# SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

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

## The Bill to Wipe Out the Mormons.

*From the N. Y. Herald.*

Mr. Ashley's bill concerning the boundaries of the States of Nevada, Minnesota, and Nebraska, and the Territories of Colorado, Montana, and Wyoming, having been twice read on the 11th instant, referred to the Committee on the Territories and ordered to be printed, was on the 14th instant reported back with amendments, and its further consideration was postponed until the 28th instant. It is, almost without disguise, a bill to wipe out the Mormons. By parcelling the region which, it is but just to say, was not long ago a wilderness, that the Latter Day Saints by admirably organized and persistent industry have made to blossom like the rose, this bill proposes to divide the Mormon forces and thus bring them more directly than before under the control of the United States Government, of the common law, and of the almost universal sentiment of Christendom condemnatory of polygamy as preached and practised by the disciples of Joe Smith.

We have here nothing to say of the personal schemes of political ambition and land speculations involved in this bill. It is of comparatively little importance to the public at large whether the passage of the bill would help Mr. Ashley or anybody else to become Governor of Montana and future United States Senator, or cheaply enrich this or that speculator at the expense of the Mormons, who have already done so much to develop the resources of the distant regions to which they were driven by religious persecution, and from which it is presumed they will again be driven in consequence of the passage of Mr. Ashley's bill. It is likely that this bill will meet with spirited opposition on the part of Mr. Hooper, delegate from Utah, and Mr. Burleigh, delegate from Dacotah, which also is wiped out by its provisions. Others are pledged to protest in Congress against the inexpediency, if not the injustice, of such a mutilation of the map of the United States as Mr. Ashley proposes. Unquestionably Congress, as composed of representatives of the people of the United States, has a perfect right to legislate with reference to all territorial questions. It has the right to sanction the partition of the State of Texas or that of the State of Michigan, so earnestly desired by the inhabitants of the Upper Peninsula, who would like to have it ceded to the General Government for the purpose of organizing the Territory of Superior, and who offered at the recent Territorial Convention at Houghton very strong arguments in favor of this purpose. But the question of the proposed partition of Utah and the abolition of its Territorial Government presents a peculiarly difficult problem. It would be undignified for the Government of the United States to try to cut the gordian knot of this problem by anything like a Yankee trick. Without discussing whether Salt Lake City polygamy is or is not worse than unrecognized poligamy in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Washington, London, Paris, Vienna, or any other city in Christendom—without comparing it even with what we consider the much less objectionable system which prevails in Constantinople—we must say that in our opinion the question before Congress is mainly of expediency. Congress has now to decide whether it is more politic by obnoxious, or only apparently obnoxious, legislation, to afford the Mormons the immense advantages which every religious sect derives from persecution, or to leave to the Pacific Railroad, with all its irresistible civilizing influences, the task of speedily effacing in Mormondom whatever is inconsistent with modern ideas of progress. It is not improbable that Mr. Ashley's bill, which would cut Utah to pieces and give the fragments to the adjoining States and Territories, which also divides Minnesota and Nebraska, and which despoils Idaho by giving half her territory to Montana, will be defeated.

## General Butler's "Similitudes."

*From the N. Y. Tribune.*

General Butler, as a financier, has done better than some; he has added to the stock of public thought, and has widened the popular view of our financial situation. It is too early yet to predict whether any of his suggestions will become part of the financial policy of the country. We regard his speech as far more able than his plan. He plans badly; but the worse his plan the finer the opportunity for displaying his powers of speaking well for a bad client. He proposes that the present greenbacks and national bank notes be withdrawn, and Treasury "certificates of value," or pictures having a "similitude to money" not redeemable in gold, but only receivable for taxes and customs, and made legal tender in payment of all private debts, be issued in their place, to the amount, in disbursements by the Government, of $350,000,000, and to the further amount, on the application of bondholders, of 90 per cent. of all the six per cent. bonds outstanding, provided the holders of those bonds shall deposit them with the Government as security, and pay 3 65-100 per cent. per annum for their use. Fractional coins are also to be issued of the intrinsic value of 50 per cent. of the nominal amount of the present fractional currency, now worth in specie 75 per cent. of its face. The proposition closes the national banks as banks of issue, and converts the Treasury into one vast national bank of issue, authorized theoretically to loan the bondholders, on the security of $1,750,000,000 of six per cent. bonds, a volume of currency amounting to $1,575,000,000, which, with the $350,000,000 of currency to be issued in redemption of the greenbacks and for Government expenses, amounts to a grand total of $1,925,000,000 of currency thus legally authorized.

The question how much of this will ever be issued depends, by the terms of the bill, not on the will of the Government, or of the Secretary of the Treasury, but on the interests of the bondholders alone. The principal bondholders are at present the national banks, savings banks, insurance and trust companies, and foreign and American capitalists desiring them as a means of investment. It is important to bear in mind that very few of the bonds are held by the commercial and business classes. Mr. Butler argues that this currency will be uniform, sound, cheap, stable, and elastic. He cannot mean, by uniform, that we will not still be compelled, by good faith, law, and express contract, to provide coin with which to pay the interest on our five per cent. and six per cent. bonds. To this extent we must still have one currency for the Government and its creditors and another and depreciated one for the people. In order to provide coin for paying the interest on the bonds, if our customs as well as internal taxes are payable in these similitudes, the Government must sell them or its bonds in the market to get the gold. Either the Government must repudiate the interest (as well as principal) of the debt, and its express promise and written law (as well as its good faith), or it must in some way receive and pay out about $130,000,000 in gold per annum. To this extent our currencies would be no more uniform than before. That the Government could buy half a million of collars in gold a day with paper "similitudes," which can be issued to any required extent, and continue to do this from year to year until the country would have "grown up to" specie payments, more smoothly, cheaply, and efficiently than it could collect that sum for duties, General Butler may fully believe. We do not. He explains to us with great clearness that the value of our present currency depends upon, and is conferred by, that of the bonds, insomuch that when the recent German war caused Prussians to sell our bonds largely, in order to invest in the new loans their own Government was putting on the market, and in consequence our bonds declined, for a reason wholly disconnected with our own credit or business, all the efforts of Secretary McCulloch by selling gold to prevent our greenbacks from declining also, as shown by the continued rise in gold, were unavailing. Greenbacks fell to the level of our bonds. General Butler was on a good scent here, and he should have followed it further. Having shown that the value of our present currency depends on that of the bonds, he should have told us what the value of the bonds depends upon. He could not have avoided the conclusion that the value of the bonds depends upon the adequacy of the provision made by us for paying their coin interest. Capitalists judge of the value of any investment by the adequacy and certainty of the interest. If that is kept right they can get the principal at any time by selling the bond. German, English, and American capitalists will pay only 75 per cent. of its face for an American bond, because under our system of government there is about one chance in four that all provision for meeting the interest will be repealed. Our bonds sell at 78 at Frankfort, because we can show our German friends that we have a gold revenue of $160,000,000, all pledged to the payment of a coin interest of only $130,000,000. If on this argument alone the consents to pay 78 cents per dollar for our bonds, and if this causes our greenbacks to be worth 72, what would either bonds or greenbacks be worth if, as proposed by General Butler, all provision for a gold revenue were repealed, and the Government could get no gold whatever, except by buying it in the market? What would be the nature and extent of the "corners" and the gold gambling which would result if the brokers of Wall street knew that the Government must buy gold at the rate of half a million a day in open market, or repudiate its interest at the end of six months? Whether it may not be possible at some future time to base a paper currency entirely on credit, to have it irredeemable in gold and yet maintain a steady value in exchange for other forms of wealth, is a proposition apparently utopian, but upon which, as we have said, we are not disposed to dogmatize. We do strongly believe, however, that if to-day General Butler's bill repealing all provisions for a gold revenue from customs, with which to meet our annual interest, were passed, our bonds would tumble down to twenty-five or thirty cents, gold would rise to three hundred, the Government would find it impossible to buy half a million of gold per day with its new Butler "similitudes," and, unless it promptly returned to its present position, it would have to repudiate its interest within six months for want of coin.

General Butler argues in a circle as to the value of these "similitudes." He says they will be valuable because they will pay customs as well as taxes and debts; but he forgets that the value of the customs will depend on that of the currency in which they are paid. He cannot rest the value of his similitudes on the customs duties and the value of his customs on his similitudes, with nothing for either to rest on. In reality, the value of the "similitudes" will be only what they derive from being "legal-tenders;" and this, as General Butler shows, depends on the value of the bonds, which in turn depends on coin interest, which General Butler abolishes, by abolishing a coin revenue. This lets the bottom out of his whole plan. General Butler's currency would fail in soundness, therefore, even more signally than in uniformity.

## General Webb in Brazil—His Controversy with Admiral Davis.

*From the N. Y. Times.*

We have recently published in the *Times* a very interesting official correspondence between General J. Watson Webb, our Minister in Brazil, and Admiral Davis, in command of our squadron on that coast. It seems that, in its official publication under direction of the State Department, this correspondence has been very materially emasculated—the Secretary not deeming himself authorized, under the call of the Senate, to publish so severe an arraignment of the action of the Navy Department as is contained in the letters of General Webb.

It will be seen that General Webb deals with the whole question, and with all the parties involved, with characteristic frankness, independence and impetuosity. Where he has instructions he follows the line of conduct which they mark out, with vigor and fidelity—especially if they seem to him adequate to the emergency; where he has none he acts all the same—never hesitating to "take the responsibility" upon himself.

The whole difficulty, as the public pretty well understands, grew out of the refusal of the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied armies, and of the Brazilian forces, to permit an American war-vessel first to pass the blockade and convey our Minister, Mr. Washburn, to his destination, the capital of Paraguay, and next to bring him away after his position had become dangerous. General Webb demanded a reversal of this decision, the censure by the Government of the Secretary who made it, and such general redress as the insult to our flag seemed to require.

Failing to secure either of these demands, the General made the peremptory demand, either for permission for the Wasp to go through the blockading lines, or for his passports. Admiral Davis, who seems to have taken a different view both of the Minister's duty and of his own, remonstrated very strongly against the demands made by General Webb, which, instead of inducing him to waive them, or modify them in any respect, only had the effect of drawing the Minister's attention to the Admiral's dereliction of duty, and to bring down upon himself a very sharp and protracted correspondence.

It is claimed, on General Webb's behalf, that his prompt and vigorous interposition actually saved the lives of Mr. Washburn and his family—while in doing this he had to contend, not only with the Brazilian Government and the chiefs of the allied forces, but with the inactivity and incompetency of Admiral Davis, of our own squadron. It will not be denied or doubted that he acted with a degree of promptness and vigor, and with a paramount regard for the honor of his country and the safety of his countrymen, quite characteristic of his whole career, both at home and abroad.

## Scan. Mag. in the "Tribune."

*From the N. Y. World.*

It is a heinous thing and not to be borne which the *Tribune* has done in respect of General Grant. There may be many minds of many men as to the civil capacity or the military merits of General Grant, but there can be no rational dissent from the proposition that he is at this present writing a "high personage" in the land. He is the actual Commander-in-Chief of the Federal forces and the prospective Chief Magistrate of the Republic. The reduction of the army may have impaired his importance in the office which he is about to resign, and the distrust of his radical supporters may curtail his influence in the office which he is about to assume. But a General of the Armies must always be a functionary of some consequence, and a President must hierarchically represent the collective dignity, even if an usurping Congress forbids him politically to exert the collective force, of the Republic.

And therefore it is that the *Tribune*, by sundry recent publications concerning this conspicuous citizen, has made itself guilty of the ancient and abominable offense of *scandalum magnatum*. This offense consists, according to the statutes by which it was first defined in the reigns of Edward I and Richard II, "in any wrong, by words or in writing, done to high personages of the land, such as peers, judges, ministers of the crown, officers in the state, and other great public functionaries, by the circulation of scandalous statements, false news, or horrible messages, by which any debate between them and the Parliament or any scandal to their persons might arise." Such a wrong is *scandalum magnatum*. It differs from mere promiscuous and malignant lying about private persons in that it is reduced to no certain rules and definitions, but it may be whatever shall be judged to be derogatory to the high character of the person of whom it was spoken. An old Nisi Prius report tells us that, while it was held to be harmless to say of a common person "he is no more to be valued than a dog," it was held to be *scandalum magnatum* to say the same thing of a peer.

In like manner, while it would be harmless for the *Tribune* to say of a common person—as, for example, of H. G. before he is raised to the rank of Envoy to England—that he "lies" or that he is a "villian," it would be *scan. mag.* to say the same thing of H. G. after he had been presented as the American Minister to her Majesty Queen Victoria. Or for the *Tribune* to have said of Ulysses S. Grant, tanner in Galena, that he "didn't know his own mind," or that he "went back on his own words," would have been harmless. But for the *Tribune* to say, as it said the other day of General Grant, "by authority," that he denied ever having uttered "to any human being" any opinions whatever on public questions and public men, was an open *scandalum magnatum*.

Again: For the *Tribune* to have said of any private person—as, for example, of George Francis Train—that he objected to the treaty just negotiated between England and America, because the "true measure of our American claims against England was the sweeping of our whole commerce from the seas and the prolongation of the civil war for a year by English sympathy with the Confederates," would have been harmless. But for the *Tribune* to say this, as it said this Wednesday, "by authority," of General Grant, was also an open *scandalum magnatum*. For though such words of themselves really may mean no more when put into the mouth of General Grant than they would if put into the mouth of George Francis Train, still such is the responsible position of General Grant that they commit him to one of two alternatives, either of which is a "horrible" thing to think of. If they are to be supposed to prefigure the foreign policy of General Grant, the utterance of them must be interpreted either as a most unworthy and artful attempt to prevent the outgoing administration from effecting the settlement of an important question (and this, by exerting an unconstitutional and debasing influence upon the Senate through the personal hopes and fears of its members in the matter of patronage yet to be), or as designed to make the English Government recede from the treaty, by putting that government, as it were, under a direct menace from the incoming American administration.

If, on the other hand, they are to be supposed to represent nothing at all but an ebullition of personal feeling and temper on the part of General Grant, then the utterance of them would put him into the odious light of seeking to persuade the popular mind that, if the country would only have waited until after his inauguration for the settlement of the "Alabama claims," the country would have seen Great Britain compelled to atone for her misdeeds by the payment to us of the difference between the value of our foreign commerce in 1860 and its value in 1865, *plus* the whole of the last year's expenses of the war—a sum which, in the aggregate, we need not say, would go a long way towards clearing off the national debt. Of course, General Grant never uttered the language imputed to him by the *Tribune*. But there are many fly-gobblers in the land, readers of the *Tribune*, who will believe that he did utter it, just as the same persons on the same authority believed that he really did deny the authenticity of the much more rational and respectable observations recited as falling from him on a variety of topics by a trusty and intelligent correspondent of the *World*.

And therefore, we repeat, alike by its denials and by its affirmations, the *Tribune* has committed the crime of *scan. mag.* against a "high personage." It has done its worst to discredit and make him appear ridiculous. If the perpetrator of these misdeeds will give himself up, we should recommend his being let off with a few years in the Dry Tortugas. If he obstinately hides under Windust's table or in the crown of H. G.'s hat, then let the whole *Tribune* staff be arbitrarily arrested by Superintendent Kennedy, and subjected to the *peine forte et dure* of reading Badeau's "Military History of General Grant" or Greeley's "American Conflict" until the guilty person shall consent to plead.

## Congress Nothing but a Caucus.

*From "Brick" Pomeroy's N. Y. Democrat.*

Under the despotic rule of the radical majority of Congress, legislation has become nothing but the partisan action of a political caucus. Everything is decided upon in a caucus of radical members, and then is put through under the spur of the previous question," cutting off all debate, almost choking down all thought about matters of the most vital importance to the present and future well-being of our country.

The *Tribune's* Washington correspondent of Tuesday says:—"A caucus of the Senate will be held to-morrow morning, for the purpose of considering the relative importance of the various measures before Congress, and determining the course of action thereon."

Hear that, people of America! All the action of Congress is "determined" in a purely partisan caucus. There is no act of your National Legislature that deserves any higher respect than the edict of a caucus. So far as the dignity and justice of legislation are concerned, this caucus might just as well be held in the "Loyal League" pest-hole in this city, and its daily action proclaimed to the public in the columns of the *Tribune*, as to go through the expensive farce of doing the business at the Capitol in Washington. The entire legislation at the Federal capital is controlled by some fifteen or twenty radical leaders. They concoct all and shape all, while the rest of the radical members stupidly acquiesce in their work, and then the whole is rushed through the abominable farce of Congress by the omnipotent previous question. Now we say these fifteen or twenty leaders might just as well meet in some congenial whisky hole for "determining" what shall be law, and then proclaim the same through the radical press, thereby saving the people all the useless expense of Congress. And this course would also save the Democratic members from the humiliation of belonging to a so-called legislative body, in which they have really no more influence or recognized right than they have in the negro Assembly of Hayti.

For example, there are a great number of vacant offices, both at home and abroad, and President Johnson, with a proper regard for the public welfare, has sent to the Senate names to fill them. Forthwith the radical leaders call their caucus, and in secret session determine not to act upon a single case, thereby leaving this great number of offices still vacant until Grant has a chance to supply them from the great batch of thieves who are waiting without to be let into the public crib.

Recently President Johnson nominated two of the best officers in the whole army to be advanced to the post of brigadier-generals in the regular army. The radical caucus was called to "determine" upon these cases, and it was decided that they should not be confirmed, for the simple and sole reason that they are gentlemen of too much respectability and too much honor to be relied upon to do whatever infamous and dirty business the caucus may please to demand of them.

So gradually both the civil and the military service are being weeded of all efficiency and all respectability, and their place filled with the disreputable tools of the *caucus*.

Our Government is a *cau-cus*, particularly the *cus*.

## Three Black Crows.

*From the N. Y. Tribune.*

The investigation of the Alaska purchase seems to have nearly reached bottom at last, and a very pretty little affair it is when we get at the truth. Our readers will remember that a Captain R. J. Hinton wrote from Washington to the Worcester *Spy* a story that over $2,000,000 of the price paid for Alaska had been distributed among newspaper editors, correspondents, lobbyists, and other persons, for the purpose of promoting the sale, and a list was given of the principal newspapers said to have been bribed. A committee of Congress has been about six weeks looking into these charges. One journalist after another was called and examined. None of them had received any bribe or been offered any, but several had "heard" that money had been used. There was rumor of a man named Noah who had said that Mr. Robert J. Walker, the Czar's "counsel," paid him $2000 for services as a newspaper correspondent; but Noah, being found, protested that he never had got a cent and never had spoken to Mr. Walker in his life. The man named Hinton was called, and confessed that he had no knowledge of the truth of the statements he had been the first to publish, and got all his information from a man named Martin, who professed to have a list of the persons bribed by the Russian Government. The man named Martin was examined, and knew nothing at all about the case. He referred his questioners to a man named Tasistro. The man named Tasistro was equally ignorant, but thought Mr. Seward and General Banks, at all events, must have been bribed, because they were both "flush" of money about that time; and if they did not get it from Baron Stoeckl, where the mischief did they get it? So the story of the Russian bribery seems to amount to this—that General Banks has bought land and Mr. Seward has paid off a mortgage. Really we think the farce has gone far enough.

Several interesting facts, however, have been developed in the course of this otherwise barren investigation. There was the high principle of Mr. Robert J. Walker, who would not touch a $26,000 fee for lobbying the purchase through Congress, unless it came in the shape of a regular "counsel's fee." There was the unexampled kindness of the Washington *Chronicle* and *National Intelligencer*, which gave up their space to Mr. Walker's articles on Alaska. There was the gratitude of Mr. Walker, who hinted that one or both of them ought to receive some pecuniary recompense for the damage they must thereby have suffered. There was the delicacy of the editor of the *Chronicle*, who waived his claim to the $3000 offered in obedience to this suggestion in favor of the publisher. There was the promptness of Mr. D. C. Forney, who didn't waive his claim at all, but took the money, and we hope has made good use of it. And finally, the investigation has shown us how a certain class of journalists manufacture Washington news, and with what extreme caution it is necessary to read the Worcester *Spy*. Upon the whole, the information may be worth the trouble it has cost to get it.


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