SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS UPON CURRENT TOPICS—COMPILED EVERY DAY FOR THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

Hail! Virginia!

From the N. Y. Tribune.

The Mother of States records her verdict in favor of loyal reconstruction on the basis prescribed by Congress! The struggle has been arduous, and the result doubtful; for the wealth and social power of the State were nearly all against us. The press was against us, bitterly, furiously, venomously. Even the Richmond *Whig*, which would be Republican if it durst, was coerced into supporting the "conservative" ticket at last. Probably not six journals in all, and they mainly new ones, stood unflinchingly by the Republican colors, while sixty or eighty were doing their utmost to defeat a Convention and to elect "conservatives" thereto. The leading organ of the reaction called lustily on those whites who employed blacks to discharge every one who should vote the radical ticket; yet ninety-nine in every hundred colored voters would vote no other, and nineteen of every twenty would not be deterred from voting. And thus every district which had a majority of colored voters on its registry, with several others, has chosen radicals to the Convention, giving us a clear majority of at least twenty delegates, and carrying the Convention by over ten thousand—perhaps by twenty thousand—Republican majority. The white preponderance over the blacks in the State exceeds twenty thousand men, of whom not more than six thousand are disfranchised for conspicuous treason by the Reconstruction acts, and these, we trust, will, upon giving evidence of present loyalty, soon be restored to all the rights of freemen.

It is instructive to note that the most radical counties and districts are those which, in the times now happily past, were the strongholds of slave-driving Democracy. Halifax, Brunswick, Mecklenburg, Louisa, Caroline, etc. etc., were Democratic Gibraltars, when none but slaveholders and their white satellites were voters; but now that the laboring class also vote, they are citadels of radicalism. Rockingham, Shenandoah, Page, Warren, etc., which were Democratic without being preponderantly slaveholding, constitute the only notable exceptions to the general rule. We may joyfully expect to see the districts heretofore represented in Congress by Meade, Goode, Dromgoole, and other vehemently pro-slavery fanatics, henceforth honoring and blessing the republic by sending to her councils apostles of liberty and equal rights for all.

And it will be found that the Convention just elected is not only radical, but, in the truest sense, conservative also. We did hope to see Governor Pierpont's name head the Republican ticket in Richmond, for we believe it would have insured the choice of that ticket by a large majority, and would have been a pledge to the people generally that liberty for all would be asserted and secured without giving just cause of alarm to any. Mr. Hunnicutt has probably said some of the harsh things about Rebels that are attributed to him; but we are confident that, should he seek to inaugurate a policy of confiscation, or anything like it, he would find himself in a very small minority.

The Convention will strongly assert the equal rights of men; but it will be moderate and cautious in so using the triumph of genuine democracy as not to endanger its perpetuity. Reconstructed Virginia takes her place among Republican States, and there she will remain. Her aristocracy, stimulated by exaggerated reports of the recent achievements of its confederates in California, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, did its very utmost to retain its ancient power and prestige, but, happily, in vain. Henceforth, Virginia, which embosoms the ashes of so many gallant sons of the Republic, consecrates herself to the maintenance of that Liberty and Union which they laid down their lives to maintain. Long live the regenerated Old Dominion!

The Resumption of Specie Payments—Secretary McCulloch's Policy.

From the N. Y. Times.

Secretary McCulloch makes it no secret that he will assume the same ground regarding the resumption of specie payments in his forthcoming Treasury report that he has maintained for the last two years, and which he first set forth in his celebrated Fort Wayne speech, and reiterated at length in his Boston letter. That is to say, he will favor the resumption of a specie basis just as soon as the state of the national finances makes it practicable. He has avowedly and consistently pursued this end under all circumstances during his administration; and he has repeatedly expressed his opinion of its rapid approach at times when things looked infinitely less hopeful for it than they do now. As the President thoroughly indorses the views of the Secretary on this point, the subject will presently be brought before the country in the Annual Message in such a way as to command universal attention.

He will certainly, on this occasion, be able to make out a case vastly better than any it has ever before been in his power to present to the country. Though he is not likely to put forth views quite as sanguine as are entertained by those who think resumption may be effected by the time the Seven-thirty bonds are all funded—that is, in six or eight months from now—yet there is no danger of his overlooking the importance of that time and circumstance; for then our financial condition will reach a point of compactness and order beyond anything in the past, and which may well form a new starting point for the goal which the nation must reach before its affairs can be placed on a basis of enduring prosperity.

The Secretary will be able to show an amount of funding in short-time bonds, and an amount of contraction in greenback currency, which will furnish the most solid arguments in favor of his policy, and which will appeal to the common sense of the country with a force which cannot be resisted. From his monthly statements, extending over the last and present years, it appears that in January, 1866, there were 830 millions of Seven-thirty bonds outstanding, while on the 1st of the current month there were but 365 millions, thus showing that 465 millions have been funded into six per cent. securities running twenty years. By August next the entire body of Seven-thirties yet remaining will have been transformed into the Five-twenties, and the immediate responsibilities of the Government, in the shape of principal, will have almost entirely passed away. One of the great barriers to resumption will thereby be removed. In regard to greenback currency, the Treasury statements show that in January of last year 426 millions were afloat, while at the beginning of this month there were but 361 millions, showing a reduction of 65 millions—to which extent the Secretary has contracted under the law which empowers him to withdraw 4 millions a month. This process of contraction is still going on, and the Secretary has it in his power, before August next, to withdraw another 40 millions, which will reduce the entire greenback currency to 320 millions of dollars.

Now there are sanguine men who hold that, as soon as things are in this shape, it will be possible for the Secretary, with one hundred millions of gold in his hand (which he now holds and will then hold), to announce the immediate resumption of specie payments. Secretary McCulloch, however, is a very conservative financier, and it may be taken as assured that he will do nothing rash!

There are some business people, and not a few speculators, who are alarmed at the prospect of the resumption of specie payments. They argue that it will unsettle values, business and industry, that it will come hard on the debtor class, and damage the chance of making money by the rise and fall in gold. From the way these people speak, it would seem that it will be forever dangerous to resume, and that we must either always keep up the present state of things, or, at most, let there be a change of one or two points a year, until, towards the close of the century, we are able cautiously to bring matters out right. We hold that these fears are chimerical, and that, instead of producing any serious unsettling of money matters, the return to specie payments will give freedom, force and assurance to the enterprise of the country, and will be followed by an era of solid prosperity, which will speedily extend its beneficent influence to all classes of the people. When, in the period of a few months, gold fell from 285 to 125, the business of the country was not shaken nor its interests damaged. When it goes down 40 points more, and the national currency is exchangeable for it, dollar with dollar, there will be no more commotion, unless it be that of universal exhilaration.

And if it be in Secretary McCulloch's power to adopt such a policy as bids fair to bring this about in a reasonable time, we promise him an amount of popularity fit to satisfy any human ambition.

The Democratic Party and the Senate.

From the N. Y. Times.

The Senate is just now a formidable obstacle in the path of the Democratic party. Flushed with greatly exaggerated success, they have begun to count the months which must elapse before they return to power. They calculate confidently on the possession of the next President and the House of Representatives in the next Congress. And they talk patronizingly of their authority over the reconstruction question, and propose compromises of which they and the Southern Rebels, with President Johnson to aid them, shall dictate the terms. One difficulty alone seems to trouble them. The House they hope to manage, but the Senate is beyond their reach. Do what they may, win what they may, for years to come the Senate will be controlled by a Republican majority. The fact is awkward and cannot be explained away. Braggadocio and buncombe are unavailing against it. It is there—fixed, immovable.

The Democratic game, therefore, now is to break down the Senate. The *World*, in a recent paragraph on Mexican affairs, pronounced against a second Chamber in republican government. Its remark that "the tyrannical powers exercised by a Republican Senate in the United States have served to warn intelligent men, even in Mexico, of the probable results of reëstablishing in that country * * this branch of the National Congress"—admits of no other construction. It is an affirmation of Bentham's doctrine in favor of a single legislative body. Governor Seymour, in his address to the Albany Convention, did not explicitly announce his adhesion to the same view, but his attack upon the organic nature of the United States Senate, and his denunciation of the principle of representation by States instead of numbers, pointed unmistakably to war upon the conservative branch of the National Government.

In his Brooklyn speech on Thursday evening, Governor Seymour returned to the subject with a warmth that showed how fully he realizes the difficulty which the Senate interposes to the accomplishment of Democratic purposes. His argument professedly rests upon the influence which the blacks will exercise under the Reconstruction acts in Southern politics. He points the moral of his tale by dwelling upon white disfranchisement and negro supremacy. But the principle he thus propounds is not affected by considerations of color. His objection is, that the ten Southern States will send twenty Senators to Washington, while nine Northern States, containing half the population of the country, send only eighteen. Whether the Southern voters be white or black, Rebel or radical, makes no difference in the argument. It is a condemnation of the fundamental Federal principle by which the States, as States, are secured an equality of Senatorial representation; and the object of Governor Seymour is to revolutionize the Constitution of the Government in this respect. His appeal has this significance, or it is altogether meaningless.

There is nothing in the policy of the ultra radicals which aims more directly at the individual authority of the States than this newly-invented cry of States-right Democrats. By assailing the organization of the Senate, and denouncing as a grievance the principle it incorporates into the Government, Governor Seymour strikes at the root of all security for the South or for minorities anywhere. Without avowing himself a disciple of the *World's* version of Benthamism, he does all he can to promote it. For there will be no advantage in the possession of a second Chamber, if its organization in regard to representation be identical with that of the other House. Bentham's theory of republican government was equivalent to a centralized Democracy, with no respect for the rights of minorities and no provision for the rights of States. Jefferson is to be discarded, then, from the new gospel of our New York Democrats.

The allegations of the *World* touching "the tyrannical powers exercised" by the present Senate are as much at variance with fact as Governor Seymour's arguments are with old-fashioned American principle. Whatever conservatism remains in the Government operates in and through the Senate, which has been the only real bulwark against the application of harsher measures to the South. For "the tyrannical powers" of which the latter complains it is more indebted to the Democratic members of the House than to a Republican Senate, whose majority have steadily striven to moderate the legislation of the period, and to mitigate the conditions imposed by the reconstruction measures.

The Coming Elections and the Issue.

From the N. Y. Herald.

It is proper at this critical period of our national existence that every man who has the good of the country at heart should ask himself what are the coming elections to decide! In analyzing the situation he must cut loose entirely from all the narrow and sectional ideas which have so much influence when no great question is before the people. He must weigh the matter in its widest sense, and North, South, East, and West seek for the general welfare. The salient question which, above all others, forces itself into notice is that of civilization versus barbarism. It is the question which we have been fighting to decide. In 1861 we found half of our territorial extension and one-third of our white population wedded to a semi-civilized element, which, wherever its touch was felt, left its inherent curse.

The black contact forced us into a four years' exhaustive war, filled the land with civil hatreds, heaped a debt upon us that makes us stagger, and unsettled the whole national progress. No sooner have we shaken off the one curse—of four millions of slaves—than this same black element springs into a new and even more threatening attitude than ever it before possessed. This time it takes head and front as a compact and unrelenting ruling power, ignorant, and consequently lacking in judgment, and swayed entirely by passions which are stirred to action by the most unprincipled of the demagogues who make our system of government a mockery. Here this element stands to-day, demanding the same rights, the same power, the same consideration as any equal number of the population of the United States, no matter how many centuries of toil they have had to reach their present standard of civilization.

Let us suppose, for a moment, that four millions of negroes from Africa could be landed *en masse* upon the shores of the Northern States, with brains undeveloped, steeped in a barbarism that a forty centuries' contact with the earliest civilization of the world never could penetrate, who is there among us that would engraft such an element upon our political fortunes and stake the future of the country upon the result? And yet this is the very thing that the crazy politicians are attempting. The power which the concentrated energies of the nation gave them in the war they would preserve by raising into existence a worse political curse than slavery.

Did we raise the sword to cut loose from the barbaric element only to bind it the tighter to the throat of the nation by after legislation? Strange result, indeed, of all our efforts. Surely our legislators cannot understand the will of the people, much less their good, when they undertake in a worse form to fasten upon them this negro question. Our politicians are organizing here a magnificent edition of St. Domingo, Soudan, and Central Africa. Here we were laboring to establish all that was lofty in civilization. We were making brain power the standard of the man; we were driving on our car of progress at a pace that threatened to leave Europe far in the rear. In the midst of all this we stoop to Africa, and voluntarily force into existence a barbaric power worse than any that ever flooded Europe. Europe had an invasion of fresh and vigorous brains from the north; ours is of brains cooked to a crisp under more than forty centuries of African sunshine. No folly in the whole progress of civilization equals this one. Not in the range of all history can be found an instance where a nation voluntarily receded in civilization. Nor can we believe that our people, by endorsing the action of the radicals, are about to retrace their steps and lapse into barbarism.

The situation as it now presents itself has nothing to do with the Rebellion. If the negro cursed us while a slave he doubly curses us now; and in the mad idea that everything in the shape of a man should count one, we have forced him into a political power where not he nor we can profit by it. Frightened at the signs of the coming reaction, the demagogues, whose existence depends now upon the amount of ignorance they can bring to their support, spring to the forum and make desperate efforts to prop up their falling fortunes. Colfax, Speaker of the House of Representatives, is among them. His late speech, like the rest, must depend upon ignorance to appreciate it. It disgusts intelligence. Nor is the radical opposition speech of Seymour any better. Seymour neither appreciates the situation nor is able to analyze it. The most puerile financial ideas are the whole burden of his brain. It is in the power of the people to launch again our stranded wreck. The coming elections of this State will show how they appreciate the condition of the country. It will show, too, if they are willing to shake hands with the great West, and, in common with the conservative element from Ohio to Kansas, dictate the law so that our rulers cannot fail to understand it. In dictating that law let the people remember that they are called upon to decide if the country shall commence a retrograde movement, and that the great issue of the hour is to choose between civilization and barbarism.

Trial of Jefferson Davis—A Humbug Crutched Upon Cant.

From the N. Y. World.

In the decay of religious faith among the Romans, it was deemed a wonder that the augurs, while practising their solemn fooleries, could look each other in the face without laughing. It should be deemed equally wonderful now that those reverend ministers of the law, Chief Justice Chase and Judge Underwood, can maintain the expected gravity of face in the judicial farce they are preparing to enact. It is at last decided that Jefferson Davis shall be tried; and the Chief Justice has written a letter to the District Judge notifying him that he will preside if the prisoner and his counsel will consent to appear on the 13th of November instead of the 27th; the latter being the day on which Davis gave bail to be present. On the farcical character of this proposed arrangement we forbear to remark until we have first exposed the main humbug; the proffer of the Chief Justice belonging to the mere drapery, or rather the frippery, of the intended trial.

The trial of Mr. Davis for treason can have but two legitimate objects—to hang the prisoner and to settle the law. If there is no design to do the one, and no doubt which a trial can remove respecting the other, the proposed trial will be as hollow and theatrical a piece of judicial foolery as was ever enacted

"With all the foppish gravity of snow
Which cunning magistrates on crowds bestow."

There is not a man of decent intelligence, whether he be lawyer or layman, who believes that Mr. Davis' life is to end by the hands of a public executioner. He is to be tried, then, for some other purpose than to visit upon him the penalties of treason.

The only other rational object of a trial is to settle the law; that is, to determine whether the right of secession formerly claimed by the South, but now abandoned, was valid. Could any proceeding be more supremely farcical than to submit to the judgment of a court, at this late day, the question whether the Government was right or wrong in a war waged for four years, during which it called two millions of men into the field? Why should the Government gratuitously admit that this is a matter of doubt, and act as if the rightfulness of the war were still so, open to dispute that the question still needs to be decided by some higher authority than has yet pronounced upon it? Suppose the court solemnly decides that the war was right; what pertinent practical consequence follows? Why, that the Government *may* inflict a penalty on the individual on trial which it neither wishes nor intends to inflict.

But suppose the Court affirms the right of secession; what follows then? Why, that we waged against the South an unjustifiable war; and hat the seceding States ought to be reinstated in the independence they rightfully assumed. It is indescribably preposterous to hold a trial, at this late day, to determine whether any such doctrine is to be admitted. The trial of Mr. Davis can settle nothing which is not already settled on immovable foundations. It will neither make any difference in his personal fate, nor in the future action of the Government respecting the relations of the States to the Federal authority. It will therefore be a mocking humbug dressed up in the solemn robes of justice.

But conceding, for argument, that the rightfulness of the war is an open or a doubtful question, and that the trial of Mr. Davis will determine it, it is proper to inquire whether the settlement hangs on the charge of the judge or on the verdict of the jury. If on the latter, a verdict of acquittal will upset the whole theory of the war, and all the questions which the war is supposed to have decided are liable to be ripped open by the caprice or the sectional prejudices of a Southern jury. But if the settlement depends on the expected charge of Chief Justice Chase, everybody knows as well beforehand, as anybody can after the charge is delivered, what its substance will be. Having been a consenting member of the Government which waged the war against secession, he can decide but one way. Being a Republican candidate for President, he will not blast his prospects by espousing defunct secession. If, therefore, the object of trying Mr. Davis is to find out whether Chief Justice Chase thinks a State can legally exempt its citizens from the penalties of treason, nothing could be more idly superfluous.

It is of no practical importance to decide the question whether a State may shield its citizens from the penalties of treason against the United States. In respect to Mr. Davis himself it is confessedly of no practical consequence, since there is no intention to hang him. It signifies equally little in respect to cases that may arise in future rebellions. The utter futility of any judicial decision on a question so purely theoretical, will be apparent as soon as we consider the provisions of the Constitution in respect to criminal trials. They must in all cases be before a jury of the State in which the crime has been committed. But if the crime has been commanded by the Government of that State, a majority of its people are accomplices; the State Government being merely the organ through which the majority of the people execute their will. In such a State, the majority of every jury will consist of accomplices of the person on trial, and any one juryman of the whole twelve can prevent a conviction. The theoretical question whether the State can rightfully protect its citizens from the penalties of treason is therefore trivial. If a State consisted merely of its officers, the question might be of some importance; but inasmuch as a State consists of its people, it is idle to inquire whether they can absolve themselves from the penalties of treason, when conviction is possible only by the unanimous verdict of twelve jurymen drawn from among them.

The charge of Chief Justice Chase, if he delivers one, will decide nothing respecting future punishments for treason; nor would an adjudication by the Supreme Court decide anything. Every future trial will be before a separate jury, and whether the prisoner is punished will depend upon the consent of the whole twelve and not upon the charge of the presiding judge. The question of State protection cannot arise except in cases where a majority of the citizens from whom the jurymen are drawn were accomplices in the alleged crime; and let the judge in each trial charge as he will, it is still for each juryman to form his own judgment, and any one of the twelve can save the prisoner.

Chief Justice Chase of course knows perfectly well that the proposed trial of Jefferson Davis is a solemn humbug. He has fought shy of it as long as he could, and he would keep aloof from it altogether if he were not a candidate for President. It is the cant of the so-called Conservative Republicans that drives him to dip the tip of his judicial fingers in this farcical business. He is understood to belong, like his admirer, Mr. Greeley, to the "universal amnesty, universal suffrage" wing of the party. Their opponents pelt them with cant about the awful crime of treason which they are unwilling to have punished; and either from moral cowardice or political expediency, Mr. Chase permits himself to be canted into participation in a judicial farce. The chorus of howls raised against Mr. Greeley when he signed the bail bond, warns the Chief Justice that he must not seem slack; and he consents to preside at Richmond from the same motives that led him to make stump speeches to the Southern negroes two years ago. But he is planning to shirk the trial while professing a willingness to conduct it. He consents to be present at its opening, but declines to remain till its close. The offer to be present on the 13th of November is a deceitful dodge, for he knows that the trial cannot be brief. Many days, perhaps many weeks, will be spent in getting a jury. Much time will be consumed in examining and cross-examining witnesses. Before the trial is concluded, the Supreme Court will sit at Washington, and the Chief Justice declares that he cannot be absent. The consequence will be that the charge to the jury, the chief thing for which he is wanted, will devolve on Judge Underwood, and Chief Justice Chase will escape the responsibility of giving any opinion except on matters merely preliminary or incidental. The pretense that he cannot be absent from the opening of the Supreme Court is a subterfuge. A majority of the judges would suffice to hold the Supreme Court, which has more than once opened and advanced far into its term without the presence of a Chief Justice. Not only is the proposed trial itself a humbug and a farce, but the management of the Chief Justice to evince a simulated willingness to preside at it, and to slip out on a feigned necessity at the critical stage of submitting the case to the jury, is a more pitiful because a smaller and more tricky humbug than the rest.

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