

SPRIT OF THE PRESS.

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

The New South.

From the N. Y. Tribune.

In all the many letters we have received from and conversations we have had with Southern men during the last six or eight months, we have not had an intimation of regret that slavery has passed away, nor the hint of a desire that it should ever be restored. And, now that it is gone, we hear from no Southerner a suggestion that its overthrow was not a great blessing to the whites. There are still some who tell us that they apprehend the extinction of the blacks as one of its consequences; and this fear has some historic justification. A race signally inferior in energy, numbers, wealth, intelligence, persistency, and almost every other quality that would enable it to hold its own, placed in close contact with a superior, if incapable of absorption, is in danger of gradual extinction. Still, the blacks have shown such tenacity of life under slavery that we cannot doubt their endurance under the novel temptations and trials of freedom. We presume they will not increase so fast as they have done; we know that they are destined, because of our immense, incessant immigration of whites, to constitute a smaller and still smaller fraction of our people at each successive census, so that the child is now born who will see them but a twentieth where they have been an eighth of the American people; yet we believe they will be more numerous in 1900 than they were in 1850. If they can be induced very generally to shun cities and buy lands, they certainly will.

Next in importance and helpfulness to the general rejoicing that slavery is dead, we rank the improved prospects of industry at the South. On this point, there is no conflict of testimony, no diversity of judgment. Wages are higher than they have been, and labor is in more eager demand. Those who grew last year's crop generally did so well that they are planting more extensively this year. If the season be fair, there will be more cotton and far more sugar grown than in '68, with at least an equal amount of rice, tobacco, corn and meat. Lands, though still low, are selling faster than last spring, and at much higher prices. Improvement is the order of the day. The most effective implements and machinery are largely bought. More fertilizers are sold than ever before, and the market is still widening. Phosphates, marl, guano, are the current topics, replacing the Freedmen's Bureau and the Reconstruction acts. The planters are not only willing but able to buy a way for them. Thus the profits of the last crop are used to insure and enlarge the next. Instead of speedily wearing out one plantation and then removing his "forces" to a new one, the planter meditates enriching the soil and enhancing the crop of his present holding to the end of his days.

Of course, there is a background to this picture. There are malignant, implacable forces, banded in Ku-Klux and other midnight organizations to harass, outrage, and kill; there are inveterate white loafers, hanging about cross-roads taverns and stores, drinking bad whisky and talking worse politics, who will never work if they can help it; and there are worthless, thievish, vagabond negroes, who prey on the country, skulking about the edges of plantations, hiding in forests, shooting pigs, robbing corn-cris, and grumbling that they can find nothing to do. Some of these will get shot before they know it; others will find themselves in prison; others still will persist in their wretched course, eking out a miserable subsistence by occasional hunting or fishing. But "the schoolmaster is abroad"; the children generally attend school wherever they can; so vagrants and profligates, white or black, are gradually becoming scarcer. There are localities in several States, especially West Tennessee and Eastern Texas, where the bad status of two or three years ago still continues or has been little modified; but these are but a very small proportion of the South, of whose counties nine-tenths have to-day as quiet and law-abiding citizens as Iowa or Massachusetts.

The influx of immigrants and of those who are prospecting with a view to immigration is large and increasing, and is no longer repelled by a generally sullen demeanor. Indebted land-holders (still a numerous class) are eager to sell, even to "Yankees"; railroad managers offer to carry, and hotel-keepers to entertain, at reduced rates, those who visit with a view to purchase and settlement. With a good season and such peace and order as the general confidence in President Grant's fairness and firmness is calculated to secure, the South can hardly fail to make a large stride towards recuperation in the year 1869.

The Democracy and the Suffrage Amendment.

From the N. Y. Times.

The resignation of seventeen Senators and thirty-seven Representatives in Indiana, leaving either branch of the State Legislature without a quorum, illustrates the recklessness with which opposition to the pending constitutional amendment is conducted. Necessary legislation is brought to a stand-still. The State is left minus appropriations for the maintenance of its courts and public institutions. Essential work is unfinished. And serious inconvenience is occasioned to important interests by the abrupt and violent termination of the session.

The motive of the seceders is not concealed. They apprehended the ratification of the amendment, and resolved upon delaying by strategy what they could not hope to defeat by votes. Mere absence would not have served their purpose. They resigned, therefore, and now appeal to their constituencies in behalf of the fundamental Democratic doctrine—that this is a white man's government. Events which Southern States have accepted as conclusive reasons for impartial suffrage are still resisted by the Democratic legislators of Indiana. They prefer confusion and embarrassment to the toleration of "this great iniquity."

But where is the thing to end? The pretense put forward is that the Legislature should not be asked to vote upon the amendment until the people of the whole State have passed judgment upon its merits. A general election alone would meet their requirements. And their resignations secure nothing more than a limited and partial verdict.

Governor Baker, in the proclamation fixing the day for the elections to fill vacancies, announces that the embarrassed condition of public business will necessitate a special session of the Legislature at an early period. Suppose then, as is not improbable, that at the special session shortly to be held the suffrage amendment will be brought up for ratification, will the Democratic Senators and Representatives again resign, be the injury to public business what it may? Of course, their demand for a general appeal to the people will be unsatisfied. It is consistent, therefore, they must make up their minds to renew their resignations, and thus a second time break up the Legislature, without re-

gard to the effect upon the State. "We are not in favor, as a general thing, of such revolutionary measures," says a Louisville newspaper; "but this is a case which would justify it." From which we infer that "revolutionary measures" are in order with the Democracy when the fifteenth amendment is in question. In such a game Indiana Democrats properly take the lead.

The New Hampshire Election.

From the N. Y. Herald.

Last spring the Republicans of New Hampshire, three months and over in advance of the Chicago Convention, fought their State fight under the banner of General Grant as their Presidential candidate against the field. That State campaign, therefore, was accepted as the touchstone of Grant's popularity. The State had always been closely divided and sharply contested between the two parties, and from the general drift of the elections East and West of 1867 the Democrats were encouraged with the evidences of a popular reaction which might give them the initial victory of 1868. The Republicans appreciated their danger. The Democrats were inspired with the hope of a defeat of Grant in his first preliminary battle. Consequently the State canvass in New Hampshire last spring was contested foot by foot on both sides, and every accessible voter was brought out; for the result was to be the first gun for the Presidency under the banner of Grant. The election marked a return of the popular tide to the Republicans, and dissipated all doubts as to the availability of General Grant and as to the action of the Chicago Convention.

This year New Hampshire has been called upon to speak first among the States her opinion of President Grant's inaugural and upon his policy of a Cabinet of his own choosing. The result—a more decisive victory than that of last March—was on election night substantially covered by the congratulatory speech of the Governor-elect, Osgood Stearns. He said:—"It is a reaffirmation of New Hampshire's attachment to Republican principles, and of her determination to stand by President Grant in his declared purposes of introducing economy, retrenchment, and reform into every department of the Government. As New Hampshire was the first State to formally present the name of General Grant to the nation, it is fitting that her people should send as a greeting the first endorsement of his administration." Very good, Governor; see that you stick to your text, for the administration will be fighting the battles of the whizky rings and other Treasury plundering rings before long, and the cries of the wounded will be apt to startle the radical junta of Congress.

Connecticut comes next—April 5. The election here, as in New Hampshire, includes the State delegation to the lower house of the Forty-first or present Congress. New Hampshire returns an unbroken Republican delegation. In the last Congress, expiring the 4th of March, the Democrats of Connecticut had three members to one Republican. But General Grant last November completely upset the State, carrying three out of the four Congressional districts. What is the prospect now? The Democrats profess to have some hope of recovering the State on the negro suffrage issue embraced in the pending fifteenth amendment to the Constitution. They are making their fight on that question and the Democratic dry bones of State rights. We apprehend, however, that the Democratic party on these old Bourbonic ideas is dead and done for, and that its reconstruction will depend upon the coming events of the new administration.

Will General Grant "Fight It Out on This Line?"

From the N. Y. World.

The week which has elapsed since the inauguration of President Grant has applied better material for estimating his capacity than his whole previous career. The impenetrable silence by which he screened himself from scrutiny might, for aught the public knew, cover a robust wisdom like that of William the Silent, as it also might be the cloak of dullness and mental impotence. A prince who had never met his destined consort except in a dark apartment, would not know whether he was to wed a Cleopatra or a Witch of Eador, and when the bridal veil was lifted immediately after the marriage, the beautiful illusions of the lover's fancy might encounter a repulsive reality. Grant has suddenly demonstrated that his obstinate taciturnity was a mask for his ignorance and inability. He has exposed himself to the scorn and derision of his enemies, and has incurred the pity and contempt of his friends. It was for his interest to put his best foot forward and appear to the greatest advantage at the beginning of his administration. If a statesman of recognized eminence should make great blunders on entering a new office, his reputation would be impaired, but not fatally damaged; for although his last acts would make the liveliest impression, as being the freshest, they would not form the sole basis for estimating his ability. They would be regarded merely as heavy items on the debit side of an account which had a long list of credit entries. But General Grant, in setting up the new business of a statesman, has opened a clean set of books, and the first page, which records the capital with which he commences, exhibits him as hopelessly insolvent.

There is nothing, in the whole course of his administration, which is so deeply concerning him to do well, nothing which will have an opportunity to do with such ample forethought and deliberation, or in which it will be so easy to avoid egregious blunders, as the selection of a Cabinet. He has had little else to think of since he was nominated, ten months ago, with full confidence of an election. Since that time, he has been in frequent personal contact with all the leading men of his party. He has resided for the last four years in Washington, the focus of political intelligence, with advantages of association which must have given him constant opportunities of listening to the estimates put upon all prominent public characters by those best qualified to judge. With this amplitude of time and influence of facilities for composing his administration with deliberation and wisdom, he has blundered as a respectable mechanic could not have done, if suddenly caught up in the streets on the 3d, inaugurated on the 4th, and required to send in the names of his Cabinet on the 5th. General Grant's blunders make a far worse impression than if perpetrated by a man unexpectantly made President without notice, as Vice-Presidents sometimes are, and compelled to choose a Cabinet on the spur of the moment. General Grant's blunders prove that he is a man on whom opportunity and opportunities are lost; they therefore preclude the hope that his administration will improve as it advances. Our laws wisely place a long interval between the election of a President and his induction into office, giving him so much time for reflection and consultation, that if the impressions produced by his first official acts are unfavorable, he can blame nothing but his own incapacity. This ample period for preparation has been wholly lost upon President Grant. He is like a general suddenly surprised in his camp by an enemy, and obliged to extemporize a plan of battle under every disadvantage, in the confusion of

the moment, after having known for months that he would have to fight at that time and on that ground. Our new President is worse off than if he had been elected, without notice, on the day of his inauguration. In that case, the country would have made generous allowances; but even in that case, such a fiasco as General Grant has committed would be hardly excusable. But to have blundered so enormously after the amplest opportunities for circumspect action, shows that he is a man on whom opportunities are thrown away; that he is incapable of profiting by advice or experience; and that he so prostrates public confidence at the outset of his administration as to incline the public to look with doubt and misgiving upon everything he may hereafter do. It is much as if the general who was so disgracefully beaten at the first battle of Bull Run had just been invested with the full command of our armies for four years.

The chances that General Grant will improve are slender indeed. Aside from the incurable mental deficiencies which unfit him for success as a statesman, the shame of such a beginning and his reluctance to confess his blunders, will induce him to adopt some course which will not seem a total abandonment of plans which he formed with so much deliberation, with such arrogant self-confidence, and such contemptuous rejection of advice. When a pretender is detected in a ridiculous blunder, he is under a strong temptation to shield and defend it. General Grant, having assumed to be superior to ordinary usages and independent of such assistance as has been sought by all his predecessors, will naturally desire to show that his assumption was not a mere exhibition of empty self-conceit, and will probably act as nearly as possible in accordance with his original ideas. His self-conceited presumption and absurd affectation of superiority have not only led him into mistakes which a diffident man with access to advisers could not have committed, but they have enlisted his pride in support of an indefensible course, which might have been easily abandoned if it had not been taken with such a lofty and repellent air of superiority. Modesty easily confesses its faults; but ostentatious presumption, which censures and deviates from the common usage, commits itself to persistences in error. So that General Grant has to encounter not only the intrinsic difficulties of the situation, and those which result from his incapacity and inexperience, but the embarrassments which attend a gratuitous assumption of superiority that enlists his vanity in defense of his mistakes. He will doubtless continue his paltry affectation of acting solely on his own judgment.

This kind of self-ostentation, instead of being a mark of capacity, proves the utter want of it. The most superior minds are always the most indebted to others; their superiority consisting, among other things, in their ability to use the facilities of others as an architect uses the rude labors of quarrymen and the trained skill of mechanics. As soon as a man has exhibited a marked superiority to his contemporaries, he becomes a river into which all the streams of intelligence and capacity flow, as affluents, to swell its volume. The imposing figure made by a great statesman is due to the fact that his eminence makes other capable men proud to give him their assistance, to supply him with facts and suggestions, and thus to gain for their ideas a currency and importance which they could never give them by their own efforts. To be the correspondent of a great man, to be the valued adviser of a great man, is a distinction which gives clever men consideration in their own circles, and supplies their only chance of incorporating their ideas into the general public thought. Thus, one superior man becomes the conduit of numerous streams of valuable thought, as the Mississippi rolls into the Gulf the collected rivers of half a continent. There is no plagiarism in this kind of assistance; what material for estimating his capacity than his whole previous career. The impenetrable silence by which he screened himself from scrutiny might, for aught the public knew, cover a robust wisdom like that of William the Silent, as it also might be the cloak of dullness and mental impotence. A prince who had never met his destined consort except in a dark apartment, would not know whether he was to wed a Cleopatra or a Witch of Eador, and when the bridal veil was lifted immediately after the marriage, the beautiful illusions of the lover's fancy might encounter a repulsive reality. Grant has suddenly demonstrated that his obstinate taciturnity was a mask for his ignorance and inability. He has exposed himself to the scorn and derision of his enemies, and has incurred the pity and contempt of his friends. It was for his interest to put his best foot forward and appear to the greatest advantage at the beginning of his administration. If a statesman of recognized eminence should make great blunders on entering a new office, his reputation would be impaired, but not fatally damaged; for although his last acts would make the liveliest impression, as being the freshest, they would not form the sole basis for estimating his ability. They would be regarded merely as heavy items on the debit side of an account which had a long list of credit entries. But General Grant, in setting up the new business of a statesman, has opened a clean set of books, and the first page, which records the capital with which he commences, exhibits him as hopelessly insolvent.

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