COLLEGE SECRET SOCIETIES.

LETTER FROM THE REV. DR. HODGE.

A STRONG PROTEST FROM ONE OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE COLLEGE OF NEW-JERSEY AGAINST COLLEGE SECRET SOCIETIES—COMBINATIONS AGAINST THE COLLEGE AUTHORITIES—THE LITERARY SOCIETIES INJURED—HAS THE COLLEGE A RIGHT TO EXACT PLEDGES?

To the Editor of The Tribune.

SIR: The public are aware that about a month ago the faculty of the College of New-Jersey dismissed some fifteen students on the ground that, in violation of a pledge, taken on their matriculation, they had been connected with certain secret societies. This action of the Faculty brought up two questions for discussion: First, are such secret societies an evil in our colleges? and, second, supposing them to be an evil, is it right to exact a pledge of the students not to be connected with any such society so long as they remained in the College?

These questions were discussed at a meeting of the New-York Association of the Alumni of the College held early in the present month. Such was the interest felt in the subject that the association resolved to appoint a committee to present their views to the Board of Trustees at their meeting on the 22d inst. The Committee was appointed, and discharged the duty assigned them in a highly creditable manner. The trustees complimented them on the marked ability which they displayed, and for the courtesy which they exhibited. And, on the other hand, the Committee thanked the trustees for the respect with which they had been listened to, and the cordiality with which they had been received. A communication from the faculty was received by the Board, in which they express their decided conviction that these secret societies are a great evil in the college, and that the laws now existing for their suppression ought not to be repealed. The evils attributed to these societies are:

First: That they are, at least as far as Princeton is concerned, secret, not merely as to their constitution and rules of procedure, as is the case with the Whig and Cliosophic Societies, but even as to their design. Some are said to be literary; others, social; others, social and literary. Social is understood to mean "eating and drinking." They are secret as to their membership; as to the place and times of their meetings; as to the exclusion of all members of the faculty from membership, inspection, or control. Every one sees what facilities such secret organizations offer for all kinds of combinations and machinations. A college is like a large family, and for a family to be divided up into secret and rival coteries would be destructive. Such secret combinations are equally destructive to the life of a college.

Second: As these societies furnish the facility for combinations, human nature being what it is, it is inevitable that they should be used for evil purposes. According to the testimony of college officers and students, they are in fact used to control the distribution of hall and class honors. Not merit, but membership in a favorite society, is made to determine an aspirant's success. This of course gives rise to hard feelings, and leads to all kinds of electioneering, and to what in politics is called "log-rolling." Thus we have all the devices of political primary meetings, caucuses, and, as is affirmed, bribery, direct or indirect. If men do such things, why should not boys do them, if you give them the necessary appliances? The evil is still greater as it affects the discipline of the college. If a student is subjected to any penalty, the members of his society make it a society affair. If members of two or more societies are brought under censure, then the resisting force is duplicated. All discipline comes at last to be exercised in the face of organized and mischievous opposition. The next step is to interfere with the laws of the institution, until the affairs of our colleges pass out of the hands of the proper officers into those of these secret societies. We hear of colleges in which this has already come to pass. It is in this matter as with the "trade-unions," which undertake to regulate not only the rate of wages, but the hours of labor, the manner of employés, the use of machinery, etc., etc. A prominent builder in New-York recently said that at a time of great pressure, having discharged a laborer for drunkenness, the whole gang left him. Such is the power of combination. This question of secret societies is likely to become a vital one in our American colleges. The question is whether the faculty or the students, parents or children, are to govern. A gentleman connected with one of our Eastern colleges recently said: "We are watching with great interest this controversy about secret societies. We feel that Princeton is fighting the battle for all our colleges." It is a matter for sincere gratitude that Princeton has won the battle. Presidents and officers of colleges most overbone and demoralized by these societies have urged that the great colleges should combine to extinguish them.

Third: Another prominent objection to the societies in question is their manifold injurious influence on the established literary societies. In the College of New-Jersey the American Whig and Cliosophic Societies have existed for a century. They are recognized institutions. They have their halls and stated times of meetings. They are purely literary. All the officers of the college are members of one or of the other, and have free access to all their meetings, and are, or may be, cognizant of all that is done. Their educational power has been great and salutary. Their members are trained to order, to obedience to parliamentary rules, and to the exercise of all their gifts. The attachment of a loyal Whig or Cliosophian to his hall is scarcely second to his love for his Alma Mater. Whatever, therefore, injures those societies injures the college. When the members of the secret societies were allowed in the halls, they constituted a party with its own objects and aspirations. And since their exclusion the rivalry is pronounced. The fact that the long-established societies, the Whig and Cliosophic, have felt it necessary to establish the rule that no member of a secret, prohibited society should be admitted to either hall, is proof enough that the influence of such societies threatened to be destructive. They have destroyed the great halls in Yale, Dartmouth, and are doing it in other colleges. In this contest no one can doubt as to the side on which the authorities and friends of the College should throw their influence.

Fourth: Another objection strongly urged is that the influence of these societies is injurious to their own members. It is not said that it is so always and everywhere. It is freely admitted that where they are purely literary—where they are tolerated and subject to due control—where they are not in conflict with older and more important institutions, they may be harmless or improving. But such a conjunction of circumstance rarely does or can occur, and as to Princeton, and many other of our colleges, these societies cannot fail to exert an evil influence even on their own members. The very fact that they have constantly to carry on a system of deception and concealment, is itself demoralizing. Should an officer of the college make his appearance, they scatter as acknowledged criminals before a policeman. Is this a healthful influence? Is this the way to develop manliness and independence of character? Besides, there is no security that these societies should be purely literary in their character. Indeed, it is avowed that many of them are not. Some years since an officer of the college appeared unexpectedly at one of the meetings. The members dispersed with marvelous alacrity, leaving twenty empty bottles scattered about the room. What is true here, we know to be, as indeed it must be, largely true in other colleges where they are not prohibited. Other grave objections are that they aggravate expense, and originate or intensify cliques, castes, etc., so contrary to the true genius of literary communities.

Such are the leading objections against secret societies urged by those who, by long observation, are best qualified to judge of their influence. And their judgment is entitled to a deciding weight over the minds of those who have not had the same opportunity for observation. There are, however, many who join in the condemnation of secret societies who object to requiring the students on entering college to pledge themselves not to belong to any such association so long as they continue connected with the institution. Some take the general ground that all such pledges are wrong or inexpedient. It may be admitted that their multiplication, or their being made without sufficient reason, as all other trammels on our Christian liberty, are liable to great abuse—as in the case of monastic vows. Nevertheless, the Bible teaches that vows are lawful, and when lawful, obligatory. They were recognized under the Old Testament and under the New. A vow is a voluntary promise made to God, to do or not to do something lawful in itself, and within our power. Paul had such a vow upon him when he went up to Jerusalem. In fact, baptism, the Lord's Supper, ordination, and marriage, all involve solemn pledges, which being made to God, are vows. It is not necessary, however, to discuss the general principle. The obligations assumed by young men on entering college do not belong properly to the category of vows, not having the formal religious element. They belong rather to the class of obligations assumed by every one who enters any society, or corporation, or who is inducted into any office. A pledge is commonly exacted on all such occasions. Every man promises to obey the laws and regulation of every association which he joins. The members of these secret societies make such a pledge; so do the members of the American Whig and Cliosophic Societies; so do all the students of most colleges; so do the trustees and all the members of the Faculty; so do all legislators, judges, and executive officers in the States. It is vain to say that these pledges are binding because they are voluntary, whereas the pledges made by the students are exacted by authority. The one is no more voluntary than the other. In all these cases the man is required to take the pledge or forego a privilege. No student is bound to enter college, and no parent is bound to send him. Besides, it is a new principle in morals that a pledge is not binding because imposed by authority. Are not our baptismal and eucharistic vows binding, although imposed by the highest conceivable authority? Is not every man bound to render due allegiance to his native country? Can he commit treason with impunity? A witness called into court is bound by his oath, although his only alternative is to take the oath or go to prison. This is not a question which admits of debate. The propriety of exacting a pledge of students on entering college is universally recognized. Nearly all colleges require a pledge of obedience to their laws. And if this general pledge is recognized as proper, there can be no objection on principle to a specific pledge, if for any reason it be deemed expedient. The special reason for a pledge in opposition to this as distinguished from other evils is the secrecy which fortifies and belongs to its essence.

2. The second objection to the pledge in question is, that it is inoperative. If this be true, it is a very sad truth. Nothing more disparaging can be said of any set of young men than that a solemn promise not to do a certain thing has no effect in preventing their doing it. This objection, however, is nullified by those who urge it, saying that the effect of the pledge is to prevent conscientious students from joining the secret societies, and thus throwing them into the hands of the least desirable class of men. We have heard both these objections from the same pair of lips at an interval of not more than two minutes. It is said, however, that the pledge has been in operation in Princeton College for 20 years, and yet these secret societies still exist. Suppose they do. Does the physician confine himself to the use of infallible specifics? Must moral reformers fold their hands and make no effort until they discover the means to absolutely extirpate the evils of society? It is enough that a means is useful for the accomplishment of an important end to make its use obligatory. It is a great mistake, however, to assume that the pledge is inoperative. It has proved itself to be by far the most efficacious means for suppressing the evil in question yet devised. A distinguished alumnus stated that when he was a student the majority of the best scholars in the college were members of a secret society. But as soon as the pledge was required, they met together and disbanded, and that he took the list of members to the then President of the college and assured him of the dissolution of their society. Since that time the evil has been kept in check, so that it never attained the headway in Princeton that it had before, and now has in many other of our colleges, and has become so strong as to defy the authorities. No student known to be a member of a secret society is allowed to enter either the Whig or Clio Hall; and yet of the 438 students in the academic department all but between 80 and 90 are members of those halls, and of that number many decline applying for membership from motives of economy. The necessary expenses of the halls for light, fuel, furniture, subscriptions for papers, magazines, reviews, and for the purchase of new books for the library, are so heavy as to be a serious burden to students of restricted means. It is stated by those who have the best opportunity to know that not more than one-fifteenth of the students were connected with the prohibited societies at the time of the recent discipline. The most decisive evidence of the efficacy of the pledge is furnished by the recent experience of the college. The Faculty had obtained satisfactory evidence in regard to fifteen students of their connection with secret societies, and they were immediately dismissed from college. This act of discipline produced a deep impression in the college and out of it. The consequence was that some sixteen other students voluntarily came forward and admitted that they had been connected with such societies, but gave assurance, in documents signed by themselves (and by their dismissed comrades), that those associations should not be revived so long as the pledge continued in force. This was chief among the conditions on which the Faculty consented to the return of those who had been dismissed. The evil is therefore, for the present at least, suppressed, and it is not likely to be revived.

3. By far the most serious and effective objection to the pledge is its assumed demoralizing effect. It is admitted to be obligatory. It is admitted that its violation is a serious moral offense and a permanent injury. It was forcibly said that, however a young man may delude himself, for the time, into thinking that the pledge is not binding, he is sure in after life to repent of his violation, unless, indeed, "he gets into a state in which he repents of nothing." Parents naturally shrink from having their sons exposed to such a calamity. This objection, if valid, bears against all pledges. It bears against the pledge exacted of students to obey the laws of college, which they are constantly tempted to disobey. It bears against the pledge required before admission into Whig or Clio Hall; against the pledge taken by the trustees and professors, and against all official pledges. A witness called before a court of justice is often under the strongest possible temptation to violate his oath; why then should he be subjected to danger of committing perjury? Because the public good requires it. In like manner the good of a college requires that its students should be required to obey its laws. Unnecessary pledges are an evil; but there can be no valid objection to requiring for sufficient reason a man to promise that he will do what is right. This is what we all have to do.

The authorities of the College have done their duty, and they doubt not that their action will be sustained by the great body of the friends of this and of other similar institutions. It is of the last importance that all parties should consider the matter, so far as Princeton is concerned, as finally settled. The judgment of the Faculty and Trustees is now what it has been for the last 20 years. To them is committed the government of the College. This is a trust which cannot be delegated. It must be executed according to the conscientious convictions of those to whom it has been confided. There can be no security for good government, whether in the family, the college, the state, or the Church, unless those in authority are controlled by the fear of God, and not by the fear of the people. CHARLES HODGE.

Princeton, N. J., Dec. 30, 1875.

THE BECKWITH EMBEZZLEMENT.

EXAMINATION AT THE TOMBS POLICE COURT—TESTIMONY OF MR. BABBITT—A CIVIL SUIT BEGUN AGAINST BECKWITH AND THOMAS R. LEWIS.

The examination in the case of Charles R. Beckwith, formerly the confidential clerk of Benjamin T. Babbitt, on a charge of fraud and embezzlement took place yesterday, before Justice Bixby, at the Tombs Police Court. Messrs. Beach and Brown conducted the prosecution; Mr. Fullerton appeared for the defense. The first witness was Mr. Babbitt, who testified that he knew the prisoner for five or six years before he employed him, in 1868. He engaged him as superintendent. Beckwith purchased all the goods, consisting of tallow, soda, etc. He was paid $2,000 or $3,000 the first year, and his salary was raised at the rate of $500 a year; he was receiving $6,000 a year at the time of his discharge. His dismissal was caused by his writing a letter reflecting on Mr. Babbitt. He was discharged in May, 1873. The witness explained the duties of the prisoner, and the responsibility attached to his position. It was the custom of Beckwith to write to the witness daily in relation to the state of business affairs. Beckwith had charge of the bank and check books, the return book, and nearly every book, in fact. The counsel presented a check to the witness, dated Jan. 27, 1872, for $11,656 55, indorsed by Beckwith, and inquired if he had ever seen it. The witness said he had not. In answer to the questions of counsel, the witness enumerated the several books in his office, but did not manifest familiarity with their contents. The average receipts from his business, he said, were over $2,000,000 a year.

Mr. McGuckey, paying teller of the Manhattan Bank, testified that he received the check already referred to, and paid the same. C. R. Burton, head clerk to Mr. Babbitt, testified in relation to the same check. He could not find on the debit or credit side on the books any entry corresponding with it. An entry for tallow, purporting to be from Frazer & Co., and dated March 7, 1871, was also discovered. The bill was for $31,082 40, so far as ascertained, it had never been paid to Frazer & Co. Several witnesses were produced, including merchants of high standing, and defalcations to the amount of $145,000 were verified, exclusive of frauds by raised checks to the amount of $15,000. It is alleged that there are peculations to the extent of $65,000 not verified.

The prisoner was committed without bail. All the persons connected with the case will meet in the District-Attorney's office to-day to go before the Supreme Court and ascertain the amount of bail that will be required.

Mr. Babbitt has begun a civil suit against Charles R. Beckwith and Thomas R. Lewis, in which an order of arrest against the defendants and an attachment against their property has been issued.

UNION PRAYER-MEETINGS.

The Up-Town Daily Prayer-Meeting, which was held yesterday afternoon at the Collegiate Church, at Fifth-ave. and Forty-eighth-st., was very largely attended. In the absence of the Rev. Dr. John Hall, who was expected to conduct the services, the meeting was led by the Rev. Dr. Ludlow, the pastor of the church. G. S. Weeks led the singing, furnishing the accompaniment with a small melodeon. The meeting was opened with prayer by the Rev. Dr. Berthoff. Dr. Ludlow stated that the subject assigned by the Evangelical Alliance for the meeting was, "Prayer for families, for godless parents, for prodigal sons, for children at school, for those entering upon professional and commercial life, for widows and orphans, for sons and daughters in foreign lands, and for all mentally or otherwise afflicted." Dr. Ludlow then read the 78th Psalm, and made a few remarks upon the subject of the meeting. Two requests were presented from mothers for prayers for their sons. Remarks were then made by the Rev. Dr. Anderson, the the Rev. Messrs. Sabine and Hepworth, and prayer was offered by Dr. Elder.

A union praise and prayer-meeting of churches in the Ninth Ward is held at the church of the Rev. Mr. Page in Eleventh-st., near Seventh-ave., every day this week from 12 to 1 p. m. It is conducted by the pastors of churches in that neighborhood, without regard to denomination. To-day a number of the young men from the business men's prayer-meeting, held in Greene-st. every day, will be present and take part in the service.

A union meeting of all the churches in Harlem was held yesterday afternoon in the rooms of the Young Men's Christian Association, over the Harlem Bank. There was a large attendance, and exercises appropriate to the week of prayer took place.

A Connecticut minister says he was once called to marry a man who was to be united to his fourth wife. As he approached the couple he said, as usual, "Please rise." The man fidgeted about on his chair, and finally remarked, "We're usually sot."

XLIVTH CONGRESS—1ST SESSION.

REGULAR REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS.

A FLOOD OF NEW BUSINESS—THE HOUSE AMUSES ITSELF ABOUT THE APPOINTMENT OF UNION SOLDIERS TO MINOR POSITIONS—SENATOR MORTON'S TWO RESOLUTIONS GO OVER—AN IMPORTANT BILL IN THE HOUSE ON THE PACIFIC RAILWAY INTEREST.

SENATE.....WASHINGTON, Jan. 5, 1876.

After prayer by the Rev. Joseph Cross, an Episcopal clergyman of Illinois, and the reading of the Journal, the CHAIR laid before the Senate the report of the Chief of Engineers in regard to the amounts appropriated for the improvement of the mouth of the Mississippi River, Fort Jackson, and Fort St. Phillip. Ordered to be printed and lie on the table.

Also a communication from the Secretary of War recommending that the military reservations at Camp Crittenden and Camp Grant, Arizona, be transferred to the Interior Department for disposal under the Public Land laws. Ordered to be printed and lie on the table.

Mr. CONKLING (Rep., N. Y.) presented a petition of citizens of New-York City asking for an amendment to the Constitution prohibiting the appropriation of money for any religious sect. Referred to the Judiciary Committee.

Mr. MORRILL (Rep., Vt.) introduced a bill to further provide for the redemption of United States legal-tender notes in accordance with existing laws. Ordered to be printed and lie on the table. Mr. Morrill introduced the bill upon his own responsibility; he said he presumed no Senator desires to repeal the act of last session to provide for specie redemption; his purpose was to make the execution of that law easier; he would ask leave to submit some remarks explanatory of the bill after the expiration of the morning hour to-morrow.

Mr. SARGENT (Rep., Cal.) introduced a bill relating to the promotion of commodores on the retired list of the navy. Referred.

The CHAIR laid before the Senate a communication from the Secretary of War, stating that since the last session of Congress the preparation of the official records of the Rebellion, both Union and Confederate, have made rapid progress, and showing the amount expended on the work and the balance on hand. Referred to the Committee on Appropriations.

Also, a recommendation of the Secretary of War for the transfer of the Military Reservation at Fort Ransom, Dakota Territory, to the Interior Department for disposition as other lands.

Mr. SARGENT (Rep., Cal.) presented a copy of the memorial of various officers and seamen of American ships destroyed by the Shenandoah, stating they have been absent from the country, and asking that the time for filing such claims before the Alabama Court be extended. Referred.

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN (Rep., N. J.) presented the memorial of George W. Hunt for the extension of his patent for paper and cloth collars. Referred.

The CHAIR and Mr. Christiancy (Rep., Mich.) presented various memorials of the citizens of Michigan, one being in favor of a law giving $200 bounty to each Union soldier and sailor, in lieu of a homestead donation without actual settlement; another asking for pensions to the soldiers of the War of 1812 who served five days and were honorably discharged; and another that the Homestead law be so amended that soldiers and sailors, who by loss of limb or equivalent disability are prevented from making settlement, shall be entitled to an amount of land equal to that which they would have obtained with settlement. All referred.

Mr. HARVEY (Rep., Kan.) presented the memorial of the Kansas State Horticultural Society, asking Congress to provide for an investigation as to the habits of the Rocky Mountain locusts or grasshoppers. Referred to the Committee on Agriculture.

Mr. DORSEY (Rep., Ark.) submitted a resolution directing the Committee on Transportation Routes to the Seaboard to report on the desirability of a complete hydrographic survey of the Arkansas River between Fort Smith, Arkansas, and Pueblo, to determine whether that portion of said river can be made navigable. Referred.

Mr. SHERMAN (Rep., Ohio) submitted a resolution calling for a detailed statement of the assets of the Freedman's Bank undistributed and all the assets collected or changed in any way since Dec. 14, 1874. Agreed to.

Various resolutions and memorials were offered in regard to improvements on Columbia River, White River, Willamette River, and Fox River, which were severally referred.

Mr. MITCHELL (Rep., Oregon) introduced a bill extending the time for the completion of the Oregon Central Railroad and Telegraph Line from Portland to Astoria and McMinnville, Oregon. Referred.

Also a bill providing for the removal of the Walla Wallas, Cayuses, and Umatillas bands of Indians to a permanent reservation, and to open to settlement the Umatilla Reservation in Oregon. Mr. KELLEY (Oregon) offered a similar one. Referred.

Mr. CONKLING (Rep., N. Y.), by request, introduced a joint resolution authorizing the President of the United States to nominate Wm. Walsh as Commodore in the United States Navy. Referred.

Mr. ALLISON (Rep., Iowa) introduced a bill to divide Iowa into two judicial districts. Referred.

Mr. BOOTH (Ind., Cal.) introduced a bill in relation to fruit brandy, and to punish frauds regarding the same. Referred to Committee on Finance.

Mr. DAWES (Rep., Mass.) introduced a bill for the purchase of a site and for the construction of buildings for the use of a girls' reform school in the District of Columbia. Referred.

Bills were offered for the relief of Michael W. Brock of Tennessee, Capt. J. M. Thompson of South Carolina, Sarah E. Wedelstaet of Wisconsin, William Watts of Kentucky, Lewis Ross and others of California, and James Dunlap, and S. K. Thompson of Kansas.

Mr. BOUTWELL (Rep., Mass.) gave notice that on Thursday of next week he would submit resolutions relating to the services and public character of the late Vice-President Wilson.

Mr. KERNAN (Dem., N. Y.) presented the petition of Albert Fuller for the extension of a patent granted to him for a water faucet. Referred.

Mr. BOUTWELL (Rep., Mass.) presented the petition of H. A. Brown, late Special Agent of the United States Treasury, asking a hearing in regard to revenue frauds by systematized undervaluations of imported merchandise, cooked invoices, and device, extent thereof, and facilities provided by loose conduct of customs business. Referred to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. CONKLING (Rep., N. Y.) introduced a bill to amend the act entitled "An act to provide a National currency, secured by a pledge of United States bonds, and to provide for the circulation thereof," approved June 3, 1864. Referred to the Committee on Finance.

The CHAIR laid before the Senate the resolutions submitted by Mr. Morton (Rep., Ind.) before the holidays in regard to State rights. Mr. Morton said his colleague was not present, and he therefore asked that the resolution be laid over. So ordered.

The resolution submitted by Mr. Morton before the holidays providing for the appointment of a committee to investigate the late election in Mississippi, was laid before the Senate, it being the unfinished business. Mr. MORTON asked that the resolution be laid over until Monday. So ordered.

Mr. SHERMAN (Rep., Ohio) introduced a bill to amend the act of June 20, 1874, amending the charter of the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company, &c., referred to the Committee on Finance. The bill provides that in case of the resignation or death of any of the present Commissioners the survivors shall carry on the work. Authority is given to sell property at public or private sale, and to compromise debts. It also provides that when the Commissioners are prepared to make dividends, said dividends shall be paid by Assistant Treasurers or Government depositaries throughout the country.

The Senate at 12:50, on motion of Mr. SARGENT, went into Executive Session, and at 1:10 the doors were opened and the Senate adjourned till to-morrow.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

The House reassembled after the Christmas holidays, the Speaker occupying the chair in apparently good health, and few members absent. The oath of office was administered to R. J. Riddle of Tennessee, elected to fill the unexpired term of Mr. Flitt, deceased.

A large number of Executive communications, which had accumulated during the recess, were presented by the SPEAKER and referred to appropriate Committees.

The SPEAKER proceeded to call the Committees for reports, but none had any business to report.

On motion of Mr. MORRISON (Dem., Ill.), the House at 2:30 went into Committee of the Whole on the State of the Union, Mr. Wheeler of New-York in the chair. The usual resolutions distributing the President's annual message to the appropriate Committees were offered by Mr. Morrison and were adopted.

The Committee rose and reported the resolutions to the House, when Mr. KASSON (Rep., Iowa) called attention to the fact that among the subjects referred to the Committee of Ways and Means were those of the redemption of United States notes, the partial repeal of the Legal-Tender act, and the gradual reduction of legal-tender notes. Mr. Kasson suggested that these subjects were specially within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Banking and Currency.

The subject was discussed by Messrs. MORRISON (Dem., Ill.), TOWNSEND (Rep., Penn.), COX and WOOD (Dems., N. Y.), BURCHARD (Rep., Ill.), KELLEY (Rep., Penn.), and GARFIELD (Rep., Ohio). Finally the resolutions were adopted, giving to the Committee on Banking and Currency control of the subject of resumption of specie payments by National banks.

The SPEAKER said that by his own request Mr. Hewitt (Dem., N. Y.), a member of the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, would be relieved from service on that Committee, and an exchange take place with his colleague, Mr. Ely, now on the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

NEW BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS.

The SPEAKER then proceeded to call the States for bills and resolutions. Under the call, bills were introduced and referred, among others, as follows:

By Mr. FRY (Rep., Me.)—To provide for the payment of the judgments of the Alabama Commission as soon as possible after the 22d of January next.

Also, for an equestrian statue in Washington of President Taylor.

By Mr. BLAIR (Rep., N. H.)—Resolutions of the New-Hampshire Legislature in favor of specie payments.

By Mr. JOYCE (Rep., Vt.)—For a commission on the subject of the alcoholic liquor traffic.

By Mr. STARKWEATHER (Rep., Conn.)—For the improvement of Stonington Harbor, Conn.

By Mr. WILLIS (Lib. Rep., N. Y.)—To repeal the Bankruptcy act.

By Mr. DAVIS (Rep., N. Y.)—To allow all persons on trial in United States courts to be competent witnesses.

By Mr. WARD (Dem., N. Y.)—To establish a Coinage Department in the New-York Assay Office.

By Mr. METCALF (Dem., N. Y.)—To improve the navigation of the East Rockaway channel.

By Mr. LAPHAM (Rep., N. Y.)—To simplify and secure uniformity in the practice of the courts of the United States, and of the several States, relative to the rules of evidence and to the competency of parties as witnesses.

By Mr. HARDENBURGH (Dem., N. J.)—A resolution of the New-Jersey Legislature relative to Gen. Fitz John Porter.

Also, a similar resolution in favor of Congress passing an act recommending that the people assemble in their several counties on the approaching centennial anniversary, and have delivered on such day a historical sketch of the county; copies thereof to be deposited with the Clerk of the County and with the Librarian of Congress.

By Mr. CUTLER (Dem., N. J.)—Constituting Jersey City as a port of entry.

By Mr. MUTCHLER (Dem., Penn.)—To regulate the selection of jurors in United States Courts.

By Mr. O'BRIEN (Dem., Md.)—Directing the Committee on Naval Affairs to investigate the disbursements for the support of the Marine Corps, and to inquire into the expediency of abolishing such corps or transferring it to the army. Adopted.

By Mr. GOODE (Dem., Va.)—Calling on the Secretary of the Navy for information as to whether the eight steam vessels authorized in 1873 have been constructed, and their cost. Adopted.

Also, instructing the Committee on Naval Affairs to report whether any materials belonging to the Government have been fraudulently or wrongfully removed from the Navy-Yards, and whether there have been any unlawful combinations for the purchase of the same. Also, whether any part of the money appropriated for the construction of the eight steam vessels of war has been misapplied for political purposes or used in any manner to promote the success of the Republican party, and especially whether any money has been paid to incompetent persons possessing no mechanical skill who have been employed in the Navy-Yards on the condition, expressed or implied, that they would vote for the nominees of the Republican party.

Mr. KASSON (Dem., Iowa) suggested that the inquiry go back a few years further and include the Democratic party.

Mr. GOODE preferred not to go back to the times before the Deluge.

Mr. HOLMAN (Dem., Ind.) suggested to strike out the words "Republican party" and substitute for them the words "any political party."

Mr. GOODE agreed to modify the resolution accordingly, whereupon Messrs. HALE (Rep., Me.), GARFIELD (Rep., Ohio), and other Republicans said that there was no opposition to the resolution on that side. The resolution as modified was agreed to.

By Mr. DOUGLAS (Dem., Va.)—A resolution for the appointment of a select committee to investigate the affairs of the Freedman's Savings Trust Company. Adopted.

By Mr. HARRIS (Dem., Va.)—To restore to the pension rolls the names of persons stricken therefrom for disloyalty.

By Mr. CALDWELL (Dem., Ala.)—Calling for information as to the number of United States troops stationed in the States of Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas and Louisiana on the 6th of December, 1875. Adopted.

By Mr. MONROE (Rep., Ohio)—Instructing the Committee on Education and Labor to inquire into the expediency of making a moderate appropriation for the ratio of illiteracy for States which have established or will estab ish a permanent system of common schools for the education of their youth. Adopted.

By Mr. WHITE (Rep., Ky.)—To recommitize in the collection of the whisky tax in remote and out-of-the-way places; also, to insure the success of the International Exhibition at Philadelphia, and to maintain the honor of the nation; also, to pay the soldiers and sailors who are entitled to bounty lands $1 per acre for those lands.

Mr. BRIGHT (Dem., Tenn.) gave notice that he would on next Tuesday move the House to adopt suitable proceedings in relation to the death of the late ex-President Johnson.

By Mr. WHITHORNE (Dem., Tenn.)—To improve the navigation of the Tennessee River; also to amend the Texas Pacific Railroad act.

By Mr. CASON (Rep., Ind.)—A resolution recognizing the brave and gallant services rendered by the loyal soldiers of the country in time of its greatest peril and need, earnestly recommending to the people the utmost care and watchfulness over the rights and interests of these brave men by securing employment to them; that in all cases of public employment, all other things being equal, the soldier shall have preference of civilian; and declaring that the House is in favor of giving limited pensions to diseased and crippled soldiers, their widows and children, and their dependent fathers and mothers.

The previous question was seconded by 142 to 9, and the resolution was agreed to amid laughter on both sides of the House.

Mr. MORRISON (Dem., Ill.) offered a resolution directing the several committees having in charge matters pertaining to Indian affairs, military affairs, naval affairs, post-offices, public lands, public buildings, and grounds claims and war claims to inquire into any abuses or frauds in the administration and execution of existing laws affecting those branches of the public service, with a view to ascertaining what changes and reformations can be made so as to promote integrity, economy, and efficiency; also, instructing the committees on expenditures in the several departments to proceed at once, as required by the rules of the House, to examine into the state of the accounts and expenditures of the respective departments, as to whether all moneys have been disbursed in conformity with the appropriation laws. Adopted.

PACIFIC RAILWAY INTEREST.

Mr. LAWRENCE (Rep., Ohio) offered a resolution, which was adopted, requiring the Judiciary Committee to report a law to compel the Pacific Railway Companies to indemnify the Government for interest advanced on subsidy bonds issued to the Companies. He said the Supreme Court has recently decided that the Government is bound to pay the interest on the subsidy bonds, and no provision is made for reimbursement, except that where freight of passengers are carried for the Government, one-half of the charges may be credited on the advance. The subsidy bonds amount to $65,000,000 and the interest paid by the Government over and above freight charges credited is over $27,000,000. The Attorney-General estimates that the railroad companies would owe the Government $200,000,000 at the maturity of the bonds—in about 20 years. All this will be lost to the Government unless we now by law secure indemnity. This is the object of the resolution—to save the Government from a loss of $200,000,000.

Mr. FORT (Rep., Ill.) offered a resolution declaring that the doctrine just communicated by the House in the resolution offered by Mr. Cason (Rep., Ind.) is so wise and just that it should be followed by the officers of the House in filling the subordinate places under them, and instructing them in all such cases to give to well qualified Union soldiers the preference over soldiers of the late Confederate army. [Laughter.] He moved the previous question on its adoption. The previous question was not seconded by a vote of 78 to 103.

Mr. WOOD (Dem., N. Y.), remarking that this is the centennial year—a year in which all past dissensions, difficulties, and controversies should be forgotten—moved to refer the resolution to the Select Committee on the Centennial Celebration. He wanted the House to go to business, and have no more buncombe. The motion was agreed to, 121 to 91.

Mr. HARRISON (Dem., Ill.) offered the following resolution:

Resolved, That in the distribution of the patronage of the House of Representatives, not of the Government generally, those only elected, and who by law have the appointment of subordinates, should regard the Jeffersonian test, "is he honest? Is he faithful? Is he capable?" and that recent events in the Federal Administration give peculiar emphasis to this democratic sentiment. [Laughter.] Adopted.

Mr. CAULFIELD (Dem., Ill.) offered a resolution stating that certain charges have been made implying fraud and mismanagement in the construction of the Customhouse and Post-Office building in Chicago, and instructing the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds to enter on the investigation of such charges. Adopted.

The House at 4:10 p. m. adjourned till to-morrow.

A QUESTION OF MENTAL CONDITION.

B. A. WARDHAM COMMITTED TO THE TOMBS FOR EXAMINATION AS TO HIS SANITY—HIS EXPLANATION.

An eccentric gentleman named Boyd Alexander Wardham, who has lived a curious out-of-the-way life on the frontier and in Cuba, for most of his days, was on Tuesday arrested on complaint of W. T. Anderson, a Masonic book publisher, for theft, in forcibly taking from his store four chromos, of which Wardham claimed Mr. Anderson was trying to defraud him. Justice Kilbreth dismissed the charge of theft, and committed Mr. Wardham to the Tombs, for examination as to his sanity. Mr. Wardham's explanation is given in the following statement made by him to a TRIBUNE reporter:

About a year ago I obtained from W. T. Anderson $500 worth of books, in payment for which I gave him my notes, payable at intervals, and deeds of property in Santiago, Cal., as security. I paid all of the notes except $25, and then asked Mr. Anderson to take for the balance some chromos which I owned. He accepted, but I found that he had only given me credit for them on his books at $1 50 each, whereas my price for them is $2 50 each. I wrote to him about it, but could receive no satisfactory answer, nor did he return me the deeds of my property. I arrived here a few days ago and went to his store, and saw there four chromos, two of them being of "Hope," which I had not sold him. It was a mystery to me how he obtained them. I took these four chromos, in the presence of his employés. He then had me arrested for theft, but the magistrate dismissed that charge and then committed me as being insane. I used to have an office with the Masonic publishing firm, when Robert Macoy was one of the firm, and they all knew me then, and know that I had no intention of defrauding anybody, but only wish to get back my property. I am well known in the Masonic fraternity, but have had no opportunity of communicating with any one. My room at No. 39 Lafayette-place is open, and I fear that some of my property may be lost while I am detained here.

As yet no examination has been made with regard to Mr. Wardham's mental condition, and Warden Quinn of the Tombs does not think him insane, but only eccentric.

INACTIVITY AT THE BROOKLYN NAVY-YARD.

Immediately after the launch of the sloop-of-war Trenton a general discharge of workmen took place in the Navy-Yard, mostly from the contractor's department. One of the attachés of the yard says he has never witnessed such a complete suspension of work during his connection with it of over 22 years. It was stated that the sliding-ways and valuable timber used in launching the Trenton lies in the basin, subjected to the destructive influences of the salt water, and the staging, cables, and other debris remain as they were left after the launch. When one of the officers was asked why this material was not picked up and taken care of, the reply was, "Because we have not a man whom we can put at work upon it; there are not over 200 persons, including watchmen, employed in the whole Navy-Yard." The Trenton is lying in the dry dock, with no one at work upon her. She is ready to receive the necessary machinery to be put in before leaving the dock. Orders have been received from Washington to defer coppering the vessel until the machinery is put in. The workmen have not been paid in full yet, but the rolls are rapidly being made out, and it is expected that they will be paid before Jan. 10. The Supply is taking in ballast, and will leave at the earliest moment for her destination. She will probably not get away before the last of the week.

CLOSING A LOAN AND TRUST COMPANY.

For some time past it has been the intention of the managers of the New-York State Loan and Trust Company, at No. 50 Wall-st., to wind up the Company and retire from business. Nearly all the clerks were discharged at the close of the year. The only business transacted is that which is rendered necessary by the liquidation. The capital was $1,000,000, and the officers consisted of H. A. Smythe, President; C. T. Bowen, Vice-President, and H. J. Hubbard, Secretary. There is a possibility that business may be continued under the charter in a new organization, but this is not probable, as the present Company is closed out because of the lack of profitable business.

A writer from Visalia, Cal., says: "The meanest and one of the most stingy men in town, named Mr. Z., was taken suddenly ill and was not expected to recover. He asked to have his will made out, which was accordingly done. After reading it over carefully, he arose, drew on his pantaloons leisurely, and was heard to exclaim: 'Egad! this is too much to leave my man.' He can be seen walking the streets now as well as ever."

THE COURTS.

PROPERTY IN NEWS.

JUDGE VAN BRUNT'S OPINION IN THE SUIT OF J. J. KIERNAN AGAINST THE MANHATTAN STOCK QUOTATION COMPANY—TRANSMISSION OF NEWS TO CUSTOMERS BY TELEGRAPH ONLY A QUALIFIED PUBLICATION—DECISION FOR THE PLAINTIFF.

Judge Van Brunt has rendered his opinion in the case of John J. Kiernan against the Manhattan Stock Quotation Company and Francis A. Abbot, a case involving the right of ownership in telegraphic news, and decides that such a right exists and is not forfeited even by sending out the news to subscribers, but only ceases after a complete and full abandonment of such right by a general publication. The Stock and Gold Telegraph Company had acquired from the Associated Press a right to the exclusive use for 30 minutes of the foreign financial news received by the Associated Press, and had sold this right to Mr. Kiernan. It was charged that the defendants took this news before the time that the plaintiff abandoned it to the general public and sold it as their own. Judge Van Brunt thus states the questions involved: First, had the plaintiff any right of property in the foreign financial news obtained by him from the Associated Press Corporation, and transmitted by him to his customers? Second, has the defendant, the Manhattan Quotation Company, made use of this news by transmitting it over its wires to its customers? Third, if the plaintiff had a right of property in the news received by him, did he abandon such right when he transmitted the news to his customers?

Jud