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De Lomer Than De Lome

Our esteemed contemporary, the official Organ of Mr. Huntington and Mr. Huntington's Mr. Mills, is pleased to be dissatisfied with the treatment accorded to Senor Dupuy de Lome, sometime Minister of Spain to this country.

Senor de Lome, the official Organ points out, "cannot be blamed for his prejudices; they are hereditary and instinctive." Why, as to that, so are those of the rattlesnake; yet the meekest Moses amongst us treats his Snakecellency with scant consideration when the creature bites, or even rattles. The action of the worthy Irishman in continuing to belabor the mortal part of a snake long after its vital spark had fled, in order to make it "sensible of its destruction," was not inconsistent with a steadfast faith in the overmastering suasion of instinct and heredity.

In the view of the Organ, Senor de Lome, "as a private individual," "has as much right to express his opinion of President McKinley" as the editor of "The Examiner" has—a view that we are indisposed to controvert, and which indeed, we "indorse" by inviting Senor de Lome to the fullest and freest expression of his opinion that he may be willing to make in the hospitable columns of this paper. It is likely that they would be found not altogether different from our own. Unfortunately for our obfuscated contemporary, until Senor de Lome's resignation as Spanish Minister because he was unable to help himself to the same comfortable view of his privileges as that entertained in railroad circles, he could not express anything "as a private individual" for he was not one. Never for a moment, by day or night, did he cease to represent in this country the Government of Spain. The fiction that a man can have two characters, an official and a private, is doubtless a convenient one, and saves a good deal of circumlocution and repetition in writing or speaking of his acts; but like most other convenient conventionalities it has no existence in fact, and deceives only the unreflecting. While he holds his office an official is always an official. For example, the governor of a state pursuing a greased pig at a country fair would flit along, not as a private individual, but as the governor of a state in lawful execution of a purpose having no relation to his official duties. In truth, hardly anything could be conceived as parted by a wider gulf from those duties than the chase of a greased pig; yet even our esteemed contemporary would find a difficulty in defending the act—so hard it is to accept always the fiction that when a man is instated into office a new man is created, who may alternate with the old one, but cannot have a simultaneous existence.

It is granted that Senor de Lome had an indisputable right to express his opinion of President McKinley, not "as a private individual," but as Minister of Spain. This right was inherent, inalienable and constant. Nothing could deprive him of it for a single instant. But President McKinley is himself not utterly destitute of rights, and among these is that of demanding the recall of an impossible minister whom he does not care to meet. Senor de Lome's right was subject to that, just as the right of any blackguard to be disagreeable is subject to that of a gentleman to pull his nose.

It is very painful, indeed, to observe our corporation contemporary wandering so far from the actual question involved in the incident as not only to ignore the insult to our country and people, but to insist that the point at issue is the right of certain American newspapers to exist. The facts that the existence of these newspapers makes its own existence precarious and unsatisfactory, and that as thorns in the pillow of Uncle Collie Huntington they occasionally afflict that great and good man with a quickening of the conscience, are perhaps the kindly light that leads the Organ so far afield in search of the “true inwardness” of the matter. However that may be, it is indubitably a most enterprising Organ; but being a good deal that way ourselves, we cannot consent (in its own infelicitous phrase) to “stand supinely by” and permit it to perform any such feat of illogic. The question actually raised by the De Lome incident is this—is it right for Mr. W. H. Mills to promote the cause of cheap labor by writing for the “evening Post” for nothing? That is to say, Oughtn’t he be made to pay space rates?