SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

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EDITORIAL OPINIONE OF THE LEADING JOURNALS OFOR CURRENT TOFICS-COMPILED RYRRY DAY FOR THE EVENTRO TELEGRAPH.

Railroads and Telegraphs-Shall They be Public Property ! From the N. Y. Independent.

A question which is becoming every day of greater moment relates to the management. of our means of communication and transportation. We have become habituated to turnpike roads, costly bridges, and post offices owned and supported at the public expense; but it gives us no slight shock to think of our railroads and telegraph lines taking the same course, and passing from private control and monopoly into the service of the community. In Europe the idea is more familiar than here for in several of the Continental countries the Government has either built or runs the rail. roads, or both. In Switzerland, as Dr. Howe has lately stated, the telegraph lines are all in the hands of Government, with what result we shall see hereafter. At the late Social Science Congress in Ireland, a protracted discussion was had of the question whether the Imperial Government ought to buy out the Irish railways, and run them for a lower rate of fare and freight. One of the most enlight-ened speakers (Mr. Galt) urged strongly this course. He said, among other things:-

"There was a line which should be drawn between where the State might and ought not to interfere. Where one man could compete with another, there might not be any Government interference; where there was a monopoly, then it was the duly of the state to interfere on ment interference: where there was a monopoly, then it was the duly of the state to interfere on behalf of the public, (Hear, hear, and ap-planse.) If one man could strike on a plan by which to make a sixpenny loaf at the cost of one balf-penny, it did not follow that the maker would seek to get sixpence, the price obtained by others who had not his scoret. He might preser to sell at twopence, threepence, or four-pence, so as to increase consumption and make granter profits thereby. (Hear.) A book sold at first at a guinea and a half had lately been sold at sixpence. The works of Sir Wai-ter Scott, for example. These cases illustrated how railways might make greater profits with lower farces. He then referred to the differences in farces in the kingdoms. These London and Northwestern Half way Company otherged for log miles as follow:--first class, 16s. 3d.; second class, ILs. IId.; third class, 7s. IId. London and Yorkshire Company:--IIs., 3s. 9d., and 5s. 9d. The Great Northern and Western of Ireland;--I8s. 4d., 18s. 9d., and 8s. 5d. These examples of fares aboved what a high rate was paid in Iroland. In Belgium the rates were even much lower than on the Caledonian, and this was accomplished by the Government there manuging the railway worked what a high rate was paid in Fredand. In the Government there managing the railway system of the country. Great progress had been made on this question in Parliament. He then referred to all the movements taken last session by the peers and members of Parlia-ment for Ireland, and of their meeting with ford Darby on the subject and he boned for Lord Derby on the subject; and he hoped for the best results from these proceedings. The railways of Ireland might be bought for £19,500,000, and the profits would afford the Goverument ample margin to greatly reduce the fares, without loss to the reveque and with great advantage to the community."

The rates here mentioned as charged on the English and Irish railways are, on the whole, higher than ours, and much higher than such rates as prevail by special legislation on the New York Central Road. There is no doubt they could be greatly reduced, and still bring a fair profit to the owners.

The principal advocate of this change in our oustoms in the United States is Mr. Josiah Quincy, of Boston. He has addressed boards of trade, legislative committees, and other organizations, urging that some steps be taken in the direction of purchasing the railroads for the good of the State. This very evening, the 21st of November, he is to present his views to the Social Science Association, now in session near us. In a pamphlet on this question Mr. Quincy has stated some of the system he favors. He says:-

"What might be the advantage of government management of rallways is shown not only in the canal system of New York, but even more

three hundred thousand whites, and where the registration of voters, from Rebel disfranchisement, shows a much heavier preponderance of the black power, the vote appears to be all one way, and, excepting a radical white strag-gler here and there, all of one color.

The Southern white policy of "masterly in-activity" on this business of reconstruction, which was first developed in the Louisians election, seems to have gained strength since the recent Northern elections. The idea seems to be that the next Congress from the North will be so far anti-radical as to completely demolish the existing radical programme, and restore the outside States on the platform of President Johnson. But while the present radical House of Representatives will doubtless be superseded by a conservative House on the 4th of March, 1869, the present radical Senate can hardly be upset inside of four years to come. The Southern whites of the outside States, therefore, while looking to the future for better conditions than those now before them, should be prepared to avail themselves of any reasonable concessions which may be offered from the present Congress, so as to get reinstated in the Government as soon as

The recent Northern elections have quashed this extreme radical theory of universal negro suffrage. If it will not go down in the North it cannot be made to stick in the South. In 1866 a constitutional amendment declaring the equal civil rights of citizens of all colors; declaring the sacred obligations attaching to the national debt; repudiating all Rebel debts and all claims for slaves; declaring the disfran-chisement of certain leading Rebels, subject to a two-thirds vote of Congress, and providing that suffrage and representation shall go together as the several States may elect re-stricted or universal suffrage, was a programme which swept the country from Maine to California. In 1867, wherever in the North this new test of universal negro suffrage has been tried, it has been signally rejected, and most signally in the most radical States, such as Olio and Kansas.

Now, if we are not mistaken, this constitutional amendment of 1866 has been ratified by three-fourths of the States represented in and constituting the Government of the United States. All, therefore, that is needed to give it effect as part of the supreme law of the land, is a resolution or bill from Congress declaring the ratification. The required inm ber of the States having ratified the amend ment, it is even now "valid to all intents and purposes as part of the Constitution," requiring only a change of the law pro-claiming the fact. As the law stands it is the duty of the Secretary of State to make the proclamation. Mr. Seward, how-ever, stands committed to the Johnsonian theory, that three-fourths of all the States, inside and outside the general Government are necessary to ratify. So, under Mr. Johnson's coercive Southern reconstruction policy, a sufficient number of the Rebel-States were forced to ratify the amendment abolishing slvery to make up three-fourths of all the States. Then Mr. Seward proclaimed the ratification. But as Congress has since rejected as illegal and void all of Mr. Johnson's acts of reconstruction, all these Southern ratifications go for nothing, and if the amendment abolishing slavery, therefore, is not a part of the Constiby the voice of three-fourths of the tution States adhering to the national Government. then slavery is not legally abolished, and Maryland or New York may revive the institution to-morrow, and Congress cannot touch it. Why can't we have the views of "Old Thad

Stevens" upon this question ? It will not do to shirk it; for, if not in this, in the next Congress it will come up for settlement, and it will have to be settled.

The Whisky Scizures-A Recent Decision of the Department. From the N. Y. Times.

In the course of the discussions elicited by the recent seizures of whisky in this city and elsewhere for alleged violations of the Internal Revenue law, and by the prosecution of the parties arrested for complicity in those violations, two points appear to have been established by common consent; first, that the great bulk of distilled spirits finds its way into the general market, and into the consumption of the country, without paying the tax of \$2 per gallon; and, second, that the system of fraud and deception by which the tax is evaded is far more effective and successful than the administration of the law which imposes it. From these premises it has been assumed, to a great extent, that as every fresh effort to detect and punish the frauds of the distillers and their accomplices only serves to expose the inadequacy of the internal revenue system, the constant violation of the law and the flooding of the market with illicit spirits is a necessary svil for which Congress is primarily responsible, and which no amount of vigilance or energy on the part of individual revenue officers oun successfully resist. under cover of just such vague and It is superficial views of the law and its violation, that the rogues who live by fraud and evasion contrive to give justice the slip. Let it be once conceded that the law is powerless to punish them, and they will take all the other risks of oriminality. It is doubtless very gratifying to the parties whose operations in spirits have been so summarily interrupted, to gain an ally in a public sentiment which, while it brands them as cheats and impostors, opens a wide door for their escape. But even if the notion that the defects in the existing revenue system would accomplish a general jail delivery of all the culprits involved in the pending arrests and prosecutions-a notion which we will presently show to be without any just foundation-were true, most substantial and beneficial results have already been attained by the efforts put forth for the en-forcement of the law. First of all, the complicated network and machinery of fraud by which the traffic in illicit spirits is maintained have been nu-covered and plainly shown. There is no longer any doubt that fraud is the badge of a very large portion of the entire trade, and irrespec tive of any question of punishment or redress, there is an immense gain in the knowledge o the evil and of the methods of its operation. Honest men are warned not to participate in the business; capitalists and money-lenders who were before ready to make advances on whisky and spirit in bond or in transit, are now very cantious how they part with their funds on the security of a suspicious conmodity. Loans on whisky have been called in, and the capital of the country, to a large extent, ceases to aid the operators in an article which to so great a degree promised a profit only by illegal transactions. Dishonest men are driven out of a business which has become inconveniently liable to the inspection and scrutiny of public officers. Let the landlords of whisky dealers, whose rent is in arrear, and who were told last quarter-day, by their tenants, as a sufficient excuse for their default, that their business was ruined, give us some information on this subject, and disclose what percentage they will accept in full of all de-mands and to cancel their outstanding leases.

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The truth is that light enough has been let | that the blunder lies at the door of Congress into the dark corners of these dealings in distilled spirits, to make them dangerous even for the most experienced and cunning adepts in the violation of revenue law.

Another point gained is a more exact know-ledge of the relations between the law ant all parties concerned in operations in illigit spirits. If, as is so currently reported and reiterated, the law is inadequate and defec tive, it will be easy to find a remedy by amending it without delay, so as to reach every case which it now fails to cover. Con gress can readily extend its operation so as to embrace every form of violation and every species of wrong-doing which the recent se ures and proceedings disclose, and it should be one of the first acts of the present session to make these new penal and remedial pro visions.

But we venture to affirm that the law as it stands to-day is sweeping and comprehensive enough to bring within its provisions all the cases in which proceedings have been com-menced, and in which the facts may justify its application. It is true that the frauds are ingeniously montrived, and no doubt are arranged with special reference to what are supposed to be the weak points in the Internal Revenue system as now in force. But it is difficult to find on any statute-book a more thorough or complete array of prohibitory penalties and forfeitures than that which applies to the dealing in illicit spirits. It may a that Congress will do wisely if it sweeps away the whole framework of the legislation on this subject, abolishing the entire bonded system, and requiring the payment outright and in the earliest stage of whatever tax is levied upon spirits, in such a manner as to dispense with all the checks and safeguards by which it is now attempted to keep the commodity in the custody of the Government until the tax is actually paid or the goods are out of the country. Be this as it may, we apprehend that so long as the existing law remains unrepealed, it is the plain duty of all officers charged with the responsibility of enforcing it to do their utmost to make it effec tual, and of all Courts and magistrates to aid in its enforcement.

Just here we may be confronted by a recent and somewhat extraordinary decision of Mr. Commissioner Rollins, dated November 1. 1867, which has been given to the public with all despatch, and on which, probably, is based much of the apprehension as to the insuffi-ciency of the law. He announces the absolute immunity of all spirits "in bond" from any liability of forfeiture, and thus virtually shuts the door upon any attempt to proceed against, seize, or forfeit any spirits which have been placed by their owners in the bonded ware-houses anthorized by the law. This would exempt the greater part of the whisky and spirits which are already the subject of seizure; and while the importance of the decision does not appear to have been fully recognized by the public, it is doubtless duly appreci-ated by all the private parties owning spirits in bond which had been placed in jeopardy by the vigilance of the seizing officers.

They had good reason for anxiety; their whisky had been seized under provisions of the law which seemed to point plainly to its condemnation and forfeiture, provided the facts on which the proceeding was based were proved; applications for the release of whisky in bond made to the United States Circuit Court in this District had been considered and denied; the prosecuting officers and the Dis-trict Attorney announced their readiness to proceed to trial. At this critical juncture it seems like a very special interposition which brings the Commissioner to their relief in a decision in which, with a few easy strokes of his official pen, he releases them from the delays and uncertainties of litigation, dispenses with proofs of innocence, forestalls the judgment of the court, and decides, off-hand, against the Government, whose officer he is, by a construc-tiou of the law as favorable to the whisky interest as if it had been condensed in one of their own stills ! He has made the sudden discovery that the statute, which, with a severity almost unexampled in our legislation, denonnees the forfeiture of all snirits in any way involved in violations, actual or attempted. of any of its provisions, is so tender-footed in respect to spirits in bond that it will not touch them ever so lightly. The Commissioner says :- "While it is too true that frauds in the manufacture and sale of distilled spirits have been vast and notorious, 'yet that to allow the forfeiture of spirits in bond,' even when owned by violators of the law, and when themselves the instruments of such violation, 'would not only be contrary to the best interests of the revenue, but contrary to the true intent of the statute," and he "prefers that the culprits be punished in other ways than by the forfeiture of the spirits." This is just what the whisky dealers prefer. So long as the grasp of the law is held off from their property they will not complain of suits, prosecutions on other grounds, or of the other methods of punishment at which the Commissioner rather obscurely hints, "Shylock" was not so anxious about his life as about the means whereby he lived, and the vital part of the fraudulent whisky dealer is in his casks. It is just here that the Commissioner's order protects him, and to make assurance doubly sure, and 'certify the "culprits" against any lingering doubt as to the finality of the deci-sion, he anneunces that the Secretary of the Treasury fully concurs in the views he has expressed, so that whatever may happen to other spirits, the state of spirits in bond is one of complete exemption from any of the pains, penalties, and forfeitures of the law. But the plain provisions of the Internal Revenue law, fairly construed, seemed to stand directly in the way of the conclusions of Mr. Commissioner Rollins and the Secretary of the Treasury. The section under which the seizures of the whisky in bonded warehouses have been made is section forty-eight of the law. It is broad and sweeping in its terms. It declares the forfeiture to the United States of "all goods, wares, merchandise, articles, or objects subject to tax, which shall be found in the possession or custody, or within the control of any person or persons," for the purpose of sale or re-moval, in fraud of the internal Revenue laws, or with the design to avoid payment of tax. It authorizes the seizure of all such goods and their prosecution by proceeding in rem against the goods themselves, in the Circuit or District Court of the United States for the district where the seizure is made. There is no exception, qualification or proviso in respect to place or person or property. The existence of the property, the non-payment of the tax, the intent to sell or remove it, so as to evade the payment of the tax by fraud-these are the sole and sufficient grounds to warrant its seizure, prosecution and condemnation, whatever its description, wherever found and by whomsoever held. The section specifies no particular goods or merchandise, because it includes all, and it applies equally to every article which is the subject of tax. Without pursuing this subject further at present, it is clearly an interesting and important field for Congressional scrutiny and action. If the Commissioner has erred in his construction of the law, the law-makers are at hand to correct his blunder; if he is right in his conclusion

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they can accept his rebuke and amend the defective law. In either case the public interest demands prompt and efficient action.

Roomomy in Congress. From the N. Y. Tribune.

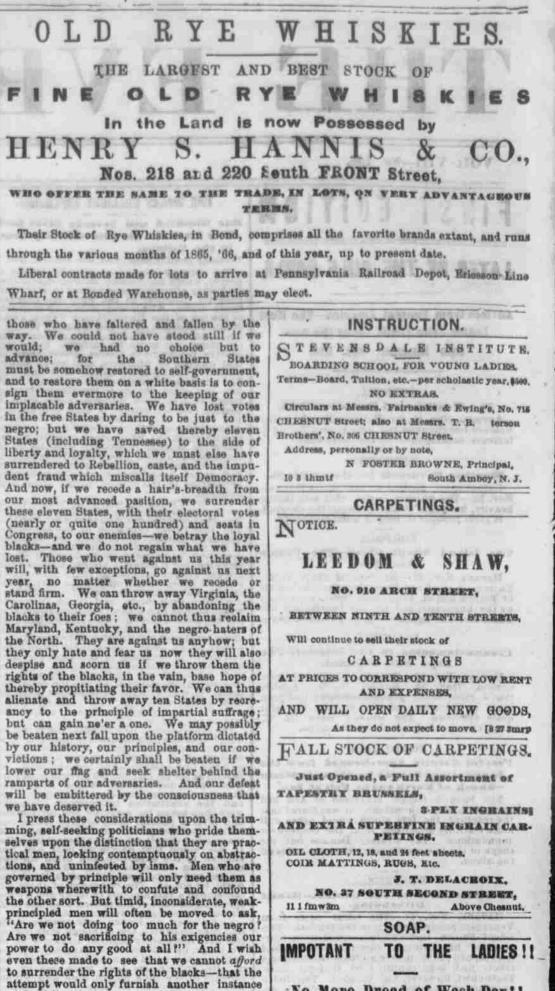
The country is under an enormous burden of taxation, nearly all of which falls on the Northern States. The first duty of Congress is to retrench the expenses of the Government in all its departments, to seek out the various wounds of which the country is bleeding to death and staunch them up, and stop the fatal outflow as soon as possible. By the statement of the Secretary of the Treasury for the quarter ending September 30, 1866, when the army had been disbanded and little more than our present expenses were being incurred, our national outlay for three months was given as

follows:-

7,878,609 17 33,865,399 99 Navy ... Interest on the Public Debt Total expenditures

One of the first duties of Congress is to lessen taxation by every means in its power consistent with the maintenance of the public credit. To this end it should close up the business of reconstruction as rapidly as possible. Exaggerated statements have been made of the expense of maintaining our present military governments in the Southern States, but it is, no doubt, considerable, and involves the continuance of a portion of our army, which might otherwise be discharged. Universal suffrage has proved to be worth more to maintain peace at the South than thirty thousand bayonets would be. Now that the first elections in which freedmen have ever voted have passed off without an act of violence, Congress may safely confine itself to preserving inviolate the right of suffrage as the cheap, sufficient, and only standing army needed in the South. As soon as possible let them repeal all laws against Rebel suffrage, and leave that great peace-maker, the ballot, to exercise its universal influence. And when the Southern Conventions have framed their constitutions, and elected loyal State officers and representatives in Congress, let the work of reconstruction be promptly consummated. If it be possible, let every Southern State be reorganized and readmitted in time to vote at the next Presidential. election, without any attempt to control the question whether it will vote Republican or Democratic. Whatever States, if any, we might lose at the South by removing all restrictions from the right of suffrage, will be more than balanced by our gain at the North.

Not the least important measures of retrenchment should be those which affect Con-gress itself. There is a vast amount of stationery supplied to Congress, which the mem-bers would be much more stationary if they did not drink. There are too many investigating committees, got up to postpose ques-tions like the impeachment question, on which members "fain would wound, but fear to strike the blow." If there were grounds for the President's impeachment, they were grounds "known and read of all men," and needed not a six months' session of a smelling committee in order to discern them. We have had investigating committees, calling together witnesses from all parts of the country to testify to facts which they have gathered from of the folly of whosoever vainly essays to gain the whole world, and thereby loses his own the newspapers, and which, being sworn to, have been embalmed in ponderous volumes soul. by the Public Printer, and distributed over the country to be burned. We have had ernor of our State in 1858, when he succeeded Indian wars got up by contractors, costing millions of dollars for their prosecution, in over Judge Amasa J. Parker by 17,440 majority. He urged in his first message the abowhich no gun was fired on either side, and lition of the constitutional disabilities of blacks which were finally settled by long speeches, and fresh gifts of powder and ball to the savages. We have a mass of rotten Assessors and Collectors of Internal Revenue, District in our State; and-two successive Whig legislatures having passed the requisite amendment -it came before the people for ratification at Attorneys, and Postmasters, whose daily iniquities are a stench in the nostrils of the nation, and who are appointed and retained in office by the President, with the well-aimed intent to sicken the country of the Republican party; and it Mas that effect, though the party is no longer responsible for their appointment or their conduct. Severe examples of punishment and disgrace need to be made among our public thieves, and unless the Republican majority in Congress does something to relieve the party of the odium they are bringing upon us, Republicanism, as a political power, is drawing to the close of its reign. Reputations can no longer be won by fighting on the dead battle-fields where slavery and disunion now lie buried. What we now need are wise, vigorous, and economical measures to raise public credit, restore our finances, revive business, and develop our national industry.



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strikingly in the Post Office arrangements of England and this country. The Post Office con-England and this country. The Post Office con-veys our letters on one system by government management; the railway companies our per-sons and our property on one totally different. The first is conducted primarily for the public good, and incidentally for profit. The second exclusively for the benefit of the managers and stockholders in the corporations. By the one I can send a book from here to San Francisco for four cents. By the other I cannot send the same from here to New York for less than fifty. If I am dissatisfied in the one case. I can apply to a am dissatisfied in the one case, I can apply to a man whose interest it is to see every abuse at once corrected. In the other, at best, I am sent

"The tere, "aph system in Switzeriand is full of suggestions on this kindred subject. That country is covered with a network of telegraph wires, and the whole is under the control of the E. deray B. Switzeriand is twilt wires, and the whole is under the control of the Federal Government. The charge is twenty cents for twenty words, forty for fifty, sixty for one hundred; and the Government has re-solved, after the first of January, 1868, to reduce the charges fifty per cent., when a despatch can be sent to any part of the country for half a cent a word. Let our merchants, who would cent a word. Let our merchants, who would pay five dollars and five cents for sending a hundred words to Washington, meditate on the difference between the Government management in Switzerland and our private monopo

We can see nothing but good resulting from this movement, in which Mr. Quincy has so prominent a place. Whatever may be the decision of the public, after a full examination of the subject, there is no doubt that a discussion of the uses and abuses of railroads will be a great public benefit.

At present they are practically beyond our control, and may be well managed or ill, without the public being able to protect itself from injury, or to share in the good results. A few persons generally contrive to direct all the operations of a railroad, sometimes for their own personal benefit, sometimes for the good of the community, and sometimes for both, as may be the case with the late extraordinary proceedings in regard to the New York and Brie and the Hartford and Erie Bailroads. We hear further rumors of a possible combination of the Erie and Central Roads to keep up or increase the rates of freight. Very likely they have no foundation; but the possibility of such combinations, and the nature of the monopoly that would result from them, should put us on our guard. It may not be best for the State to own its railroads; but in some way it should have the means of regulating them and making them serve the general interests of the people. For this reason we welcome Mr. Quincy's crusade against the existing system, without knowing exactly what ought to take its place.

Southern Elections and Conventions What is the Duty of Congress? From the N. Y. Herald.

The reports so far received of the reconstruction elections in North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Mississippi, and Arkansas, indioate that in each of those States the majority of the votes cast has been for a Convention. and that a majority of the delegates thereto will be radicals, whites and blacks, as in Virginia, Georgia, Alabama, and Louisiana. Texas still lags behind. In North Carolina, it appears, as in Virginia and Georgia, where the registered whites held the majority, they have · permitted the elections to be carried by the blacks by default. In South Carolina, where the blacks are four hundred thousand against

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The Uses of Adversity-By Horace Greekey.

From the N. Y. Independent. The Republicans have suffered heavy reverses in the elections of 1867. Let us frankly admit and calmly consider the fact. We carried all the former free States in 1866; we have lost a considerable part of them in 1867. True, the majorities in either case were inconsiderable in many if not most of the States; but the changes, large or small, have been uniformly against us. We were last year morally certain to elect the next President; we have now a hard contest before us, and the hopes of

our adversaries are high. They talk openly of carrying the next House of Representatives, as well as the President, organizing governments in the Southern States based on their old, familiar principle that blacks have no rights that whites are bound to respect; and then, by the aid of twenty new United States Senators chosen from the States thus revolutionized, organize, with their Senators from the other States, a Senate which shall ignore and exclude the Senators elected from the Southern States under the Reconstruction acts of Congress; and thus restore, so nearly as may be, the rule of the late cotton lords, not only in the South, but over the entire Union. Such are the prospects opened up by the late Democratic successes; such are the sanguine calculations based thereon by the Northern and Southern enemies of Republicaniam, now one in faith and hope, and one in their efforts to obliterate the memories and the consequences of the last seven eventful years of our country's history.

Let us comfort them by the admission that what they call the negro question lies at the bottom of our reverses. Several influences have conspired with that; but thousands have turned against us because we purpose to enfranchise the blacks. Just as, in 1862, Mr. Lincoln's first proclamation of freedom was quickly followed by Democratio victories in every State from the Connecticut to the Mississippi, so now the reconstruction policy of Congress, based on manhood and loyalty, has caused a popular revulsion in favor of caste, rebellion, and slavery. Every step forward causes some to lag behind, others to turn back. The pathway of human progreas is thickly dotted with the skeletons of

with any particular and many particular of a set tors and share a want to be the second stations want to and work that to share and the station of the stations Satainer's as galling parties . . .

the election of 1860, and was rejected by the heavy majority of 140,481. Yet at that same election Governor Morgan, the avowed, wellknown author of the amendment, was reelected-receiving 110,314 votes more than he did in 1858, and 43,519 more than the aggregate vote of his two opponents.

Edwin D. Morgan was the first chosen Gov-

This is no solitary case. Ohio has just elected every man on the Republican State ticket-all known to be openly for impartial suffrage-though she at the same election gave some 50,000 majority against the Suffrage Amendment. And Minnesota, in 1865, and again this year, elected the Republican State ticket, which was pledged to impartial suffrage; and at the same time gave a small popular majority against such suffrage. Connectiont in 1865, and again in 1864, elected the Republican State ticket, openly for im-partial suffrage; and at a special election halfway between the two State elections, voted down impartial suffrage by a heavy majority. So we shall triumph in 1868, not by a lapting our principles to the prejudices of our weaker brethren, but by constraining even these to respect our courageous fidelity to principle. We shall triumph because we stood unshaken in adversity and undauntedly defied the peril of defeat. No party can ever be good for much until it deliberately prefers being right to being victorious. We shall triumph because we shall win the respect alike of timid friends and manly foes; and our triumph will usher in a reign of justice and of peace in our long-distracted country.

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