The Sun.

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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12, 1884.

Amusements To-Day.

Academy of Music—Rehearsal, 2 P. M. Opera, 8 P. M.
Bijou Opera House—Adonis. 8 P. M.
Casino—Nell Gwynne. 8 P. M.
Comedy Theatre—An Adamless Eden. 8 P. M.
Daly's Theatre—Love on Crutches. 8 P. M.
Eden Musee—Tableaux in Wax, &c. 11 A. M. to 11 P. M.
Fifth Avenue Theatre—The Mighty Dollar. 8 P. M.
Grand Opera House—Captive. 8 P. M.
Koster & Bial's—The 7 Maidens, &c. 7:30 P. M.
Madison Square Theatre—Private Secretary. 8:30 P. M.
Metropolitan Opera House—Les Huguenots. 8 P. M.
Niblo's Garden—Lynwood. 8 P. M.
People's Theatre—Shadows of a Great City. 8 P. M.
Star Theatre—Jane Eyre. 8 P. M.
Thalia Theatre—Roderick Heller. 8 P. M.
Theatre Comique—Investigation. 2 and 8 P. M.
Tony Pastor's Theatre—Variety. 2 and 8 P. M.
Union Square Theatre—Three Wives to One Husband. 8.
University Club Theatre—French Recitations. 11 A. M.
Wallack's Theatre—London Assurance. 8 P. M.
3d Avenue Theatre—Notice to Quit. 8 P. M.
14th Street Theatre—Pelica. 8 P. M.

The Marine Bank and the Nicaragua Canal.

We have seen in several newspapers what purports to be a synopsis of the provisions of the Nicaragua Canal treaty. This is a mistake. The document presented as the gist of the new treaty is merely an abstract of the clauses of the old MENOCAL concession, which expired by limitation on the last day of last September.

The discussion over the new treaty, the character of which is at the present writing still unknown to the public, will probably bring to light many facts respecting the financial and political intrigues of the men interested in the MENOCAL concession. Gen. GRANT was to be the nominal head of the construction company, and Mr. JAMES D. FISH and other financiers whose names were rather prominently before the public last spring, at the time of the failure of the Marine Bank, are said to have been members of the syndicate formed to build the canal, provided Government aid could be obtained.

In the *San Francisco Chronicle* we find a most interesting statement by Capt. MERRY, one of the proprietors of the MENOCAL concession. We copy a part of his narrative:

"Nearly two years ago, when Secretary FRELINGHUYSEN was requested to lend the support of the Government to the construction of a canal under the MENOCAL concession, he replied that he could not favor a construction which would conflict with negotiations for the building a canal on Government account, for which he was then in treaty with Nicaragua.

"During the last session of Congress and before the expiration of the concession, the republics of Nicaragua, Salvador, Costa Rica, and Honduras had jointly guaranteed our construction company annual earnings of 6 per cent on $33,000,000, if the United States would guarantee a similar rate on the balance to make up the $75,000,000 calculated as the cost of the work.

"I may mention as showing how the most unexpected results may proceed from apparently entirely foreign causes, that the failure of the Marine Bank in New York to a certain extent made this treaty possible. A syndicate of New York and San Francisco capitalists had been formed to aid the construction of the canal under the MENOCAL concession, of which syndicate Gen. GRANT, Mr. FISH, the President of the bank, and others interested in that institution, were members. Admiral AMMEN had taken up his pen to affix his signature to a construction contract, when a boy rushed in and announced the failure of the Marine Bank. Foreseeing the consequences of that failure, Admiral AMMEN laid down his pen, and being unable to obtain the necessary financial aid, our concession was allowed to expire."

The important points in Capt. MERRY's statement are three:

That the negotiations which have resulted in the present treaty were in progress two years ago, and that for at least two years the influence of the State Department and of President ARTHUR's Administration has been exerted against the plans of the speculators under the MENOCAL concession, and in favor of a canal constructed by the Government on its own account.

That the exposure of the GRANT & WARD system of financiering and the events that immediately followed knocked the MENOCAL business sky high.

That, in Capt. MERRY's opinion, there are now no private interests involved in the Nicaragua Canal project. This opinion, however, can be better appreciated when the treaty is published.

The Senate and its Secret Sessions.

We could have no more striking proof of the benefit of giving the text of treaties to the people in advance of their discussion and sanction by the Senate than the prompt and explicit declarations of opinion which have followed the disclosure of the inchoate agreement between the United States and Spain. In no other way can Senators obtain directly from the interests imperilled by a commercial convention the exact, authentic, and exhaustive information indispensable to the efficient and faithful performance of their duties. They should also remember that a heavy blow is dealt against their usefulness and credit whenever a treaty which they have ratified in secret session is made abortive by unfriendly action on the part of the House of Representatives—action taken after all the facts have become public property, and in compliance with the protest and mandate of the nation.

It would do Senators no harm to study with some care the history of the fluctuating position which, at various epochs, the Senate has held in public esteem. To which of the two Chambers it was expected by the framers of the Constitution and the community at large that power would inevitably gravitate, may be judged by the decided preference of able and distinguished men for the American House of Commons during the first quarter century of our national existence. Nor did anything tend more forcibly to discredit the Senate and its undemocratic methods of transacting business than its sanction of the JAY treaty, which, it is well known, provoked the popular branch of Congress to formulate the principle now impregnably established, that whenever a treaty requires ancillary legislation, the House of Representatives has a right to discuss the treaty itself, and virtually annul it by rejecting laws designed to make it operative. If, after this claim had been set up, the Senate had again risked collision with the larger Chamber by approving a treaty so offensive to the mass of citizens as was that signed by JAY, it would have planted in the public mind incurable distrust and a firm purpose to gradually divest the Senate of all substantial power, while leaving unimpaired its ostensible authority. It is true that not even by a constitutional amendment could the Senate be abolished, but the absolute sovereignty of public opinion in this country could by a very simple process transform the Senate into a mere Board of Registration, a legislative adjunct superfluous for every other purpose except the assertion of equal rights as between the States. It would only be needful for State Legislatures to resolve to elect no man to the Senate who would not pledge himself to vote on all questions of moment in compliance with their specific instructions. This course, which would ultimately convert the Senate from a deliberative Chamber into a docile and unenvied committee of recorders, like the Electoral College, will unquestionably be taken the instant the masses of the people become convinced that it has ceased to properly defend their interests and reflect their wishes.

Since the quarrel between President JOHNSON and the Federal Legislature the Senate has obtained more power than it was allowed to exercise at any previous era of our political history, and some of its members have conceived a proportionately exalted opinion of their own importance. But they should remember that they owe the present improvement in their situation wholly to the fact that, in the conflict with the Executive, the great majority of their House happened to be on the right side; that what public opinion gave it can as easily reclaim; and that only a few years would be needed to reduce the whole of them into mere clerks and messengers of their State Legislatures. It is particularly timely to recall these truths just now, when the country is threatened with an avalanche of treaties, some of which, like the published arrangement with Spain, will seriously affect our industries and our revenue, while others, like the undivulged compact with Nicaragua, may pledge the credit of the nation to a speculative enterprise of suspicious origin and dubious utility.

A Remarkable Interview.

The interview on Wednesday between Mayor EDSON and certain representatives of the County Democracy is worthy of more attention than it has yet received.

The purpose of the political deputation which visited the Mayor on this occasion was to bring about the reappointment of Mr. HUBERT O. THOMPSON and Mr. E. H. LACOMBE to the offices which they respectively now hold under the city Government.

Mr. JOHN E. DEVELIN was the spokesman, and in a few well-chosen words made known their wishes to Mr. EDSON.

The Mayor evidently felt that he had not been properly treated by the County Democracy, and he did not try to conceal his feelings. He frankly told the assembled statesmen that their organization had nominated and supported a man for Mayor who was bitterly opposed to him, and intimated that this action released him from any obligation to its leaders.

"Mr. GRACE's nomination," said Mr. DEVELIN, in response to the Mayor's remarks, "was forced upon us and we supported him with reluctance."

This is an interesting and extraordinary statement to come from one of the recognized leaders of the County Democracy, speaking as the Chairman of a committee of the representative politicians of that faction, including among its members such men as Mr. PETER B. OLNEY, the present District Attorney, and Mr. RANDOLPH B. MARTINE, the District Attorney elect.

Mr. MARTINE ran on the same ticket with Mr. GRACE. Was he one of those who supported Mr. GRACE with reluctance? If the nomination was forced upon the County Democracy, as Mr. DEVELIN tells the public—and his veracity is not to be doubted—who forced it? Give the names of the men who were thus able to dragoon this powerful and successful political faction, and let the world know how they succeeded in accomplishing so much. Nothing in local politics could be more interesting just now.

Another notable incident of this visit to Mayor EDSON was that part of the conversation which related to our friend, the Hon. WILLIAM C. WHITNEY.

The Mayor mentioned the fact that he had requested one of the leaders of the County Democracy to come to see him, but the leader did not come. Mr. DEVELIN demanded the name of the leader, in order, as he said, that he might be hanged by the heels. The Mayor said Mr. WHITNEY was the man, whereupon a voice from the deputation declared that Mr. WHITNEY was not a member of their organization and had not been for more than a year. This strikes us as rather disingenuous, and we do not believe Mr. WHITNEY would approve of any such excuse in his behalf or admit that he had done anything which required to be excused. He can get along without the County Democracy a great deal better than the County Democracy can get along without him.

It will not be wise for the County Democracy to repudiate the leadership of so able a man as WILLIAM C. WHITNEY.

A Proposed Change in the Civil Service.

Referring to the Civil Service Commission, the President said in his recent message:

"Their report will be shortly submitted, and will be accompanied by such recommendations for enlarging the scope of the existing statute as shall commend themselves to the Executive and the Commission charged with its administration."

This sudden movement to alter the present civil service rules in order to enlarge their scope, just as the Administration is going out of power, is certainly worthy of notice.

The rules now apply only to the different grades of classified clerks up to $1,800 a year. The plan is to enlarge them so as to include the chief clerks, the disbursing clerks, the appointment clerks, chiefs of divisions, and many others now exempt from examination and within the control of the heads of departments and beyond the reach of the Commission. This will place them on the footing with other clerks, and thus cut off that patronage from the next Administration. The law directs that the Civil Service Commission shall be composed of "three persons, not more than two of whom shall be adherents of the same party." There are now two Republicans and one Democrat on the Commission. In the nature of things, these political elements will be reversed, and the new Commissioners may have very different views from those held by the present incumbents.

The Decree of the Independents.

In a few days, or weeks, or months at the furthest, we hope to master the principle of selection which governs the *Boston Herald* in its present melancholy task. In behalf of the Independent Republicans, our esteemed contemporary is engaged in sending to the rear for the next four years all the old-fashioned Democrats—that is to say, all Democrats "of the HENDRICKS, THURMAN, and McDONALD type."

This wholesale sentence of exile is one of the harshest decrees of which there is any record in political history. Since its original promulgation the *Boston Herald* has seen fit to modify its character sufficiently to admit Mr. THURMAN to Mr. CLEVELAND'S Cabinet. But the *Herald* announces that it can make no other exception. It explains that there is "no danger in one" old-fashioned Democrat, and that Mr. THURMAN, although "*something of a Bourbon in regard to civil service reform,*" is "a very able and honest man." So it lets him in, while shutting out HENDRICKS, McDONALD, and the rest.

Are we to infer, therefore, that by new-fashioned Democrats the *Boston Herald* and the New England Independents mean those Democrats who regard the result of the recent election as essentially, if not exclusively, a vote of confidence in Mr. DORMAN B. EATON?

For Spoils as Well as Others.

Of course the County Democracy will fight like tiger-cats against Mayor EDSON if he seeks to nominate any one for Commissioner of Public Works other than HUBERT O. THOMPSON; but why should our neighbor, the *Times*, and other organs of mugwump wisdom fight the Mayor too? They seem to be as anxious as the County Democrats that he should reappoint Mr. THOMPSON, or that he should allow Mr. GRACE to appoint him upon his accession.

Yet it is time for the Mayor to nominate a Commissioner of Public Works; and we do not remember that there used to be much mugwump love and admiration for Mr. THOMPSON in days past. There is no reason to suppose that, in case of Mr. THOMPSON's rejection, some other gentleman as good as he might not be nominated.

This course on the part of the Independent contingent of the County Democracy doesn't look much like an all-monopolizing and uncontaminated desire that the Mayor should perform what he thinks to be his duty. We fear that the Independents smack their lips for patronage and spoils along with the other wicked politicians of the day.

A Praiseworthy Example.

When an officer of the Government is so much interested in his work that he is willing and anxious to prosecute it at a loss of his salary for the time being, his conduct cannot be made too widely known.

A telegram from Washington announces that a leave of absence of four months has been granted to Dr. WALTER WYMAN, a surgeon in the Marine Hospital Service, to enable him to go to Berlin and study in the laboratory of Dr. KOCH, the distinguished German investigator into the causes of the cholera. The law does not permit the pay of an officer to be continued during a longer absence than thirty days, and Dr. WYMAN will not only lose his salary, but be obliged to pay his own expenses.

His action in this respect presents a praiseworthy example. It is refreshing to find a public officer more anxious to deserve well of the country than to make money out of it.

There is no disputing the fact that in the contest now before us in New York, wherein a new Republican Senator is to be elected, the leading Republican newspaper, the *Tribune*, looks with the greatest favor upon the candidacy of the Hon. WILLIAM MAXWELL EVARTS. Unquestionably Mr. EVARTS is one of the most renowned non-bolters of New York, and in some respects he is ahead of all his fellow citizens, in this or any other State, especially in his connection with the Electoral Fraud. But if he should become Senator, he will doubtless be sorry when he dines at the White House that Gen. ARTHUR doesn't provide the dinners.

A Republican Senate still refuses to confirm the appointment of Hugh McCulloch to the Treasury Portfolio. Democratic Senators and their delegates to Congress are political renegades as JAMES G. BLAINE.—*New Haven Evening Register.*

Because JAMES G. BLAINE is sound on Republican doctrines. It is not so certain about Mr. McCULLOCH. As to political renegades, when did Mr. BLAINE ever bolt a regular nomination?

The silver dollar should go.—*Philadelphia Times.*

Perhaps so, but it won't yet awhile.

There is a good deal of nervousness afloat just now in regard to the condition of our navy and the weakness of our harbor defences. The other day, for instance, we were told by the Chamber of Commerce of the existence of "war cruisers which could easily enter our lower bay and demand from the cities of New York and Brooklyn a ransom," "without the possibility of an impediment worthy of the name." This is a great mistake. The Chamber of Commerce should remember that, although we have no such blackmailing cruisers, we have our invincible scows, manned by the descendants of CÆSAR'S veterans, who for years past have been placing impediments well worthy of the name in the way of all such war vessels. Nobody need be afraid. In spite of all opposition, the system of harbor defences long ago adopted by our City Fathers is still advancing, and is vigorously aided by the skill of the Standard Oil Company, which is evidently making experiments in one of the Chinese methods of dealing with invaders. New York and Brooklyn are perfectly safe.

Unquestionably President ARTHUR would have stood a much better chance of election to the Senate if he had displayed a little more interest in behalf of BLAINE and LOGAN.

The member of Parliament who applied to Mr. CARL SCHURZ, formerly United States Senator from Missouri, for facts and opinions about certain American institutions was promptly informed that "the upper Houses, in Congress as well as in State Legislatures, are usually composed of a class of men somewhat superior to those in the lower Houses."

Why Riddleberger Opposes McCulloch.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 10.—At three successive meetings of the Senate in executive session Senator Riddleberger has prevented the confirmation of Secretary McCulloch. As yet he has not formally given his reasons for the obstructive motions, but they can be stated. The young Virginia Senator is a man of convictions, which he follows on all occasions. He is a protective tariff man. He holds that when one so nearly a free trader as Mr. McCULLOCH is nominated for Secretary of the Treasury, it is his fidelity to his convictions to oppose his confirmation. If there were no other reasons in the case Senator Riddleberger would resist Mr. McCulloch's confirmation. But there are other reasons, and, in the Senator's mind, serious ones.

As the agent of the foreign holders of the Virginia bonds Mr. McCULLOCH spent the winter of 1870-'71 in Richmond, and it is alleged that as the result of his labor the Legislature took the action which has led to the State's subsequent financial trouble. What is known as the "Riddleberger bill," which, though it was fought over as a political issue a number of years, has been formally concurred in by all parties as the settlement on which Virginia is sold, was the undoing of what is known as the McCulloch legislation.

Senator Riddleberger says that in opposing McCulloch he utters the voice of Virginia, not only on the tariff question, but also on the debt question, which has agitated the State through and through for years. He is receiving many commendations from home for his course. While he does not expect to defeat the Secretary's confirmation, he intends to fight it until he has exhausted every resource. On the tariff question it is claimed that Virginia is as solid for protection as Pennsylvania, and that her entire delegation will be found acting in harmony.

The Clerks' New Trick.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 11.—Clerks in the high grades outside the rules are resigning to take lower places, believing the change will give them a certain degree of protection. The President has declared his purpose to fill every vacancy that may occur before the 4th of March, up to the day of Cleveland's inauguration. This departure from the old practice will not sweeten the disposition of the Democrats when they assume possession of power.

A Healthy Sign.

From the Champaign Signal.

THE SUN has regained much of its standing with the Democratic party by its able, honorable, and reliable reports of the election returns. Its independent course entitles it to a heartier support from the members of all parties. It is a healthy sign when THE SUN refuses to be a mere partisan newspaper.

NEW YORK'S SENATOR IN CONGRESS.

UP COUNTRY, Dec. 9.—The election of the next Senator in Congress is becoming the engrossing question in the up-river counties where lie the Republican strongholds. As this is the best thing the party has saved out of the last campaign, they are making the most of it.

A few familiar figures will help to elucidate the situation. The whole number of members of the Legislature is 160, viz., 92 Republicans and 68 Democrats. The majority of the Legislature necessary to elect a Senator, provided all the members vote, is 81, which is 13 more than the Democrats have. But the whole Legislature way not have to act together. Suppose, however, that it comes to that point, could there be found 13 Republicans who would unite with the 68 Democrats, and thus elect a coalition Senator, as was done in the well-remembered cases of Salmon P. Chase, Charles Sumner, and David Davis? Are there 13 such Republicans in the present New York Legislature?

We now come to the next stage of this rather interesting problem. Will all of the ninety-two Republicans go into a caucus? It seems to be assumed in most quarters that they will; but who knows this to be a fact? It will be remembered that in 1881, when Roscoe Conkling and Thomas C. Platt resigned and then were candidates for reelection to the Senate, the Republican joint committee of the Legislature refused to summon a caucus to nominate Senators, and that when an effort was subsequently made to meet the emergency by getting a majority of the Republicans in the Legislature to sign a call for a caucus the required number could not be obtained.

To ill-favored fowls sometimes come home to roost when not wanted? Will all the Republicans go into a caucus? Who knows? Well, suppose they all assemble there, it will require forty-seven votes to nominate. Who will be able to get the forty-seven? Judging from the up-country feeling, Gen. Arthur stands now at the head of the list. But are the forty-seven within his reach? It is reported all abroad that Gen. Sharpe has counted the members of the Legislature who are sure for Gen. Arthur, and that they number forty-nine. Even if this be true, is not the margin rather narrow for a wary politician like Chester A. Arthur to trust his fortunes upon? He is aware that this is not the first time that George H. Sharpe has counted the Legislature from a Senatorial point of view. Mr. Conkling, Mr. Platt, and Gen. Arthur went into the bitter fight of 1881 on Gen. Sharpe's assurance that he had carefully gone through the list, and that success was a certainty. He was then Speaker of the Assembly, and yet how badly he was mistaken.

Gen. Arthur took a deep interest in the reelection to the Senate of his old-time friend, Edwin D. Morgan, in 1869. The Republicans in the Legislature were then, as he was supposed, carefully counted, and it was claimed that Gov. Morgan had a majority. The caucus was held, and Reuben E. Fenton beat him on the first formal ballot.

There is nothing more difficult than to get at the precise position of all the individuals in the Legislature in a Senatorial contest, even after they meet in Albany. It is out of the question to do it previously. We remember the case of Patrick, who was sent to count the pigs. He reported that he could enumerate them correctly except one little speckled pig, which frisked about so that he could not count him at all. Experience shows that when a Senator in Congress is to be chosen there are a great many frisky members in the Legislature.

Judge Black and the Electoral Fraud.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* Having been a subscriber for your paper many years, I wish to avail myself of your courtesy by asking if the late Judge Jeremiah S. Black ever published in pamphlet form the history of the Electoral Commission, and if so, where can I buy it? Please give me the address and the sum to be forwarded, that I may obtain it with as little delay as possible. Do you think he could enumerate the particulars of that great fraud from the Judge's pen.

Yours truly, A. CARMICHAEL.

CANBY, Clackamas county, Oregon, Dec. 1.

Judge Black never to our knowledge prepared a history of the Electoral Commission. His speech, however, in the South Carolina case, exposing the fraudulent purpose, and lashing the infamous slight for the deliberate villainy with which they were executing the purpose, was probably the most remarkable episode in its proceedings. It was in this speech that he predicted the retribution which must inevitably follow the crime then being enacted, and said, among other things almost equally striking: "Justice travels with a leaden heel, but strikes with an iron hand." Judge Black also published in the *North American Review* for July, 1877, an article entitled "The Electoral Conspiracy." None of these productions have ever to our knowledge been printed in pamphlet form. But they will be published entire in a volume entitled "Speeches and Essays of Jeremiah S. Black," which his son, Lieut.-Governor Black of Pennsylvania, has prepared.

Truly Independent Forevermore—The Mugwumps' Future.

From the Boston Herald.

The Stalwart Republican organs at the West are discussing the question, "Where will the mugwumps go?" The class described by this expressive aboriginal term do not seem to be in a hurry to "go" anywhere. They are tolerably content to stay where they are, on an independent and commanding point of political observation. Whenever the Republicans nominate better men than the Democrats, or pursue better methods, they will support their candidates and policy. Whenever the Democrats present men of the type they approve, or adopt a course which command their respect, they will cast their influence on that side. They will never again "belong" to any party, body, soul, and breeches, but will use one party or the other, as best suits their purpose, to accomplish the public ends which they have in view. Finding it impossible to play successfully against loaded dice—in other words, to contest caucuses with professional politicians—and having no desire to intrude where they are not wanted, the Independents will, for the present, keep away from the primary meetings, and induce good nominations by voting steadily against bad ones. This is a very comfortable and satisfactory position.

The Secret of Long Life.

From the Philadelphia Times.

Simon Cameron is about the only man I have ever known to quit public life while he was still able to deal with the world. It has been something more than ten years since he went out of the Senate and voluntarily retired to his country home to spend the rest of his days in enjoying the best pleasures of old age. He has travelled eight or ten thousand miles a year since, and devoted himself to his friends and to his own comfort. He loves young company. In health, spirit, and ambition he is not over forty, although he is turning eighty-six. He seeks men of his own spirit and with blood warm enough to make them see the rosy side of life. He hasn't a single characteristic of an old man about him, and I have often heard him say:

"The secret of life is to keep moving. Men grow old only when they sit down long enough to get rusty. I want to live just as long as I can be happy. When I reach the point when my friends, standing on the corners and seeing me come up the street, say, 'Let's get on the other side; there comes that old fool,' I want to die. Men make a great mistake in this life by holding on to any position after they have lost their grip and their company has become unpleasant to their associates."

The Child the Father of the Man.

From the Hartford Times.

The gentleman was returning from Richmond to his home in Southampton county, and as we came to Petersburg I asked: "Do you know Mahone?" "Oh, yes; he lives here. I served in his brigade in the war. He is a smart fellow. They say to me here, 'Mahone is dead.' I tell them, 'Wait and see.' They do not know Billy Mahone as well as I do. He is an indefatigable worker, and he never knows what it is to get licked. He can put up more jobs in a day than any other Virginian I ever met. He is perfectly unscrupulous, and all he cares about is Billy Mahone. His father kept a saloon down in Southampton county when Billy was a boy, and the planters for miles around would gather at his place to drink and play poker. The old man could play a good hand until he got drunk. Then he would say, 'Billy, take my hand.' Billy, a little red-haired cuss, would take the old man's hand and clean out the crowd. That was Billy Mahone when he was a boy, and I think he is just as good at poker now. This is his last time in the United States Senate; but the devil only can tell where he will turn up next."

Mr. Blaine Heard the Three Rs.

From the Washington Capital.

I asked Mr. Blaine how it happened that he failed to rebuke Dr. Burchard on the spot, and whether it was possible that he did not hear what Burchard said. Mr. Blaine's reply was: "I heard him perfectly, and the words went through me like a knife; but I thought that perhaps only a few heard it and the best way might be to take no notice of it, but let it pass."

Isham G. Harris of Tennessee.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* As it is generally conceded that President Cleveland will appoint to his Cabinet one member at least from the South, how would Senator Isham G. Harris of Tennessee do? He has been governor, twice senator, and Acting Vice-President of the United states. He is an able, popular, and conservative gentleman, who would not only reflect credit upon his state, but on the entire country. Bayard, Harris, Randall, and Thurman in the Cabinet would be a guarantee of good government and that the Democrats have come to stay.

BROOKLYN, Dec. 11. G. V. DAELGEN.

THE PANAMA CANAL.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* I have read with much interest the recent communications to your paper on our Isthmus canal from Capt. Gorringe, Admiral Ammen, the Secretary of the Panama Canal Company, and Capts. Eads and Pim. In two of these reference is made to the report which I had the honor to submit to the Navy Department on the Suez Canal and its lessons for any like work on our Isthmus. Without venturing at all within the province of the engineer, I may, perhaps, throw some other light on the problem to which your columns give the attention it again deserves. The history of the enterprises—especially of the Suez route—is certainly instructive. My own interest in both has not failed me since my first connection with the plans for an American canal when assisting the late Admiral Davis in preparing his report to the Senate in 1866.

I submit to merchants, shipping firms, and the general public the positions:

I. That to meet the requirements of commerce to-day, any interoceanic transit, hopefully anticipating the commercial and financial results from investments like those of the great highway of the East, must, like it, offer full, safe, uninterrupted, and speedy transportation. Neither railway nor locks can satisfy the age. The transit must be a waterway through which ships of the largest class, of the maximum tonnage now attained, and perhaps beyond this, can pass without breaking bulk. My reasoning is chiefly from the Suez experience. Over this route of 100 miles, during the last year, the mean time of passage of the 3,307 ships was but 48 hours in the canal (19 hours 32 minutes under way), 5.7 drawing more than 23 feet. In addition to the protection of the piers, the outer harbor is kept open by a powerful sea-going dredger; entrance is by electric light to a harbor lit with gas; "everything on the line," according to a recent letter before me from a naval officer, "most systematically done;" an agent at each station facing his model of the canal, with its peg corresponding to the ship's position, and telegraphing this to each gate. In a word, no serious delays by storm or collision or want of management; and yet the Parliamentary papers show new arrangements lately effected, as the result of urgent avowals by British shipping firms to Gladstone and the Foreign Secretary of their determination to build their own additional canal if greater facilities were not immediately secured. No delays and all charges reduced, and yet at this hour an International Commission on the soil of Egypt to provide for doubling the whole route! My simple-minded conclusion eliminates then, from our problem both lock and tunnel. It seems impossible to believe otherwise than that if two ocean canals were built—one with and one without lockage—the second named must sweep the trade, and this notwithstanding the advantage in reducing the time of passage by locks. The Secretary of the Suez route affirms that "an annual traffic of 6,000,000 tons (the lowest basis for financial returns) cannot be realized unless a canal can pass in one day and for several successive days as many as fifty ships;" and Mr. Dirks, the engineer of the new Amsterdam Canal, tells us that the time required for passing through the lock at the city is one hour; twenty-five is the highest number passing through the whole, which has but two locks, in one day; thirty might be able to go through, but there is a limit to the reduction of time. Opening the gates too quickly would injure the locks. Five minutes is the utmost one may dream of saving. The inference from this in regard to the time for passing the seventeen locks of Nicaragua is clear. In this connection it is scarcely to be wondered that M. de Lesseps should transfer the idea of the dikeau to our Isthmus. In 1858 he resisted the plans of the English engineers, Manby and McClean, of locks for the Suez, supported by the Italian engineer of the Commission, Paleocapa, who said to Stephenson, next to Palmerston, the chief antagonist of the work: "I wonder that English engineers, who know better than others the difficulties in navigation of the greatest speed and facilities, should propose a canal which can give entrance and departure only by the manœuvring of locks, causing sometimes entire suspension of navigation by the repairs to both machinery and the locks." What would those in a similar case say now?

II. All estimates for cost, as for all other works of importance, must be taken as estimates only, to be corrected by the experience of actual work. The Suez Canal was reported by the International Commission as practicable for a outlay of 200,000,000 francs; its friends claim that the increase to nearly 500,000,000 was caused by the serious interference and delays brought about by England. The Panama Canal was reported by the Technical Commission as practicable at the cost of 600,000,000 francs; it must cost much more. The Nicaragua route, to the great surprise of many, has been recently spoken of as practicable at the cost of $41,000,000 (if your types did not err). But the Commission of 1873 composed of the Chief of the Engineers and the Coast Survey and Admiral Ammen, placed the estimate at "at least $100,000,000," and Major McFarland, to whose report Capt. Gorringe refers, gives it as $140,000,000. The eminent engineer Trautwine, surveyed in America for some of your patriotic citizens, estimates $200,000,000. The Atrato route, multiply by 3 or by 4 for the estimate." The truth is that the preliminary costs of placing capital, contracting for and experimenting the delays of machinery and the much more serious losses by sickness, with many other items, are not always put into the bill offered to investors. But they mount up.

III. The health on the different lines is not so differently promising as may be supposed. A few of those engaged even on the surveys managed to return in good health, but the larger number need placing on the pension roll, if they are not already on.

When Eng and had her plan to divide the Spanish possessions, and Nelson went up the San Juan, 300 of his crews took to their beds after the first experience of the river, and of his 1,500 men nearly four-fifths were entirely disabled. True, the hygiene of our day would not permit such a result, but Nicaragua is not the land of health. The battery when a canal is under way will be heard there as certainly as from Panama.

IV. I submit that the difficulties of each route are not so different in degree as many suppose. Those of Panama have not been concealed, but the engineers, Conrad, Dirks, Turnbull, Menocal, Talloway, and others who went down with M. de Lesseps, have not strangely staked the loss of their reputation, built up by years of labor, if they have not knowingly considered these. The members of your Society of Engineers will remember that Mr. de Lesseps, in a lecture in this city, if I recollect rightly, said that if the gentlemen tell me a canal can be built in Panama without locks, I will undertake it; if not, I will return to France." As to Nicaragua, if the report to which Capt. Gorringe refers were printed, it would show that the harbor of San Juan "irretrievably ruined," and as to Brito, called, as Prof. Mitchell says, "by courtesy" harbor, enough of difference in estimates; and by this I do not reflect on the ability or the good faith of others who have examined the same lines. But the doubling the estimates for the harbors and for the whole line cannot be well overlooked. On the other hand, the opinion that any canal will cost "four hundred million dollars" may be set alongside of those which say in this age of increasing decrease that no canal is needed, or that steam is not superseding sail.

To close this letter, let me summarize the salient points of the lines. Tehuantepec requires 140 locks; Nicaragua requires at least seven locks and the creation of harbors, but has the advantages of the great Lake, San Juan, otherwise the best of all, requires a tunnel of seven miles; the Atrato also a tunnel. Panama has the great obstacles of the immense cuttings, chiefly on the Culebra section, and the floods of the Chagres.

With true pride in what has been done by our naval officers on the lines, it is with much regret that the reports of Admiral Cooper, Lieut. Rodgers, and others on the Isthmus, together with other reports referred to, and the progress and prospects of the Panama line as the only one for the age, compel the belief that this will take the trade of our country and of the world. To the complaint that so little has been done it is justly replied that the preliminary work of organizing, of receiving machinery and supplies by the Atlantic, of erecting a distant land, the construction of quarters and hospitals, and the clearing of the dense forests in order to lay out the true axis of the canal (a work referred to by Admiral Cooper as no easy task), together with the delays by sicknesses, repeating the history of the Panama Railway—all this is seemingly forgotten by such complaints. Reporting what had been done up to last year, Admiral Cooper said: "The careful preparation for the great undertaking, more than anything else, strengthens my belief that the canal will ultimately be finished." The fulness of work is rightly to be expected during the present dry season and those which follow. The contract for the last section has been taken, American machinery and material are in full demand, as superior to all other. The canal across Panama will be finished.

J. E. NOURSE.

P. S.—Since writing this, the President has announced an important treaty with Nicaragua for the construction of a canal by transit. With the fullest respect for the Executive and for the efforts of all who have been or may be related to any work thereof, may it be permitted to renew the suggestion made at the close of the report named in the first lines of this letter, that a commission of army and naval officers examine the present status of the problem. In my humble judgment, it is not what it was at the time of the able report from the Commissioners of 1873.

In addition to the facts here presented, the judgments of many competent ones accord with the following expression from the head of one of the chief steamer lines of England:

"I am good tempered that Lesseps favors a canal in the neighborhood of that railway at Panama, and grapples with the difficulties of construction in preference to accepting an easier route, which would be objectionable in working. I think your people are reading the Monroe doctrine rather hard. Without differing from that doctrine, or denying that the United States have the leading interest in the Western continent, still it cannot be denied that other nations have great interests. I think you would do better to leave Panama alone, and not make the same mistake (though in an opposite direction) which Great Britain made about the Suez Canal."

TURMOIL OVER THE OFFICES.

The Break in the Tammany-Republican Ranks Worse than was Suspected.

The political weather was very stormy in the City Hall yesterday. The break in the ranks of the hitherto consolidated Tammany and Republican forces proved to be even more serious than was at first suspected. The determined effort of the leading Tammany men to get a special meeting of the Board of Aldermen called for to-day failed because some of the Republicans would not sign. Aldermen Waite and Miller were in close consultation with the Mayor during the afternoon. This was regarded as significant of a possible capture of the Department of Public Works by some old-time Tammany-Republicans. The Mayor was very busy all day. Among those who conferred with him were: Police Commissioner Fitz John Porter, Jefferson M. Levy, Lawson N. Fuller, and Coroner Levy. The Mayor was reticent. The discomfited and rebuffed County Democracy Committee did not appear again. Alderman Pearson says that twelve names of the necessary thirteen were signed to the call for a special meeting to-day. Alderman Waite said he didn't know whether or not an attempt would be made to-day to get thirteen names on a call for a special meeting on Saturday.

One thing appears to be settled, and that is that Commissioner Hubert O. Thompson will not be renominated by Mayor Edson, and he is not at all sanguine of appointment by Mayor Grace. The situation at present looks much like a repetition of the oft-repeated result of the Republicans making good profit out of the quarrels of the Democracy. It does not seem to occur to anybody that the conflicting Democratic factions could unite with the Democratic Mayor and carry off the prize.

THE HEALTH BOARDS' CONFERENCE.

Measures Recommended to Prevent the Visitation of Cholera.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 11.—The second session of the National Conference of State Boards of Health was chiefly devoted to reports from various States. Dr. Reeves of Virginia advocated the appointment of women as house to house inspectors. Dr. Campbell of Virginia talked of the large death rate among the colored population, and attributed it chiefly to their poverty. He thought that in the future the mortality would be less. Dr. Carson made a report on the epidemic which has recently prevailed in Kentucky and West Virginia. He said that the disease was really epidemic dysentery, caused by malaria poison, and many patients died because the people did not believe in doctors, and so called them, if at all, too late. The total number of deaths did not exceed 223 in Kentucky. The people were deeply aggrieved by the publication of the exaggerated reports of the disease. Although the crops are not abundant, yet the people have enough to support them until next harvest.

The Committee on State Action reported that the laws of the States were so different that it was difficult to formulate a system of uniform action against cholera or other epidemics. They recommended that Health Boards in adjacent States should promptly inform each other of any case of cholera discovered in their own domain. They thought that State Boards should be recognized in some national form as having authority to indicate what sanitary measures are necessary and to secure the same.

The Committee on Municipal Action recommended as minimum regulations that all surface wells be closed, privy vaults abolished, stagnant pools disinfected, sewers kept clear, accumulations of filth prevented in tenements, the food supply inspected, garbage promptly removed, and that the attention of authorities of all institutions, public and private, and individuals as well, be drawn to the great importance of maintaining habits of personal cleanliness as one of the most efficient means of warding off an attack of cholera or reducing its virulence. They urge the authorities of States, cities, and villages to carry out their suggestions.

STEEL FILINGS FOR GOLD.

Ingenious Attempt to Palm Off Spurious Bullion at the Philadelphia Mint.

PHILADELPHIA, Dec. 11.—It was stated at the Mint to-day that two attempts were made lately to palm off spurious bullion at that establishment. It seems that on Monday last a new and rather ingenious device to defraud the dealers in gold bullion was unearthed by the reception of a deposit from the agent of the Adams Express Company of what had the appearance of gold grains, for Charles S. Stief of Little Rock, Ark. Yesterday another deposit of a similar character was presented by the same agent for Meyer Cohen of Nashville, Tenn. The appearance of the grains was strikingly similar to African gold grains or North Carolina amalgam from which the quicksilver had been drawn off by the retort. The want of specific gravity as compared with gold first attracted the attention of the clerk in charge, who took it to Col. Snowden, the superintendent, whose thorough familiarity with the subject enabled him to promptly declare it to be a spurious article.

The curious and interesting fact was presented that, while