

SPRIT OF THE PRESS.

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

PARITISAN CALUMNY.

The late General Thomas, in replying to a suggestion of his nomination to the Presidency for 1872, thus spoke to his intimate friend and old comrade, General Negley:—"The profession of arms is most congenial to me. I do not wish to be connected with politics as now conducted. No matter how irreproachable the conduct of a man, or how distinguished his services, he cannot hope to escape calumination at the hands of partisans."

It is one of the many ill results of slavery. The Quaker, whose team baulked in a mud-hole and then upset his wagon, pitching him under the load of manure, with just enough of him outside for the free use of tongue and smelling powers, and who wanted to swear heartily, was in much the predicament of honest men in this nation during the era of the reign of slavery and slaveocrats. Here was an institution accurately described as the sum of all villainies, which, by hook and crook, had got to be the chief concern of all politicians. In its defense every branch of government was arrayed and in full force.

Not only so, but the press and pulpit generally defended it. Those who preached or wrote, or argued against it, were constantly denounced in the most opprobrious language. When the truth began to penetrate the public mind, retaliation was not unnatural, and one of the saddest, if not one of the worst, works of slavery on this continent is that, in respect to the discussion of politics, we are a nation of blackguards.

The evil is not confined to one party, though truth compels us to say that in great and versatile accomplishments herein Democratic journals and speakers, upon the whole, surpass those of the Republican party. We have to acknowledge the superior capacity of the Democracy in this respect, but without intending thereby to admit that the Republicans have shown any stupidity in acquiring the art.

There is, perhaps, no evil now having full sway in the country, which accomplishes more harm than this of which we speak. If it deterred General Thomas, as brave a man as ever lived, from all thought of political life, we may safely conclude that it deters hundreds of true, able, and patriotic men, who might do the State some service, from all ambition in that line. We may safely conclude that but for this many of the worst, and but precious few of the best, men of the country would be in office; that many of notable talents, of culture, and refinement, and nearly all avoid practical politics as they would a pest house, and are found engaged in commerce, the learned professions, banking, architecture, farming, journalism, etc.

National habits, no more than national institutions, can be put off like a garment. So long, however, as the simple fact of candidature makes a target of the best man in the country, at which the public shoots off all sorts of guns, loaded with all sorts of foul missiles, the public may expect to be ill served, or at best to have for public servants, in many instances, men of little merit and no modesty. There is a courage of the highest and most admirable order, which dares obloquy and repels calumny no less steadily and grandly than Thomas drove back the Rebels from Chickamauga. We have some such men in the public service now. But not so many as there ought to be. Whilst the evil of universal calumny exists, it is demanding too much of men of talents and refinement that they shall submit to be assailed in the style of Chinese warfare on being candidates for office. While other honorable and influential vocations are open, they will prefer them, and have a right to.

DIED TOO SOON.

The institution which has attained unenviable notoriety under the name of "the American Anti-Slavery Society" held its final meeting on Saturday week, and resolved that having, like good old Simeon, "seen the glory of the Lord," it was now safe and proper to depart in peace and be gathered to its fathers. Various male and female apostles, black and white, spoke on the subject profusely, and in the same opinion as to one Mr. Stephen Foster, the husband of a strong-minded sister, well known in the ranks of the faithful, stood alone in the minority, and declared that the American Anti-Slavery Society, instead of having finished its labors, had only fairly entered upon them, and ought by no means to die, but rather to gird up its loins anew, and fight valiantly under the old banners for many years henceforward. Foster was promptly opposed by several members, and the coup de grace being administered in a speech by Mrs. Foster, he subsided; the motion was carried, and the society adjourned sine die.

Now, if we could only hope that the endless stream of fanatical nonsense and blundering philanthropy, which has deluged the country for almost half a century, had, like the rivers in the desert, run itself into the ground and disappeared permanently, there would be ample cause for hearty congratulation; but it is impossible to lay this flattering unction to our souls. This regiment of the abolition army has indeed disbanded, but both officers and privates announce their intention to continue the holy war on the guerrilla system; and, wherever and whenever a head is raised against Africa, to hit it. The last resolution given this cheerful assurance:—"We welcome our wronged equal to our sides. We prove him henceforth to make every effort to secure to him a safe exercise of all his rights, and the present opportunity for social enjoyment, relating not one whit of our watch and aid until no vestige is left in social, civil, or religious life of that hateful prejudice which has poisoned and still so largely disgraces our legislatures."

The American Anti-Slavery Society, it seems, has a vast and untrodden field of effort yet before it, and might just as well have held together and conducted the campaign on scientific and parliamentary principles, instead of scattering into squads of three or four, and thus losing the manifest advantages of organization and discipline. What guarantee is there, for instance, that Frederick Douglass and Mary Grew will have the same views of the proper elements to constitute "the social enjoyment" of the negro as C. D. Drake and Mrs. Tappan? And why must not Charles Sumner and Lucretia Mott differ widely from both of these couples in regard to this vital matter? Douglass and Miss Grew might insist upon amalgamation as constituting the greatest amount of "social enjoyment" in the smallest compass, while Mr. Drake and his partner and Mr. Sumner and his partner might prefer the enjoyment of our colored brother to be found in some other shape. Confusion of counsels must inevitably occur, and through them the negro may fall utterly to enjoy himself, and thus suffer a grievous wrong. That enjoyment, however, is pledged him in the resolution aforesaid, and we may therefore expect a continuance of the agitation so auspiciously begun.

The negro, as a general thing, is not yet invited to join in the social enjoyment of "social enjoyment" in the smallest compass, while Mr. Drake and his partner and Mr. Sumner and his partner might prefer the enjoyment of our colored brother to be found in some other shape. Confusion of counsels must inevitably occur, and through them the negro may fall utterly to enjoy himself, and thus suffer a grievous wrong. That enjoyment, however, is pledged him in the resolution aforesaid, and we may therefore expect a continuance of the agitation so auspiciously begun.

THE AFRICAN IN HIS NEW CAREER.

The National Anti-Slavery Standard devotes all its space last week to the recent jubilation of the American Anti-Slavery Society over the ratification of the fifteenth amendment. It was the last meeting ever to be held by that society, which has ended in a sort of triumphant dissolution.

Whether the event celebrated with such a blaze of oratorical bonfires justifies all this exultation is a question to be decided by those who are to come after us. They will gather the ripened fruit of the tree planted to come to an end withered with blood. Whether this stupendous change is a reform must be determined by the sure test of experience. It ought to be a great reform indeed to justify its hideous cost. Its advantages are yet doubtful; but the evils by which it has been purchased are, alas, too real. A million of the bravest of our countrymen have paid their lives or their limbs to purchase this negro jubilee. They have not been benefited. They were generous young men, cut down in the flower of their age. Had they lived, and had each become the father of four children, their offspring would have been equal in number to the negro population freed and enfranchised. The exchange of four millions of such citizens for four millions of voting freedmen presents an account which has a debit as well as a credit side, even if the negroes should prove to be worthy members of the body politic.

The brave men who fell in battle or died of military exposure left agonized relatives at least equal in number to the whole negro population. The jubilant Anti-Slavery Society prudently forbore to go into the arithmetic of bereavement and deprivation. The exultant orators did not compute whether the pain of these sufferers is overbalanced by the boon conferred on the negroes. The grief and desolation, the blasted hopes and agonized affections, of four millions of white mourners make a sum total of misery more than equal to the happiness which has accrued to the four millions of negroes by the change in their condition. So far as this generation is concerned, the balance is against the experiment.

And there is still another exhibit on the debit side of the account. The change has cost in money more than it has cost in blood and sorrow. It has piled up a mountain of debt. It has destroyed our shipping, deranged our currency, wrenched our political institutions, crippled our industry by ruinous taxation, filled the hearts of our people with fierce animosities and fiendish hate, increased the hours and diminished the rewards of labor. These surely are not blessings; and they cannot be left out of any fair estimate of the results of the negro agitation. Whatever may be the value of emancipation and negro suffrage, the ecstasies of exultation need to be tempered by a sense of what the experiment has cost. It ought to bring a harvest of beneficent consequences in future generations, to justify the losses and suffering it has inflicted on the present.

All has now been done for the negroes which can be done for them by legislation, and they must be treated as equals by themselves. They will be the architects of their own fortune, or of their own ruin. Constitutions and laws can do nothing for human beings but to remove obstructions to the free exertion of their faculties. The negroes will find their proper level. Their color will remain black in spite of emancipation and the fifteenth amendment. If their mental endowments are naturally inferior, no law declaring them equal can make the declaration good, any more than it can change their color. Those who resisted their enfranchisement did not wish to exclude them for mere color, but because they supposed there was an ineffaceable distinction in the characters of the two races as in their complexions. It is for the negroes to prove that this opinion is a prejudice. If they shall display equal energy and capacity with the white race, their color will be no impediment to the recognition of their equality. But if they are to rise in the esteem of the white race they must rise by their own efforts. The field is open; they have every opportunity. A bird and a frog may be equally tied down by a string; when the string is cut the bird mounts and the frog is left to sink. When the negroes shall rival the whites as skillful inventive mechanics; when pictures and statues by negro artists shall bear comparison with the best products of white genius; when poems, novels, and works of science by negro authors shall be read and praised by people of culture; when negroes shall become the heads of great mer-

cantile houses; when negro wit, sense, manners, refinement, and social gifts shall captivate elegant circles, their black skins and woolly hair will not be regarded as badges of inferiority. That they are black we know; but we do not know that they can become superior mechanics, artists, poets, savans, conversationists, merchants, jurists, or statesmen. They have now a career open to talents; and if the difference between them and the whites is only a difference of skin and hair, they will in time make it manifest. But we cannot accept their equality on trust, without any proofs. Against their color, merely as color, there will be no prejudice when they shall have demonstrated that it is not an accompaniment of mental and moral inferiority. If a barn-door fowl claims equality with the lark or the eagle, he must not stand disputing on his plumage, but show that it covers equal strength of wing by rising to their elevation in the air.

The negroes of this country take their new start under very favorable circumstances. They are not compelled to maintain a struggle for existence in a dense and overcrowded population. The demand for labor insures them employment, whereas if the experiment were tried in an old country whose labor market is glutted, it would go hard with them unless they were really equal to their white competitors. There is abundant room and employment for them and their offspring, so that they will have an open field for all the energies they possess. If they fail, it will not be because they are crowded and crushed in a press of laborers. The length of time they have been in slavery is also an advantage to them. It is beyond question that slavery has been a civilizing process. The negroes of the United States are altogether superior to their kindred in the wilds of Africa—a superiority produced by inuring them to the habits of regular labor, which is the first lesson of civilization; by contact with a superior race; and by their conversion to Christianity. They are better qualified for their new condition than were the freedmen of the British West India Islands, because they have continued one generation longer in a condition of tutelage; all that is gained being kept and continued by hereditary transmission in accordance with a well-established physiological law. For this reason, the failure of the experiment in the British West Indies does not necessarily foreshadow its failure here. The enslavement of savages is a civilizing influence up to a certain point; and the superior industry of our liberated negroes over those of Jamaica would seem to indicate that British emancipation was premature. If our negroes shall persevere in habits of voluntary industry, that fact will have to be accepted as proving that slavery had done for them all that it can do for any savage race, and that the time had fully come for their release from their leading-strings. But if they relapse into idle and vagabond habits, they have been emancipated too soon or the race is incapable of self-subsistent civilization.

ACROSS THE CONTINENT.

Twenty years ago, the suggestion of a transcontinental railway, connecting our Atlantic with our Pacific border by a direct overland route, was regarded by most people as a stupendous absurdity. Whoever chooses to run over a file of the New York Herald will find therein editorials in which a railroad hence to the Pacific is classed with one across the Atlantic to Europe or through the sky to the moon. Such was the opinion of men who prided themselves on being practical, and regarded all who dissented as dreamers and visionaries.

A Pacific Railroad over the central route has now been more than a year in full operation. As the two ends had been pushed across the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevada respectively at least eighteen months ago, we may say that—so far, at least, as obstruction from snow and ice is concerned—it has stood the test of two years' actual working. For more than two years passenger trains have started daily from Omaha and from Sacramento respectively, and have crossed the great mountain chains which on either hand inclose the Great Basin with facility and with regularity. We doubt that there has been, on any part of the long route, a greater detention than has repeatedly occurred on the Central and Erie lines respectively through this State, or one that which commands Albany with Boston. Undoubtedly snows will be encountered, in the course of a lifetime, which will test more severely the resources of modern engineering; but then the provisions for resisting and overcoming these embarrassments will be annually extended and perfected. Doubtless the work itself will gradually be straightened and otherwise improved as experience shall dictate, and the average speed of passenger trains will be considerably accelerated; but were nothing to be done but to maintain the present capacity of the road and its equipment, we may safely place the average time required to reach San Francisco from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, or Washington, inside of eight days; while Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis are each considerably nearer to the Golden Gate. Practically we may say that half the people of the Atlantic States are within a week's journey of the Pacific.

And this road has been pushed across by far the most difficult and costly of the three projected highways to the sunset land. Its extreme and its average elevation are both far greater than those of the Northern or the Southern route; far more snow falls and lies upon this than on the Northern route, and many times the quantity that falls upon the Southern route. It is not to say that either of these can be built for two-thirds the cost of this, while the Northern will not be obstructed by snow one day where this will at least three, nor the Southern one day where this will be not less than ten. The entire problem of overland travel and trade by rail may thus be regarded as conclusively solved.

True, it may be urged that the pecuniary phase of the question is still in doubt; but that would be a mistake. Twenty years will see the present road overcrowded, though its two rivals be meantime constructed—overcrowded, even though its reasonable expectations of an immense freighting business in the products of the farthest West should be entirely blasted. Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Utah, Nevada, are to-day in the main wild wastes and deserts; the year 1890 will return their civilized population at not less than ten millions of intelligent, energetic, industrious freemen. The sugar, tea, coffee, wares, implements, etc., which they must draw from the seaboard States would support a railroad; while millions of tons of mineral which will now pay neither for smelting on the ground nor for transportation to the States, will soon be whirled away to the seaboard smelting works, and even to Europe. The abundant salmon, peaches, grapes, and other delicate fruits of California, will yet fill train after train consigned to the Helena and Virginia Cities of the elevated mining regions, where such fruits cannot be grown. As yet, shipments from either coast

have mainly been experimental, tentative, speculative, and of course moderate in quantity; while the population of our Alpine territories is but a handful compared with what it soon must be. Whoever lives to see 1890 may see hourly trains laden wholly with peaches, pears, grapes, and figs, leaving Sacramento eastward, and among them to Dubuque, St. Paul, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Buffalo, Albany, and New York. Let those who still doubt only watch the developments of the two next years only, and they will be abundantly satisfied.

THE RAILROADS OF THE UNITED STATES AND THEIR MANAGEMENT.

Last year a bill authorizing a classification of the directors of the Erie Railroad—whereby the management of the road and the control of the company were practically placed for an indefinite time in the hands of Messrs. Gould and Fisk, the president and the comptroller of the road—was passed by a Republican Legislature at Albany and signed by our present Democratic Governor. Before our present Democratic Legislature Mr. Charles Burt, a British barrister, representing a number of English stockholders, has appeared, asking in behalf of said stockholders a repeal of said classification law, in order that the stockholders generally may choose a new board of directors, Mr. Burt charging that the interests of the stockholders have suffered and are suffering, and that there is no prospect of relief under said management.

Gould and Fisk, thus put upon their defense, claim that the road under their administration has been well managed; that they found it in a bad condition every way, and have put it in a good condition; that they have extended its connections and feeders, reduced its expenses, and increased its receipts; that if there have been no dividends it is because of the costs of their repairs and improvements; that in regard to this classification law the same system exists in England, and that before it was applied to the Erie road it was in force in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, and elsewhere, and applies as well to the New York Central, Hudson River, and Harlem lines, and that this classification system is good in securing experienced men in the direction of the affairs of every road concerned.

In general terms such are the two sides of this controversy. Without taking either side we undertake to say that the relief sought by Mr. Burt for the English stockholders he represents will not be found in the repeal of the bill in question, nor in the New York Legislature, now or hereafter, nor in our State courts. The trouble lies deeper, too deep to be remedied by State Legislatures or State courts. Nor are the evils complained of confined to the Erie road. They exist more or less in all the great railroad lines of the United States, and are beginning to be felt in the small ones. The great and overshadowing evil of all is the watering of the stock. The stock of a railway company, for instance, in twenty-five millions of dollars. But there are hard up, and though a new issue of stock or watering of twenty-five millions may reduce the shares from seventy to thirty per cent, or less, the new issue still gives to the management the control of millions, whereby State Legislatures and State courts become the willing servants of the controlling heads or head of the railway concerned.

Against this formidable evil of stock watering the stockholder, as these matters now stand in New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and other States, has no redress; but beyond the stockholder is the greater interest of the masses of the people. And here we find in our great railway companies growing monopolies, which threaten in time the absolute political control of every State concerned unless they are put under the checks and balances of some general law of the United States. The Western Union Telegraph Company is becoming from its stock watering and other processes a dangerous monopoly in view of the general interests of the people. Hence we advocate the merging of the whole telegraph system of the United States in the Post Office Department and as properly belonging to that department of the General Government. In the same view is the paramount interest of the people we hold that there will be no end to these railway corruptions and the grasping ambition of these great railway companies and combinations except in a general law of Congress regulating all the railroad business of the country.

Among the powers conferred upon Congress are the power "to regulate commerce with foreign nations and among the several States, and with the Indian tribes," the power to "establish post offices and post roads," the power to "lay and collect taxes," etc., and the power "to make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the foregoing power," etc. Now, under these powers in the Constitution, as settled in the late Rebellion, in the establishment of the supremacy of the United States and the subordination of the several States, Congress clearly possesses the authority for a general law for the regulation of commerce among the States on our railroads.

The powers recited were granted to Congress before such things as steamboats, railroads and telegraphs were dreamed of, at a time when Washington was practically as far from New York as San Francisco is to-day. If the powers then recited were held to be necessary to Congress in 1787, how much more necessary are they in 1870? In this new age, in fact, of rapid intercommunications, and the great lakes and the Gulf of Mexico, and around the world, all those old notions of the age of horse power on land and sails on the sea—all these old notions, we say, dividing States, provinces and peoples, have become obsolete and absurd. We are no longer a loose confederacy of different peoples, cut off from each other by mountains and rivers or by many days' travel; we are one people, and the wants of each State in such things as railroads, steamboats and telegraphs, are the wants of all. In view, then, of harmony, uniformity and wholesome checks upon grasping State monopolies, Congress alone can supply these wants of the age. So, in our judgment, neither the stockholders in our railroads, English or American, nor the people of the several States, have any security for the future against railway stock watering monopolies save in a general law of regulation from Congress.

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