SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

Editorial Opinions of the Leading Journals Upon Current Topics—Compiled Every Day for the Evening Telegraph.

DEMOCRACY ON A MORAL RAMPAGE

From the N. Y. Commercial Advertiser. The dead level of journalism during the "heated term" has occasionally been enlivened by the most orthodox advice concerning political morality from Democratic sources. and very pointed and ponderous philippics against the corrupt distribution of patronage by the administration in power. Our hearty 'amen" goes with all crusades against vil lainy, wherever such crusades originate; and our benedictions follow every criticism of scoundrelism on whomsoever the criticism falls. We are not over sensitive, or thinskinned; and if a Republican miscreant is unmasked, or a Republican scheme of plunder exposed, the righteous exhibition receives our approval. So refreshing is it to see a Democratic organ undertake the role of virtue, and affect the phrase of piety, that we forbear to touch too rudely any symptom of regeneration in that quarter. Certainly iniquity must, assume, fearful proportion, when it can startle our Democratic friends, and we have no words to express the condition the rest of the world should be in, when their sense of propriety is shocked. What excites our curiosity is that sin has no terror for Democrats, unless committed by Republican officials, and so far as they are concerned, shame seems atterly impotent in fixing its mark of infamy on any but recreant Republican foreheads Are our politics in such a lamentable strait that pollution, fraud, and depravity are so identified with one party, that we are only astonished when they make their appearance in the other? Some things seem to indicate this. For weeks the leading Democratic paper in this city has been pouring out the bitterness of its bile on the head of the lately appointed Minister to Spain. The choicest specimens of editorial rhetoric have informed the public of the viciousness of that gentleman's life and manners. The resources of spleen and syntax have been exhausted to depict and disparage the character of General Sickles. The decalogue records no moral obligation that he has not violated, if the World is veracious, Larceny in all its stages, interspersed with the finer arts of arson and burglary are laid to his charge. We will not rehearse the filthy catalogue of vice which the World heralds triweekly as making up the career and marring the conduct of the ambassador to Madrid. What seems remarkable is, that this tirade and traducement come so late. Why did we not hear of General Sickles as the "chief of sinners" when he was the pet and pattern of the "fierce Democracy?" When Tammany sheltered him, and showered its darling with annumbered honors, his alleged experiments at perjury and forgery did not disgust or even trouble our high-toned opponents. If Sickles ever pilfered, civic station was the reward he received from his Democratic associates. If he ever contemplated the dangerous pastime of incendiarism, the Democratic party did not seem to regard the fiery weakness with discredit, for it lavished on him legislative promotion. If in bygone years Sickles fitted himself for a permanent residence at the penitentiary, that party generously changed the direction of his location, and gave him a European retreat as a member of our diplomatic corps. If he was a murderer, and if he basely conpounded with lechery, he was a Democratic Congressman and a high priest in the Democratic church when the foul crimes were committed. As it is only after heroic service in the field as a patriot, and the most vigorous defense of liberal ideas as a Republican, that the Democratic ress have discovered General Sickles' unworthiness to be a recipient of public favor, we must infer that, according to the ethics of that party, no amount of criminality unfits an American for wearing Democratic laurels and leading Democratic masses. It is only when Republicans see fit to endow men damaged with early blemishes and tainted reputations that the inconsistency is entitled to mention and censure. We know of no greater compliment that could be paid to the party with which we have the honor to act, than the fact that the elevation of public men with dubious

THE USURY LAWS AND THE BROKERS. From the N. Y. Herald.

perpetrated by us.

histories, while it provokes neither compli-

ment nor condemnation, if coming from our

enemies, becomes a dishonor and marvel if

The Wall street brokers seem likely to have a check put on their high profits. The public is so disgusted with the system that finds favor in that locality that the prosecution will be sure to be sustained by every class, however high or low, outside of Wall street. Though we cannot deny that we are in general opposed to usury laws-being of opinion that money, like everything else, should be left free to look for the highest purchaser-yet we admit that circumstances may arise in which such laws may prove of great service. Here we have combinations made to tighten the money market, giving money an undue value in order that the rate of interest may be raised. Such dealing is unhealthy and most prejudicial to commerce through every part of the country. We have bankruptcies and dull times in consequence, and it would be hard to say what class of society is not injured thereby. Let these money brokers make money in a fair, honorable way, letting it out at its true, not inflated value, and, supposing they should thus chance to exceed the legal rate of interest, the public will be so well satisfied with the bargain that the law will be suffered, as before, to go into desuetude. But as they do not choose to act so, for these modern Shylocks we have no pity. They are gentle-men who stick hard to a bond, and look for

then, we say, and plenty of it. DELAY IS PERIL.

the law to support them. Give them law,

From the N. Y. Tribune. Twenty-two States have already ratified the fifteenth amendment to the Federal Constitution, whereby the right of suffrage is accorded and secured to every native and every naturalized citizen of the United States, without regard to race, color, or previous condition of servitude. The ratification of five more States is required; and there are four Southern States-Virginia, Georgia, Mississippi, and Texas-ready to give such assent unless repulsed by those who ought to welcome and facilitate their co-operation in the needful work. Is it not palpable madness not to bail their accession with a hearty enthu-

We have recently conversed with leading Mississippians of diverse antecedents and pre-They are preparing for a spirited contest in their approaching election, but on no clear issue. The radical Republicans as-sure us that they will vote against the disfranchising clauses of their constitution—that no such would now be proposed or advocated -that the existence of such clauses is due to the passions evoked by civil war, which have now nearly died out. Though there is a large

ing majority.

On the other hand, the "Conservative Republicans" assure us that their party will vote o ratify the Constitution minus the disfranchising clauses, and will vote in the Legislature to ratify the fifteenth amendment. They have proved their strength in the election already neld, when they voted down the Constitution and gave their candidates a large majority, despite the heavy preponderance of colored voters. Negro suffrage has no terrors for them; and they are prepared to prove that their rule will have no terrors for the blacks, and should have none.

In Texas there are no disfranchising and proscriptive clauses to be voted down, and of course no separate submission. The "conservatives" will vote to ratify the Constitution, support General A. J. Hamilton for Governor, and say he will be elected by an immense majority, and the fifteenth amend-

ment ratified without serious opposition. In this State there is a very formidable body of outlaws, who would, like to pass for Rebels, but are really horse thieves and robbers generally, though they sometimes try to give their crimes a semi-political aspect by outrages upon conspicuous Unionists, and especially upon isolated and defenseless negroes. The military have done their best to repress these villains; but there is hardly a soldier in the State to every hundred square miles, while the vast unpeopled forests and prairies all ord refuge and concealment to the outlaws, Texas needs a government which has not only the sympathy but the active support of her people, in order that she may deal stringently with these villains, and either suppress or expel them. The work is already well begun; but there are still extensive districts in which life and property will not be secure until she is fully reconstructed.

In Georgia the conservatives have on their hands a large elephant of their own raising. By expelling from the Legislature its colored members, when they thought Seymour and Blair were to be elected, they put themselves wholly in the wrong. They forced a majority for Seymour when at least ten thousand more voters preferred Grant. Since they heard of Grant's election they have been trying to get out of their false position; but this is not half so easy as keeping out would have been. Yet the recent decision of their Supreme Court that blacks were eligible to office has given them an excuse, and an opportunity alone is still wanting. They are ready to restore to the colored members the seats wherefrom they were most wrongfully ejected, and to ratify the fifteenth amendment. Could they be assured to-morrow that they might thus regain the ground they most unwisely and perversely abandoned, they would promptly do so. * (We speak of the vast majority; there is in Georgia, as elsewhere, an incorrigible few; but their sceptre has departed.)

Virginia virtually says to Congress and the country: "You prescribed to us conditions of restoration: we have fulfilled them so far as we have been accorded opportunity: let us convene our Legislature and inaugurate our State officers, and we will complete all that you required. We have adopted a Radical Constitution by nearly 200,000 majority, rejecting only those sections which proscribed and disfranchised many thousands of our foremost citizens, as the President enabled and authorized us to do. We are ready to ratify the fifteenth amendment, and to fulfil every duty of loyal citizens of a Union State, Will you admit us to self-government, and to a

voice in the National Councils?" She is met by a requision from General Canby that her newly chosen legislators shall take the iron-clad oath (that they never gave any aid or countenance to the Rebellion), which many of them cannot do, and which the members of no Legislature of a reconstructed State have vet been required to do. General Grant instructed General Meade not to require it in Georgia or Alabama, and he did not: General Canby was urged by Governor Holden to require it in North Carolina, but would not. We will not review the reasoning by which General Canby justifies this requirement in the case of Virginia; but we assert with entire confidence that none of his superiors-President Grant, Secretary Rawlins, and General Sherman-have directed or counselled it.

Just consider for one moment the intrinsic absurdity of the requirement. The Virginia conservatives say to the President, "We want to vote for the constitution, and thus to return to our places in the Union; but there are certain clauses thereof which disfranchise and proscribe a part of ourselves; these we want to vote against and vote down if we can The President looks into the matter, and says, "This is reasonable and right; it shall be as you ask." They proceed to vote, and vote down proscription and disfranchisement by some fifty thousand majority, thus establishing upon the highest authority the equal rights before the law of all citizens; and yet, in the face of this verdict, some thirty or forty members of the new Legislature are to be excluded from their seats!

Most certainly, the partisan aspect of this matter is quite subordinate; but just look for one moment at this: We want Virginia's ratification of the fifteenth amendment-want it now-want the moral influence of such ratification by the assent of all parties. Exclude all the prominent conservatives from her Legislature, and that ratification will be shorn of all power and significance. "O yes!" says a caviller, "Virginia has ratified; but how What sort of Virginia is it? Let us exclude from a legislature all whom we will, and we can make it do anything we choose." Is there not force in that criticism?

We ought to have had all the outlying States brought into the Union this summerought to have welcomed and helped them to come in-ought to have put through the fifteenth amendment by their aid, and had it officially proclaimed a part of the Constitu-tion, so that the blacks could have voted in every State next fall. That would have given us five or ten thousand votes in each of the great States, where we are quite likely to need them. Better than this: it would have taken the question of negro suffrage out of politics, and enabled us to fix public attention on other points of the greatest interest and imminence. All affords but a minor reason for doing what ought to be done, and in time must We are for universal amnesty with impartial suffrage, for reasons far above any question of party ascendancy-because this is just in itself, and best for the whole country, North as well as South. We do not advocate the prompt, cordial, ungrudging restoration of Virginia because we imagine that all those who voted for Walker will henceforth be in a party sense Republicans: we expect nothing of the kind. Congress never exacted this, and they never promised it. They were asked to ratify the fifteenth amendment; and that they stand ready to do in good faith and abide by it. Further we do not look nor inquire. And now, if that amendment shall fail, when its ratification was so clearly within the reach of its friends, there will rest somewhere a fear-

ful responsibility.

The sensational use to which the income

tax returns are this year applied operates as an incentive to the opposition which this form of taxation has from the first encountered. It is declared to be odious and oppressive. It is stigmatized as inquisitorial, as an encouragement to fraud, and as a burden which should not be allowed to continue beyond the period fixed by the present law, Many of our contemporaries demand its repeal at the next session of Congress; insisting that an equal amount of revenue may be raised from other sources with less vexation and embarrassment than are occasioned by

The unconditional repeal of the tax may be assumed to be out of the question. What it will yield in the present year remains to be ascertained. Last year, however, its product exceeded forty millions, and in 1867 was more than sixty-four millions; either of which amounts exceed the probable saving capacity of the Treasury, considered with due reference to other phases of fiscal reform. The immediate abolition of the tax, unless followed by the imposition of a corresponding burden in some other form, we take to be impracticable. And in what other form may forty millions of faxation be made more acceptable? The industry of the country cannot conveniently bear it. Manufacturers, according to their own showing, are taxed to the extent of their capacity, and to a degree which seriously impairs their ability to compete with the most formidable rivals. The tariff, again, has reached a standard which renders additions in that direction impossible. And as for the taxes on whisky and tobacco, they are now quite heavy enough for the interests of the Treasury. Where, then, shall the national financier look for the extra forty millions which the removal of the income tax would compel him to acquire? What branch of production or trade can be reasonably expected to assume this further load in order that the "odiousness" of the income tax may be averted? Reduce the inquiry to this single point, and the great obstacle to the total repeal of the tax becomes

But effective retrenehment, coupled with the more efficient collection of the revenue, may enable the Government to dispense with forty millions annually. Perhaps so. And supposing this pleasant condition of affairs to be attained, undoubtedly a reduction of taxes should take place. The country needs as much fiscal relief as may be had without detriment to the public credit; and if the experience of the current year warrants the elief that a considerable surplus will be available, we think that its reduction by the din inution of taxes is preferable to any application of it that has been devised. With the just claims of the public creditor provided for by compliance with the terms of the Sinking Fund act, it would seem that the best use for any excess of Treasury strength is the abatemect of burdens which only absoute necessity has rendered tolerable.

Grenting that a reduction of taxes to the amount of forty millions may be found practicable, the soundness of the policy that would sweep away the income tax, and so limit relief to a single channel, may well be questioned. For there is this to be said in behalf of the income tax, it falls only upon those who, as compared with the mass of the people, are able to bear it. The great body of manual workers, and all in receipt of less than a thousand dollars annually, escape its operation. To these-and they constitute the bulk of the community-abolition of the income tax means nothing more or less than benefit to the classes better off than themselves, while the taxes from which all suffer would inevitably be continued. The taxation that may be most equitably dispensed with is that which falls upon necessaries of life. Articles of universal consumption are at present heavily burdened, and the fiscal reform first needed is one that will mitigate this burden, and thus confer a substantial benefit upon the main body of the people. A revision and reduction of the tariff, with special reference to the removal of duties from commodities which enter into the expenditure of every family, would confer greater and more uniorm benefit upon the people than can be obtained by the repeal of the tax on incomes.

But while we consider income-tax repeal impracticable in the present circumstances of the country, there can be no doubt that its modification is desirable, as well in the interest of the Treasury as of the public. A uniform tax of five per cent, is too high. It increases the temptation to fraud, and operates harshly upon the possessors of small incomes derived from labor or trade. It should be reduced to two and a half per cent. on incomes below some fixed figure, or on all in comes derived from industry or trade, as distinguished from those derived from realized property. Whatever injustice there is in the tax as now levied consists in a total disregard of the essential peculiarity of incomes which are contingent upon the accidents of employment and health or the vicissitudes of ever-varying competition. The clerk or the professional man, whose income may cease any day, or the merchant, whose profits of this year may be swallowed up in the losses of the next, are required to pay the rate that is paid by the retired capitalist or real-estate owner, whose incomes are as certain as anything human can be. The anomaly is so glaring, and the hardships it inflicts are so cruel, that its continuance is indefensible. It might not be fair to exempt one of these classes from the tax while retaining it on the shoulders of the other; but some discrimination is called for with the view of relieving what may be called contingent incomes from load which incomes that are certain are abundantly able to carry. A reduction of the tax to half the present rate, in the case of the former, should not be delayed.

The loss to the revenue resulting from this reform might be partially covered by a revision of the list of exemptions, especially in the item of rent. Mr. Wells has pointed out the abuses to which this exemption has given rise, and also the incongruities to which it leads. The law should define the maximum of rent-exemption, and it should be regulated with a view to the only object which makes exemption proper-the relief of those whose incomes are by comparison small. The occu pant of a palatial residence perverts the true meaning of the consideration shown in the law when allowed to deduct from taxation a sum which, as rent, argues the possession of ample wealth.

The objections to the tax which grow out of the publicity it gives to private affairs are less applicable to the tax itself than to the manner of its application. Of course, under the most favorable management, a tax upon incomes implies a certain sort of inquisitiveness on the part of the assessor. The inquiries which are of necessity instituted may sometimes be unpleasant, but they become 'odious" only when the assessor abuses his authority, or when information which should be regarded as given for the exclusive benefit of the Government is traded upon by

majority of colored voters in the State, those | THE INCOME TAX_ITS REPEAL OR | newsmongers and the scandal-loving portion | GAS LIGHT FOR THE COUNTRY. of the public. The annoyance and injury occasioned by the publication of income may be averted by enjoining upon the officers secrecy in regard to the returns delivered to them. For though publicity here and there operates as a check upon fraud, and may ompel some to pay tribute who have hitherto evaded it, we cannot forget that a properly organized revenue service would be able to guard against knavery and evasion of the use of means within its own reach. Its own servants should suffice to prevent the escape from taxation of persons notoriously rich, or the gross falsification of income by persons in business. This done, publicity would be unnecessary, and being unnecessary, would be a nuisance which Congress may be asked to abate.

THE "TRIBUNE" ON GAMBLING.

from the N. Y. World. The Tribune, having discovered that, "gaming-houses were formerly licensed and public in Paris, they are so no longer," desires to know whether "the World is familiar with the reasons which dietated the change?" We are happy to respond in the affirmative. Gaming-houses were "for-merly licensed and public in Paris," but the Tribune apparently is not aware that they were neither "licensed" nor "public" for ages before they were either "licensed" or "public." The *Tribune's* plan of dealing with men's vices as if they were men's crimes, and of getting "the State" to "admonish and forbid where it is incompetent to do more," has been tried in Paris and given up again, not once but a dozen times. Inder Louis XI, gambling was strictly prohibited in the French capital, and infamous penalties were attached to it. Gambling, lowever, flourished exceedingly till Law took its life with his "Mississippi" scheme, As the eighteenth century grew older the practice of fleecing persons of consideration in such unrecognized gambling saloons as those of the Hotel de Gevres and the Hotel de Soissons had given birth to a special class of rogues, who for their astuteness were called "Greeks"—a name which remains in vogue to this day, the Greeks being still at our doors, not only in unlicensed faro banks, but in the persons of such political gamblers as, for example, the Hon. Reuben E. Fenton. In 1775 the King's Lieutenant of Police, Sartines, tried the licensing experiment. gave the proceeds to the hos-pitals, and gambling for a time at Paris was comparatively subdued, the licensed houses which sprang up being so infamous and perilous that none but the most desperate ventured into them, and the police baptized them by the expressive name of "hells." In 1778, the whole business was prohibited again. It got worse, and not better, under the prohibition, and so was licensed again in 1786. Under the republic. it was again prohibited and again became ten times worse than it had before been. In 1806, Napoleon turned the whole thing over to the police to be regulated as they might find best; and under the Restoration the city of Paris agreed to pay the Government 5,500, 000 francs a year for the privilege of 'farming" out the gambling of the capital. The leases granted under this privilege expired in 1837. and, the whole matter having been debated at length in the Chamber of Deputies in 1836, it was finally resolved, on a motion of M. de la Rochefoucault-Liancourt, that the gambling houses of the capital should be closed on the 31st of December, 1837. The Finance Minister, in consenting to this motion, warned the Deputies that it would be idle to expect the suppression of gambling from the mea-'Close Frascati's," he said, "and you sure. will find the better classes hurry to gamble at the Exchange, where fortunes will be lost and won more frequently, more easily, and no whit more morally." Subsequent history has proved that he was right. Under the enormous recent development of stockenterprises, the green-table has lost its charm the world over. The Baden-Baden and Homburg of today, the Frascatis and Crockfords of long ago are but trivial sources and centres of moral corruption in comparison with the stockboards of the Old and the New World. Instead of being "circumscribed" and "rendered less prevalent" by the suppression of the licensed gambling-tables under police regulations,

extensive and as prevalent as it was a genera-The truth is that no other definite conclusion can be safely drawn from the history of sumptuary and moralizing legislation in the past than this-that no good ever is done by attempts to confound the vices which society tacitly recognizes and condones with the crimes which society holds to be incompatible with its safety. But, whether the Tribune accepts this conclusion or not, will it have the goodness to let us know of what possible use it conceives the severest legislation not only against prostitution and gambling, but against dishonesty and murder, could be, in the face of the premium set upon prostitution and gambling, and dishonesty and murder, by the espectable men who openly profess their 4 esteem, friendship, and respect" for such persons as Daniel E. Sickles? To this question we desire an answer.

gambling in Paris to-day is twenty times as

BORIE'S FOLLY.

From the N. Y. World. . .

The names of our naval vessels, a telegram from Washington states, will not be restored by Secretary Robeson, because he intends to leave the whole matter for Congress to deal with. But Congress has already dealt with the subject, and, according to the laws by Congress enacted, with which poor Borie was of course unfamiliar, General Order No. 130 was without authority and void. So that all Secretary Robeson has to do, and just what he ought to do, is to treat that order as so much waste paper. If steps have been taken to carry it out, they should be rescinded. If not, he should permit none to be taken. Or the order may be simply countermanded.

Secretary Borie changed the names of forty-two vessels. Now, all of these were built by the United States, and their names were bestowed upon them by proper autho rity, under an act of Congress, when they were built. Neither the act in question nor any other act gives authority to anybody to change their names. That may be done, according to an act of Congress, in the case of vessels purchased by the United States; but, whenever these are thus renamed, there is no authority conferred upon anybody again to change them. A name for a United States vessel, once conferred by the designated authority, can be changed only by act of Congress. Secretary Borie, therefore, did not only a stupid and tasteless thing, he did an illegal thing. Secretary Robeson, in sheer kindness, ought not to make him ridiculous in the obscurity to which he has returned by perpetuating for another day the remembrance of his folly. The old names were excellent;

let them stand. As for gallant Admiral Porter's plea, it is sufficient that he is forgiven for his share in



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