

SPiRiT OF THE PRESS.

EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS UPON CURRENT TOPICS—COMPILED EVERY DAY FOR THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

An Attempt to Garrote the American People.

From the N. Y. Evening Post.

The Senate has now before it a bill whose purpose is announced in the title to be "to increase the revenue on duties from imports and tending to equalize exports and imports."

The bill we speak of has been given out by its friends as the "Copper bill," and the public has been led to believe that its single or chief purpose is to increase the duty on copper.

But besides copper this bill lays additional duties on lead, nickel, zinc, steel, iron wire, iron of all kinds, glass, salt, rice, timber, raw cotton, cotton and linen goods, and a number of other articles.

Now, first, as regards the revenue, the higher duties it is proposed to impose on most of the articles we have named are for the most part nearly prohibitory; and they are certain to decrease the revenue. They are plainly, as every one can see, intended simply for "protection," as it is called; that is to say, as a special bounty to a very few of the many industries of the country.

But see how partial is this measure. If any one is to be "protected," all ought to be protected alike. But this bill proposes to give special favors to a few, a very few, at the expense, of course, of the many. Take, for instance, the duty on copper. Copper is used in every household in the land; it is used in ship-building, and in many of the most important arts and industries of the country.

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So of lead. There is not a house in the country in which lead is not used. For water-pipes, for paint, for bullets and shot used by the immense frontier population—for many purposes, lead is an article of universal use and of absolute necessity, whose cheapness would benefit the whole country, and add to the comfort and happiness of every man, woman, and child in it.

It is a fact that we do not produce, now, even as much lead as supplies the demand in the neighborhood of the mines. Thousands of tons are every year sent West, from Europe, to fill the demand for paint, pipe, etc. Lead is now produced than when the duty was far lower. Nevertheless, it is proposed to tax every man who wishes to use lead pipe, to tax his house, to protect himself against wild animals, or to follow the chase, in order that less than three thousand persons may put money in their purses.

What we have said of these two articles is true of every other on the list. The number of persons who are to gain is ridiculously out of proportion to the number who are to suffer increased taxation; and it would not be unjust to call this bill a bill to swindle and oppress the American people for the benefit of less than one per cent. of their number. Will the country endure such gross and reckless favoritism?

Take another example, only one item in the proposed increased duty on steel. Steel rails are now bought and laid on all our railroads. It is of the utmost importance to the safety of the travelling community—which means nearly the whole population—that these rails should be quickly laid; but here comes in this bill, and proposes to increase the duty of these steel rails between fifty and seventy per cent., to benefit a few already wealthy steel rail manufacturers. Is it right that the whole country shall be injured or endangered to enrich a few capitalists?

Nor is this all. The rapid extension of our railroad system is of vital importance to the whole country. Destroy our railroads, and we should be bankrupt; double their mileage, and we should increase tenfold our wealth, and an hundred-fold the comfort of every family in the country. Check their increase and you check the growth of the country; you stop its power of increase; you put a limit to the area of land which can be profitably cultivated; you paralyze enterprise, crowd people into the centres of population, decrease wages, and affect very injuriously the independence of the working men.

We could well afford to admit rails free of duty, even if all other articles were to be covered by high duties. The extension of our railroad system is thought so important that the Government gives lands by millions of acres to help their construction, and even endorses the bonds of some railroads. Yet this bill and the present tariff unite to largely increase the cost of rails in this country, to the positive injury of the revenue, and to the still greater injury of the whole country; and for the great profit of perhaps two or three hundred persons, interested as capitalists in the production of rails.

Again, take lumber. Everybody knows that a tax on lumber is a direct and severe tax on the comfort of every household in the land. For houses, furniture, tools, utensils—in all parts of our lives, cheap lumber and timber are necessary. Let lumber be made dear and you check house-building; do that, and you crowd the working people into narrow quarters, increase rents, and plunge millions into distress. This is precisely what this bill will do. It lays exorbitant duties on lumber and timber—and for what? That a few great capitalists, who have secured a monopoly of the few large lumber tracts still left in our country, may make rapid fortunes.

And at what cost do they make this unrighteous gain? In most European countries timber is specially cared for; its possession is counted of national importance; waste lands

are planted; and the people gladly buy from abroad, and save their own. If we were wise we should buy all we need, cheaply, from the British provinces, and save what remains—little enough—of our own timber lands, for that day of need which will come. Instead of that, the protectionists in Congress have for several years offered a bounty for the destruction of our timber; they have treated trees as though they were wild animals; and have paid a large premium for the waste of what all thoughtful men know to be a precious possession.

Such is this so-called "Copper bill." It is a bill levelled at the property and comfort of the people; a bill which seeks recklessly to paralyze enterprise, to check our growth, to set a penalty on our progress, to add to the discomforts of the millions—for the benefit of the few greedy and unscrupulous monopolists and speculators. And this bill the House of Representatives has passed without debate! What is the use of talking about equal rights, when such a gross piece of favoritism, such a violation of the rights of the millions, in favor of a few hundred or thousand men, is perpetrated in open day? Is it not time for gentlemen in Congress to stop talking about the rights of negroes, and look a little to the rights of white men and black men both, which are thus recklessly attacked? Do the Republican leaders imagine that they can escape the just odium which must fall on them and their party for such an act as this? Are they not afraid, or ashamed, to show themselves the enemies of the people, traitors to the common and general interest, tools of the designing and greedy few?

The People's Choice.

From the Boston Post.

General Grant took his nomination declaring that as yet he was wedded to no particular policy, and that, if elected, he should shape his public conduct by what he apprehended from time to time to be the will of the people and the wants of the country. On this basis he has proved the successful candidate. If he refused to be rigidly and exactly bound by the formulas of the dominant party, and for that very reason received a large vote that he otherwise would, it is fair to expect that he will maintain equal freedom for his faith and action in the future. But will he be able to do it, if the radical leaders proceed to insist that he is solely their President, that he was elected by them only, and that he is bound to work out their purposes? The time will assuredly come when the fork of the road will be reached. The man who was elected to the Presidency without a distinct pledge, and who doubtless received a large proportion of the popular vote because of his refusal to make one, can hardly be regarded as likely to yield the point after gaining his position.

There is something for the leaders of the radical party to pay heed to in this result, which they will be much more likely, in the flush of their selfish joy, to pass over. They must remember that many people have given General Grant their votes in a generous spirit, because, first, of their gratitude to him for what he has done for them in a time of great peril; and second, because they repose confidence in his moderation. Now here happens to be an element in this election over which the leaders of the prevailing party had no control, and can have none. They cannot create popular sentiment, albeit they may, on a pinch, shrewdly avail themselves of it to advance their own ends. And this same powerful body of public sentiment they will not be at liberty to ignore, far less to successfully resist. General Grant will come into office with all this accumulated force at his back. He will probably feel that he can afford to keep on in his independent way, with such a substantial reinforcement as that. Should the radicals in Congress undertake to drag him into the support of measures at which his official conscience might revolt, they will find that they have got to confront just so much of public sentiment, embodied and represented in his person. They cannot repeat their Andrew Johnson experiments. They will have very different circumstances to deal with, and a greatly altered tone of the public temper. It strikes us that their very victory, as they now claim it to be, will yield them more of a lesson than of real partisan advantage.

All sides, except, perhaps, these same party managers, will be inclined to extend their confidence to General Grant as the new President. The general disposition will be to sustain him. He will make a strong and successful administration just in proportion as he stands firmly by the popular confidence thus reposed in him. So long, during his term, as he refuses to cut loose from that, he may expect to remain the President of the people instead of a party; and in that position no mere party can unfavorably affect him. It is because, by his independent acceptance of the nomination, and his generous support by the people, he is to the President of the people only, that his official conduct will be scanned in something much above the spirit of party, and be supported on its solid merits irrespective of considerations of the past. There is too much waiting to be done for the country to care whether it is directed by men of this party or that, so it be but done faithfully and well.

Can a State Withdraw or Repeat Its Ratification of a Constitutional Amendment?

From the N. Y. Times.

Early action on her new Constitution by the people of Virginia was recently urged in Congress, in the expectation that her restoration to the Union would assure another vote for the ratification of the Fourteenth amendment of the Federal Constitution. Some of the opponents of that amendment have supposed that the attempts of New Jersey, Ohio, and Oregon to rescind their ratifications of it might be effectual and valid. The whole number of States of the Union is thirty-seven, of which three-fourths are required by the Constitution to adopt a proposed amendment. Including New Jersey, Ohio, and Oregon, twenty-nine States have ratified that amendment. If these States are to be counted out, then two of the unreconstructed States must ratify it before it becomes a part of the Constitution.

But can a State, after having ratified such a proposed amendment, repeat its ratification? There are no judicial decisions or dicta to aid us in answering this question.

It is clear that there is not either in terms or by implication any warrant in the Constitution or the laws of the United States for a State Legislature in twice passing on such an amendment. If a proposed amendment were to be rejected by the States, Congress might possibly re-submit the same form of words as a new amendment, but in this case each State is justified in a second action on it by virtue of this second submission. The only conceivable case where a State could act a second time in pursuance of one and the same Congressional submission is where its first action was fatally irregular, and therefore void, and hence no legal action at all. But it is admitted in the case of each of the backing States that its first action and ratification were regular and legal in all respects.

A State Legislature, in ratifying a proposed amendment, does not act in its ordinary legislative capacity. It can resort to none of its methods of originating or perfecting bills. It

can neither insert new clauses into the amendment nor strike out old ones, nor, after striking out, insert others. It can simply vote to ratify, or refuse to ratify. When that is done, its function is discharged. Thereafter it can neither recall its vote nor change it. Whichever way it votes, it forthwith transmits a certificate duly authenticated of its action in the premises to the office of the Secretary of State, and thereafter its vote and action are the exclusive property of all the States of the Union. State authority extends over State affairs, but never beyond, except by the comity of sister States. Over local interests within its own domain the State has exclusive jurisdiction. But the power of a Legislature to act on a proposed amendment is not derived from the State Constitution, but from the Federal Constitution. And in passing on such an amendment it acts in a new capacity on a subject foreign to its customary duties, and with an energy that may be felt in every miller's race throughout the land. It is then a quasi-national body sitting within the limits of a State, engaged in framing the organic supreme law of the land, or, rather, engaged in an organic act of legislation.

When this high body has consummated its action on such an amendment, its return to its usual duties operates an adjournment sine die of its session on the constitutional question—and it could not reasonably in its former high capacity, except by the express authority of the power that summoned its first session. Its action in that extraordinary capacity was a finality, and therefore the nation has a vested interest in its action. An act of a contract pledging the payment of the sum set opposite his name, provided a certain total sum shall be subscribed in all. He may regret his subscription the instant it is made, but he cannot recall it or modify it. When the total amount is subscribed, his subscription becomes due and payable. When a State Legislature ratifies a proposed constitutional amendment, it in effect says: "I will be forever bound by my ratification, provided three-fourths of the States in all shall ratify it." It may claim to be on the side of repudiation the moment after such ratification, and seek to nullify its action. But the instant the three-fourths majority is obtained, that amendment is a part of the United States Constitution. Again: A proposed State constitution is submitted to the citizens of the State for ratification, and if a majority of those voting ratify it, it is adopted. An amendment of the United States Constitution is submitted to the State legislatures for ratification, and if three-fourths ratify it, it is adopted. Now, a man who, in the forenoon, casts his vote in favor of the proposed State constitution, might, with the same propriety and right, apply in the afternoon, and before a majority of those voting that day shall have voted to ratify that constitution, to recall his vote because he had, in the meantime, changed his mind, as a State legislature which has once ratified a constitutional amendment could ask for a second opportunity to vote, because, in the interim, it has obtained new light. No. Once ratified by a State, its ratification binds it forever, provided the required number of States cooperate.

We trust, therefore, that Congress will not precipitate the admission of any unreconstructed States to the adoption of that amendment. Give those States all the time they may require to rally and embolden the loyal masses, so that their future local governments shall surely be such as will meet the wishes and necessities of their people. When finally admitted, they will promptly perform the superfluous but gratifying act of ratifying that amendment.

Preliminaries to Resumption.

From the N. Y. World.

Senator Morton's speech convinces us that resumption is yet a long way in the future. Though worthless and preposterous as an argument, his speech is nevertheless of considerable value as an indication of the existing state of public opinion. He proposed his bill with a wish to have it pass; and as we must suppose him to understand the temper of Congress and the people, we infer from the idea which he extends all his strenuous protesting, that Congress and the West will not consent to any scheme of resumption which seems to them to involve a contraction of the currency as its accompaniment. It appears to have been almost the sole aim of Mr. Morton's speech to disarm this fear; he felt that, unless he could succeed in doing so, his bill would not be used a slang phrase, have "a ghost of a chance." Hence his laborious and futile attempt to prove that the depreciation of the currency does not result from redundancy but from discredit. Hence his vehement protest against the positions of Secretary McCulloch, whose former policy of contraction (which he still believes the true one) was so strongly reprobated by the West, and so emphatically condemned and repudiated by Congress. This fresh evidence, which Mr. Morton's speech affords, that contraction will not be tolerated in the present state of public feeling, seems to set the question of early resumption practically at rest; since nothing is more demonstrably certain than that resumption is impossible without the dreaded accompaniment of contraction. If resumption is still desired, it is important that the country should understand it, every element of uncertainty operates injuriously on business calculations.

But while the currency will not soon be contracted, it seems almost equally certain that it will not be further expanded. The ground of this opinion is the felt inconvenience of the present state of things, and the growing conviction that resumption is greatly desirable, as evidenced in the deep interest which Mr. Morton's bill and the schemes of similar schemes excite in the public mind. With a tolerable certainty that there will be no contraction nor any further inflation for two or three years to come, the business community must do the best it can. Business of course cannot stop, and within certain limits, it can calculate the immediate future. All engagements not extending beyond two or three years will be met in a currency of about the same value as that in which they are contracted. This being the case, the passage of a bill authorizing gold contracts is not a matter of any great importance, for comparatively few would avail themselves of such an authorization; but the measure is so unobjectionable in itself, may, so just and right, that it ought to be passed, in order that all who choose may avail themselves of that liberty.

The only practical question that seems to be really open, is what can now be done to smooth the way to resumption when the times are more propitious? A capital difficulty in the way of resumption, even if the country would brook the necessary contraction, is our heavy foreign indebtedness and the constant danger which these results of an unfavorable state of the exchanges. The Secretary of the Treasury estimates that American securities held abroad amount to the enormous sum of eight hundred and fifty millions. A portion of this sum consists of State and railroad bonds, but the greater part of it of Government securities. It is by the exportation of five-twenty bonds that we have been the substitute for our former vast exportations of

the great Southern staple. But as we have ceased to deluge the market with further issues of bonds, this resource must soon stop, and besides a return for the goods we import, we shall have to send abroad every year the interest on the bonds. And yet our main resource is our breadstuffs and moderate cotton crop, which are so long required to be supplemented by immense exportations of securities. An abundant harvest in Europe, or a scant harvest at home, or still worse, both of these occurring in the same year, would bring us so heavily in debt that the country would be drained of all its specie, and the banks would again be forced into suspension even if they could now resume. It is a signal illustration of the narrowness of view with which the question of resumption has been discussed, that this all-important consideration has been well-nigh ignored. It is the main thing which should have occupied public attention from the moment that the war closed. The great requisite for strengthening our financial position is the re-education of the South, and the building up of its established industries. If the Union had been promptly restored on the close of the war, capital would have flowed freely into the exhausted South to revive its prosperity; and its great staples, so important to redress our foreign balances, would by this time have been in a state of healthy reexpansion. Prompt restoration would have benefited the country every way. By greatly enlarging the field for the employment of money, our currency would have been made less redundant, and the saving of the war might have been put to use in a "reconstruction" which has made our resources more adequate to our exigencies, and have greatly strengthened the public credit. The most important steps that can now be taken towards resumption are to foster and encourage the industry of the South, cut down our military establishment, so disproportioned to a state of peace, and retrench the extravagance which has so long run riot under the misrule of the Republican party.

The Situation in England.

From the N. Y. Tribune.

"Come what may," said Mr. Disraeli to a political acquaintance towards the close of a memorable debate in 1853, "history must record that I was twice Chancellor of the Exchequer." This was said in anticipation of the vote of the House of Commons which a few hours after dismissed Mr. Disraeli from office; and it was his proud consolation for expected defeat. Doubtless he finds at present the same sort of consolation in looking back upon the greater honors he has lately won. Come what may, history must record that he was three times Chancellor of the Exchequer and once Prime Minister. Only those who study closely the organization of English political life can understand the nature of the triumph over difficulties which is represented by the elevation of a man of no family to the place of Prime Minister. Had Mr. Disraeli a son far loftier and more distinguished than he has, he might well indulge a personal pride in the recollection of his triumphs. "I cease to live," says Goethe's Egmont, "but I have lived."

There is something, however, we cannot help thinking, which sustains Mr. Disraeli in his fall beside the consolation of memory. The address in which he explains to his party the reason of his resignation of office shows that he has no idea of giving up the game he has played so unscrupulously and so successfully. There were reasons why he could not hope for the present to bid against Gladstone for a popular favor. He could not justly attempt to accomplish the same audacious change of front with regard to the Irish Church which he effected so completely in the case of the Reform bill. He could not bring his party, at this hour, up to the pitch of sacrificing the Irish Church. His hold over some of the stricter members of the party was terribly shaken by the events of last year. One more such victory and he must have been undone. Already a sort of sullen secession was forming itself in his own Ministry in anticipation of his venturing on some surrender of true-blue Tory principles. At the same time, his political friends, round Gladstone, who had been predicting that, come what might, he would lose his Protestant ascendancy colors to the mast. Then there were the powerful seceders of last year—the Marquis of Salisbury, the Earl of Carnarvon, and Gen. Peel—prepared to resist with utmost force any attempt to compromise with the spirit of religious equality. No, the thing could not be done. It must have been very tempting to Disraeli. One bold coup d'état, one daring announcement that the abolition of the Irish Church had all along been the dream and the hope of the Conservatives, and the names of Gladstone and Bright be then? But it could not be done. Disraeli must in his heart have raged against the slow and stolid men of principle—the Harbys and such like—who could not appreciate the splendid chances before them, and would rather stick to what they called their principles than execute the most brilliant manoeuvre with the utmost certainty of success. Unluckily, too, he had tried the Popery cry himself; he had tried to kindle the fire which would not light, and he had only burned his own fingers in the futile effort. So, surveying the situation calmly, he saw nothing to do but for him but to get out of office, and educate his party in the way of religious equality. The coming year is full of chances. Gladstone is now to prepare a definite and complete scheme for the disendowment and disestablishment of the Irish Church; and what opportunities may not the development of any such scheme afford to his hateful rival! It would hardly be in human possibility to carry such a measure in the next session; and meanwhile events, and the force of rivalry and jealousy, ambition and disappointment, will be doing wonderful work towards the subversion of the Tory party. If it be true that Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright have resolved to make the Marquis of Salisbury Governor-General of India—an appointment quite likely to be made by men so magnanimous and so wise—a grave difficulty would be removed out of Mr. Disraeli's path. The Marquis of Salisbury is by far the ablest, the best, the most high-minded of the Tories; he has long watched Mr. Disraeli with jealous eye, and Disraeli feared him. If Salisbury were bestowed safely in India the way of the great adventurer would be much more clear. Nobody supposes that Disraeli, in his heart, cared about the Irish Church. If he has any individual feeling in the matter, it must rather be a secret sympathy with the cause of religious equality. Given a free choice, he would probably rather be remembered in history as the statesman who abolished the Irish Church than as the Tory leader who sustained it. But he wanted to be Prime Minister anyhow—that first, all the rest second—and he could no more work himself up to the political virtue of a Bright or a Gladstone than he could make himself young again. So he went in for Protestant ascendancy because it gave him the first and apparently the best chance; and he must have felt very much as Becky Sharp did when, after having secretly contrived to get married to Rawdon Crawley, the poor younger son, she found out that she might have married Sir Pitt Crawley, the rich father.

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