

SPRIT OF THE PRESS.

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

GLAD TIDINGS!

From the N. Y. Times. Of course, the wiseness who proposed to excommunicate the Times for daring to urge a large and an immediate reduction of taxes, will expand all that remains of their wrath upon General Grant and the Committee of Ways and Means. The offense of the President is rank and must be punished; he has listened to the voice of the people, and has come to the conclusion that they want and must have substantial relief. And the members of the Ways and Means Committee are not less guilty. They have heard the country's cry, "Down with the taxes!" They have agreed to recommend some measure of reduction. Great will be the fury of the monopolists and their prophets, and terrible the fate of President and committee-men. Who knows what will happen now the powers that be at Washington begin to evince their appreciation of the feeling prevalent throughout the States?

We have no doubt that General Grant will survive the scolding that is in store for him, and will even come through stronger than ever. He commenced his Executive career with the declaration that though having on all subjects a policy to recommend, he should have "none to enforce against the will of the people." On this subject of taxation he has kept his word. In December he recommended the retention of the present rate of taxation through another year as a means of facilitating the funding of the debt. That was General Grant's policy. Since then the will of the people has been made manifest. It is that taxes shall be reduced now. Precisely how reduction shall be effected, what taxes shall be revised or repealed, and what maintained, is a matter in regard to which opinions differ. But on the essential point—that the fiscal burdens shall be lightened to the greatest possible extent, and without delay—the people are all but unanimous. On no other subject is there half the unanimity that prevails on this. "Down with the taxes" is everywhere the cry—a cry not prompted by ordinary impatience of taxation, but originating in the conviction that trade and industry have endured the exhaustive drain of war taxes to the full extent of their ability, and that a diminution of the load is absolutely necessary. This is the deliberately expressed judgment of the people, echoed with few exceptions by the press, and the force of which is now recognized at the White House and in the Capitol.

The demand for reduction must have impressed the President with greater force because of the evident friendliness with which it has been uttered. His policy and the will of the people differed—but only as to order and time. "First funding, then reduction," was his maxim. "Reduction first, that the country may be relieved and its credit strengthened by prosperity, then funding"—is the policy of the people. In their ultimate purposes the two methods are identical. The popular preference has not been expressed in vain. With a promptitude and frankness which are honorable to his manhood as to his sagacity, General Grant has studied the will of the people, ascertained its drift, and comprehended its significance. Another President might have clung to his own policy despite all declarations against it. He might have mistaken defiance for duty, and confounded obstinacy with principle. General Grant has more correctly learned the responsibilities of his position. Having ascertained the will of the people, he proposes to carry it into effect. He has discovered that they require a reduction of taxes at once, and he has exerted his influence to bring the Ways and Means Committee to the same conclusion. For this candid acknowledgment of a great fact, we thank him—and the people will thank him heartily.

Will Congress with equal grace pause in its personalities, arrest the empty talk which renders it ridiculous, and enter upon the work which should have been begun last December? Will the Ways and Means Committee discard its Tariff of Abominations, whose promulgation has provoked just indignation, and acquiesce in the President's suggestions? These are questions yet to be answered. General Grant, it is known, recommends an immediate reduction of taxes to the extent of at least fifty millions—thirty millions to be taken off internal taxes, and not less than twenty millions off customs duties. This is the minimum of relief that should be afforded. The committee, it is understood, has already adopted the proposition relating to internal revenue, and we trust that it will not hesitate to renew the consideration of the tariff, as well with the view of abating its enormities as of diminishing the revenue derived from it.

The satisfactory performance of the task which thus devolves upon Congress calls for the exercise of some of the qualities which have just added to the greatness of the President. Fifty millions less of taxation will be a boon of no common magnitude. To enable the country to realize all its benefits, however, the work of revision, whether of internal or customs taxes, must be prosecuted without fear, favor, or affection. The largest possible relief to the people is the object to be aimed at; and any attempt to diminish this relief in the interest of specially-favored classes or monopolies will be unjust and impolitic. It cannot be forgotten that any notable reduction of taxation is a concession to the people, exacted by the pertinacity and force of their demand, with the help of the President; and Congress will blunder egregiously if in the process of reduction it shall heed other interests than those of the people.

CONGRESS AND THE ADMINISTRATION ON THE CUBAN QUESTION.

From the N. Y. Herald. "My policy" came within a single vote of the expulsion of Andy Johnson from the White House. Whether General Grant, remembering the misfortunes of Johnson, has or has not determined to avoid every danger of a collision with Congress, his policy seems to be the policy of awaiting the action or the opinion of the two houses upon all the great questions of the day. Upon the Cuban question, for example, we have been over and over again assured that his sympathies are with the islanders and their cause of independence, and yet his Secretary of State, in his strangely distorted notions of neutrality, has proved an active and efficient ally of Spain. His zeal and vigilance as a detective in the interest of Spain have been very remarkable for an old man, while his gracious ticket-of-leave to those thirty Spanish gunboats has shown that he has none of the patriotic weaknesses of a young man. General Grant, we will suppose, has consented to all this because he thus avoids the danger of trenching upon the supreme authority of Congress over such delicate questions as war, peace, neutrality, and belligerent rights. This is the best defense

we can give him, and conceding that, under the circumstances, it may excuse him for resting upon his oars and drifting down stream, we can look only to Congress for action upon this Cuban question.

It is in this view that nothing can be expected from the administration in taking the initiative for the settlement of this question that we regard with special satisfaction the movements made in both houses of Congress in behalf of something like fair play to the Cubans, and in behalf of some recognition of the rights of American citizens. We regard these movements with special satisfaction because, without the direct intervention of Congress, the Government is in danger of being disgraced in the eyes of the civilized world. On the plea of humanity alone General Grant, at any time since the 15th of March last, would have sustained by Congress, by the American people, and by the enlightened opinion of Christendom, in proclaiming belligerent rights to the Cubans. Nay, more, at any time within the period indicated he would have been sustained by the public sentiment of the United States, and justified before the world, in pleading the duty of an armed occupation of Cuba in order to put an end to the barbarous atrocities of the Spaniards and to their savage government over the island, as outside the pale of civilization recognized by the law of nations.

On the broad and general principles of humanity and civilization there is a plausible excuse for the French armed intervention in and protectorate over Mexico. On the same plea as that of Louis Napoleon, considering the fact that we have assumed the guardianship over that country against European interferences, it becomes our duty to establish law and order in Mexico. The same plea, in view of the reduction of the Spanish government over Cuba to the savage condition, would doubtless satisfy Napoleon as our explanation for a military occupation of the island. But Mr. Fish, they tell us, is afraid of a war with Spain, and the President says, "Let us have peace." So be it, then. But surely, the Cubans, against all the power of Spain by land and sea, have sufficiently proved their title to belligerent rights. Perhaps; but have we come in conflict with Mr. Sumner's hobby, those Alabama claims? We apprehend that Mr. Fish has not the remotest idea of any further agitation of those claims while he remains in the State Department; but for all that Mr. Sumner does not wish to have his case weakened by any recognition of belligerency in behalf of the Cuban insurgents.

Hence we infer the resolutions submitted in both houses of Congress, and the reported intention of the Committee on Foreign Relations of each body, are directed rather to the enlargement of our neutrality laws than to the concession of belligerent rights to the Cubans. On belligerent rights their claim is apparently not much better than that of Jeff. Davis after Lincoln's proclamation of a blockade, and that is a matter of international law; but our neutrality is a matter subject to the action of Congress. The law of 1818 has become threadbare and liable to such one-sided misconceptions as those of Mr. Fish. It needs amendment, and such amendment as will admit of reconstruction.

We believe that the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the House, of which General Banks is chairman, is disposed to act faithfully on this Cuban business, in accord with the universal public sentiment of the country; and we are assured that the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate, of which Mr. Sumner is chairman, is satisfied that they must not in this business trifle any longer with public opinion. We hope, however, that General Banks and the House will lead off, because that body, in being nearer the people than the Senate, is nearer the mark of "manifest destiny," and we want a resolution from the immediate representatives of the people first, because we want to wake up the administration. It has already been asleep too long, and should be permitted to sleep no longer.

A FOOLISH SCHEME.

From the N. Y. Tribune. There is one cardinal error at the foundation of all Government telegraph schemes, and it is this:—Government has no concern with what the private citizen can do without Government aid. Experience shows that the machinery of any government, when applied to the concerns of private life, is cumbersome and wasteful. A man is apt to spend his own money, and squander that of other people. If Mr. A. T. Stewart had built our new Court House for his private business, he would have spent about one-fifth of what Mr. Tweed has squandered as Supervisor. We have no doubt Mr. Tweed would have done the same thing if he had been erecting a house on his own account. We can understand how a Government should aid new enterprises, railroads and telegraphs in unsettled countries, where capital wisely spent will add to the nation's wealth and prosperity. Thus, we have always found that railway land-grants increased the value of Government lands. The construction of the Pacific Railway has no doubt added to the nation's capacity for taxation five times as much as we spent for subsidies.

At a time when statesmanship begins to consider the wisdom of abandoning the Post Office and submitting the mails to private competition, we are asked to assume the whole telegraph system, and do as a Government what is done already by private companies. Mr. Hubbard of Boston is the champion of the new policy, and Mr. Senator Ramsey is his representative. Mr. Hubbard's bill proposes to combine both government credit and private capital. He proposes to destroy all telegraphic interests by establishing under our Post Office Department a system which will paralyze all existing companies by underselling them in service. It places all telegraph property at the mercy of the United States Postal Telegraph Company. It makes no provision and offers no inducements for improvements in telegraphic service. It seems to provide for a large reduction in tolls, but in truth leaves the new company without any restraint whatever in its charges for all business passing over its wires. Thus it is declared that the rates shall be twenty-five cents for all messages of twenty words or less, including date, address, and signature, sent a distance of 500 miles, and at night the same rate when sent 1000 miles. As very few messages are ever sent more than 500 miles at night, and as all lines charge high rates for night service anyhow, this provision in fact amounts to an increase of charge upon night business. There is also a provision that the payment of extra tolls will secure what is called "priority of transmission." This would be a vicious principle. The rule now is, "First come, first served." Mr. Hubbard would declare, "The largest pay, first served." Under such a rule, no business man could have any assurance that his business would be attended to; and he could have no advantage in promptitude or expedition service. Such a provision would destroy all fairness and impartiality. It is even a grave objection that there is no opportunity for competition between the

new line and lines now existing. The Government makes a contract at fixed rates, rates higher than are now charged. It would be at least fair to ask proposals from the present companies and accept the lowest bid. This is not done, and, worse still, no attempt is made to advance telegraphic science. The bill merely provides for equipping the line with "good" instruments. Why not the best? Telegraphy is a science still in its infancy, and, if the Government really means to do this work, it should open the door to some of the new inventions that promise to increase the value and expedition of this service. The bill would purchase all lines now in operation. Why not purchase one of the patents which promise great value? Why allow Mr. Hubbard to charge \$500 and \$200 a mile for wire, when the best wires in the country can be bought for \$60 and \$70 a mile? Why, in rendering an account of its expenditures, simply give its "construction account," and no schedule of salaries and incidental working expenses? What principle governs newspaper charges? We have a schedule of rates based upon the tariffs of the Western Union Company, with special rates to the Associated Press. As a member of the Associated Press, we appreciate of course this proposed dispensation, but at the same time we do not ask for any special legislation for our benefit. We can do without it. The Associated Press simply wants to be treated like any other customer, and does not appreciate being made a lever to push along any scheme like that of Mr. Senator Ramsey.

Finally, this embraces the whole question, the principle of Mr. Ramsey's bill is radically wrong. We have shown its mischief in detail, even supposing that there existed a necessity for the proposed legislation. General Washburn's bill is bad enough, but the General would take the English plan, which is open and honorable, makes the whole service responsible to the people, recognizes vested rights so far as to pay telegraphic companies for the money they have expended in establishing their business. Senator Ramsey, on the contrary, crystallizes into a monopoly a business as great as our postal system. It creates vested rights which, in the end, must be purchased at large cost by the public money. It permits Mr. Hubbard to exact greater tolls than other responsible companies would in time be willing to charge for similar service. It commits the Government directly to a system which will be extravagant, foolish, and ruinous. We cannot tolerate such a scheme, especially at a time when we are doing all we can to pay old debts without contracting new ones. The bill is partial, unjust, and unnecessary, and we hope to see it swept into the sepulchre of dead legislation.

DOWN WITH THE RING.

From the N. Y. World. Horace Greeley was once in a position where it was within his sole competency to give to the people of New York city an honest and capable city government. He preferred to be a partisan rather than a good citizen. It is within his competency to assist greatly the effort of the Democratic masses here to throw off the domination of the ring. He prefers to be a partisan rather than a good citizen. Therefore he calumniates honest Democrats now, and within a week will be writing comparative praise of the ring.

It would be very easy for us to ask troublesome questions of Mr. Greeley concerning his share in the Pennsylvania protectionists' corruption fund, his share in the city advertising which has stopped the Tribune's mouth more than once, and his share in the contracts for the new City Post Office which one day he pronounced "a wart on the end of a man's nose" in its present site, and shortly after advocated through thick and thin for "reasons of utility and propriety" but all this we shall not personally refrain from doing, not only for the honor of our profession, in which he is a veteran, but also because, so far as the World is concerned, this contest for the self-government of New York city and its honest and frugal self-government shall not be dwarfed to the dimensions of a personal encounter, or a fight of factions, by the manner in which Mr. Greeley, the Tribune, or any other ally of the ring chooses to earn his wages.

It is sufficient to say, and we regret to say it, though we have foreseen that it would soon have to be said, that Mr. Greeley is lending some of his influence, and, as the contest waxes hotter, will shortly be lending all his influence, to the thieves of the ring whom for a dozen years it has been his stock in trade to denounce. It is sufficient to find his motive for this in the more partisanship which prefers New York city to be corruptly governed, since it is certain to be governed by Democrats, rather than honestly and frugally governed, since that would be fatal to the Republican party in the State, and imperil its ascendancy in the Union.

In this more unscrupulous partisanship he will find no following, save among partisans unscrupulous as himself. Good citizens will not suffer themselves thus to be led astray. As they are good citizens, they will support with their voices and their votes the men who vindicate themselves against all his aspersions by the nature and character of what they propose for the city.

Senators Genet and Norton, by the resolutions which they introduced in the Senate on Wednesday, which are fully reported in Thursday's World, but are garbled or concealed from the readers of Thursday's Tribune, have done more in one day than Mr. Greeley has done in twenty-five years to get good government for this city. It does not lie in his mouth to proclaim their inferior civic virtue. If, when it was impossible to overthrow the ring because the Tribune and its party ruling in the State divided places and spoils with the ring, they then made no assaunt upon its gigantic corruptions, what politician is pure enough to pitch a stone? Most reformers begin by sharing the errors which it is their mission to overthrow. But the Tribune would vilify Luther for not earlier starting the Reformation, though earlier it must have failed.

These Senators, and those men in the Senate and the Assembly who co-operate with them, represent the wishes of the honest Democrats of this city. They deserve the support of every good citizen, whatever his party. Their integrity and their sincerity cannot be impeached with success; for it is daily vindicated by the heavy blows they are dealing to the ring; their resistance to the charter which would perpetuate the power of the ring; their persistent unearthing of the corruptions of the ring; their avowed and pledged refusal to give the hands of the people a fatal weapon against all future rings—namely, a charter under which this city government can be revolutionized by the people's votes in one election.

CAUTION TO INVESTORS IN STOCKS.

From the N. Y. Sun. Within the past few years innumerable companies have been formed under the general manufacturing law of this State, not only for the transaction of business within the

State, but for the purpose of carrying on all sorts of operations in other and remote localities. Many of the petroleum companies, for instance, operating in Pennsylvania, are incorporated under our State law, as well as most if not all of the silver and gold mining companies of Montana, Nevada, and even California. The Mariposa Mining Company, with its capital of \$10,000,000, is a corporation of this kind, and so are many other concerns whose shares are daily bought and sold in Wall street.

It would be well for persons owning shares in this class of companies, or who may be intending to buy them, to be reminded of a provision in the act under which they are incorporated, imposing a serious personal liability upon individual stockholders. Section 18 of the act reads thus:—

"The stockholders of any company organized under the provisions of this act shall be jointly and severally individually liable for all debts that may be due and owing to all their laborers, servants, and apprentices for services performed for such corporation."

The liability it will be observed, is for money due to "laborers, servants, and apprentices." The words are sufficiently comprehensive to embrace every person employed by such corporations; and in the case of mining and petroleum companies, which require the services of a great number of men, they take in nearly all the debts such companies are likely to incur. Now, in general, "laborers, servants, and apprentices" will not work very long without getting their pay, so that when the company's money gives out its debt for wages does not increase much. But cases may be readily imagined in which the arrears of wages may accumulate; and when they do, they may become a serious claim against any unlucky shareholder who may be singled out for the operation of the law. He is individually liable, and has no alternative but to pay, and trust to legal process to make his fellow stockholders reimburse him their shares. The workmen may be induced by promises to keep on for a considerable time, and when at last they lose all confidence and quit the company's employment, some speculator may buy up their claims at a low figure and proceed to collect them as the law allows. It might thus happen that the owner of single share of stock would be made to pay a thousand dollars, and be practically remediless.

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