A STRANGE AND SAD STORY.

EVENTS PRECEDING THE MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF ASSEMBLYMAN BRENNAN.

The Feeling in Franklin County—William A. Wheeler's Letter to his Protégé—Its Effect—a Sensitive Mind—Mrs. Brennan's Statement—Her Husband's Devotion to Mr. Wheeler—Speaker Sharpe Tells his Story—What is Said in the Assembly Chamber.

The tragic death of the Hon. William D. Brennan, member of Assembly from Franklin County, has been the cause of much comment in all parts of the State, but more especially in Albany and at his home in Malone. It has been freely charged that he was driven to insanity and suicide by the severe criticisms of William A. Wheeler upon his course in the late contest at Albany when Mr. Wheeler was a candidate for the United States Senate. On the other hand, it was claimed that Mr. Brennan was overawed by the imaginary importance and duties of the position of chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, to which he was appointed by Speaker Sharpe, and that constant thought upon that subject and a fear of failure finally resulted in unseating his reason, and then in his taking his own life.

With a view of getting at the facts in the case if possible, a Sun correspondent recently made a visit to Malone, the home of Mr. Wheeler and also of Assemblyman Brennan. In Malone he found the people much excited upon the subject. Almost without exception they charged the death of Mr. Brennan to William A. Wheeler. But at nearly every point the correspondent was met with a fear upon the part of those with whom he talked of the influence and resentment of Mr. Wheeler and his friends.

In order to reach an intelligent understanding of the whole case, it will be necessary to review briefly the relations which had for years existed between Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Brennan. The correspondent talked with several old residents who had known them intimately for years. One of them said:

"I remember poor Brennan, a bare-footed, bright little boy, who came here from Canada when he was 12 years old. The Ogdensburg and Lake Champlain Railroad was then building, and young Brennan used to carry water to the men on the work. I believe an uncle of Brennan's, or some relative, had a contract on the road, and Brennan was brought along as a water boy. The work moved on, and young Brennan remained in Malone. He attended our district schools and our academy, and then graduated at Middlebury College. He was a bright, good scholar, and was liked and loved by everybody. I remember he was first to appreciate his talents and to lend him the helping hand was William A. Wheeler, and it is generally understood that to Mr. Wheeler he was indebted for his education and for his political advancement. In 1862 he was elected to the Assembly, and I think he served a term with William A. Wheeler. When the rebellion broke out young Brennan was one of the very first to enlist. He went out with the 16th New York Volunteers, and came out a major by brevet for gallant and meritorious service as exposed by the commission from President Lincoln. At the battle of Chapin's Bluff in 1864 he was wounded while leading his company in the thickest of the fight, and lost his leg and had to be amputated. He was naturally of a nervous temperament, and with sensitiveness of one as a woman's. His wound from the loss of his leg was a great trial to him. I do not think he ever fully recovered. Every one here knew how fine a soldier he was, and no one better than Wheeler, with whom his relations have been like those of father and son. We all took delight in hearing the Major boy, he came among us known and loved, and back of his boldness of heart, his strict honor and upright life endeared himself to all. For nine years he was our county treasurer. Here is an instance of the sort of a man he was. At the expiration of his term as treasurer he turned over to his successor a balance of over $2,000 in interest on the money which had come into his hands while treasurer. This was the first instance of the kind in this county. When told that that money was his he refused to receive it, but insisted upon its being passed over to the credit of the county. When any thing attempted to be done to injure William A. Wheeler, Brennan never betrayed a friend or knowingly committed a dishonorable act, he attempts something that no man, woman, or child who knew him will ever believe. And that of all other men he betrayed William A. Wheeler! If ever man worshiped another, then William D. Brennan worshiped William A. Wheeler."

"To what do you ascribe the cause of Mr. Brennan's suicide?" asked the correspondent.

"Well, there is but one sentiment as to that here. It is said that Mr. Wheeler wrote him a very harsh and cruel letter, charging him with having sold him out in the contest for the United States Senatorship in Albany. This preyed upon his mind continually. He lost his appetite, he could not sleep, and failing to get a retraction of the charge from Mr. Wheeler, his reason gave way and he sought relief in death."

"Did you ever see that letter?" asked the correspondent.

"No. But poor Brennan often spoke to me about it, and with tears in his eyes would ask if I believed it possible that he could ever betray his friend and benefactor."

The correspondent then called upon a gentleman who is closely connected with Mr. Wheeler in business and by marriage. It was a painful subject to him, and he insisted that his name should not be used.

"I do not believe," said he, "that William A. Wheeler is a man capable of writing such a cruel letter to any man as it is said he wrote to Mr. Brennan, and certainly not to him, for he always loved him as his own boy. Mr. Brennan and I were the closest of friends, and I know just how he felt toward Mr. Wheeler, and how Mr. Wheeler felt toward him. Mr. Wheeler loved Brennan as a father would love his son, and he seemed to me to always regard Mr. Wheeler as more than a father. I remember after he had been elected to the Assembly and first had he came into my place one day, and we had a long talk about what he should do in Albany. He said that he was quite certain that Mr. Skinner stood in the chance for the Speakership, but that it was the duty of the friends of Mr. Wheeler to support him, and he should do so, though it would probably result in sending him into oblivion when Speaker Sharpe made the committees. I told him that if he wanted Mr. Wheeler to be successful he should support Skinner for Speaker. He replied, nothing up his right hand, 'I would sooner have this right arm cut off than do anything to injure William A. Wheeler.' Yes, there is no doubt but he meant to be true to Mr. Wheeler."

"Why do you say second?" suggested.

"Well," after some hesitation, "there are some things in connection with this whole affair that it is hard to understand. Why did he sign the call for the caucus on Wednesday when the men who were managing Mr. Wheeler's case had told him that it would be the night before the election, which came on the following Tuesday? And when afterward his name appeared at the head of the Committee on Ways and Means, a position to which no one had ever dreamed of his getting, there was a good deal of surprise and some unpleasant things were said. Mr. Wheeler did undoubtedly write him a letter chiding him for his course, and there was a good deal of unfavorable comment here, of which he no doubt heard. The despatch which brought us the news aroused suspicion. It said: 'Sharpe nominated for Speaker and Brennan chairman of Ways and Means.'

"I remember the night that Mr. Brennan came home. He came directly to my place of business from the depot, and walking into my private office, closed the door after him, and said: 'What is the matter here? What is the trouble?' He seemed to be very much excited. He had seen it stated in some way that the Republicans of Malone had called a meeting and denounced him for betraying Mr. Wheeler. I tried to reassure him, but saw that he was very much excited. I saw him frequently during the time he was at home, and did my best to cheer him. But he would not talk upon any other subject. One day I took him riding. We had gone but a short distance when he began talking about Mr. Wheeler's letter, and the idea that people believed he had betrayed his friend and benefactor. He cried like a baby and said it seemed as though every one was pointing his finger at him and saying, 'There goes the man who betrayed his best friend.' I tried to reason with him, but it was no use. His mind had become unsettled then, though none of us realized how bad he was. Finally we prevailed on him to take a trip South—to stop at Washington and make quite an extended trip, hoping that change of scene and air would do him good. At first he consented, but upon calling there on the morning of the day he was to start I found that he would not go. He said he had just received a letter written to Mr. Wheeler, which had caused him to change his mind. The letter was one written by Mr. Wheeler just written to Col. Wm. A. Jones of the New York Custom House, in reply to one written by that gentleman to Mr. Wheeler and telling him of Mr. Brennan's condition. It was as kind a letter as one man could write to another, and should have been perfectly satisfactory to Mr. Brennan. In fact, it did seem to cheer him up for a little while, but he soon relapsed, and was worse than ever."

"Do you believe that the charge that he had sold out Mr. Wheeler, together with the letter from Mr. Wheeler, in substance making the same charge, was what finally drove him to take his life?" asked the correspondent.

"Well, that is hard to say. It is certain that he brooded over the matter continually, and no doubt magnified Mr. Wheeler's criticism upon his course a great deal. But why was he made Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee? and why did he sign the call for that caucus? These are things that the best friends of both Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Brennan cannot understand. It is a sad business all around."

The correspondent called upon the widow of Mr. Brennan. In the pleasant home he occupied, on the banks of the Salmon River, commanding a delightful view of the Adirondack Mountains. She had no hard words to say against William A. Wheeler. She knew that he had been her husband's friend, and through his life, and that her husband had been faithful to him to the end. But she knew that there was a time before that Mr. Wheeler thought him guilty of treachery that had driven him to take his life.

"Because you thus labor which Mr. Wheeler wrote your husband, and which it is said caused him to take his life?" asked the correspondent.

"No," she replied, "the letter is destroyed, William destroyed it himself. So he told me."

"Why did he destroy it?"

"Because he said he could not bear to have it about him. He told me that, waking or trying to sleep, it was continually before him, and he could see those great black letters charging him with ingratitude to his friend."

"It has been said that the cares and duties of the position of Chairman of Ways and Means were what worked upon your husband and finally drove him to insanity."

"That certainly is not so. Until he received that letter from Mr. Wheeler I never knew him to be more cheerful. He had worked hard during the campaign making speeches almost every night, and I was, of course, tired and somewhat exhausted, but he had no fears but what he could discharge his duties. He did not desire to go back to the Legislature, and it was only because he was led to believe that he could be of service to Mr. Wheeler there that he finally consented to again be a candidate. He went to Albany as the friend of Mr. Wheeler, and he was his friend until he died. He said he owed everything to Mr. Wheeler."

"Did you ever notice anything peculiar and strange in Mr. Brennan's action before the receipt of that letter?"

"Nothing more than that he was weak and restless, owing to the work of the campaign and the anxiety we felt caused by his responsibility in conducting Mr. Wheeler's candidacy for the United States Senatorship."

"What was his conduct after that letter?"

"He seemed to become utterly despondent. He could not rest nights, and did not want to talk to me about any other subject. 'Everything is lost; I am a ruined man. Wheeler can't help me,' he would say. I tried to convince him that he had misconstrued Mr. Wheeler's letter; that it was not as severe as he thought it. That Mr. Wheeler had made a mistake, and would fight it as soon as it was pointed out to him. But it was all useless. Finally we left Albany and came home in hopes that the change of scene and air would do him good. But it did not. He seemed to grow continually worse."

"Was not Mr. Wheeler informed of Mr. Brennan's condition?"

"Yes, I wrote to him myself, our family physician wrote to him, and so did Gen. N. M. Curtis, who was closely connected with him in the army; George Dawson of the *Albany Evening Journal*, Col. William A. Jones of New York, and others."

Did these letters state the precarious condition of his mind and appeal to Mr. Wheeler to write to Mr. Brennan withdrawing his criticisms?"

"Yes, so far as I know."

"Did Mr. Wheeler write to Mr. Brennan?"

"No at that time. But he did write to Col. Jones, and that letter was sent to Mr. Brennan. For a time it seemed to cheer him up a little, but it did not last. It was not such a letter as my husband wanted. He would frequently say that if he could only get a letter from Mr. Wheeler exonerating him and withdrawing his charges he would be all right."

"I have been informed that a friend went to Washington to see Mr. Wheeler in the matter before Mr. Wheeler, urging him to write to Mr. Brennan and withdraw his charges. Is that true?"

"Yes. Mr. Kilburn did go to Washington, and saw Mr. Wheeler. Here is a letter he wrote to my husband."

The lady stated that the writer had seen Mr. Wheeler, and that that gentleman was thoroughly satisfied that he had done Mr. Brennan a great injustice, and would also write him a letter making it all right.

"That letter," said Mrs. Brennan, "seemed to have a good effect upon my husband for a little while. But it soon wore off."

"What he desired, I presume, was a letter from Mr. Wheeler retracting what he had said in the letter written him shortly after the election of Speaker Sharpe and his appointment as Chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means?"

"Yes, that seemed to be what he desired. He could not realize that it was a misfortune that he had been appointed." Mr. Wheeler?"

"Did Mr. Wheeler design, after all these requests from mutual friends, to write to your husband?"

"He did write finally. But it came too late, and did not meet the approval, in my husband's judgment. Here is the letter:

WASHINGTON, Feb. 27, 1881.

DEAR WILLIAM: I am pained to learn through mutual friends of your physical and mental condition, and that it is attributed by the friends of the cause of my nomination. I am thoroughly convinced from facts which have since come to my knowledge, that at the time I judged your action at Albany so harshly. It is needless and useless to traverse the ground now. Mistakes are not criminal, but natural and common to us all. You must not be down under this mistake, for such it was in the opinion of all for whom you ought to care. With your ability for usefulness, and at your time of life, it is wrong to magnify this matter. You had the nerve and the courage to defy death on the battlefield; now show your manliness by shaking off this morbid depression. Cease dwelling upon this matter—look toward. No one will more cheerfully reach out to you the helping hand than I will, and all your old friends will join with me. Let the waves of oblivion cover the past, and summon up the manhood which has so often and so vitally served you in the past.

Cordially your friend, W. A. WHEELER.

The Hon. WM. D. BRENNAN.

"What did Mr. Brennan say when he read this letter?"

"He said, 'It is like so much ice. It does not satisfy, but it calms me.'"

"Brennan," suggested the correspondent, "that letter was intended by its writer as a vindication from one of treachery and ingratitude to that of incompetency to manage Mr. Wheeler's canvass, as it still insisted that he had made a mistake."

"Yes, that seemed to be about the view he took of it. I tried in every way to convince him that he was mistaken. I told him that Mr. Wheeler was his friend, as he always had been, and that everything could be satisfactorily explained in time, and would be. I was very anxious that he should go to Washington and see Mr. Wheeler, and at one time he agreed to do so, but changed his mind. We had hoped to get him to take a trip to Nassau, and other places, and he said he would, but always backed out. He seemed to grow worse after the receipt of this letter. We used to take long rides up in the North Woods, and the bracing air and beautiful scenery sometimes seemed to have a beneficial effect upon him. He would talk about his relations with Wheeler and talk only of this trouble. He was so honorable himself that he could not rest under the imputation that he had been guilty of a dishonorable act to another, and that other a man to whom he owed so much as he did to Mr. Wheeler. He felt sure that Mr. Wheeler had been misinformed by some one as to my husband's course in Albany, or he never would have written that letter."

"Did you read Mr. Wheeler's letter?"

"No. William never showed it to me, but he talked with me about it almost continually."

"Was William your husband's intimate friend of Mr. Brennan's said to the correspondent.

"I labored not mind hearing him go on so about Wheeler's letter, and one day I said to him: 'Why don't you write to William A. Wheeler, and tell him to go to the devil?' You know you can do it, and he will do anything for you, he knows it, too.' I thought I would rouse him up and perhaps make him shake off his melancholy in that way. His only reply was, as he turned and leaned his head in the fancy: 'Did you ever look as if you would like to lie down quiet place and lie down and die?' I made up my mind then that it was getting to be a serious business. In less than two weeks poor Brennan did find a quiet place up there in the North Woods, where he laid his face down in the cold snow and died."

From Malone the correspondent went to Albany. In the Assembly Chamber he found the desk and chair of Mr. Brennan draped in deep mourning. Paused to the crape was a picture of him and his army corps badge. On the arms of the members and officers were mourning rosettes. Everyone had a kind word for the dead Assemblyman. When I asked what killed him, the almost universal reply came without the least hesitation, "William A. Wheeler's letter." This was the place to verify the truth or falsity of the charge that Mr. Brennan had sold out Mr. Wheeler for the Chairmanship of the Committee on Ways and Means. To that end the correspondent first went to work. A gentleman who resides in St. Lawrence County, and who was a friend of Mr. Wheeler and also of Mr. Brennan, but who, being himself in political life, has a wholesome fear of Mr. Wheeler's influence, and therefore desired to have his name omitted, was first visited.

"Is there any truth in the story?" I asked, "that Wheeler was sold out by Brennan?"

"Sold out!" he repeated, laughing. "War, he had nothing to sell. Wheeler never stood the ghost of a chance of getting the nomination. Somebody, however, had filled him up with ghost stories to the effect that when Depew's friends became convinced that their man could not be nominated they would go to Wheeler in preference to any other man. Others had told him that of all the candidates outside of Platt and Conkling he was the most unobjectionable to Mr. Conkling, and that if neither of those men could be elected, then he would be the most acceptable of all the anti-machine men. Then it was said that the fight was so bitter between the Governor and his friends, who were supporting Platt, and Chester A. Arthur and John F. Smith and their friends, who were backing Conkling, that either of them would prefer to see Wheeler elected rather than their opponent. Wells Dickinson, Mr. Wheeler's autobiographer, and Henry James, the son of ex-Congressman James of St. Lawrence County, came here to conduct Mr. Wheeler's campaign and insist Mr. Brennan and the rest of us in trying to capture the prize. These men, and every one of the top friends of Mr. Wheeler who finally voted for him in the caucus, know that from the time of the opening of the fight on the Speakership until the nomination of Thomas C. Platt was assured, Mr. Brennan straightest every nerve to advance the cause of Mr. Wheeler. Not a move was made without consulting him and duly weighing it as to the effect it would have upon Mr. Wheeler's chances. As to his signing the call for the caucus, that was all talked over in our consultations. Mr. Brennan freely expressed his views, and said he was ready for the caucus at any time. He did not believe in waiting until the night before the Senator was to be nominated, claiming that it would only be giving the Speaker and the Governor so much more time to operate upon members with their patronage and secure their votes. In this, it is true that Mr. Dickinson, Mr. James, and some others did not agree with Mr. Brennan, but there was no positive understanding that a call for a caucus should not be signed; and when the paper calling a caucus of the Republicans for the Wednesday night preceding the Tuesday of election was presented to Brennan for his signature, he, relying on his declared judgment, at once signed it. And that was all there was of it. Of course some gentlemen who may have represented to Mr. Wheeler that there was going to be a big fight, and that he was the coming dark horse, had to account for their bad judgment in some way, and the easiest thing to do was to unload on poor Brennan, by charging that he had betrayed Wheeler and sold him out for the Chairmanship of the Ways and Means Committee. That was much pleasanter than to confess that they had been badly fooled—outgeneralled by the other fellows from the start. But it is well to remember that Mr. Brennan nominated Mr. Wheeler in the caucus, and voted for him, and that the Speaker's committees were announced before the election of a United States Senator. The story that Brennan had agreed to go for Crowley when the break came and Wheeler was out of the race, and that his reward was to be the Chairmanship of that committee, is all the veriest bosh, and was only invented to cover up the foolish promises of some men who had been helping to conduct Mr. Wheeler's canvass."

Senator Lynde of St. Lawrence was one of Mr. Wheeler's strongest supporters to the end. He could not believe that there had ever been any understanding between Speaker Sharpe and Mr. Brennan. To him Mr. Brennan read a portion of Mr. Wheeler's letter upon receiving it, and appealed to him to write to Mr. Wheeler and tell him that Senator Lynde did not, but the next morning, when he showed the letter to Mr. Brennan, that gentleman said he need not send it just then, as another party had promised to go and see Mr. Wheeler. Senator Lynde, in his numerous talks with Mr. Brennan, endeavored to convince him that he was giving a wrong interpretation to Mr. Wheeler's letter, and to assure him that it would be all right as soon as he knew all the facts of the case, but all in vain.

Assemblyman Lockering of Lewis County was probably Mr. Brennan's most intimate friend in the Legislature. To him the letter was shown on the morning of its receipt.

"I noticed Brennan," said Mr. Lockering, "whose seat was directly in front of mine, holding a letter in his hand and looking toward me with a strange expression. As he caught my eye he beckoned to me to come over to his desk. I did so, and he handed me the letter. I read it through carefully, and as I handed it back to him he said: 'What do you think of that?' My reply was that I did not think anything of it, and that I should not pay any attention to it. The tears started into his eyes, and he said, 'I feel as if I should die.' I talked a long time with him, finally telling him that I could not see anything in the letter that he should feel so very bad about, assuring him that he and every other friend of Mr. Wheeler's in Albany knew that he had been faithful to that gentleman to the end, and that as soon as the facts came to Mr. Wheeler's knowledge he would be the first to do him justice. Throughout his entire trouble I continually urged upon him this view. I am sure if the letter had been written to me, I should not have taken it very seriously to heart, especially if I had been as guiltless of offense as I know Mr. Brennan was. But there are very few men in this world made of such fine stuff as William Brennan, and he never rallied from the blow that letter inflicted. At his solicitation, as the friend of both himself and Mr. Wheeler, I wrote to the latter gentleman, urging him to withdraw what he wrote. I felt sure that Mr. Wheeler would do it if the letter was not sent. During the time Mr. Brennan remained here after he received the letter he was continually talking with me about it, and I constantly labored to convince him that it was not such a terrible letter after all, and that it would be right when the truth was known, but it was all in vain. He did not sleep, and when I chided him once and told him he must get some sleep or he would not be able to stand the strain upon his nerves, he replied, 'I cannot sleep. Every time I close my eyes I see those great black letters charging me with ingratitude with my friend.' As to his having sold out Mr. Wheeler, it is untrue, cruel, and preposterous. No man was more surprised than William Brennan when he heard his name announced as Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. He said to me, 'I should not have been surprised if the arch of the chamber had fallen upon me.'"

Mr. Lockering either could not or would not try to remember the exact words of Mr. Wheeler's letter. But another gentleman, who had a view of it, said that the whole gist and substance of it was a charge that Brennan had sold out his best friend, and benefactor for the paltry position of Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. The concluding sentence, as near as this gentleman could recollect, was:

"But it is no matter what becomes of my case. You are Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. You are taken care of, and it is of little consequence what becomes of me.

"And that," said he, "was about the tone of the whole letter. It was injured innocence bowing to the injustice done him by a friend, and in true Peckersniffian style. William A. Wheeler knew the temperament of William Brennan so well that he knew just how to strike to make him feel it the most."

Then the correspondent called upon Speaker Sharpe and said bluntly: "Mr. Speaker, it has been said that there was an understanding between you and Brennan that if Brennan would be was rewarded for his signature to the call for the Republican Senatorial caucus by the Chairmanship of the Ways and Means Committee. I have called to ask, if you will say anything upon the question."

"I say that the story, by whomsoever told, is a most infamous falsehood," Gen. Sharpe. "I will tell you why Mr. Brennan was made Chairman of the committee. For years it had been run in the same old rut by nearly the same men. Old claims that made their appearance in the appropriation bills annually from year to year, to a time beyond even the memory of the oldest inhabitant, were allowed to get into the bills simply because of their antiquity. I resolved to take the committee out of the old rut by making it up of new men. My attention was attracted to Mr. Brennan because last year he took the lead in the fight against all the objectionable claims, and his amendments that were stricken out in the House, and also against those that were subsequently vetoed by the Governor. I knew that he was a man who would scrutinize every item, and these old stagers would be new to him, and would be as closely scrutinized as any others. And that was why I gave my assurance that Mr. Wheeler would be the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. He knew no more of my intention before he heard his name read from the Clerk's desk than you did. It was a complete surprise to him, as well as to many other people."

"It has been said, also, that Mr. Brennan had promised to do that which Mr. Wheeler finally had to get out of the race for, viz., to give his vote for your candidate, Mr. Crowley," continued the correspondent.

"That is more infamous, if possible, than the other," said Gen. Sharpe. "I never had but one conversation with Mr. Brennan about the Senatorial contest in which I did not urge his vote wherever he and every other of our opponents would go when their own candidate was withdrawn. I was anxious that they should not go to Depew, who was the only real candidate the last ballots had at any time who could make us a fight. I did ask Brennan where he should go in the event of Wheeler's getting out of the contest. He replied, 'That is a matter I have never taken into consideration. I am for Mr. Wheeler first, last, and all the time, and if it comes down so that he has but one vote in the caucus, that vote shall be mine.' Brennan was true to Mr. Wheeler and his friends to the end. That was his ready, and that was all the understanding we ever had. After I had made him Chairman of Ways and Means he expressed his surprise, because he thought I was displeased with his declaration at that interview."

"What do you think of the charge that the duties of the Chairmanship of that committee were so great as to frighten Mr. Brennan and drive him insane?" I asked.

"My opinion is," said Mr. Sharpe, "that no one but an idiot or a crazy man would say such a thing. Last year Mr. Brennan was Chairman of the Judiciary Committee of the Assembly, a committee that has as much work before it as nearly all the other committees of the House. He discharged his duties there faithfully and well. That committee never had a more faithful and hard-working chairman, and his work was done in a manner that received the approval and commendation of the ablest lawyers in the State who had business before it, and also of both branches of the Legislature. Nonsense! All a Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee needs is backbone to stand up for the right, and Brennan had plenty of that, as would have been discovered had he lived."

"And now, Mr. Speaker, what do you know about Mr. Wheeler's letter to Mr. Brennan?"

"I never saw the letter, though I was told he had received one, and I know that he was greatly troubled. His wife talked with me about it. I saw that he was all broke up from the effects of it, and I was told that Mr. Wheeler had charged him with selling him out for the Chairmanship of the Ways and Means Committee. I was very anxious that he should go to Washington and see Mr. Wheeler, and offered to write a letter to Mr. Wheeler, if he would do so. But he did not go."

"What do you think the effect of Mr. Wheeler's letter was upon Mr. Brennan?" I asked.

"If the facts are as I understand them, to be," said Gen. Sharpe, "then I consider William A. Wheeler responsible for the death of a better man than himself."

Here our investigations ended. We have endeavored to give a faithful report of our researches. The reader must draw his own conclusions. In the summer days William A. Wheeler is accustomed to go up in the woods fishing and to enjoy the pure air and beautiful scenery. Often has he cast his fly in Meacham's Lake, where Mr. Brennan was going when he took his own life. Will he go there next summer? If he does, will he think of poor Brennan, who, with his face buried in the snow, took that long, last sleep which could not be disturbed even by "those great black letters," charging him with ingratitude and the betrayal of his friend and benefactor?

THE FIGHT IN THE SENATE.

ANOTHER DAY OF SPEECH-MAKING AND DILATORY MOTIONS.

The Democrats Very Much in Earnest—Mr. Conkling Silent—Mr. Johnston in a Dispute with Mr. Hoar—Possibly a Compromise.

WASHINGTON, March 25.—Mr. Conkling has taken no part, except to vote, in the remarkable proceedings of the Senate. Mr. Dawes dignified these proceedings to-day by characterizing them as a conflict between great political forces. That was what lay behind this petty struggle to retain and to get the Senate offices. There were some bitter, stinging comments by Democrats to-day. Mr. Conkling listened to them all in silence. When Mr. Johnston charged the Republicans with endorsing repudiation because they made one of the leading Readjusters of Virginia their candidate for Sergeant-at-Arms, it was Mr. Dawes who replied to the charge. When Mr. Harris asked whether the Republicans had not nominated this Readjuster, Riddleberger, because Mahone demanded it, it was Mr. Dawes again who answered in what seemed to be an evasive way.

The silence of Mr. Conkling was the cause of much comment. He was busy at his desk. The morning mail brought great bundles of letters that covered the desk—a far larger mail than is usually brought to him in the Senate. Despatches were received and answered by him, and it was surmised that this increase of mails and this flurry of receiving and answering despatches might not have happened had Judge Blackburn not been nominated for Collector of the Port of New York. It is certain that some of the Republicans were disappointed that Mr. Conkling, for whatever reason, did not think it worth his while to defend his party to-day. He was expected to do so.

There was no chance for any mistake respecting the purposes of the Democrats. They have not this winter shown such determination of purpose as they do now to prevent the change in the Senate offices and they mean that the country shall understand the kind of bargain that has been made with Mahone. Mr. Johnston, Mahone's colleague from Virginia, made a long speech this morning. In it he reviewed the record which Mr. Riddleberger had made on the debt question in Virginia, and insisted that the Republicans could not escape the charge of having endorsed a practical repudiationist in nominating Mr. Riddleberger for Sergeant-at-Arms. There was an interesting digression from his speech when he read extracts from leading Republican newspapers, such as the *New York Times* and the Providence *Journal*, in which the Virginia Readjusters were spoken of as repudiationists. Even Senator Hawley made his mark an utterance by saying that, although Senator Anthony owned an interest in the Providence *Journal*, yet it did not follow that he was responsible for its articles. To this Mr. Johnston replied by asking Gen. Hawley if he did not believe that the articles reflected Mr. Anthony's views. "I do not know," replied Gen. Hawley, "but I can say that they are very nearly mine." It is known that there are a number of Republicans who, with Gen. Hawley and Gen. Burnside, not only look with great disfavor upon the bargain with Mahone, but who look forward to very unfortunate consequences as the result therefrom.

When Mr. Johnston finished his speech, there was a dilatory motion made, but the greater part of the day up to evening was devoted to speeches, although Mr. Johnston's was the only one of any length. Mr. Hoar received some attention from the Democrats in consequence of the policy proposed by Senator Brown yesterday of defeating the proposed change of officers by filibustering was revolutionary and treasonable. Mr. Johnston said that Mr. Hoar ought to receive a degree from a Massachusetts college, similar to that of the famous Dr. Pangloss, who maintained that he was a D.D., LL.D., and an A. S. S. This Mr. Hoar characterized as a cheap and vulgar joke. Senator Brown also again made a logical effort to convict Mr. Hoar of having been guilty of the very treason he now ascribes to the Democrats. Mr. Brown simply compelled Mr. Hoar to admit that he, while in the minority, had defeated the purposes of the majority by filibustering, and this was what Mr. Hoar now called treason. Mr. Hoar again tried to explain away the seeming inconsistency between his present charge and his recent conduct by an exceedingly hair-splitting definition of the difference between republican parliamentary delays, which he called filibustering, and Democratic parliamentary delays, which he called treason.

When dinner hour arrived some of the Senators began to get a little fractious. Senator Vest, whom his Democratic associates have expected any minute to hear arraigning the Republicans with the power of invective of which he is reported to be the master, made a remark that brought a sharp answer from Mr. Dawes—sharper in the manner than in the language of it—and Mr. Harris drove Mr. Dawes into a very narrow corner by sharp interrogations respecting the bargain with Mahone. It is impossible to predict what the outcome will be.

The Democrats have a purpose in their course more important than the mere saving of a few offices. They intend that the attention of the country shall be called to the position in which the Republican party has placed itself. They mean to have the bargain laid bare and to show that to gain a few offices the Republicans have been willing to consort with a repudiator, and to fellowship with a man who bears the title that was conferred upon him by Virginia taxpayers, and, moreover, are willing to vote for a Democratic Confederate officer, and now a noted repudiationist, for an important Senate office. This is the reason for the policy of delay as explained to the writer by a Democratic Senator.

Late in the afternoon, neither side being anxious for a protracted session, an adjournment was secured until to-morrow. It is announced to-night that the Republicans have intimated their willingness to abandon their effort if the Democrats will give assurances that they will not oppose the change of officers next December.

AMUSEMENTS.

Italian Opera—La Favorita.

The representation of "La Favorita" last evening was one of the most notable performances of this winter's operatic season. It was not only an opera, it was a drama, and one remarkably well played. The cast did not differ from that with which it has hitherto been given, except in the substitution of Galassi for Del Puente as the King, and that, with all respect for Del Puente's undeniable merits, was a change for the better. He has rarely been heard to better advantage than in this role.

The leading parts were distributed between Cary, Campanini, Galassi and Muzio. All of them seemed to throw aside the old traditions of the Italian stage, which sacrificed so much to simple vocal effect, and, instead of walking through their parts after the accustomed manner, they played them, and with a passionate intensity as striking as it was novel upon Italian stages.

For Cary, Campanini, and Galassi the evening was one of superb achievement. Occasionally Campanini's voice failed through the lingering weakness of his throat to respond entirely to his desires, but that was a light matter in view of the sustained excellence and the intellectual force with which he invested the admirable quality of his singing throughout the four acts. To the interpretation of the last act both Miss Cary and Campanini brought their fullest powers. It was given without reserve either of voice or feeling, and with an intensity of emotion seldom paralleled.

Razing at Syracuse University.

From the Syracuse Herald.

A case of razing on the part of students of Syracuse University took place Monday night. Student in his freshman year, Mr. Ezra S. Tipple of Camden, Oneida County, received a note Monday, supposed to have come from lady friends, inviting him to spend Monday evening at their home. Following the invitation genuine, he responded. When near Lemon and East streets a carriage drew up to the walk, and he was seized, thrust into it, bound and gagged. Of course he understood that he was in the hands of fellow students, as it was the sophomore year. The carriage was driven rapidly into the country, some distance beyond Orville, where he was taken into a grove and subjected to various tortures, while still bound and gagged. Razing was carried on in a fine fashion, stripped, and "anointed." They attempted to feed him some nauseous compound, in the shape of medicine, but he refused to take it. After this exhibition entrance had been gained to the house, and the assailants got into their carriages, leaving the victim to shift for himself as best he could. He released himself, and gaining the main road ascertained where he was, and walked back to Syracuse.

A Cotton Steamboat Burned.

NEW ORLEANS, March 25.—A telegram from Monroe, Ouachita County, Ark., to Mr. Kaufman, president of the Steamboat Writing, together with 700 bales of cotton, on the Salmon River, twenty miles above its mouth. No lives were lost.

Harry Hill's Surprises.

One of the greatest charms of Harry Hill's very interesting reminiscences in the *Sunday Mercury* is their refreshing variety. No two chapters are alike, and each week's installment, complete in itself, is a delicious surprise. It is the best and most entertaining Sunday reading extant.—*Adv.*

Carpets! Furniture!

Great bargains in carpets! All the latest styles and newest designs in Ingrains, Brussels, Tapestry and Moquettes, Brussels, Velvets, Tapestries, Hallys, Durrants, &c. Cash or easy terms. Comfortable's, 155, 157, 159 Chatham st. Keeping time for the million. Carpets and chamber suits in great variety. Established in 1862.—*Adv.*

Weak Eyes, Sore Eyes, and Inflamed Eyelids.

Stye, &c., rapidly cured by using Dr. Becker's celebrated Eye Balsam. Sold by druggists. Depot, 11 Bowery.—*Adv.*

Invaluable for all Forms

Of female weakness, Carter's Iron Pills.—*Adv.*

Dress shirts, fast colors, $1 25, $1 50; unlaundried, 75c. $1. Popular prices in gents' furnishing goods. JOHN A. BRIDGE, 565 and 567 Broadway, Metropolitan Hotel block, 26th and 27th sts.—*Adv.*

Circulation is the cure infallible remedy for Corns. It relieves Pain, cool and soothes. All Druggists, 25c.—*Adv.*

The only certain cure for piles is "Arakema." Call for free samples at 30 Mercer st.—*Adv.*

Hub Punch—keep in wine cellars.—*Adv.*

LARD, CHEESE AND OLEOMARGARINE.

Food Adulterations Under Investigation by a Legislative Committee.

Messrs. Fenner, Palmer, Hayes, Roberts, Hunter, Campbell, Derrick, Lewis, Newman, Donoho, and Willis, the Legislative Committee on Public Health, which has recently been inquiring into the healthfulness of the ingredients used in manufacturing oleomargarine and in adulterated cheese, met yesterday in the rooms of the Butter, Cheese and Egg Exchange, 309 Greenwich street. William Jeffries, wholesale commission merchant at 168 Chambers street, said that only this year an adulteration in cheese had sprung up. It was made for sale in England and Scotland. He believed that so long as high prices prevail in the cheese market, so long the adulteration will continue unless checked in some way by legislation. He knew of parties now making adulterated cheese in St. Lawrence County. It was made by working lard into the materials while the cheese-making process is going on. This process enabled the manufacturer to use skimmed milk—i. e., milk from which the cream had been skimmed—to make the cheese. The result was a richer, "meatier" cheese than the common skimmed milk cheese. It sells for nearly as much as the best cheese and is with difficulty distinguished from it. Retailers would sell it to customers as unadulterated cheese, and would remove, if possible, from the cheese as it was on the counter any marks stamped on it to brand it as adulterated cheese. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to brand the cheese so that the mark could not be removed. He plan for keeping the adulterated article out of the market, until it should come in on its own footing was to enact a law providing that all cheese coming to New York should be inspected on its arrival by officials under the control of the Produce Exchange, and to confiscate anything found to be adulterated. Any and every attempt to cultivate or uphold this traffic should be rooted out.

"If these new-fangled cheeses," continued Mr. Jeffries, "are proved not to be harmful, then let them come to market on their own footing, stamped and branded as imitations. I believe that this lard cheese is not healthful. The fat used is deodorized animal fat. I think that no such oil can be manufactured that will not show the character and taint of the animal from which it comes except at a very low temperature. I don't see why the germs of animal disease or why animal putrefaction could not be put into cheese in this way. Then the oil and lard would be adulterated, because the process of destroying these offensive matters had not been gone through with. Scrofula is a hog disease, and I don't know why it cannot be carried to lard."

During the examination of witnesses Mr. E. S. Cranser of Stockholm, St. Lawrence County, manufacturer of lard cheese, sat among the committee and frequently suggested questions to the witnesses.

James M. Benham, 108 Broad street, said that he had sold what was said to be lard cheese. It was of more bodie, "meatier," and was richer flavored than the skimmed milk cheese. He considered the addition of lard an improvement, so far as known, but it had not yet had the test of time. It came from Mr. Crapser's establishment, and was billed to the firm as lard cheese.

"No," he said, "he did not inform customers who bought it that it was lard cheese. It was bought in lots for exportation to Liverpool.

James Evans, Mr. Benham's employee who sold the lard cheese, testified: "I did not go out on the market crying 'lard cheese for sale,' when I sold it. I think that every buyer and seller understood about this lard cheese business. We had inquiries for it. I showed some specimens to a few men, but not to all of those who bought it. Whether it would stand age or not I don't know; it was only sixty days old when I saw it and sold it."

Frederick W. Leggett of A. W. & F. W. Leggett, 302 Pearl street, said that oleomargarine is not sold to anything to cost, but generally to give it to somebody else to eat. Cheap boarding houses use it. It is a very successful imitation of butter, and people ordinarily cannot tell the difference. Even many dealers can't tell the difference. The wholesale dealers do not consider it unnatural from cows or jobbers. We buy it for what it is, but the retailers and jobbers, many of them, do conceal its nature.

FINANCIAL AND COMMERCIAL.

New York Stock Exchange—Sales March 25.

UNITED STATES BONDS ($1,000's).

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