doors. There never was a period of peace so intense, and plenty so boundless. The Temple of Janus is shut, and the quarrelers are all inside. Why, then, this solemn profundity of design, vexing the nation, and, for once, baffling unspeakably the curiosity of the most inquisitive Jonathan of us all?

The ships designated for the service, whatever it is, can be readily spared from the Atlantic side. They are useless here; they may be of immense advantage wheresoever they may be going. The Pacific is the destined theatre of a vaster commerce than the world has yet a conception of. Its calm, deep waters are to be closely furrowed in all directions by the daring merchantmen and whaler. Its myriad islands, rich as ocean's pearls bedded in coral, will be the daily resting places and marts of the mariner. The wild dreams of South Sea schemers in Queen Anne's time, are to be more than realized. There will be a wide, insular empire for some one to rule—some one of the present commercial powers of the world to rule—and which shall have it? England, with the shrewd prescience of the Saxon, has pushed forward her van-guard Westward, from India to Ceylon, from Ceylon to Borneo, from Borneo to New-Guinea, Australia, Tasmania. Her commercial energy strides sturdily from island to island towards the golden prize. Her factories in China all look, mediately, to the same object. France has begun operations at the centre. With that happy pliability and homogeneity that makes the Frenchman as much at home among Indians, Arabs and Tartars, as amid the highest refinement of European life, his footing has been firmly fixed in the Southern groups, while his pretensions and audacity extend over all the others. The Hanoverian kingdom stands in hourly fear of his avaricious violence. By the acquisition of California, the United States have entered the lists from the East. Our people stand upon the western shore, looking seaward, like the company of Cortez, "silent upon a peak in Darien." There is, of course, no retrogressive element in the American character. The next step must be forward, like its predecessors; and whether it shall be southward along the Continent, or westward across the waters, time alone will demonstrate. But the extension of American power to the Pacific is likewise a simple question of time. Ultimately the launch will be made. The Continent is but the portage to the Fortunate Isles beyond. Scouting parties are already hovering about the Sandwich Islands. The natives beg to be admitted within the shadow of a flag more familiar to them than any other. Their petition is backed up by the threatening attitude of the French, the earnest wishes of our mercantile navy, and the urgent needs of commerce. At the Sandwich group the pause will be only momentary. The decisive contest for commercial supremacy in the world is to be held, like a great Olympic game, in the South Sea; and the combatants, we among the rest, press thitherward, strengthening themselves for the struggle. We have only to accept the prophecy for fact, and act upon it.

This, then, is one portion of that high vocation, termed manifest destiny, wherewith we are called; and our fleets cannot too early appear and take their stations upon the pellucid seas of the Pacific. - They may protect and encourage a growing commerce. They may extend it, through amicable treaty with the Japanese, or any other people sufficiently enlightened to make and observe international contracts. They may, if the time be mature, complete the consolidation of the Hawaiian kingdom with our continental states. At all events, they may guarantee the independence of those lovely islands until the fullness of time be come. The object is grand, and worthy of the utmost circumspection, in order to make sure its attainment. Our advance across the ocean should be step by step. If we reach too far at once, we may miss our aim once for all. That vision is not the safest, which, like Mrs. Jellyby's, sees only the distant and impracticable. The New-England sailor, trafficking from island to island among the Polynesian and Australasian group, will gratefully own the benefit of the American flag, endorsed by American commerce. The opening of Japanese ports is a doubtful measure—the policy and morality alike doubtful. There is an excess of better occupation for our fleets; and we shall make an irreparable blunder if a hasty calculation lose us that grandest prize of commerce, the mastery of the Pacific. By all means dispatch the squadron, but let its present destination be made known, and be the Sandwich Islands.