THE DAILY EVENING TELEGRAPH-PHILADELPHIA, THURSDAY, JUNE 27, 1867.

PAST PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATIONS.

BY JAMES PARTON. The American press is becoming as remarkable for its docility as it was formerly supposed to be for its ungovernable recklessness. We are within a few months of a Presidential campaign; every editor in the land has his candidate selected; and the topic is one of such interest that almost any expression of opinion with regard to it would attract attention. But upon what subject is the press so reticent ? Twenty years ago every newspaper in the country blazed with the names of candidates for the next election, almost as soon as the last one had been decided, and reams of excellent writing paper were spoiled in recommending those candidates to the favor of the The press has learned wisdom by people. experience, and now, voluntarily, abstains from prematurely bringing competitors into the arena to be weakened and maimed before the contest begins.

Admitting the wisdom of this pelicy, we follow the example of our brethren of the press, not doubting that the American people will in the future, as they have in the past, select for their Chief Magistrate the individual who, all things considered, will be the best man for the time. Alexander Hamilton once said, that the mode of electing a President prescribed by the Constitution "was intended to secure to prominent talents and virtues the first honors of our country, and forever to disgrace the barbarous institutions by which executive power is to be transmitted through the accident of birth." If this view of the matter be correct-if the Presidency is to be regarded as a means of rewarding services and honoring merit-then it must be confessed we have failed to carry out the design of the Constitution. On several occasions, indeed, the people have bestowed the Presidency upon men prominent, above all others, for virtue and talent; but at other times, men have been selected for their insignificance rather than their prominence, and merely as representing the platform of their party. But under a Government such as ours, so long as it is honestly administered, if great talents in the Presidendential chair might essentially benefit the nation, inferior talents cannot materially retard its progress. Under John Tyler, the United States continued to advance in wealth and in civilization; under George Washington, it did no more. It is desirable, for many reasons, that the President of the United States should be an able, honorable, and prudent man. All we mean to assert is, that the destinies of the country do not depend upon an individual; and, if this had been before doubtful, recent events have established it.

It may be interesting at this stage of our affairs, when parties are about to select men to represent them in the coming canvass, to cast a glance at previous Presidential elections, and not the various processes by which, among the mass of American citizens, a suitable Chief Magistrate has been found. As the mode of electing a President has always been prescribed by law, the chief difficulty has been the nomination of candidates. We have usually had in the United States two political parties nearly equal in strength and numbers, but we have never had two men in the country so clearly representative of the divertendencies embodied in those gent parties, that the people spontaneously looked up to them as their standard-bearers. At the present moment, for example, there is no man in the Republican party, nor one in the Democratic party, who stands out con-spicuously as the best representative of either. So far as we know, but one man has ever

med a nation who was the sponts 80U and unanimous choice of its inhabitants. That man was George Washington. In him alone, among the sons of men, were combined all the qualities which could influence a free and virtuous people to elect him as their chief. In social position he was the first gentleman of America, and that was a far more important consideration eighty years ago than it is now. His private character was spotless. His prudence had been subjected to every test, and never found insufficient. His military reputation, so captivating to the multitude, was only equalled, among living generals, by that of Frederick the Great. Possessing the traits of character which inspire confidence, an imposing personal presence, and a splendor of reputation unequalled in America, he must have been the choice of the American people, in whatever mode his name had been presented for their suffrages. Every electoral vote was cast for him, and he took his place at the head of the Government with the approval of every individual voter in every State of the Union. During General Washington's first term, the two parties were formed which, under various names, have ever since contended for the supremacy. Each of these parties consisted at first of one man. The first American Democrat, in the party sense of the word, was Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of State; and the first Federalist was Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury. These two men, associated in the Cabinet of President Washington, soon discovered that they differed fundamentally on almost every point on which it is desirable that Cabinet ministers should agree. The French Revolution was the great topic at that time. Jefferson, fresh from France, hailed that mighty revolt with the keenest approval, for he had witnessed the oppression which justi-Hed it. Hamilton from the first regarded it with dread and horror. Hamilton had a low opinion of mankind, and thought that government must necessarily be both powerful and imposing. Jefferson, on the contrary, respected his fellow-citizens, and desired their Government to be simple, inexpensive, and strictly limited. The consequence was that til two Secretaries, as Jefferson remarked. "pitted against each other every day in well abinet like two fighting-cocks;" and this the there and followers, gradually divided the nation into parties. Those who sided with Jefferson were called Republicans, and those who sympathized with Hamilton were called Federalists. The Republican party embraced three descriptions of persons :-- First, young men of intellect and enthusiasm, like Jefferson himself, who had faith in their fellow-men, and believed in the progress of their species; secondly, a considerable number of the wealthy planters of the South, who, without being Democrats, desired the General Government to be so simple and limited as not to detract from the importance of the State Governments: thirdly, the more intelli-gent artisans and poor men of the North, who were naturally attracted by the equalizing doctrines of the Declaration of Independence. The Federal party included a large majority of the men of property and education-the men who in all times and lands are naturally disposed to conservatism. These solid men of the land, and the voters whom they influenced, constituted the Federal party. The first contest between these parties occurred in 1793, when for the second time a President and Vice-President were to be chosen. Washington was unanimously re-

animated strife.

At the first election in 1788, John Adams had received thirty-four electoral votes out of sixty-seven for the Vice-Presidency, and the rest were divided among ten other candidates, of whom no one received more than nine. In 1792 the party lines were strictly drawn. A caucus of the Republican members of Congress nominated for the Vice-Presidency George Clinton, of New York, and a caucus of Federal members nominated John Adams. In the short space of four years party discipline had become so well developed in the country, that every elector but five cast his vote for one of these candidates. John Adams received seventy-seven electoral votes; George Clinton, fifty. It was only far-off Kentucky that had not yet fallen into line. Kentucky cast its vote for Thomas Jefferson, and one elector in South Carolina voted for Aaron Burr.

A cancus of members of Congress, then, was the first method hit upon for the selection of candidates. It is difficult to conceive of any other plan suited to the state of things at that time. A National Convention, even if it had been thought of, would have absorbed the greater part of a year, and there was then no press which could in any sense be called national. The newspapers were few and of limited circulation, and a nomination by them would have been considered impertinent by the country gentlemen then so influential.

The Congressional cancuses were held with closed doors, and no part of their proceedings was communicated to the public except the result. It is obvious that such a mode of nonomination was open to objections, since it gave opportunity for personal intrigue and solicitation, and it rendered a President who desired re-election, and a Cabinet minister ambitious of the succession, subservient to those members of Congress upon whom would soon devolve the nomination of candidates, and whose nomination was frequently equivalent to an election. These objections, however, though immediately apparent to the few thoughtful observers, were not at first regarded by the people-certainly not considered formidable. Five Presidents in succession were nominated in this manner, who, upon the whole, were the best men entitled to the confidence of their party, and all of whom served their country well.

In 1796, when it was known that General Washington would retire at the expiration of his second term, there was no man in the Federal party of such commanding prominence as to be its natural and spontaneous choice. The Federalist who was most active, and who possessed most of personal force and influence. was Alexander Hamilton: and it is somewhat remarkable that so shining a light in the Federal party should never have been thought of for the Presidency. It is true, he was not a native of the United States; but a special clause of the Constitution had provided for such cases as his, by making foreign-born citizens eligible to the Presidency who had been citizens at the adoption of the Constitution. Why, then, was the creator and soul of the Federal party never its official head? Partly because he never desired it. He was not ambitious of official distinction. Whatever Alexander Hamilton did in politics, whether wrong or right, was done with a single eye to the public good. If he in-trigued, he intrigued for his country. If he used improper means for the success of his party, it was because he believed that the honor and safety of his country depended absolutely upon its being governed by Federalists. Destitute of fortune, he was compelled to devote himself to the labors of his profession; and at that day a man but forty rears of age, dependent upon his industry for his livelihood, had not that kind of weight in the country which would have drawn attention to him as a possible candidate for the highest office. Besides this, he was the author of the very measures most odious to the Republicans. He was, we may say, the Charles Sumner of the Federalists; and who has ever proposed Charles Summer for the Presidency ! The Federal members of Congress in 1796 recommended to their fellow-citizens John Adams for the Presidency, and Thomas Pinckney for the Vice-Presidency. The Republican members nominated Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr. Here we see at once both the excellence and the perils of this mode of nomination. Adams, Jefferson, and Pinckney were fit and proper names to be presented for the consideration of their fellow-citizens. The impetuous and unmanageable Adams, during the seven years of his Vice-Presidency, had been in a position which kept him aloof from party politics, and concealed from those around im his eminent unfitness to rule. His revolutionary services, his diplomatic career, his oratorical talents, his fine personal presence. and the English cast of his mind, made him a suitable representative of the party with which be sympathized. Thomas Jefferson-the author of the Decla ration of Independence, the conspicuous champion of France and the defender of the French Revolution, and the first Democrat of his age -was peculiarly entitled to the suffrages of the party himself had created. Pinckney, too, as a member of an important and wealthy Southern family, of dignified demeanor and respectable talents, could not have been considered out of place in the chair of the Senate. But Aaron Burr-what was he, and what had he done, that at the age of forty he should have been reckoned a fit man to succeed John Adams in the second office ? His nomination was unquestionably due to the fact that, having sat in the Senate for six years, he had brought to bear upon members of Congress at once the magic of his personal presence and the arts of the politician. A popular convention might not have selected either of these names; or, if either, the dexterity of a Burr might have had a better chance than the earnest wisdom and sublime humanity of a Jefferson. We can say that through the instrumentality of a Congressional caucus the best attainable statesmen were sometimes placed in nomination, and only once the mere politician. Candidates in those simple old days were usually passive, and if they were not so, it was felt to be dishonorable. The letters, diaries, and private memoranda of Washington. John Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and John Quincy Adams, convince us that neither of those gentlemen wrote a line, or uttered word, designed or calculated to promote their own elevation or to prevent that of another. In such a man as John Adams, infatuated as he was with a consciousness of his transcen dent merits, such delicacy as this was highly honorable. There is an amusing passage in one of his letters, written a few days after his ally, my election might be a matter of indifference, or rather of aversion. Had Mr. Jay, or some others, been in question, it might have less mortified my vanity, and infinitely less alarmed my appre-hensions for the public. But to see such a character as Jefferson, and, much more, such an unknown being as Pinckney, brought over my head, and trampling on the bellies of hundreds of other men infinitely his superiors in talent, services, and reputation, filled me with apprehensions for the safety of us all. It demonstrated to me that, if the project suc- the party of Republicans who desired to reward

elected, but for the second office there was an 1 ceeded, our Constitution could not have lasted four years. We should have been set afloat, and landed the Lord knows where. That and must be a sordid people indeed-a people destitute of a sense of honor, equity, and charac-ter-that could submit to be governed, and see hundreds of its most meritori-ous public men governed, by a Pinckney under an elective government. Heredi-tary government, when it imposes young, new, and inexperienced men upon the public, has its compensations and equivalents, but elective government has none. I mean by this no disrespect to Mr. Pinckney. I believe him to be a worthy man. I speak only by comparison with others."

This passage shows at once the weakness of the man and the error of his party. In their view, men were everything-institutions, principles, people, were subordinate. Happily for us, this is not the case ; for, if it had been, a man so fussy, so vain, and so unteachable as Adams might have destroyed the country, in-

stead of merely ruining the Federal party. During the four years of Mr. Adams' administration, Vice-President Jefferson, though presiding over the Senate and performing no independent action, constantly grew in the affections and the esteem of the Republican leaders. His influence over those around him was due to the captivating power of truth, and the persuasive eloquence with which he expounded it in conversa-tion. He had never served his country in the field, and he was as little of an orator as General Grant. He probably never addressed a popular audience. The public knew him as the man who had abolished in Virginia the laws of primogeniture and the legal supremacy of the Episcopal Church—the twin measures which annihilated caste and set religion free. They honored him as the great writer who had known how to express with force and dignity the feeling and the determination of America in the Declaration of Independence. They knew him as the man who could forgive the violence and even the cruelty of the revolutionists in France easier than he could forgive the infinite turpitude of their oppressors. These things, however, might not have won for him the plaudits of a miscellaneous convention.

Again we find the name of Burr associated in the Presidential canvass with that of the illustrious Democrat. A Congressional cancus, we again see, was not infallible in its palmiest days, since, while nominating a philosopher and statesman, it could at the same time recommend to the people an adroit politician-a man who perhaps had as little of the true democrat in him as any one then living. Burr was chosen by the caucus simply in recognition of his skill as a political manager. it was the State of New York which decided the election in favor of the Republicans, it was agreed in the cancus that the candidate for the second office should be a New Yorker, and Burr carried the day against Chancellor Livingston and George Clinton, both of whom were superior to himself in age, fortune, services, and social rank.

A dastardly weapon early employed in our Presidential contests was calumny; but the wounds which it inflicted were never mortal. We may assert that slander has never seriously harmed a public man, though it has fre-quently aided one. Hamilton, accused of peculation, could only refute the charge by confessing himself an adulterer; but neither the lie nor the truth lessened his influence as a politician, nor indeed lowered his character as a man ; for those who lamented his immorality honored its frank acknowledgment. Jefferson was denounced as an atheist, and it was said that his plantation swarmed with the yellow-faced proofs of his licentiousness. These accusations gained for him more votes than they lost. The virtuous John Adams was accused of importing mistresses from England, but no one regarded the rediculous Such calumnies as these had one pernitale. cious effect: they prevented well-founded charges from being believed. Aaron Burr, for example, was neither a moral nor an honest man; but, in the midst of such a torrent of groundless slanders, who could believe that the candidate for the Vice-Presidency was profligate or debauched ? So, in later times, when true representations of the violence of Andrew Jackson were given to the public, people disbelieved them as a matter of course. Skilful politicians in these modern days have learned wisdom from the experience of their predecessors. We have known instances, during the last few years, of the bestfounded objections to the private character of candidates being deliberately withheld from the public, from the conviction that they would benefit rather than injure. A profound peace settled upon the politics of the country after the inauguration of Jefferson in 1801. That great man knew the importance of little things. The stately ceremonies and tedious etiquette of the White House were immediately laid aside, and a republican simplicity characterized all the intercourse between the President and his fellowcitizens. A coach and four no longer conveyed the President through the mire at Washington. When Mr. Jefferson had occasion to attend at the Capitol, he rode thither on horseback, unattended, and tied his horse to a post before entering the building. While such trifles as these enchanted the multitude, wise men were gratified to see the national affairs conducted with dignity, wisdom, and economy, which, we truly believe, have never been equalled in the government of any nation. It cannot be that Jefferson was a chimera of the popular imagination. No man's conduct and character have ever endured so long and keen a scrutiny as his, and he retained to the last the veneration of a great majority of the American people. Such an ascendancy as he maintained for thirty years over the popular mind was not due to any splendor of talent, or to the éclat of military exploits; it was the honest tribute of an intelligent people to the greatest and best of their servants. Thomas Jefferson ruled the United States, by himself and his disciples, for twenty-four years. Indeed, we may say, with considerable truth, that the United States has only had four Presidents, namely :- George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, and Abraham Lincoln. The rest have been satellites, disciples, or accidents. In 1808, two men were prominent above all others for the succession, and they were prominent chiefly because Thomas Jefferson was known to prefer and honor them. These were James Madison, Secretary of State, and James Monroe, the negotiator who had recently purchased Louisiana from Napoleon. Of these two, Monroe was the man whose "record," as we term it, had most in it which the people could appreciate. Twice wounded, and twice promoted in the Revolution, known to be favored by General Washington, employed by Adams in foreign service, and recalled from France because his sympathies for the Revolutionists were too manifest, and their regard for him too conspicuous, a law student with Jefferson, a Virginian of good family, blessed with a lovely and attractive wife-he had recently crowned his diplomatic career by succeeding in the purchase of Louisiana, two weeks after his arrival in Paris. The merit of this great acquisition seemed to be chiefly his, though it was not; and there was a considera-

it by elevating him to the chief magistracy. He was very far indeed from being a great man. The spirit of command was not in him, nor had he the tact which frequently supplies its place. He aspired to the highest honors of the State, and he saw, not without repining, that the preference of Mr. Jefferson for his rival was likely to defer the gratification of his wishes. Mr. Jefferson has informed posterity; that in this contest he maintained an absolute neutrality, and we have not the slightest question of the fact. But Mr. Jefferson's preerence for Madison was evident, and such was the ascendency of the President in the Republican party, that that preference was decisive of Mr. Madison's nomination by the Congressional caucus. That nomination was made, however, with the understanding that Monroe was to be James Madison's successor. It is surprising to notice under what discipline the Democratic party was at that early day. Monroe, who was the favorite of the extreme Republicans, such as Andrew Jackson, received but three votes in the Congressional caucus, out of eighty-nine, while James Madison, the "regular candidate" of the party, received eighty-three. Monroe, we may gather from the correspondence of the time, was restive under his defeat; but he was recalled to his duty, and reconciled to his fate, by a few kind and wise lines from the pen of Mr. Jefferson.

Of all the men elected by universal suffrage to the chief magistracy of a nation, the one that was least likely to be spontaneously elected was James Madison. In personal ap-pearance and demeanor, dressed as he was always in a suit of black, he was more like a student than a man of the worln. A plain, sound, and courteous speaker, there was neither great force nor brilliancy in his oratory. He was a man of the closet, far more able to form a correct opinion respecting government, than to administer government in times of difficulty. A relative of Jefferson, who was much with him in his old age, has informed us that Thomas Jefferson respected more highly the understanding of James Madison, and deferred to it more, than to that of any other man of his time. It is not, however, the wisdom of the cloister which can conduct a young nation with honor and success through a war with an ancient and powerful empire. That the disasters of the war of 1812 did not prevent the reëlection of Mr. Madison is a proof, at once, of Jeffer-son's commanding influence, of the strict discipline of the Democratic party, and, above all, of the good sense of the American people. Whatever might have been Mr. Madison's shortcomings, it was not clear to the party or to the public that any one else would do better, and "it is no time," as Mr. Lincoln remarked, "to swap horses when you are swimming a stream." When some weak brethren of the party faltered in their support of the President, and besonght Mr. Jefferson to come to his aid in the Cabinet, he replied, and that, too, at a time of extreme despondency in the public mind:—"From three-and-thirty years' trial, I can say, conscientiously, that I do not know in the world a man of purer integrity, more dispassionate, disinterested, and devoted to genuine republicanism; nor could I, in the whole scope of America and Europe, point out an abler head. He may be illy seconded by others, betrayed by the Hulls and Arnolds of our country-for such there are in every country, and with sorrow and suffering we know it-but what man can do, will be done by Mr. Madison. I hope, therefore, there will be no difference among Republicans as to his

reëlection." Supported thus by the venerable chief of the Democrats, and aided by cheering vic-tories upon the ocean, Mr. Madison was re-elected by one hundred and twenty-eight electoral votes to De Witt Clinton's eighty-When the war closed in a blaze of triumph at New Orleans, in 1815, the Federal party was a thing of the past. It may be laid down as a rule, that a political party which gives a doubtful support to the administration during a war in which the honor and safety of the country are at stake, and from which the nation issues triumphant, will never regain power under its old name and organization. This law has been twice exemplified in the his tory of the United States. The Federal party ceased to exist in 1815, and James Monroe suc ceeded to the Presidency in 1817 and was reelected in 1821, with the nearest approach to unanimity the country has seen since the days of Washington. Another law of politics may be laid down: whenever a political party has practically extinguished the party in opposition to it, it will speedily divide. Even if there did not exist a ecessity for this in human nature, it would occur sooner or later from the ambition of rival chiefs. If James Monroe had been a man of commanding character, or even a thorough-going partisan, it would have been easy for him to continue the Jeffersonian dynasty by choosing his successor. But he was neither. So moderate had he become, that he was disposed to give one of the places in his Cabinet to a Federalist. "While I am here," he wrote to General Jackson a few days before his inauguration, "I shall make the Administration, first. for the country and its cause; secondly, to give effect to the government of the people, through me, for the term of my appoint-ment, not for the aggrandizement of any In this spirit the good-natured and one." hospitable old soldier conducted his adminis tration, and consequently neither of the able men who aspired to the succession was able to use the Administration for the promotion of his views. The leading competitors were six in num ber, and each of them possessed some signal advantage over the others. John Quincy Adams, as Secretary of State, was in the line of succession which the usage of twenty-four years had established. William H. Crawford, by withdrawing his name from the cancus of 1816 in favor of Mr. Monroe, had acquired a kind of right, which was acknowledged, to a nomination by the caucus of 1824; and he was indeed regarded as the rightful candidate of the party. Henry Clay, the first orator of his time, who had carried the war of 1812 upon his shoulders-the favorite of the House o Representatives, over which he had presided for fourteen years-could form well-founded hopes of success before the people. Calhoun and De Witt Clinton were also prominent candidates; and, in distant Tennessee, there was Andrew Jackson, the most popular man then living in the country, whom the Legislature of his State had placed in nomination. As Mr. Crawford was the predestined candidate of the Congressional caucus, neither of his rivals could hope for the prize unless the caucus system were abolished. Accordingly, such a clamor was fomented. Accordingly, against "King Cancus," that the prestige of that potentate was destroyed. It was in vain that the party managers admitted the public to witness the deliberations of the canous. On the evening appointed for its meeting, while the galleries of the House of Representatives were crowded with spectators, there were but sixty-six members of Congress upon the floor, who nominated Crawford, amid the derision of the country, and without increasing his strength in any section of it.

King Cancus was thus dethroned without leaving an heir to succeed him, and, for the next eight years, there was no settled and recognized plan of nominating candidates. An-drew Jackson, first recommended to the people by the Legislature of Tennessee, endorsed by State Conventions and public meetings, was a name of mania with the people name of magic with the people, and required little artificial aid. Mr. Adams' battle was fought chiefly by the press and the usual local machinery. This want of system in nomipating candidates so divided the electoral vote that the people failed to elect a President, and the election devolved upon the House of Representatives, which set aside the favorite of the people and chose Mr. Adams. For the election of 1828, no preliminary

caucus and no other system of nomination was necessary. There could be but two candidates-the incumbent of the Presidential chair, and the popular soldier whose friends had industriously disseminated the false-hood, that he had been cheated out of the Presidency in 1825.

General Jackson was elected. He received. one hundred and seventy-eight electoral votes, and Mr. Adams eighty-three. Thus, the powerful Republican party, triumphant and united since 1801, was divided, and the two divisions soon adopted new names. The party of which Andrew Jackson was the idolized chief was called Democratic, and that which looked up to Henry Clay as its head took the name of Whig.

General Jackson, as every one knows, brought into the Presidential chair the pas sions which five years of political strife had generated and inflamed, and the two darling objects of his policy were to keep Henry Clay out of and bring Martin Van Buren into the Presidency. Scarcely one important act of his administration was performed which had not some bearing upon one or the other of these objects. We, however, have only to do with the measures taken to prepare the way for the elevation of Mr. Van Buren.

General Jackson, we can positively assert came to Washington in 1829, intending to serve but one term. He brought with him in his pocket a paper of rules for the conduct of his administration; which rules he had read to several of his friends in Tennessee, and he had pledged himself to abide by them. One of these rules was, that no member of his Cabinet should be a candidate for the succession. The object of this, as he said, was to prevent a recurrence of the intrigues which had taken place in the Cabinet of "Jim Monroe," as he was wont to style his old friend; almost every member of which had been an active candidate for the succession. This famous rule was read to the members of General Jackson's Cabinet, and they all admitted its reasonableness, and promised a compliance with it. There was, however, but one member of the Cabinet o sufficient prominence to be thought of as a candidate, and that was Martin Van Buren, Secretary of State. To him alone the rule could be supposed to apply.

Andrew Jackson was not a man to let a slip of writing paper interpose an obstacle to the execution of his will, and means was readily found of removing Mr. Van Buren from the list of the excluded.

On General Jackson's inauguration day, his most intimate friendss could not have foretold who would finally stand highest in his regard, Vice-President Calhoun or Mr. Van Buren. The events which led to the President's speedy and total estrangement from Mr. Calhoun, and which induced him to dedicate himself, as it were, to the elevation of Mr. Van Buren, are too well known to be related here. It suffices merely to remind the reader of the fact; and by that fact the politics of the United States were not merely influenced, but controlled for a period of thirty years .- From the Northern Monthly, or New Jersey Magazine for July: to be continued in

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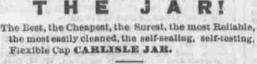
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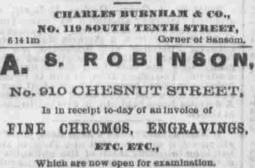
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