

THURSDAY MORNING, April 18, 1872.

THE PUBLIC PRINTING Fiasco—During the debates this Winter in our State Legislature on the subject of the public printing, and pending the action of the special committee which was raised to discover whether any member of the Legislature was interested in the printing of the present session, we felt the same delicacy about expressing an editorial opinion, one way or the other, that we should have felt in a case actually pending before a Court or a jury. We, therefore, abstained from taking sides for or against Mr. Colton, and rested content to wait further and fuller developments. The debates now, however, have gone the "way of all flesh," the special committee has reported, and the mountain has produced a mouse. It turns out, that, whether it is criminal or not for a member of the Legislature to have a finger in the public printing pie, that Mr. George Colton, the party accused, had no such finger in or about any such pie. It is true, the special committee has acknowledged to a "difference of opinion" among its members as to the record of Mr. Colton in this business, but it is also true, that four-fifths of the committee fully exonerate him from all complicity with any public printing contract before the Legislature, and that the remaining member, Mr. Spencer, furnishes not a single scintilla of evidence to explain or justify the "contrary" opinion he has expressed. But let us suppose that Mr. Colton had been caught *flagrante delicto*—in the very act of owning an interest in the paper which did the printing—what then? Would he have been a law-breaker? If so, show it or "shut up." It can't be shown, and even if it could, the finding of the special committee places Mr. Colton above all just suspicion and reproach.

With regard to the question of extravagance in the matter of public printing, we consider ourselves incompetent at this writing to speak. This we know, however, that the cost for this work has alternated for years between forty-eight and sixty-three thousand dollars, and that the present contract stipulates to do the same work with the additional printing of a thousand extra copies of the laws, for thirty-eight thousand dollars. It will probably surprise some plain people, that the ardent reformers of our present Legislature should have failed to inaugurate an *earlier* agitation against this supposed printing extravagance. Moreover, it should not be forgotten, when the present contract is considered, that it is for the whole work of the session and that the famous bid of \$22,500 was only for a part, the heavier work being already done when it was put in, and that it has been publicly and repeatedly asserted and never successfully controverted, that the State would have lost and not saved money by accepting it.

We are neither in sympathy nor collusion with printing rings, or rings of any kind, either at Annapolis or elsewhere, but we protest, nevertheless, against the current cant and flummery about the impropriety and illegibility of members of the legislature, who may own an interest in a newspaper office, contracting for public work to be done in such office, and against the injustice of associating Mr. Colton with, and condemning him about, a contract with which, he is shown to have had no concern, and which, if he had, would have been just as honorable and legitimate as any other equitable business transaction.

THE NEW PUBLIC SCHOOL BILL—We give below a condensed synopsis of the new school bill introduced in the House of Delegates by Mr. Henkle, of Anne Arundel. The following are the more important of its provisions:

The title of "board of State school commissioners" is changed to "State board of education"; the title of "board of district school commissioners" is changed to "board of district school trustees."

All the property, &c., vested in the public school authorities of any county for the use of schools is transferred to and vested in the "board of county commissioners," instead of "county school commissioners."

The bill provides for the publication, in two newspapers in each county, of a detailed, minute and accurate statement of the expenses of their said schools, specifying therein each particular item, and for what and to whom paid.

The board of district school trustees shall cause instruction to be given ten months in the year, if possible. The bill levies a State tax of eleven cents on the \$100, being an increase of one cent over the present law. One or more schools for colored children are to be established in each election district. These are to be under the direction of the district school trustees, and subject to the same laws and financial instruction in the same branches as the schools for the white children. For their support \$50,000 is to be set apart by the State and apportioned among the several counties and the City of Baltimore, and the total amount of taxes paid for school purposes by the colored people are also to be appropriated to the support of such schools.

(Correspondence of the Beacon.)
Annapolis, April 1st, 1872.

"*Veni vindex, dies*," the last day of the session of 1872 has dawned, and your correspondent C. has abandoned his knapsack, and he takes a B line for St. Mary's. He proposes, however, to see out the play, and to witness and record the last speeches and dying words of Hon. members, many, indeed, a majority of whom, are destined to be remembered in the privacy and obscurity of private life with a "nunquam revivam" for their epitaphs. The legislation essential to the commencement and completion of Drum Point Railroad has been obtained after hard fighting. Mr. Bond, of Calvert, gave to it a vigorous but an unavailing opposition. I have, on a former occasion, spoken of the great interest which Judge Magruder has manifested in the efforts made by the friends of this Railroad, to procure the passage of an act authorizing the counties of Calvert and Anne Arundel to subscribe to the capital stock of said company. The crowning success that has been the result of his and other public-spirited and praise-worthy exertions, will amply compensate him for time expended, and abilities well directed; and, in the contemplation of the great benefit he has secured to his native county and that of his adoption, he may well afford to smile at and condemn the querulous and illiberal remarks of some few Hon. members of House of Delegates. The bill to secure similar advantages to the counties of St. Mary's, Charles and Prince George's has failed for the present, and my mind is only for the present. The very persistent and selfish opposition, inaugurated in the Senate by Mr. Wilson, was re-rehearsed in the House of Delegates by Mr. Richard H. Bowie and Scott, of P. George's, who, when the bill was called up on its second reading by our Delegates, (Dunbar and Colton,) moved as an amendment, to have Prince George's stricken out, and the Delegates from Charles county voting in the affirmative, the amendment was carried. Having held the door open for Prince George's to creep out, the Hon. Delegates from Charles, Stone and Chapman, felt bound in conscience to improve the occasion, and propose also, generally remarking, that they would most willingly vote for any legislation that would enable St. Mary's county, at her side expense, to build railroads for Prince George's and Charles counties' joint benefit, but as to putting their hands into their own breeches' pockets for any such purpose, or leaving it to the voters of said counties to decide whether they would do so or not, they would not, could not, dare do so. The attitude assumed by the representatives of P. George's county in this matter, was not a surprise to us. It was in keeping with its selfish past, and its course was mainly determined by friends of the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad. Give us all the help you can, and expect nothing from us, but (vague and fallacious) hopes and promises has been the song and whine of the latter county and company. But we did expect better and more liberal treatment from Stone and Chapman, for, although it was proposed by St. Mary's county, the agents of Point Lookout Railroad to insert an amendment in the bill, that unless the District and Washington city should, through its Territorial Legislature, subscribe \$500,000 toward the construction of said road, then this act, or so much of it as authorized the people of the lower counties to empower their respective County Commissioners to issue bonds, &c., should be void and of no effect, &c. Although this liberal and most reasonable proposition was made and urged for acceptance, it met no favor or consideration at the hands of Charles county members (I do not include Senator Compton) but was, I may say, readily rejected, and was met by a counter proposition to take it out of hands of the voters at large—that is, the people of the counties—and to vest the right and power to issue bonds, both as to time and amount, in "County Commissioners alone." We trust the people, we'd see them damned first, appeared to be the determining principle of action of the gentlemen representing the sister counties of Charles and P. George's in the General Assembly of Maryland. I do not include in this category Senator Compton or Dr. Sasser, of P. George's county. Both these gentlemen are and have been warm friends and supporters of "the defeated bill." The latter gentleman, in reply to Mr. Bowie's assertion, "that the tax-payers of P. George's county were a unit against the bill," asserted that such was not the fact—on the contrary, that the voters of his section have almost unanimously voted in favor of the gentleman to leave it to the people to determine and decide the point. Apart from the very contracted and selfish stand-point of view, occupied by Messrs. Wilson and Bowie as regards the merits of the proposed legislation, a petty and most contemptible prejudice, fostered and encouraged by a few representatives of a decayed gentility, and a pretensions, ignorant and spiteful aristocracy against St. Suit, of P. George's county, a self-interest, and the master spirit of the Point Lookout and Washington Railroad Company, has stirred up, fed and supplied elements of opposition to said company, as recently organized under the general railroad law of 1870. It is not usual for gentlemen to drag into public debate the private and personal affairs of their friends or foes. It is a violation of all honorable rules of legitimate discussion to do so, the evidence of a very little and contemptible nature, but when men have made up their minds to point the finger of scorn and derision at a fellow-citizen, and to make an exhibit of the status of his affairs and property, they ought, at least, obtain accurate information, and not subject themselves (in default of a questionable industry) to assert the thing that is not true.

This great and unpardonable mistake Mr. Bowie was guilty of when he asserted (in so many words) that Mr. Suit, although having the reputation of being a millionaire, did not hold a single dollar of property in his own name. Had Mr. Bowie, ere he hazarded this very injurious and bold assertion, consulted the land records of P. George's county, he would have escaped the very unpleasant position which his erroneous (we do not believe wilfully erroneous) declaration has placed him in. The contrary is the fact. Property, land of property, to the amount of three or four hundred thousand dollars, is held by him in P. George's county, and the records of the said county testify to the fact. Apart from said property, Mr. Suit's in-

come for last year, growing out of the mercantile transactions of S. T. Suit & Co., of Kentucky, was \$230,000, and his present year's income will reach \$250,000. Of the above facts I have had unquestionable proof, and I know what I state above to be true to the very letter.

After all, some allowance is to be made for the extravagant and distasteful language which escaped Mr. B. on last Friday night. He had the misfortune (owing to a false alarm) to be constrained lately to occupy apartments in the Marine Small-pox Hospital, and when he spread himself in the House of Delegates in the extravagant manner I have indicated, he forgot for a moment his surroundings, and must have imagined that he was "telling that to the marines," and not to the "sailors" who navigate and hold the helm of the good Ship State of Maryland.

There are contentions, and not a few, who are much prejudiced against Mr. Suit. Were such to enter into the depths of their own hearts and honestly analyze their reasons for being so, they would recoil in horror from the gross injustice they have been betrayed into. It is very mortifying to little natures to see one who has started in life without the advantages of a mile of pedigree, or inherited wealth, pass them in the course, and obtain by sheer energy of brain and muscle, and honest and honorable industry, high positions in social life, and not only to settle down in luxurious idleness and imbecility, to observe him utilizing his wealth for the benefit of his kindred and native county. Mr. Suit left Prince George's county twenty years ago with sixty dollars in his pocket "and the world before him." After twenty years absence he returned to his native place worth "a plume." His first act was to purchase a farm for \$21,000, from and in the name of an aged father. From that time he has put improvements on said farm to the amount of \$100,000. Considering that the size of the farm was disproportionate to the cost of improvements thereon, he set to work and purchased contiguous lands, now one farm and then another, but in the names of his father-in-law and his brother-in-law, until he acquired all the lands now forming his magnificent estate. For he knew very well that had it transpired for whom really and eventually these purchases were made, and that he had contiguous lands would have asked extravagant prices, rating them, not at their real and intrinsic value, but by the necessity and desire which they would have concluded Mr. Suit was under of possessing them. After Mr. Suit had obtained all the land he required (7 acres excepted, of which more anon) he had all the said lands transferred to him, for and in consideration of one dollar cash in hand paid last September. 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