SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

Editorial Opinions of the Lending Journals Upon Current Topics-Compiled Every Day for the Evening Telegraph.

THE DRAWBACK FRAUDS.

From the N. Y. World. It seems to us that the prominence given to such of the developments in what are called the drawback frauds as are really new is quite disproportioned to the intrinsic public importance of such developments. There has been an attempt to throw a sensational flavor over the recent discoveries by elaborate descriptions of the formalities necessary to obtain money from the Government, as allowance or drawback on articles on which an internal tax has been paid, when the articles are subsequently exported to a foreign country, and not consumed within the limits of the United States. The whole subject is clearly treated in the section of the Internal Revenue law of July 1, 1862, which permits payment of money out of the Treasury Department for such purposes. To one who reads or has read this law, there is no need of any amplication. It is in these words:-

"And be it further enacted. That from and after the date on which this act takes effect, there shall be an allowance or drawback on all articles on which any internal duty or tax shall have been paid " " equal in amount to the duty or tax paid thereon, and no more, when exported; the evidence that any and no more, when exported; the evidence that any such duty or tax has been paid to be furnished to the satisfaction of the Commissioner of Internal Revenue by such person or persons as shall claim the allowance or drawback, and the amount to be ascertained under such regulations as shall from time to time be prescribed by the Commissioner of the warrant of the Secretary of the Treasury, and the same shall be paid, by the warrant of the Secretary of the Treasury on the Treasurer of the United States, out of any money arising from internal duties not otherwise appropriated." Internal Revenue, under the direction of the Secre

It will be seen that the Commissioner of Internal Revenue is made by the law the responsible officer in the execution of this section. On his decision the Secretary of the Treasury is required to draw the warrant. When, many months ago, the character of the frauds was discovered by information given, as was said, to the District Attorney of the United States in Brooklyn, and prosecutions against the parties implicated were thereupon commenced, the public was fully informed as to the regulations prescribed by Commissioner Rollins, under the direction of the Secretary of the Treasury, and also the machinery by which money was illegally obtained. It was thoroughly understood then that, in order to obtain money as and for dra backs, the Government must be satisfied first, that on specific merchandise a certain amount of money had been paid to the Internal Revenue official as a tax; secondly, that the identical merchandise, in the condition in which it was when the tax was paid, had been exported to a foreign country and actually landed therein. Upon proof on these two points, Congress had authorized the Executive to return the money to the person paying the tax. It was then understood by the public, and we assume by Government officials also, that inasmuch as the merchandise, if regularly exported, must have gone through a custom-house of the United States and been made to appear in the manifest of the ship or vessel transporting the same, the collector of the port of exportation would be the proper person to prove the fact of exportation, as the Treasury regulation said he should be. When, therefore, many months ago, District Attorney Tracy examined into these frauds, he must have come to a perception of the fact that, if a customhouse officer had certified to the Commissioner of Internal Revenue that on the proper manifests it appeared that certain merchandise had been exported on a certain date and by a certain vessel, and the truth was that the manifest of the vessel referred to contained no such record, or that there was no manifest on file of any such vessel, then there must be something wrong about the Custom House official who had made such certificate. It appears now, by the evidence before Commis sioner Osborn, that the initials of Chief Clerk Blatchford, then a chief clerk in the Custom House and promoted by Collector Grinnell to be a deputy collector, were on all or a great part of the fraudulent certificates; that the deputy collector gave his signature to the certificate as a matter of course, relying upon the fidelity of his chief clerk, who represented that he had made the needed examination and found the facts as he stated them to be. Now, if this be so, did the officers of the Government, including Mr. Tracy, stop at this point which implicated Mr. Blatchford? Did they make inquiry as to whether his initials were forged? Did any person at that time require him to report how it happened that he had given his initials to statements in regard to the contents of manifests which he said were on the file of the Custom House. which, upon examination, turned out to be utterly false? If this was not done while the matters were under examination by Government officials, many months ago, it is important for the public to be informed of the reason. We do nat fail to remember that District Attorney Pierrepont, who, so far as it appears, up to that time had no personal or official knowledge of these drawback transactions, was told by one Korn, a person already implicated, of the alleged complicity of Mr. Blatchford. That is all well enough, so far as concerns District Attorney Pierrepont, and the public have reason to commend that officer for the fidelity with which he seems to have followed up the matter after it came to his attention, although we do not quite understand why it took the Treasury Department six weeks after Korn gave the information to satisfy itself whether Deputy Collector Blatchford was or was not

cated by District Attorney Tracy. In a word, the only new development in these drawback frauds, beyond what was disclosed many months ago to the public by the District Court in Brooklyn, seems to be the imputed guilt of Mr. Blatchford. Here again there is something quite inexplicable in the conduct of Secretary Boutwell, who permits Mr. Blatchford, so far as the public is aware, to still retain the commission of deputy collector of the customs revenue. It is useless for the Treasury Department to pretend that there can be any such mystery as requires so long time to ascertain whether or not Mr. Blatchford is guilty. Six weeks have elapsed since their attention was brought to that officer by Korn. If Blatchford is not guilty, then some of the action of District Attorney Pierrepont in the pending trial is very severe towards him. If, on the contrary, Mr. Blatch ford be guilty, it is very unjust to the public that the former be permitted to retain so responsible an office. An example should at once be made of him by conspicuous ex-

a conspirator with the parties already impli-

THE REIGN OF THE TITE-BARNACLES.

From the N. Y. Times. It is hard work to break down any system which politicians have found handy for purposes of corruption. We have not only to fight against the corrupters, but the corrupted, and the still more numerous class which is quite willing to be corrupted if any side the Atlantic, they have been conspicu-

State; and to superficial observers it might have seemed that our labor was lost. But the very heavy vote-it may turn out to be a majority-for the Judiciary article recently submitted to the people, shows that the public mind is always open to the reception of truth. For this reason we gladly welcome any new effort to arouse the whole country to the importance of remodelling the civil ser-We may have to toil on for some time yet, but "constant dropping wears away a stone," and we shall certainly win in the end. It is impossible that people can go on reading Mr. Jenckes' statements and arguments, or articles like those of Mr. Adams in the North American Review, and of Mr. Parton in the new number of the Atlantic Monthly, or the essay of Mr. G. W. Curtis at the Social Science Congress, without being stirred to rid the country of one of the greatest scandals associated with it, at home or abroad. The civil service is a dishonest blunder

from beginning to end. When we have a good man in any post we very rarely allow him to remain there long. We either transfer him to some appointment for which he is not fitted. and in which his special abilities are utterly thrown away, or we get rid of him altogether, and put a worthless, incompetent, unprincipled office-seeker in his place. People go to members of Congress and demand appointments as a matter of right. The same plan is sometimes tried in England. A voter goes to a member of Parliament and says:—
"I was on your committee at the last election, and, as you know, I had a good deal to do with your success. Now I want to get my son into a Government office." But the member cannot help such a man if he The Prime Minister himself could not put any one into a public office, although he might give him an appointment outside of it. All he can say to the applicant is: -"If your son possesses the qualifications exacted by the particular office you wish him to enter, he will be able to pass the competitive examination, and that is the only door open to you, me, or anybody else." The son of a lord must pass just the same examination as the son of a shoemaker. People who wish their children to enter the civil service have them trained at school especially for it, and if afterward they fail to pass the examination, they know that it is necessary to find some other occupation for them. Back-stairs influence will do no good whatever. But in this country the member of Congress badgers the head of a department until he gets places for as many of his friends as he is anxious to

Of course we lose all the good men and get all the bad by this process. You cannot induce first-class men to go begging round among members of Congress for an appoint-The persons who are ready for that kind of work are the very ones whom the Government ought not to employ at any price. The Government, to begin with, does not pay enough to compensate able men who have no private means for devoting the whole of their time to the service of the country. The late Chief Justice of the Supreme Court gave up a lucrative practice at the Maryland Bar in order to accept the post offered him by the Government. His habits were moderate, but he died in a destitute condition. "When I was in Washington last winter," says Mr. Parton, "the daughters of the late Chief Justice were earning a scanty, precarious livelihood by copying documents in one of the public offices at eight cents per hundred words." Another member of the Supreme Court was last winter paying the whole of his salary for the board of himself and his wife. It took all the ex-Attorney-General's salary to pay his rent. We all know what happens when men of an inferior type are placed in this predicament. They eke out their salaries by taking bribes, by plundering the public, by defrauding the Government—and they persuade themselves that they are justified in so doing because the Government is trying to cheat them by taking

their time without paying for it. The perpetual scramble for place is demoralizing the public mind, and impeding the business of Government in every direction. It is all very well to recommend people to go out to the wilderness and work. Why should they toil for bread when by scheming and intriguing they may obtain an "office?" Of course a large proportion must fail. But they never give up hope. They would rather dog the heels of a member of Congress, or haunt the precincts of the White House, for a year together, than do a day's hard labor. Once let it be understood that a proof of compe tency will be required from every man before he can obtain office, and all this dirty work will come to an end-at least so far as the civil service is concerned. For this reason we recommend, as we have done before, the institution of a system of competitive examinations. What can be fairer? The best man will win in the larger number of cases. A higher standard of honor would prevail in the new service, and that alone would go far towards extinguishing corruption. In England the plan has answered to perfection, and it has been extended to India with the very best results. Once, valuable appointments in the Indian civil service were in the gift of a few families. Now the poorest boy in Great Britain is eligible to compete for them-and what is more, the poorest boys often get It is not an untried experiment which we urge upon the public attention. It has produced an efficient civil service in every country where it has been adopted. should we hesitate to ascertain the qualifications of our public servants before engaging them, and afterwards to remunerate them at a fair rate? It is the only way of getting the work of the nation well and honestly done.

INTERNATIONAL RACES-MORE CHAL-LENGES FROM MR. ASHBURY.

From the N. Y. Herald.

A letter has been written by Mr. Ashbury, the owner of the English yacht Cambria, challenging Mr. James Gordon Bennett, Jr., to a series of yacht races. The challenges are as follows:-

"Race No. 1.—A race in the first week of March, 1870, from Ryde round the Isle of Wight, Royal Thames Yacht Club measurement and time allow-ance; no restriction as to number of hands, canvas, or friends; to start from our anchors all canvas

"Race No. 2.—A race from Hyde round Cherbourg Breakwater and back, Royal Thames Yacht Club measurement and time allowance; no restriction as measurement and this abovance; no reactions at the number of hands, canvas, or friends; to start from our anchors with foresail and mainsail set.

"Race No. 3.—About the 7th to the 10th of March, a race from Cowes to New York; a flying start, and

no dustions as to tonnage, time allowances, or restrictions of any description.

"Races Nos. 4 and 5.—Two races in New York waters, over the usual course of the New York Yacht Club, and in accordance with their mode of measurement, time allowances, or other usual conditions."

Mr. Ashburya challenges promise to become famous in the annals of aquatic sport. Hitherto, so far as they are known on this

one will make it worth their while. But if I ous by their barrenness in results. Whether the public can once be brought to a proper appreciation of the evils produced by a vicious institution, they may be relied upon to sweep it out of the way. We have long endeavored to secure a reform of the Judiciary in this of aquatic defiance and never finally comes to the trying of even a single point among all those he proposes to settle, it must seem to the general public either that his points are trivial or that the universal of the yachting world is against the fairness of his terms. In the for-mer challenges from this gentleman, of which our readers have heard a great deal, he proposed to contest the possession of the cup wen by the America, and also in an ocean race the relative merits of the English and American models for yachts. Neither point is trivial. But the cup is held on certain conditions, and when these are complied with its holders have no option-they must make a race. The failure to race, therefore, could not be their fault. No race was made for the cup simply because Mr. Ashbury did not see fit to comply with the plain necessary conditions. In the proposed ocean trial Mr. Ashbury coupled his challenge with conditions that made a race impossible, and insisted on those conditions, so that he resolutely prevented the race he seemed to desire.

His present challenges have the same impractical character. He knows by positive declarations frequently printed that the owner of the Dauntless will not make any but an ocean race in any case where the build and model of the vessels are such as to give the contest an international character; that he will not expose such a contest to the accidents of eddies, currents, and pilotage, but will only wage it on the sea, where the chances are far more likely to be even and where it is possible to get a fair result of sailing power, endurance, and of seaworthiness in every aspect. Although this has been distinctly stated to him, Mr. Ashbury still issues his cartel with a proposal for a race sandwiched between two or three little impossibilities. Why? Is it because he knows

that it will not be accepted?

Mr. Ashbury may not be quite satisfied with the position he was left in by his failure to make any race with all his former challenges, and he may desire now to improve that position. He at first issued several challenges, so separate in their character and intention that different parties were at liberty to take him up on different points. The owner of the Dauntless accepted one of these, and Mr. Ashbury avoided this acceptance on the point of relative size, though he now says:-"I am willing to set aside all technical questions of mode of measurement as regards the principal race, and accept as the American champion your vessel the Dauntless in lieu of one of the Cambria's size, as required by me in my formal challenge to all America in He thus relinquishes the point on which he formerly refused to race; but he issues his series of challenges in a new relation, so that who takes one must take all, or refusing certain ones must seem to refuse the rest. To such a challenge Mr. Bennett has given the most proper reply in simply re-iterating his readiness to make the only race he ever proposed to enter.

WHAT THE FREE-TRADERS PROPOSE. From the N. Y. Tribune.

The Evening Post insists that the freetraders have been misrepresented as hostile to all duties on imports, whereas they are opposed only to such as have protection for their object. But let us quote the Post's exact

"We have not heard of a single American free-trader who demands, or desires, or expects to se-cure, at present, absolute freedom of commerce from restrictions. On the contrary, the free-traders, in their leagues, in the journals which support their cause, in their speeches, addresses, and resolutions, which have been made and adopted in crowded meetings all over the country, declare, without a single exception, in favor of a tariff—a tariff for revenue. They acknowledge everywhere the necessity of raising a large revenue; and they consent that trade shall be taxed to help in accomplishing this, and taxed by a tariff. "What the free-traders demand is not, as the Times

says, and as the enemies of free-trade sometimes assert, absolute free-trade, but a tariff laid for revenue purposes only; a scheme of duties on imports so arranged that the Government shall obtain the revearranged that the Government shall obtain the revenue it needs by duties on the smallest possible number of articles, and by duties so arranged as to interfere as little as may be with our industries, most of which are dependent for their success, to a large extent, on cheap materials of foreign pro-

"The tree-traders want now a reform of the revenue system; we are revenue reformers. When, by-and-by, the debt is paid, we shall no doubt demand the abolition of custom houses; and, in the mean-time, if any man can contrive a practical and simple system of direct taxation for this country, we free raders will welcome that, and urge the people to substitute it for the present or any other system of ndirect taxation.

It is the indisputable right of every party or sect to set forth its own dogmas—to define its own position. It has a right to be glaringly inconsistent, so long as it remains honest. Yet, when Professor Perry was asked, at the close of one of his free-trade addresses in our city, "How would you support the Government and pay its debt?" we understood him to answer, By a tax on in comes solely. However, let us take the Post's authority as that of an elder if not a better soldier, and consider where it places the free-

We have always understood them as contending, in opposition to us, that a duty or impost on an imported article necessarily raises the price to our consumers, not merely of that article, but of any domestic product that comes in competition therewith. They generally assume the truth of this proposition as self-evident. And they hold this increase of price to be a wrong to the consumer and a

detriment to the community. Now let us take the article of iron for illus tration, and suppose a duty is levied on imported iron (for revenue solely) of twenty per cent. Suppose that, under said duty, we import twenty thousand tons of iron per annum, and make at home eighty thousand. Call it all worth \$50 per ton, enhanced by this duty to \$60 per ton. The duty (according to free trade assumptions) takes ten millions of dollars out of the pockets of the consumers of iron, gives \$8,000,000 of it arbitrarily to the American iron masters, and puts the odd \$2,000,000 into the Treasury! Is that what you

call political economy?

Our view is radically different from this. We believe our people are supplied with iron cheaper because of the duty on its importation—that, though they may pay more dol-lars, they get their iron for less labor, because they pay for it really in fruits, vegetables, fuel, fodder, etc., which they could not sell to Europe, and which would not bring them nearly so much if our iron were made there. All this the free-traders scoff at; but the point is not the soundness of our doctrines, but the consistency of their professions with their assumptions. On what ground do they deem it wise or well to tax the consumers of iron ten millions of dollars in order to put two millions into the Treasury? Who

will say? Old women sometimes say of a young one that, if not married, she ought to be. If we believed in free trade at all, we should be opposed to all duties on imports, no matter whether levied for revenue or protection.

THE INDECENCIES OF POLITICS. From the N. Y. Tribune.

We value highly a vigorous opposition. In free country the best administration is improved, the worst is made more tolerable, by pungent, fearless, unsparing criticism. A good ruler or minister will sometimes err; and a stern, watchful, merciless antagonism, whether it address the public originally through a parliamentary forum or directly through editorial animadversion, will often enable and encourage it to retrace its false steps before they become irraversible. As a general rule, falsehoods and groundless calumnies injure their authors more than their subjects; since the public, having detected an assailant in one wanton slander, are slow to give credit to his subsequent accusations. Hence, we contemplate with patience and philosophy a journalistic effort to damage an administration by the clumsy, coarse expedient of throwing infinite mud, in the expectation that some portion of it can hardly fail to stick, or at least to stain.

The World evidently believes that it commends itself to its own party by the extraordinary grossness and persistency of its imputations on the President of the United States. Perhaps it does. We are no judges of the rankness of that party's appetite for abuse; but, judging from what it has swallowed without protest, of sneer, and jibe, and scoff, and scurrility, aimed at the dead Lincoln, it cannot be fastidious-much less squeamishwith regard to the living Grant. Yet it does seem to us that the World overdoes its work in uttering column after column of such invective as the following:-

"THE CUSTOM HOUSE FRAUDS,—We do not propose to derogate in the least from the special dishonesty of the persons especially implicated by the disclosures of the Custom House frauds. Neither do we wish to avert the blame which the present administration has justly incurred for the scandal-ous recklessness with which it has appointed incom-petent persons to office. But behind all this is the fact that the tariff under which these swindles have been brought to light, and under which far greater swindles have doubtless been perpetrated with im-punity, is one which offers every facility to unscru-lous placemen to aggrandize themselves."

I. "The present administration" has appointed to effice none of the persons implicated in the Custom House frauds here and elsewhere which its agents have detected. On the contrary, it had removed some of them prior to such discovery, and superseded the rest directly afterward. It is exactly as responsible for those frauds as the Sheriff is for the crimes of the felon whom he has

arrested and holds in custody.

II. "The tariff under which these swindles have been brought to light" had nothing to do with most, if any, of them. During the late exhausting civil war, it was found necessary to impose an excise or internal tax on most domestic manufactures. When exported, those manufactures were allowed a drawback or return of this excise, upon due proof that they had paid it, and that the goods thus taxed had been exported. On this state of facts, certain knaves out of office conspired with other knaves in office (one here, another at Washington) to swindle our hard-pressed Treasury by means of forged papers. They succeeded. Large sums were obtained from the Treasury by the unofficial contrivers of this fraud, and apportioned, four-fifthsamong themselves, one-fifth to their official confede rates. In all, nearly a million of dollars was thus stolen from the people of the United

III. The duties on American manufactures were abolished so soon after the close of the war as they well could be-some three years ago. Of course, the drawback fell with them. ago. Of course, the drawback fell with them. This whole system of frauds necessarily fell with the excise and its drawback. No dollar, so far as discovered, has been fraudently drawn from the Treasury by an appointee of General Grant, nor under his administration. No appointee of General Grant is even suspected of conniving at these iniquities. The frauds occurred under the regime of Andrew Johnson, Henry A. Smythe & Co., long enough before General Grant's election. All that those now in power have done is to detect the villainies and bring a part of their perpetrators to the bar of justice. Can that have provoked the savage malignity of the World?

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