The Homestead Bill.

SPEECH OF HON. G. A. GROW,

OF PENNSYLVANIA.

In the House of Representatives, February, 20, 1854.

The House having under consideration, as in Committee of the Whole, the bill reported from the Committee on Agriculture, by Mr. DAWSON, "to encourage agriculture, commerce, manufactures, and all other branches of industry, by granting to every man who is the head of a family, and a citizen of the United States, a homestead of one hundred and sixty acres of land out of the public domain, upon condition of occupancy and cultivation of the same for the period herein specified:"

Mr. GROW said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN:—Having, at a previous session of Congress, given my views at length on this subject, I do not propose at this time to trespass long on the patience of the committee. The bill under consideration proposes to grant to every actual settler on the public domain a homestead of one hundred and sixty acres of land, on condition of occupancy and cultivation for the period of five years. The substitute for this bill that I proposed has the same object in view, and differs only in details, except that, in addition to the homestead grant, all future sales of the public lands shall be confined to actual settlers only.

By cessions from the States, and purchases of other nations, the Government has now a wilderness of 1,584,000,000 acres of unoccupied lands; and the question presented for the action of Congress is, what is the proper and best mode of disposing of them, in order to promote the real and permanent interests of the country? for the mode and manner of their disposal is left, by the Constitution, entirely to the sound discretion of Congress. The public lands were a subject of controversy between the colonies, even before the Confederation; and it was one of the early obstacles to the organization of any government for the protection of their common interests. And, in the language of the instructions of Maryland to her delegates in Congress, in May, 1779, it was considered, by all the colonies having no waste land, to be no more than just—

"That a country, unsettled at the commencement of this war, claimed by the British crown and ceded to it by the treaty of Paris, if wrested from the common enemy by the blood and treasure of the thirteen States, should be considered as a common property, subject to be parceled out by Congress into free, convenient, and independent Governments, in such manner and at such times as the wisdom of that assembly shall hereafter direct."

And, in order to put an end to the jealousies springing up between the colonies on this subject, and to remove the only obstacle that remained to a final ratification of the articles of Confederation, Congress, on the 10th of October, 1780, passed this resolution, as a pledge to the States of the manner in which any land they might cede should be disposed of.

"That the unappropriated lands which may be ceded or relinquished to the United States, by any particular State * * * shall be disposed of for the common benefit of the United States; and be settled and formed into distinct republican States, which shall become members of the Federal Union, and have the same rights of sovereignty, freedom, and independence as the other States, &c.—*That the said lands shall be granted or settled at such times, and under such regulations as shall hereafter be agreed on by the United States in Congress assembled, or nine or more of them.*"

In pursuance of this resolution, New York, Virginia, Massachusetts, Connecticut, South and North Carolina, and Georgia ceded their claims to the waste land outside of their State limits. And in pursuance of this resolution, the clause was inserted in the Constitution giving Congress power "to dispose of, and make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory or other property of the United States," under which clause Congress is limited in its power over the public domain only by a sound discretion.

The objection of the gentleman from Georgia, (Mr. DENT,) who has just taken his seat, to granting these lands to the actual settler under this bill is, that it is holding out an inducement to the pauper population of the Old World to immigrate hither. Sir, all of that class that can get here come now. They are forced to seek our shores for bread; and they will continue to come, no matter what your legislation on this subject may be. A dire necessity forces them from the land of their fathers and the home of their childhood. Starvation and death exile them from the Old World; and where can they find a resting place save in the wilderness of the New? The decrees of fate are no less imperative than the necessity that compels them to seek our shores. Then, as they must come, for man never, from mere choice, tears himself from his native country—the graves of his fathers and home of his kindred—is it not better to give them a home in your wilderness, and thus fasten them to the country by a tie stronger than the oath of allegiance? By this means you place them in a condition to become good citizens, instead of leaving them to hang about the purlieus of your cities, a curse to themselves and to your own population.

I agree with the gentleman, that it is the first duty of man to take care of his own household; but, sir, there is a kind of selfishness that defeats itself; an enlightened selfishness seeks its own happiness by promoting that of others. And while it is the duty of the Government to take care of itself, this is one of the measures by which to do it—one to give it glory in peace, and strength in war. The first objection to this mode of disposing of the public lands, by those who have given the subject but little attention, is that it is leveling and agrarian. Sir, when was there ever an attempt made, since the world began, to wrest from power its ill-gotten gain, or its undue advantages, and to restore to man his inalienable rights, but it has been met by the friends of the existing order of things with the shout of leveling and agrarian.

That is the alarm cry of the devotee of the past, with which he has ever attempted to resist all reforms and innovations upon established usages, since Socrates was poisoned with the hemlock, and Galileo condemned to the rack. Is it not time the world ceased its blind reverence for the past, or for institutions, because of their gray age?

Most of the evils that afflict society have had their origin in violence and wrong, enacted into law by the experience of the past, and retained by the prejudice of the present. While truth and society are progressive, he who would set with a noble impulse for the one, and a generous soul for the best interests of the other, cannot entertain all the opinions of his predecessors. Nothing could seem more strange and destructive of the well being of society than did the doctrines of the humble Nazarene to the devout Jew, the teachings of Wickliffe and Huss to a dark age, or the revelations of Copernicus to the Ptolmaics. When, a little more than three quarters of a century ago, fifty-six bold merchants, farmers, mechanics, met in convention to shake the thrones of the world, and proclaim the inalienable right of man to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, the self-satisfied conservative stood aghast at the leveling project. But, from that day to this, the history of your country has been but a history of social leveling. Not of that vandal kind, however, that would pull down the splendid edifice because it towers above surrounding objects; but like the leveling of the husbandman, who fills up his low, filthy marshes, and converts them into arable ground. Is it not time the world learnt lessons of wisdom from the chronicles of the past, and ceased to cling to its mouldering forms with gloomy forebodings for the future?

"Let the dead past bury its dead;
Act—act in the living present,
Heart within, and God o'erhead,"—

ever ready to receive the new and the untried, if it be calculated to promote the happiness and welfare of the race. While the history of your country, from the landing of the Pilgrims to the present hour, as in the face of all precedent and authority, it becomes not American legislators to be startled by any names which antiquity, or power, have made odious. The true object in disposing of these lands by the Government is not their sale, but their settlement and cultivation. As is said by the Secretary of the Interior, in his annual report:

"Nothing retards the growth and prosperity of the country more, nor inflicts greater injury upon the resident, than the possession, by individuals or companies, of extensive uncultivated tracts of the public lands. To correct this evil, facilities should be liberally extended to the actual settler, and withheld from the mere speculator."

But the best means of deriving revenue from these lands is to secure their settlement even if you receive nothing for the land.—For the means the General Government has for collecting revenue is by duties on imported articles consumed in the country; and the average amount of imported articles consumed by each person for the last five years is ten dollars per head.

And, as you cheapen the necessaries and comforts of life, or increase men's means to pay for them, you increase their consumption. So that every family of seven consumes, on an average, yearly, seventy dollars' worth of imported articles; and the average of the tariff being about thirty per cent., each family of that number pays to the Government annually twenty-one dollars. By the sale of these lands the Government receives, for a quarter section, two hundred dollars, the interest of which would be twelve dollars a year: so the Government would be the gainer of nine dollars a year by giving away this land to a settler in preference to selling it without a settlement.

For the purposes of education, building railroads, and opening all the avenues of trade the best disposition to be made of these lands is to grant them, in limited quantities, to the settler. The two hundred dollars the Government now takes for the land would enable the settler to furnish himself with the necessary stock and implements to commence its cultivation. And, with this beginning, he soon surrounds himself with the comforts of life, and has the means to erect the schoolhouse and church, and all the other ornaments of a higher civilization, and to educate and rear his children respected members of society.

Under the present policy of the Government his earnings for years are abstracted for the benefit of speculators. The Government sells a township of land six miles square, containing, therefore, thirty-six sections of six hundred and forty acres each, making twenty-three thousand and forty acres of land in the township. Now, the settler when he comes to buy, must pay, in most cases, four or five dollars per acre. So on each township of land purchased from the Government, by the speculator, you compel the settler to pay $100,000 over the Government price, which amount would be sufficient, or nearly so, to build a railroad through the township. With this capital that you have abstracted by the policy of the Government, the avenues of commerce and trade would be opened by the citizen as their wants called for them, while their industry would furnish them business. Fill up your wilderness with population, and cease to abstract their earnings for the support of idleness and extravagance, and the railroad, church, and school-house, will keep pace with your advancing settlements. This policy will not only increase the revenues of the General Government, and the taxable property of the new States, but will add to their population, and will swell the commerce of the country, while it will be an inducement to the landless of the old States, where a surplus population is constantly reducing the price of labor by its own competition, to seek a home, where they can be secure from the fears of the poor-house and the wants of poverty.

I would not, however, have this Government converted into an alms-house to relieve all the miseries and woes that afflict man; yet I would have it legislate, so far as is consistent with sound principles, so as best to promote the happiness and welfare of the citizen; for thereby you promote the real interests of the country and make strong all the elements of national power. Revenue should not be the object aimed at in disposing of these lands. General Jackson, in his land veto message, of 4th December, 1833, says:

"On the whole, I adhere to the opinion expressed by me in my annual message of 1832, that it is our true policy that the public lands shall cease, as soon as practicable, to be a source of revenue, except for the payment of those general charges which grow out of the acquisition of the lands, their survey, and sales."

The real wealth of a country consists, not in the sums of money paid into its treasury, but in its herds, flocks, and cultivated fields; nor does its real strength and power consist in fleets and armies, but in the bones and sinews of an independent yeomanry, and the comfort of its laboring classes; its real glory consists, not in the splendid palaces, lofty spire, and towering dome, but in the intelligence, comfort, and happiness of the fireside of its citizens.

"What constitutes a State?
Not high-raised battlement, labored mound,
Thick wall, or moated gate;
Nor cities proud, with spires and turrets crowned,
Nor bays and broad-armed ports,
Where, laughing at the storm, proud navies ride,
* * * * * * *
No! Men! high minded men,
Men who their duties know,
But know their rights, and knowing dare maintain.
* * * * * *
These constitute a State."

The prosperity of States depend not on the mass of wealth, but its distribution. That country is greatest, and most glorious, in which there is the greatest number of happy firesides. And if you would make the fireside happy, raise the fallen from his degradation, elevate the servile from his grovelling pursuits to the rights and dignity of men, you must first place within their reach the means for supplying their pressing physical wants, so that religion can exert its influence on the soul, and soothe the weary pilgrim in his pathway to the tomb. For it is in vain you talk of the goodness and benevolence of an Omniscient Ruler to him, whose life from the cradle to the grave, is but one continued scene of pain, misery, and want. Talk not of free agency to him whose only freedom is to choose his own method to die.

Tell not the famished operative, whose soul as well as body has become shriveled and mildewed, that there is a God of love, whose tender mercies are over all his works. When the body is racked with physical pain and the gnawings of hunger are consuming the very vitals, it is in vain you repeat the "sermon on the Mount." When womanhood, numb with cold, and dying with hunger, wavers on the line that divides honor from eternal shame, of what use is a Sunday tract?—Tracts, Bibles, and religious teachings are little heeded by him, whose days are dragged out in procuring a morsel to sustain life, and whose last prayer, as he falls, shivering and heart-broken, into his kennel of straw, is, that he may never behold the light of another day. In such cases it is true there might be some feeble conceptions of religion and its duties, of the Infinite, Everlasting and Pure; but unless there be a more than common intellect, they would be like the dim shadows that float in the twilight. He who came to bring life and immortality to the weary pilgrims of earth, and beckon them on to a higher and nobler existence, laid the foundation of his mission in the alleviation of physical pain, suffering, and woe. He cleansed the leper, touched the blind eye, the fevered brow, and withered limb; and the first petition in the supplications which he taught man to address to the Author of all Good, was, "give us this day our daily bread." The best evidence of the divinity of that mission was its adaptation to the nature, condition, and wants of man. In the language of remarks, made on this subject on a former occasion, riches, it is true, are not necessary to man's enjoyment; but the means to prevent starvation are. Nor is a splendid palace necessary to his real happiness; but a shelter against the storm and winter's blast is.

If you would lead the erring back from the paths of vice and crime to virtue and to honor, give him a home, give him a hearthstone, and he will surround it with household gods. If you would make men wiser and better, relieve your alms-houses, close the doors of your penitentiaries, and break in pieces your gallows. Purify the influences of the domestic fireside; for that is the school in which human character is formed, and there its destiny is shaped; there the soul receives its first impress, and man his first lesson, and they go with him, for weal or for woe, through life. For purifying the sentiments, elevating the thoughts, and developing the noblest impulses of man's nature, the influences of a rural fireside and agricultural life are the noblest and the best. In the obscurity of the cottage, far removed from the seductive influences of rank and affluence, is nourished the virtues that counteract the decay of human institutions, the courage that defends the national independence, and the industry that supports all classes of the State.

It was said by Lord Chatham, in his appeal to the House of Commons, in 1775, to withdraw the British troops from Boston, that "trade, indeed, increases the glory and wealth of a country; but its true strength and stamina are to be looked for in the cultivators of the land. In the simplicity of their lives is found the simpleness of virtue, the integrity and courage of freedom. These true, genuine sons of the soil are invincible."

In the world's history their arms have ever proved the citadel of a nation's power; their hearts the bulwarks of liberty. For more than three centuries Switzerland waged a ceaseless warfare with the House of Hapsburgh. Her three weak and feeble cantons of Uri, Schweitz, and Underwalden, for more than a century, baffled the imperial arms of Austria. And during the night of the middle ages, when darkness and gloom had pall-ed the hopes of men, and shrouded all Europe in despotism, the fires of liberty still burned brightly along the crest of the Alps, and its spirit still lived in the hearts of her unconquered peasantry. With homes and firesides to defend, the arms and hearts of an independent yeomanry are a surer and more impregnable defense than battlement, wall, or tower. Man, in defense of his hearth-stone, is never conquered save with his life. In such a struggle, every pass becomes a Thermopylæ, and every plain a Marathon. Wherever freedom has unfurled her banner, the men who have rallied around to sustain and uphold it have come from the workshop and the field, where, inured to heat and cold, and to all the inclemencies of the season, they have acquired the hardihood necessary to endure the privations and toils of the camp.

This is the secret of American history, and success of the Revolution. Washington from his plantion, Putnam from his plow, Greene from his blacksmith forge, and Starke from his Granite hills, all came to lead armies gathered from like scenes of labor and enterprise, to freedom's battles, and to freedom's victories. When the world's unwritten history shall be correctly deciphered, the record of the rise, progress, and fall of empires will be but the history of the rise, development, and decline of agriculture. For that is the pursuit which first changes man from the wild and predatory habits of savage life to those of the swain and the husbandman, fixing him in stationary dwellings, towns, and cities, and thus ushering in the dawn of civilization; and with its growth and advancement comes the comforts and refinements of social life, and the associations and attachments of country and home.

The first step in the decline of empires is the neglect of their agricultural interest, and with its decay crumbles national power. It is the great fact stamped on all the ruins that strew the pathway of civilization. Agriculture was the wealth, the delight, and the glory of the early Romans, and almost the only manual labor deemed honorable for a Roman citizen to perform. Cato was not only a scientific but a practical farmer; and Cincinnatus was called from the plow to save his country from the ravages of the barbarian. It was the pursuit held in honorable estimation by all classes of the State. Italy was then one of the most fruitful agricultural countries in the world. But with the increase of wealth came its concentration, and the absorption of the land into large estates; and its tillage was, consequently, confined almost exclusively, to tenants and slaves, while the wealthy proprietors reveled in extravagance in the cities, or at their country villas. Agricultural labor becoming dishonorable, was, of course, confined to those who had no interest in the soil they tilled; and when the laborer ceases to have any interest in the land he cultivates, he ceases to have any stake in the advancement and good order of society, for he has nothing to lose, nothing to defend, and nothing to hope for. The soil under such treatment being constantly impoverished, at length became sterile and unproductive, and poverty and want covered the agricultural districts, while extravagance rioted in the palaces of the rich, till, enfeebled by luxury, and worn out by excesses, Italy is overrun by rude warriors, and the Seven Hills fall an easy prey to the Goth and Vandal. The counteracting influence to this decay was the laws of her Gracchi, which proposed to distribute her public lands among the landless of the nation. And had that policy been adopted, her ancient Campania, instead of being now known as the Pontine Marshes, would have continued the garden of the world, and the star of her empire might have waved in triumph long after the ivy twined her broken columns. The Italian Republics, that rose from the ruins of the empire, flourished for a day; but they, too, fell with the neglect and decay of agriculture. It is the great interest upon which a nation must rely in the hour of its peril, and it should therefore be most sedulously cared for in the day of its prosperity. While the population of a country are the proprietors of the land which they till, they have an interest to surround their firesides with comfort, and make their homes happy—the great incentive to industry, frugality, and sobriety. It is such habits alone that give security to a government, and form the real elements of national greatness and power.

The associations of an independent freehold are eminently calculated to ennoble and elevate the possessor. For the proud consciousness that man ever feels in standing on soil that he can call his own—the consciousness that there is one spot on the earth's surface over which he can exercise sole dominion, and that spot is his home, which he hopes to transmit as such to his children—is one of the best and noblest stimulants to well doing. Perhaps his farm has come down to him from his fathers. It was the scene of their former labors, and the play ground of his childhood; around him are the objects of the earliest and fondest associations of his life.—The brook along which he sported in boyhood, the meadow over which he gamboled in his way to the school-house of his early days, and near by is the church yard where repose the ashes of his fathers, by the side of whom, when this life is o'er, he expects to rest in peace. Amidst associations like these he is bound to the Government that shields and protects him by the strongest ties known to mortals. It is the life-spring of a manly, national character, and a noble, generous patriotism; a patriotism that rushes to the defence of the country, and the vindication of its honor, with the same zeal and alacrity that it guards the hearth-stone and fireside. It is amid the sports and labors of the field alone that these associations are kindled in all their intensity. They spring not from constant contact with brick walls, and the thronged avenues of a crowded mart, where gain is the all-absorbing thought that in a great degree shapes and controls the actions of men.

The only counterpoise to the evils that afflict man in a dense population, is in the pursuits of a country life, where no fetid atmosphere of a crowded city, crushes, incubus like, the vigor of youth and the energies of manhood; but where children grow up amid rocks, woods, and waterfalls, and all the wild beauties of nature's ever varying scenes, with the pure air of heaven to fan their locks and the music of birds mingling with their morning prayer and vesper hymn. Amid such associations is developed the most of the best of man. Health and long years is there his lot. "God made the country, and man made the town." The population of cities and crowded districts are short lived. Cities are the destroyers of human life, as well as the reservoirs of their miseries; and the statistics of their mortality seem to corroborate the statement of Mr. Illair, in his address before the Agricultural Society of Maryland:

"The common guide-book of Paris, which is put into every traveller's hand, has this note, under the head of population: *'Families constantly residing in Paris, soon become extinct. The effects of this mortality are observed to be more active upon males than females.'* What is true of Paris is true of every city in the world. There is not probably a man in London, Paris, New York, or Philadelphia, who can say that his great-grandfather, his grandfather, and his father, successively, lived and died in the city of his residence. There is no such thing as a survivor of three generations that have undergone the decomposing powers of a city atmosphere, assisted by city pursuits. A city, then, may be said to die out once in a hundred and fifty years, so far as regards those roofed generations that live, and move, and have their being only within a city's precincts."

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"It is remarkable that children born and bred in cities generally exhibit precocious talents. They have the easiest access to every species of learning; they have the advantage of imbibing an early knowledge of the world and have, almost in infancy, the manners, the ideas, and self-possession of polished society. But although the great cities of the Old World and of the New World send forth probably one hundred of these fully-educated youths to test their strength in the high pursuits of life for one country adventurer, yet it is found that almost all the distinguished men who shine in the service of the country or in the liberal professions, are country born and bred."

"And so, too, it has been with our great merchants and mechanics who have flourished in cities. Trace them, and you will find that the impulse that gives them this lead brought them from the fields or some village to try their fortunes in the city."

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"The hot bed of cities bring forward their plant more rapidly; but those springing from the native soil, and braving the rude seasons and rough culture of the country, are found to have the best stamina."

The refuge from these evils, which are one of the incidents of civilization, is to be found in your vast public domain. The miseries and woes that afflict man in the Old World from dense population may one day fall upon this. That day, of course, is far distant, and I trust in God it may never come; but it behooves the American legislator to look to the future as well as the present and the past.—While the Republic is but in the infancy of its existence, in the morning twilight of its day, let it establish a policy which will counteract, so far as lies in our power, these vast evils that ever attend an advancing civilization.

Let this vast domain, then, be set apart, and consecrated forever as a patrimony to the sons of toil; and if the sales must continue, let them at least be confined to the actual settler, and close your land office forever against the speculator, and thereby prevent the capital of the country, invested in that kind of speculation, from absorbing the hard earnings of labor, without rendering an equivalent. For, while the laborer is crushed by this system established by the Government, which abstracts so large an amount from his earnings for the benefit of the speculator, in addition to all the other disadvantages that ever reflect the unequal struggle between the bones and sinews of men and dollars and cents, what wonder is it that misery and want so often sit at his fireside, and penury and sorrow surround his death bed?

Mr. SMITH, of Virginia. I would ask the gentleman, who talks about those who are pinched by penury and want, whether the bill which is now before the committee does not allow the wealthiest man in America to get one hundred and sixty acres of land?—Perhaps he has overlooked that fact.

Mr. GROW. No, sir; I have not. The bill is general in its provisions. Any man who goes there, and settles upon the public domain for the purpose of cultivation, has secured to him a quarter section of land.

Mr. SMITH. If a man has ten thousand acres of land, cannot he get one hundred and sixty acres under the provisions of this bill?

Mr. GROW. Certainly he can, if he settles on and cultivates it. The object is the settlement and cultivation of these lands. What matters it, then, whether the settler be rich or poor? I am in favor of this policy of disposing of the public land as contradistinguished from all others.

I am speaking of the general principles which should control in making a full and final disposition of these lands, and settling a public policy which shall forever take them out of the legislation of Congress. We have innumerable bills piled up on your table, and before Congress, for the disposition of these lands to railroad companies, in order that they may be thrown into the market and absorbed by capital, and that in enormous quantities, to the injury and detriment of the labor of the country.

The public lands are now the great fund to be scrambled for, by schemes of private legislation, for the benefit of companies and individuals. That reason would be sufficient, if there were no others, why we should fix some general policy that would settle this land question forever; and settle it in the way best calculated to secure the real greatness and glory of the country, and promote the happiness and welfare of the race. I know no reason why the Government should look to the public lands as a source of revenue than to any other of the bounties of God to man. Why should they not be granted to the actual settler, in limited quantities, at a price barely sufficient to pay the cost of survey and transfer? and thus the Government would discharge faithfully its trust to the citizen.

While the lands are looked to as a source of revenue, owing to the varying amounts collected annually from them, it keeps our tariff fluctuating, and we can fix upon no revenue standard, for the uncertainty of the amounts derived from incidental sources—the amounts from the public lands varying in different years from a million to six or seven millions. So that one year we have too much revenue, and the next not enough, owing, in some degree, to the fluctuations in the revenue from this source. Let us then cease forever to look to the public lands as a source of revenue, not only from a sense of justice and right to the citizen, but in order, while our tariff system shall continue, to give it a more uniform standard, and thus subject it to less changes.

Mr. SMITH, of Virginia. Does the gentleman propose to abandon the public lands as a source of revenue, so as to make a necessity for a higher tariff?

Mr. GROW. I am opposed to raising revenue from the public lands, on the ground of justice and right to the citizen, and sound policy for the Government, without any reference to the tariff. I am ready to unite with the gentleman from Virginia, or any other gentleman, at any time, to reduce the tariff to the lowest revenue point.

Mr. SMITH. Is it to raise the tariff so as to benefit the iron of Pennsylvania?

Mr. GROW. Sir, it is my fortune to represent the only district in Pennsylvania that, in 1846, when the standard of the Democracy trailed in the dust in every quarter of the State, bore aloft the banner of free trade and unrammeled commerce; and, that banner floats there to-day. We would leave the iron of Pennsylvania, the cotton mill of New England, and the sugar of the South, with every other interest of the country, to stand on the same footing, with no discriminations for the benefit of the wealth of any section of the Union. But to return from the digression into which I have been led by the question of the gentleman from Virginia. The true policy, it seems to me, is to secure these lands to the cultivator, as the legitimate and proper means of individual development, and of promoting the best interests of society and the Government.

One of the objections urged against this bill by the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. DENT] is, that it is taking property purchased by the common treasure of the country and using it for the benefit of the few. But if these lands have reimbursed their entire cost, then you do no injustice to any citizen by this grant, unless it is proper for the Government to hold them as a source of revenue. By the report of the Secretary of the Interior, it seems these lands have reimbursed their original cost, and yielded a net revenue of $53,269,465.

The entire area of the public domain is estimated at about 1,584,000,000 acres.

Its purchase was effected at the rate of 4.21 cts. per acre, amounting to	$67,999,700
To this should be added the Indian reservations, which enter into the original cost, amounting to 3,100,725 acres, which, valued at $1,25 per acre, would, make	4,250,906
Up to the 30th June, 1853, 334,256,810 acres had been sold, at an expense of 2,07 cents per acre making	6,919,116
And 184,667,135, acres sold at an additional expense for selling, at 5,32 cents per acre, making	9,824,291
The entire cost (including surveying and selling) being	$88,994,013
The whole amount accruing from sales up to 30th June, 53 was	$142,283,478
Being $53,289,465 more than the cost of the whole, thus far, inclusive of survey and sale.	

Mr. DENT. I understand the gentleman from Pennsylvania to assert that the money expended for the purchase of these lands has been refunded. I should like to have the gentleman explain from what source that money came. If it came from the sale of the lands, then do not the lands remaining unsold still belong to the common people of this country?

Mr. GROW. Certainly they do. But can a person, who has advanced money for a piece of property complain that you deprive him of a portion of his investment, after all the money he advanced has been refunded? The further sales of the property, if any, would be a speculation. And, sir, is it a wise and sound policy for the Government to hold these lands for such a purpose? For after they pass from the Government, until settled, the Government derives no advantage from their sale, save the interest, on the $1,25 per acre. But by an actual settlement the occupant is constantly paying revenue on the imported articles which he consumes, while he is increasing the taxable property of the State, and adding his part to all that gives comfort to society. But none of these advantages result from the lands being held by a speculator.

Mr. DENT. If the gentleman will allow me to interupt him: I simply want to ask one question. One of the objects of the friends of this measure seems to be to keep the public lands out of the hands of speculators.—Now, I ask the gentleman from Pennsylvania, and the friends of the measure, how they will keep these lands out of the hands of speculators when the five years of tenantry have run out?

Mr. GROW. The man who has kept his quarter section five years, and has surrounded it with the comforts of the fireside, and has connected with it all the associations of home, is not likely to leave it unless it be for the purpose of bettering his condition in some far distant location. The probabilities are that it will remain in the hands of the settler who first selects it; for what does the speculator want of cultivated lands? But even if the settler does sell, it would be to some one who wanted to cultivate the land, and that would secure its continued settlement and cultivation—the object of the bill.

But the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. DENT] is in favor of the most liberal bounty land laws for the soldiers. He and many others who oppose this bill, are ready, in all cases, to vote bounties. The men who go forth at the call of their country to uphold its standard and vindicate its honor are deserving, it is true, of a more substantial reward than tears to the dead and thanks to the living. But the truest heroism is not always found in the night watch and forlorn hope of the battle-field; but in the garret, the workshop, the by-lanes of toil, and the wilderness home, where the bones and sinews of men are struggling with the elements, with the unrelenting obstacles of nature, and the equally unmerciful obstacles of a false civilization.—Industry in rags, and labor weighed down by poverty, working day by day, face to face with death, yet keeping unstained hands; womanly honor fighting with hunger and crushed by despair, yet keeping its heart unsullied; infancy born in squalid vice and cradled in ghastly crime, yet in manhood asserting the dignity of its nature. In these achievements on the obscure battle field of every-day life, is exhibited the more than manly courage and fortitude that crowns the hero of the tented field. But as the plumed warrior, mounted on his charger, is conspicuous upon the battle-field above the unpretending private in the ranks, so these obscure soldiers of civilization are passed by as unheeded while living, as are their graves when dead. Yet their achievements, if not equally brilliant with those of the plumed warrior, are equally, if not more lasting. Their achievements are in the van of civilization, and on the footsteps of the savage—achievements for the great and permanent interests of mankind—for his happiness and welfare, not for his destruction. While, then, the pioneer spirit goes forth into the wilderness, snatching new areas from the wild beast, and bequeathing them a legacy to civilized man, let not the Government dampen his ardor and palsy his arm by legislation that places him in the power of soulless capital and grasping speculation; for upon his wild battle field these are the only foes that his own stern heart and right arm cannot vanquish.

The Democrat.

THE LARGEST CIRCULATION IN NORTHERN PENN'A.

E. B. CHASE & ALVIN DAY, EDITORS.

Montrose, March 9, 1854.

☞ We are indebted to Hon. G. A. Grow, M. C., and Platt, Passmore and Deegan, of the Legislature, for continued favors.

NEW POST OFFICE.—We learn that a new Post Office has been established in Gibson township, this County, by the name of Smiley. Who the Postmaster is we have not yet learned.

☞ We present to our readers this week the speech of Hon. G. A. Grow, on the Homestead bill, and bespeak for it an attentive perusal. It is one of the ablest efforts we have seen upon this subject. This bill has passed the House and a fair prospect of its passing the Senate.

☞ We are requested to call the attention of our readers to the Advertisement of our County Commissioners, asking for a loan of $10,000, for the purpose of building a new Court House and Public Offices, as authorized by an act of Assembly. Whoever has money to loan will now have an excellent opportunity to invest it, either in large or small sums.

☞ The Pennsylvania Legislature have adjourned over from Tuesday last to the 16th inst.

The Nebraska bill of Judge Douglas has passed the United States Senate by a large majority.

Dr. Gardner, who was charged with fraudulently obtaining some $400,000 of the funds of the General Government, has been tried and convicted. The jury after deliberating twenty-two hours rendered a verdict of guilty. Shortly after he was found dead, having, as it is supposed, poisoned himself.

The National Administration.

Our personal preferences for President in 1852 were for JAMES BUCHANAN. He was defeated in the Convention, and from that moment we threw personal preferences to the winds and labored to aid in the election of FRANKLIN PIERCE. He was elected; and, from the hour of his inauguration to the present moment, we have seen no reason why a Democrat, who loves his party, and worships at the shrine of its principles, should forsake his Administration. He came into the Chair surrounded with difficulties and perplexed, with embarrassments, a part of which was bequeathed as a legacy from a clever and inefficient Whig Administration; while another was cast upon him by unfortunate relations in sections of the democratic party whose sole representative he had been made.

Believing all these difficulties well understood, we will not stop here to discuss them. They existed—must be met—have been met—and have become part and parcel of the history of the country. It were idle for anybody to expect any Administration, surrounded as was the present one when it came into being, to meet and adjust its difficulties in such a manner as to give perfect satisfaction to all the interests involved; and he who expects such a thing would invoke human impossibilities. The distribution of patronage must disappoint individuals,—and, where faction exists, must disappoint factions, hence, opposition will arise of necessity. Then come conflicting sectional interests, always exacting in their demands, and embarrassing in their settlement. Such a nation as ours, embracing every variety of interest, which variety of people, commerce, climate, products, customs and institutions naturally give rise to, cannot expect, at this day, that perfection in human wisdom and civil government which shall harmonize all, and give to each such an orbit as that it can pursue its path without coming in collision with others.

In judging of an Administration then, we can of right only call in question its general policy. The moment we go beyond that, we are lost in a maze of inextricable confusion. All aside from that is mostly incidental to the Administration and not properly a part of its policy, or the criterion by which impartial history shall write its verdict. The thousand minor questions arising, arbitrary in their character, because they arise from the business or other relations of society and the country, can be settled only on arbitrary rules as the common good may require.—They can form no part of the policy of any Administration, for they arise unforseen and unbidden. They come not within the scope of distinct governmental principles,—principles on which the government is founded, be it a monarchy or a republic, and hence no Administration can forsee their advent, or, in advance, lay down any settled policy for their adjustment. The same will hold good of parties. No great national party can do more than define certain general principles as articles of faith. It cannot decide sectional interests and sentiments, or prescribe for individual and sectional ideas definite limits, when those ideas are formed from local causes,—peculiarity of education, religious notions or moral discipline. Such parties can only be formed on general principles of government, and can only sustain themselves by adhering closely to them. Farther than this would be an attempt to settle in advance the legislation of the country, and to manufacture and govern the public sentiment by force of political organizations. The truth must be felt and recognized to its fullest extent, whether in the organization of a political party or in the Administration which represents it, that on all questions arising in the abstract from general party principles, or as incidental to the growth, progress, and sectional interests of the country, very wide toleration must be allowed. An Administration, or a party, that would think to proscribe every man as not a Democrat who cannot conscientiously believe Iron should be free of duty, when his section is deeply interested in the manufacture of that article, or that Slavery should be extended when his interests lie in extending free labor, and so on through the catalogue of interests and sentiments, would very soon find itself without adherents. And if the people have no right to expect an Administration to harmonize and adjust all these conflicting elements, so that all shall be satisfied, neither has an Administration a right to expect of the people and entire yielding of their views and interest to suit the exact basis of settlement of each particular case.—All alike entertain their notions and opinions yielding them only so far as necessity compels an acquiescence in what the proper authorities fairly determine to be the general good.

Applying these ideas to the present Administration, we say then that we can see no reason why it does not commend itself to the support of all who call themselves Democrats. The time-honored and distinctive measures of the democratic party, and its land-marks, by it have been boldly recognized, regarded, and maintained. No settled party precedent has been disturbed. —HASE.

while the PRESIDENT and his constitutional advisers may entertain one view of questions which arise in the course of legislative action, and portions of the democratic party in particular localities entertain a different one, we can see no reason in that for a disagreement that shall lead to separation. There certainly can exist no reason for a Democrat to repudiate the Administration while the fundamental principles which lie at the foundation of the party are sacredly regarded by it,—while it is an Administration based on general principles of national democracy. Only when it ceases to be such, disregards those principles and proceeds on different ones, can it be deserted with propriety and consistency. Democrats may honestly differ on questions incidentally arising,—differ from the Administration entirely, and be ever so much divided in opinion among themselves, but that comes only from the different mental constructions of men, or from local causes and interests about which all cannot expect to agree, but have no right therefore to quarrel, denounce, and factionize. And, if such be permitted, the result is finally determined in the final overthrow of democratic supremacy,—to total subversion of the principles of the party, and a consequent loss to the country of the benefits of their application to the ruling of its affairs. More anon.

Important from Harrisburg!

DEFEAT OF THE PROHIBITORY LIQUOR LAW—ITS FRIENDS IN TROUBLE.

From Harrisburg we have the most important news. The Prohibitory Liquor Law received its death blow in the House of Representatives on Friday last. We learn that the bill was made the special order, by general consent, for Friday afternoon, after having been debated two previous days, with the full determination on the part of its friends to press it to a vote on second reading. That determination was carried out and the following is the vote:—

YEAS—Abraham, Atherton, Baldwin, Ball, Bigham, Caldwell, Carlisle, Chamberlin, Crane, Cummins, Davis, Deegan, De France, Fletcher, Foster, Gallentine, Gibboney, Gwin, Hills, Hummel, Hurtt, Jackman, Lowrey, (Tioga,) Linn, Magee, Maguire, Munderfield, M'Combs, M'Connell, Miller, Moore, Parke, Parmlee, Passmore, Porter, Poulson, Roberts, Smith, (Crawford,) Stewart, Zeigler, Chase, *Speaker*—41.

NAYS—Adams, Barton, Beck, Beyer, Boyd, Bush, Byerly, Calvin, Collins, Cook, Daugherty, Dunning, Eckert, Edinger, Evans, Fry, Gilmore, Gray, Groom, Hamilton, Hart, Herr, Hiestand, Hillier, Hipple, Horn, Hunsecker, Hunter, Johnson, Knight, Laury, (Lehigh,) M'Kee, Meily, Monaghan, Montgomery, Moser, Palmer, Patterson, Rawlins, Rowe, Sallade, Scott, Shenk, Sidle, Simonton, Smith, (Berks,) Stockdale, Strong, Struthers, Wheeler, Wicklein, Wilson—52.

We published the bill several weeks since, and our readers will recollect that it contained a clause submitting the question of its *repeal* to a vote of the people.

From the above vote it would seem that the bill is dead and buried for the present session. But there is a sequel to this matter. Two weeks ago to-day the bill was taken up, and while the first section was under consideration, a substitute for the bill was offered by Mr. ELLIS. That substitute contained all the essential provisions of the bill in its orig-