SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

ROPTORIAL OPERIORS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS UPON CURRENT TOPICS-COMPILED MYERY DAY FOR THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

The Moral of the Elections.

From the N. Y. Times. Although neither California nor Maine has pronounced a verdict of much political significance, it were unwise to disregard the lessons which both read to the Republican party. There is not in either any real evidence of reaction in public sentiment; but the defeat of the party ticket in one case, and the reduced majority with which it triumphs in the other, are circumstances which those who would exclude the Democrats from power may wisely heed.

The dangers which threaten the Republican cause are the products of great strength and the overweening confidence which it has engendered. There is a disposition in sections of the party to be intolerant in respect of the epinions and measures which shall be sustained by its members. In some instances the minority have insisted upon the adoption of their views by the majority, literally claiming the right to dictate the policy and to enlarge the platform of the party without reference to the judgment or convictions of others. A comparatively small number have more than once undertaken to regulate the standard for the whole, and to read out of the party all who refused to pronounce their shibboleth. Organization has thus been managed in the interest of individuals rather than in conformity with the recorded purposes of the aggregate of its members.

California has told us with what result unscrupulous combination and intrigue are followed when they obtain control of the party machinery. We have been usefully reminded that, though knavery and presumption win in the making of nominations, the people will resent the fraud, and assert their supremacy in their own way. The managers of nominations may frame a ticket to suit their own ends, but they must not rely on the rank and file for its ratification. To secure their hearty and united power, the candidates put forward must command their confidence.

In Maine the lesson, though different, is not less clear or emphatic. The Democratic vote shows a gain and the Republican a falling off, not as a consequence of revolt within the Republican party against its national policy, but confessedly and solely because of an unpopular local issue thrust upon the party by a vigorous and determined minority. Prohibition is not a political issue, and it is not one which the Republican party as such can carry without an obvious risk of defeat. The fact that the Republicans of Maine have achieved victory in spite of the disadvantage at which they were placed by one portion of their body, is, perhaps, the strongest tribute to their strength that could be afforded. It is at any rate proof that the cry of reaction which Maine is represented as having echoed, is at variance with the admitted character of the contest.

The local writers of all shades of opinion concur in rendering this as the explanation of the changes exhibited by the vote on Monday. The Augusta correspondent of the Boston Advertiser-a known and earnest Republican declares that the "sole cause of the loss to the Republicans is the Liquor law and the Constabulary law, passed by the last Legislature." "Many Republicans," he adds, "were entirely apathetic as to the result, and not a few voted directly with the Democrats on the liquor Democratic correspondents frankly proclaim the same story. The Portland despatch to the Boston Post asserts that "all the tickets for members of the Legislature are more or less split up, the division arising in consequence of the unpopular and unrighteous provisions of the Prohibitory No other cause is assigned-no other form of reaction claimed. The Boston Herald makes a similar admission. Its Augusta despatch has this remark:-"The ill-advised and inopportune legislation of last winter, by the enactment of the Prohibitory and Constabulary laws, was the means of thousands of Republicans casting their votes for candidates in favor of a repeal of those obnexious statutes." Upon this head no room is left for doubt. The Democratic gain springs from a single local question, having no relation to the policy by which the Republican party should be judged, and in no respect indicating abatement of the firmness with which Congress and its measures are sustained by the

There is a warning in the case, however, by which Republican leaders in other States should not fail to profit. With all its strength, the party cannot afford to be made responsible for irrelevant issues, or to be saddled with the odium which attaches to all the theories and crotchets of zealous but intolerant minorities. The motives which lead to concession on the part of majorities are usually good. They are threatened with divisions, and yield to preserve party unity. Their experience in Maine will not be too dearly purchased if it suggest to extremists the wisdom of forbearance and moderation, and to the great body of the party the peril of tampering with the authorized standard of national policy in obedience to the local demands of an aggressive minority.

An Extraordinary Will Case. From the N. Y. Tribune.

One of the most remarkable cases on record, destined to rank high among the Causes Célèbres, is now the talk of Boston. The evidence, taken before examiners some months since, but only just published, fills a large volume of a thousand pages. The amount involved exceeds a million of dollars. The arguments in the case—before the United States Circuit Court, Justice Clifford presiding —commenced last Friday. It is a suit in equity, brought by Hetty H. Robinson against Thomas Mandell and others. Miss Robinson (now Mrs. Greene) was, previous to her marriage, one of the richest, if not the richest spinster in the United States; her property, which she inherited from her father, was commonly reported to be worth \$5,000,000. It appears that her aunt, Miss Sylvia Ann Howland, who died in 1865, left a will bearing date September. in 1865, left a will bearing date September, 1863, and a cedicil executed in 1864. By this will and codicil Miss Howland disposed of about \$700,000 in private legacies; the largest, of \$200,000, to Thomas Mandell, her lawyer, we believe; \$115,000 to her physician, Dr. Gordon, and from \$4000 to \$15,000 to each person in her employment. She left, also, \$300,000 for public and charitable purposes. of which the city of New Bedford, where she resided, was to receive \$320,000. The residue of her estate, amounting, it is said, to about a million, was to be placed in trust, the income to be paid to Miss Robinson during her life; the principal, on her decease, to go to some of the testator's relatives. Miss Robinson con-tests her aunt's will. This is, in itself, remarkable enough, seeing that the young lady, already the possessor of millions, is entitled, u der it, to an annuity that would add some

\$50,000 or \$70,000 to her annual income. What she contends for is the whole of her aux.'s estate, in fee, supposed to be worth about two

The ground upon which she contests the above will and codicil is noteworthy. It seems that Miss Howland had quarrelled with her brother-in-law, the father of Miss Robinson, and being resolved, if possible, to exclude him from all share not only of her own property, but of his daughter's also, she proposed, about September, 1860, to her neice, then about twenty-three years old, that if she (Miss Robinson) would make a will so that her father should inherit no part of her property, she (Miss Howland) would, in return, make a will leaving everything to her niece, the will of each to be deposited with the other, and neither to make any other will without notice to the other, and returning to that other her will. Miss Robinson agreed to this, and the wills were exe-cuted accordingly. But the subsequent will and codicil made by the aunt in 1863 and 1864 were executed without notice to the niece. Thus arose a question of law, a novel question in the courts of this country, namely, whether a contract for mutual wills, if proved, can be enforced as being without consideration and against public policy and good morals. But the most singular feature in this case still remains to be stated. To the will originally made by Miss Howland in favor of her

niece there is an addition, sewed in with fine thread to the page, not changing any provision of the will, but a sort of protest by the testator against the validity of any subsequent will which she, under undue influence from those around her, might be induced to make. Part of the text is:—"I implore the Judge to decide in favor of this will, as nothing could induce me to make a will unfavorable to my niece; but being ill, and afraid, if any of my caretakers insisted on my making a will, to refuse, as they might leave me or be angry,

* * I give this will to my niece to show, if absolutely necessary to have it appear against another will found after my death." Robinson testifies under oath, that she wrote this appendage to the will at the suggestion of her aunt, and that her aunt signed it in duplicate in her presence. The defense to this is nothing less than a charge of forgery. It is denied that the signature to this additional page is genuine, and alleged that it was copied by tracing from a signature (admitted to be genuine) of the testator to the original will to which this appendage is found stitched. This opens up a wide field, in which not only questions of law but of science, and even of art, come up. On the question of forgery both parties have spent much time and labor. Two skilful photographers have been employed for weeks, and experts have expended months in procuring and comparing, in a great number of cases, numerous signatures by the same person, so as to determine the chances that any one person should write three signatures exactly alike. The testimony is to the effect that Miss Howland's signature to the original and genuine will, and the two signatures to the appended paper, executed in duplicate, are in every letter and line and in the spaces between the three words, Sylvia Ann Howland, so precisely coincident, so identical in fact, that nothing but a deliberate purpose to make them so can explain the phenomenon. Mr. Crossman, for the defense, testifies that he has spent nearly five months in examining many hundreds of signatures of many well-known persons; comparing the coincidence by superimposing one on the other on a glass in front or a window, and also by tracing and superimposing the tracings. says there was greater similarity in Miss Howland's signatures, forty or fifty of which he compared with each other, than in any other case; and he considers the two signatures to the detached sheets to be genuine. On the other hand Mr. Southworth, after similar research, declares that the three signatures coincide with mathematical accuracy, not only letter for letter and space for space, but also that each has the same slant to the base line of each paper, so that the eye sees them parallel. His testimony covers fifty pages, and he pro-nounces the two contested signatures to be forgeries, executed by tracing.

But the most curious and interesting testimony of the whole is that of Professor Benjamin Peirce of Harvard College, Superintendent of the Coast Survey, and one of the best mathematicians of the age, upon the doctrine of chances. He said:—"He had a large experience relating to the computation of chances; that the mathematical discussion of the subject of coincidence of signatures had never, to his knowledge, been proposed, but that it was not difficult, and a numerical expression applicable to this problem, the correctness of which would be recegnized by all the mathe-maticians in the world, could readily be obtained." Then, having ascertained the relative frequency of coincidence by comparing numerous signatures of Miss Howland to bills of sale of vessels, etc., he concludes that, in her "this phenomenon (of coincidence) could occur only once in two thousand six hundred and sixty-six millions of millions of millions of times, or 2,666,000,000,000,000,-000,000." "This number," the Professor remarks, "far transcends human experience. So vast an improbability is practically an impossibility. Such evanescent shadows of improbability cannot belong to actual life. They are unimaginably less than the least things which the law cares not for." And his conclusion from these data is thus expressed:— Under a solemn sense of the responsibility involved in the assertion, I declare that the coincidence which has here occurred must have had its origin in an intention to pro-

A million of dollars has often been staked on the calculation of chances; but there is not, in all probability, another example on record in which the verdict of a law-ease involving that amount was liable to be determined by the testimony of a learned professor, following out the principles which La Place's great work has so ably set forth, and applying the unalterable rules of mathematical science to determine what may seem, to the uninitiated, a purely fortuitous matter, namely, the chances of coincidence, in its action, while writing, of the human hand.

There are other very curious details, to notice which would lead us too far. Among the collateral questions raised was one interesting to photographers, as to the compara-tive merit of the Voigtlander and Globe

Congress and the People.

lenses.

From the N. Y. Herald. The very serious and critical aspect of our national affairs is beginning to fill the public mind with and forebodings. It is doubtful whether in the darkest days of the late civil war the public pulse ever indicated a werse condition of things than it now does. Men ask each other when they meet how the political problem is to be solved, and all confess their inability to supply a satisfactory answer. In the meantime commerce languishes, the revenue diminishes, the credit of the Government -as expressed in the relations of gold to cur-

country, which formerly, through its staple products, added so largely to the wealth of the whole nation, is no longer a source of prosperity, but of expense and trouble; and all because, after having made every sacrifice to put down the Rebellion, we were not willing, because, after having made every sacrifice to put down the Rebellion, we were not willing, after it was put down to sacrifice party prejudices in order to sanctify and make lasting the work which our armies had accomplished.

Every one knows that it is in the interest of party alone that the reconstruction of the South has been delayed and prevented. No matter how men may attempt to explain and defend the action of Congress in the matter, the plain, simple truth forces itself on the mind at the last, that the object of all legislation on the subject has been to render impossible the readmission of the Southern States into the Union. That object has been thus far attained; and from present appearances it would be perfectly safe to say that, should the Republican party retain its present ascendancy, the present generation will not see the Southern States restored to the Union on the same footing as the other States. It may be that some or all of them will, in the course of a few years, go through the form of reinstatement, but it will only be a mere sham and de lusion—a gross mockery. The right of self-government will have been denied to the men of our own race in those States, and political power will have been handed over to the de scendants of Congo savages. That is the only sort of restoration which is contemplated by Congress; and improbable as that may seem, there is an evident intent on the part of Congress to carry out that programme.

But will the people of the United States consent to such a degradation of their great republic? Even if the inhabitants of the Northern States entertained no feeling towards the white men and women and children of the South but that of hate (which, we thank God, is far from being the case), would they, on their own account, agree for one moment to the proposition that the former slaves of the cotton and rice plantations should have an equal voice in the national councils with the representatives of New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Ohio? To that plain issue must it come; to that plain issue it has already come. Congress, through its legislation and through its instruments in the South, has shown its determination that all political power there shall be transferred from the white race to the black; and Congress assumes that in this policy it has the support of the people of the North. Is there good ground for any such assumption? We do not believe there is. We know that the uupopularity of President Johnson has tended to create the idea that the people approve the destructive policy of Congress; but there is no real foundation for that idea. The people may have thought, and did think, that Congress was sincerely intent on its desire to reconstitute the Union on a basis of perfect equality between all the States, and that Mr. Johnson was unwisely thwarting Congress in the execution of that design. Such a delusion cannot exist to day. Congress has shown either that it designs to perpetuate the exclusion of the Southern States, or that if they are to be readmitted, it is to be only after their political status has been thoroughly Africanized. Let the people ask themselves whether they are prepared for either of these alternatives, and f they are not, then let measures be taken, through public meetings, through the ballot, and otherwise, to give expression to the pub-lic sentiment. We care not for President Johnson or for Congress, for the Democratic party or for the Republican party; but we do care for the glory, and greatness, and pros-perity of the American Republic, which are being cruelly and ruthlessly sacrificed for petty partisan purposes. Again we appeal to the people to take such steps in the elec-tions for Congress, in public assemblages and in private conferences, as will convince their representatives that Congress must not persist in the policy it has inaugurated, which is as abhorrent to sound judgment as it is in utter repudiation-according to Mr. Thad. Stevens' boast-of the Constitution, under which alone Congress has any power to legis-

The Political Reaction-California and Maine.

From the N. Y. World. The longest line that can be drawn through the country in whose expansive greatness we all exult, is from the St. Croix river to the Golden Gate; Maine and California being the Dan and Beersheba of our ample republic. So wide is the intervening space that stretches between these States, which have a continent interposed within their outside boundaries, that the sun, which rises upon the citizens of Maine from the sparkling waters of Passamaquoddy bay, must climb up into the heavens for nearly four hours before his morning beams gild the farthest summits of the Rocky Mountains, and burnish the bay of San Francisco. If diversity were to be found anywhere we should expect it in the public sentiment of these widely separated States. They have next to no communication with each other; they have a popula tion as differently constituted as that of any two States in this Union can well be; they differ in pursuits, in climate, in productions and in their relations to the business and cemmerce of the country. When, therefore, causes which act on public sentiment are found to operate in the same manner in these two stranger States which stand as sentinels on the extreme boundaries of the republic, it is safe to assume that their operation has been general throughout the whole breadth of the intervening continent. If the Democrats had made considerable gains in one of these States, and not in the other, the change might be attributed to local circumstances; but where the distance is so great, and the circumstances so dissimilar, and the intercourse and communication so infrequent and slight, it can be accounted for only by supposing it to proceed from causes which operate upon the whole country alike.

The reaction in Maine is not, to be sure, so complete and electric as it has been in California. But this is due to the fact that life is not so active, and men's pulses do not beat as quick, in a rural and stationary State, as they do in a State settled by pushing and adven-turous citizens who fled from the tameness of older communities to find a freer field for their ardor and enterprise. Commerce, which is the great quickener of thought, the great sharpener of the human faculties, has made the Californians keen and alert; but if the citizens of Maine move a little slower, they still march in the same direction, and at a satis-

factory pace.

It being demonstrated by the recent elections that a general political reaction is in progress, extending through the country from side to side, we are content to take matters at the worst, and make the result in Maine the standard of our expectations. We have not quite carried that State, to be sure; but if our gains in the coming elections shall be as great in proportion to the whole number of votes cast as they have been in Maine, we shall, even this fall, revolutionize the politics of the counrency-wanes, and the Southern section of the | try. The same ratio of gain will give us New

Democratic States, containing a majority of the population now represented in Congress, and enabling us to elect twenty-four Democratic Senators when the terms of the present incumbents shall expire. This expectation does not rest upon fancy, but upon reasoning; it merely assumes that the reactionary tenden cies will be as active elsewhere as they have been in Maine. Let but this be admitted, and the rest is arithmetic. It has all the certainty of the rule of three.

Can there be a better occasion than the present for triumphing in the indomitable pe sistence and inextinguishable vitality of the Democratic party? Never has a party stood up sgainst such an array of adverse circumstances with such unflinching steadiness. Men who have stemmed the tide and held on to their convictions during the flery trials of the last four years, are in no dauger of faltering now. The period when it required considerable moral intrepidity to be a Democrat is past. A party which has been proof against the obloquy and the disintegrating influences of that dark era of political persecution, may claim to have gone with credit through the severest ordeal. This great party is now rising again with elastic courage and energy, and 'renewing its youth like the eagle's.'

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