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The Free Soil Meeting in Philadelphia—Speech of Mr. Wilmot.

[From the Philadelphia Republic, Dec. 2]

The free soil meeting at the Chinese Museum, last night, was quite large and enthusiastic. The meeting was called to order at half-past seven o'clock, by Mr. George Connell, upon whose motion David C. Skerrett was appointed president.

After the organization of the meeting, resolutions were offered by T. S. Cavender, and adopted with unanimity and enthusiasm:—

Resolved, That the friends of free soil, so far from being discouraged by the result of the recent election, find ample cause of rejoicing in the fact that hostility to the extension of slavery has been declared paramount to all other political considerations by three hundred thousand freemen—a number larger than the entire body of slaveholders in the United States.

Resolved, That we still demand free soil for free men, protesting against any compromise by which any portion of our national domain shall be given up to the curse and shame of human bondage, and declaring that any and every concession to the slave power shall be met by our prompt and determined demand for repeal.

Resolved, That we re-affirm the principles and policy declared in the Buffalo platform, as demanded alike by the exigencies of the crisis—by the interests of the whole country—and by the progressive spirit of the age; and that we declare our unalterable determination to sustain them, at all times and under all possible contingencies, until the preservation of freedom and the interests of free labor shall become the established policy of our national government.

Mr. Wilmot was then introduced by the president, and was received with long and hearty cheering by the vast audience present.

He commenced by saying, that it first of all became his duty to make his most respectful acknowledgments for the very kind and flattering reception they had been pleased to give him. He confessed that he had appeared before that intelligent and large audience with much reluctance—indeed, as his friends well knew, it was against his most earnest advice that this meeting had been held. He had, however, yielded to the persuasion of many kind friends, who believed that his small voice would contribute to uphold the standard of freedom in the present trying and important crisis in which the country was now involved. It was not necessary that he should inform his audience of what was meant by the proviso. It has been a subject of much misrepresentation; it had been the interest of both the two great political parties of the country to misrepresent it and impugn the motives of those who were engaged in sustaining it. An effort had been made to blend this question with the subject of abolition, with which in his humble judgment it had no connection whatever. He, for one, held to all the compromises of the constitution in relation to slavery. He would have been the last man ever to have agitated this subject, if our Southern friends had been content to abide by the compromises of that instrument, instead of transcending them. (Applause.) He held that slavery was a State institution, instituted by State authority, under the control of State laws, and that the general government has no power over this question within any State of this Union. This was the doctrine he had ever advocated, and which he held; but when the Southern States asked to be permitted to extend slavery over the general territory of the Union—over new and free territory, recently acquired from the Mexican republic, he would say that the general government—that the whole people, should exert their power and stretch forth their arm against every effort to plant slavery there. This was a question, in his judgment, in which the free States have a deep and abiding interest—one second to none that had ever arisen since the foundation of the republic. We found the soil acquired from Mexico by the war with her, free from the pollution and degradation of slavery—it was a free soil; and the question was—"Shall it remain so, or shall it become the inheritance of the slaveholder and his black cattle?" This was the only question involved in this subject. On the 8th of August, 1846, the President of the United States sent in a message to Congress asking for an appropriation of $2,000,000, for the purpose of enabling him to effect a peace with Mexico. It was apparent that this money was to be expended in the acquisition of territory. We were indebted to Mexico in no sums of money; on the contrary, she was indebted to us for spoliations committed on our commerce. This formed the topic of general conversation on the afternoon of the day this message was received, and after full consultation, as far as time was allowed for consultation, it met the unanimous approval of every democrat in Congress. (Great applause.) There was no dissenting voice, so far as he (Mr. W.) heard, in reference to the propriety of this measure—the proviso. There was no disposition on the part of the republican members of Congress to embarrass the administration; on the contrary, among those foremost in the movement, was himself, he being among the most consistent and uniform supporters of that administration. (Applause.)

The proviso was not introduced with any view to influence or have any bearing upon the Presidential election which was to follow. It was not offered to break down one man and build up another. There was nothing discussed, as far as his knowledge went, but the intrinsic merits of the question. Was it right—was it politic—was it in accordance with the genius of our institutions, that this republic should become the propagandist of slavery? (Enthusiastic cheers.) Were they to embark at this period of this world—in the middle of the nineteenth century—with the past experience before them—with a knowledge of this social institution—was it politic, he again asked that they should embark in the extension of slavery? Under these circumstances, the proviso was offered to the bill. The proposition was offered on Saturday, the 8th of August; but Congress, by resolutions, previously offered, had agreed to adjourn on the 10th. The whole of the Northern delegation, with two exceptions only, from the free States, were unanimously in favor of the proviso. The democratic delegation (one member only being absent) from Pennsylvania stood, united on the question. [Great applause.] The amendment, however, being sent to the Senate, failed there, being taken up at too late an hour, 12 o'clock being fixed as the hour for the final adjournment of Congress. It met, he knew, the approbation of the most eminent leading republicans of that branch of the national legislature. The very eminent and respectable gentleman who had been recently nominated by the Baltimore Convention, gave it his unequivocal approval. [Applause.] He declared that it was ground from which no Northern man ought to recede. [Tremendous and long continued cheering.] The Senator from Massachusetts, (Mr. Davis,) took the floor near the time of adjournment, and commenced debating the subject, and occupied the whole time, and thus all action was defeated on the subject. The eminent Senator from Michigan, (Mr. L. Cass,) so deep was his anxiety in regard to the matter, that he remonstrated with the Senator from Massachusetts on the course he had pursued—that he had been instrumental in defeating this measure. This was a fact the Senator never denied—never would deny. Mr. W. went on to say that his own convictions were, that if the vote had been taken in the Senate, the proviso would have become the law of the land. At the opening of the following session of Congress, a large proportion, if not the entire representation in Congress from the free States, was still in its favor. Resolutions of instruction were unanimously passed by the Legislature of Pennsylvania, sustaining the proviso—that is, ninety members of the House voted in its favor, and in the Senate they were passed with three dissenting voices only against it. The subject was take up by each of the free States of the Union, and in rapid succession, some ten or eleven of the free States, through their Legislatures, spoke an unanimous voice in favor of this principle. It was democratic then—it was right, it was just, it was a principle which our North held sacred, and declared they would stand by and maintain. But in a short time influences were set at work to defeat this principle—the influence of the general government was brought to bear in favor of the South, and a humiliating spectacle was presented of men occupying the first positions in the councils of the nation, who had maintained this principle, abandoning it, and turning their backs upon it! A large proportion of the press—particularly of the republican press—commenced their attacks upon it, using all sorts of anathemas against it. It was treason to proclaim this principle—it was treason to the democratic party. Such was the decree issued at Washington. Every man who dared to speak in favor of it, was proscribed. The South united together and said she would support no man for the Presidency who dared to maintain this principle—that she would strike down every man, however eminent, however good, or however noble—every man who maintained freedom in free territory. The consequence was, that the ambitious men of the country—those who had fixed their gaze on the Presidency, declared they would oppose any man who sustained it. To sustain it, it was alleged, was unconstitutional. The past experience and past action of the government was all wrong—Jefferson was wrong; Madison, Washington, and Jackson, were also wrong, and all the great and good men who laid the foundations of the republic under which we live, were all wrong! This was no new principle, (Mr. W. proceeded to state)—it was as old as the government itself. In 1787, Thomas Jefferson, and other good men, had this question in hand. They looked upon it in its true light—as a curse upon men and nations—as an evil of the very first magnitude. All the great men of that day deplored its existence—looked upon it as a calamity—and while they saw no remedy, no means for its present eradication, they took the precaution against its spread in unoccupied territory. Mr. Wilmot here entered into a history of the acquisition of the Northwestern territory—referring to the ordinance of '87, and citing the 6th article contained therein, against the introduction of slavery. He next proceeded to show in how great a proportion wealth, population, prosperity, &c., had increased in all those States of this confederacy where slavery did not exist, as contrasted with those in which it was fostered. He went on to prove that slave labor brings degradation and dishonor upon the white laborer—hence it was, that the white laboring man would not emigrate to a slave State. No laboring white man would emigrate to a country where dishonor was brought upon his children because they labored. Slavery brings dishonor upon labor. Where the great mass of the labor of a country is performed by black men, it is impossible that free labor can be respected. The foreign population which comes to our shores, cannot bear the idea of being placed on a level with our negro people. They feel too much respect for themselves, and a becoming pride, for that; they therefore desire to settle on a free soil, where slavery does not exist, and where they shall be free from all that interferes with their social relations. The whole entire foreign population seek the free States of this Union. The slaveholder and his chattels occupy the greater and more genial portions of the American continent, or rather, it is given up to them; whilst the freemen dwell in the less congenial regions of the North. All that we require is, that slavery shall make no aggression upon the free soil of the land. (Tremendous applause.) If our Southern friends look upon this institution as of value to them—if they regard it as a blessing, my voice is, let them enjoy it unmolested within the boundaries set forth by the Constitution. Let us resist unto death the encroachment of slavery. The free soil of America belongs to the free laborer of America. (Enthusiastic and reiterated cheers.) What is it that gives the laborer of America such a pre-eminence over the laborer of any other portion of the world? Why is it that the laboring men of America have better food, are better clothed, enjoy more of the comforts of life than the laborers of other portions of the world? Why, these blessings are to be attributed not only to the benign influence of our institutions, but to the great secret of the elevation of the masses, and the cheapness of our soil. Her lands are at a price within the reach of every honest and industrious laborer. After expatiating at some length on this subject, Mr. W. observed, that the day is not far distant—the day is near at hand—when the soil we occupy will be as thickly settled as that of Germany. What will then be the condition of America? The result will be that the last refuge of the laboring man of America will be the vast territories recently annexed to this country. They should be kept open for him and his posterity. If the negro slave is to occupy them, as I have proved to you, the white man is excluded more positively than by any law of Congress. No man will come from Germany; no man will come from Ireland—down-trodden as she is—to settle there. Mr. W., after making some further remarks on this point, stated that $1,200,000,000 was invested in slave property—a sum larger than the real assessed value of property in the States of New York and Pennsylvania put together. He had been brought up a democrat—delighted in its name and principles; but no matter with how much horror he had been accustomed to regard the monster bank, with its capital of $35,000,000, he confessed that he looked upon it as but a pigmy compared to the capital invested in negro flesh! (Applause.) He claimed to be a democrat—one of the strictest sort, too, (applause) and he thought certain gentlemen who had long been the recipients of government patronage should get tired, if they had not already become so, of reading him out of the party; (applause;) but he did affirm that this was no part of the creed of the republican party, (laughter and applause,) that we should embark in the work of propagating human slavery. If this damnable work was to be consummated—if they were to embark in the colonization of slaves—for God's sake let the odium rest on some other party. He was one of those who felt constrained by the highest considerations of duty, of self-respect, of regard for that people who had stood around him like a wall of fire, to oppose the late nominations made at Baltimore. It was out of no factious spirit that he had done so. If he (Gen. Cass) had maintained this great principle, he (Mr. W.) would have gone as far as he who went furthest in his support. (Applause.) Mr W. next proceeded to speak in defence of Mr. Van Buren, whom he most ably supported—insisting that that gentleman was fully justified in his recent course—a course that had been brought about by the extraordinary and unjustifiable proceeding of the Baltimore Convention in relation to one of the delegations from the State of New York. The right settlement of this question, Mr. W. said, was to determine the character of our institutions. It was to be shown whether this republic—the hope of the downtrodden throughout the world—whether this republic should be sustained and carried on, and directed by the real and true democracy of the counury and the laboring men, or the slaveholding interest of the South. If the North failed in this struggle, and slavery was carried out to the Pacific Ocean, then would the South have the entire control of this government, and mould and fashion it to their own purposes. After making a few remarks laudatory of the course of the democratic party heretofore, and some comments upon the causes of their being triumphant over political competitors, he concluded his able, and eloquent, and elaborate speech, (of which this is but a mere synopsis, as neither time nor space will allow of our going into details) by saying that those who supported the proviso were, in his humble judgment, in the right—that as sure as there was a God in heaven, he would stand by the right. If the cause was right—was just—then let no man fear the issue. It would triumph. Let us make this republic what Jefferson intended it to be, and which every freeman of the North should desire—a barrier over which slavery cannot pass.

James M. Morrisson moved, and James J. Butler seconded, the following resolution, which was adopted with loud cheers:—

Resolved, That man's real freedom can only be assured in the freedom of the public lands from the grasp of speculators, and their appropriation, in limited quantities, to the actual settler.

Dr. Elder was then called out by the audience, and after a brief address from him, the meeting adjourned, in excellent spirits, at about 10 o'clock.

Philadelphia, Dec. 3, 1848.

Great Meeting of the Young Democracy of Philadelphia—Declaration of Principles—Uproar and Excitement—Fun, Fancy, and Declamation.

A meeting assembled last night, at the county court-house, in Philadelphia, to hear the report of a committee who had been appointed at a previous meeting, and instructed to propose some plan for the re-organization of the democratic party. At an early hour the court-house was crammed, and great anxiety evinced to hear the report. John G. Sharp was called to the chair, and numerous other officers appointed. Thomas Dunn English then came forward, on the part of the committee, and read the following report and declaration of principles:—

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE.

The committee appointed at a town meeting of the democratic citizens of Philadelphia, held at the Democratic Head-Quarters, on the evening of the 13th of November, 1848, and by that meeting instructed to present, at some future public meeting, some plan for the better organization of the party, &c., beg leave respectfully to report—

That the great and controlling cause of the present condition of the democratic party, in the city and county of Philadelphia, arises from a general dissatisfaction with the party government, and laxness of party discipline. The affairs of the party, its internal management, its mode of expressing opinion, its distribution of honors and emoluments, have all been, for a long while, under the control of self-constituted cliques, or caucus-created committees. These combinations, whatever may be the individual worth and probity of their members, must naturally seek to retain all power in their own hands, or in those of their adherents. Thus it is that we see this strange position of affairs—a party sometimes led by men in whom it has no confidence whatever, and whose words and deeds it freely ridicules. This anomaly resuls from the want of a proper representative system in the government of the party, by which the will of its members could be expressed; and the fact that we have not had such a system before, arose from the timidity of individuals, who, while they gave vent to individual complaint, had a disinclination to propose a remedy. Thus, too, it has been that unscrupulous men have endeavored to make the democratic party an instrument by which they might attain wealth and position, and to speak the plain and honest truth, have frequently succeeded. By combination and organized fraud, they have, time and again, destroyed the will of the majority, and diffused lukewarmness, if not absolute discontent, in our ranks.

Your committee do not believe that any plan of organization can totally prevent the evils of improper combinations. The cure, in the main, is with the democratic party itself, the individual members of which must apply the last resort of freemen when needed, and vote down the incapable, unsound or profligate. Nor do this committee wish to go as far as their inclination would, perhaps, impel them, in the recommendation of measures for a re-organization. But they do recommend to you the plan which accompanies this report, for the annual election of a Democratic General Committee, based upon a ratio which shall afford a fair representation of the democratic party, for our city and county—a committee which, elected as its members will be by the people, will represent the feelings and wishes of their constitutents, upon all occasions where it is impossible or inconvenient to appeal to the party in mass.

To such a committee the further task of re-organizing the democratic party, by introducing such reforms as are needed in its action, could be confided with more propriety than to your committee, insomuch as the body chosen by democratic suffrage could be fully responsible to their constitutents. Your committee also report a set of rules to govern the election of the first General Executive Committee—rules sufficient to control its election and organization—after which they of course cease, unless adopted by the committee itself. In addition to this, and as the basis of all future action, your committee report a declaration of democratic principles, which they submit for your adoption. This, while it contains nothing which is not or should not be recognized as democratic doctrine, proclaims well established features of policy in a fitting boldness of style and manner, and presents a political creed so plain and explicit that the humblest citizen can comprehend and discuss it.

All of which, as well as the accompanying documents, which they include as part of their report, your committee respectfully submit.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

Adopted at a General Meeting of the Young Democracy of the City and County of Philadelphia, held on the Second Day of December, 1848, at the County Court House.

We declare and publish, as well-grounded and settled principles:—

1. That, in adjusting any tariff of duties upon imports, the sole object should be to obtain a revenue adequate to the demands of an economical administration of the government; that it would be unjust and oppressive to arrange duties for the purpose of affording to any man or set of men special favors, aggrandizement, or immunities. Legislation should be performed for the benefit of all, and when it becomes oppressive to either a greater or smaller portion of the community, or when its results impoverish the mass, its proper ends are violated and itself rendered odious. Hence it is that we denounce any tariff whose object is protection—such protection being, when fully analysed, a mere trick by which a few capitalists are enable to perform more than the possessor of the philosopher's stone—transmuting the sweat and toil of the poor man into gold, and plundering all other classes, in order to add to their already immense fortunes.

2. That the finances of government should be managed by the government itself, independent of the control or agency of banks or banking institutions—managed by sworn and responsible officers who are liable to severe penalties for a violation of duty, and not by corporations whose actions defy scrutiny, and whose infractions of law cannot be punished. The plan of the independent Treasury now in operation, which has been tested through a time of war—in all countries a season of great financial embarrassment—receives and will continue to receive our steady and well-deserved support; and while we are willing to admit such alterations in its details as may be necessary to its perfect success, we will never agree to surrender a single one of the principles upon which it is based, and by means of which the public money is preserved from the grasp of speculators and capitalists.

3. That in the disposal of the public lands, a liberal course should be pursued towards actual settlers; and since the spread of agriculture and the increase of small freeholders contribute to the prosperity and progress of the country, every actual settler is entitled to and should receive a limited and inalienable amount of land, sufficient to support, in conjunction with his industry, himself and family.

4. That this country is a confederation of independent sovereignties, whose interest it is to remain united; that the peculiar institutions in each of these States are purely domestic, and consequently a subject of local government, independent of the supervision and interference of other members of the confederacy; that when Congress attempts to legislate upon or concerning any of these institutions, it grossly invades the rights of both individuals and communities, and commits a great constitutional wrong; that the saftey of the Union and the perpetuity of our republican institutions demand that every honest citizen should repress the agitation of any and every prominent cause of discord and disunion.

5. That the public domain was granted to the general government by its donors as the source of a fund to be applied to the necessities of that government; that the money arising from the sale of the lands which compose the domain, so long as they continue to be sold, should not be diverted from its legitimate use, by being distributed among the States; and that, when the government can spare the land fund, it is more for the interest of the nation that the land should be given to those who will actually cultivate it and add to the productive wealth of the nation.

6. That the Constitution of these United States is a grant by sovereign and confederated States to the corporation of the general government, of certain powers specified and limited in the constitution itself; and we contend for a strict construction of the powers granted; consequently we oppose the creation of a national bank, a protective system of duties, and the application of the public funds to the furtherance of any schemes or plans not necessary to carry out the duties or powers directly assigned to the general government.

7. That the people are as fully capable to nominate as they are to vote for all candidates for office, and that the intervention of caucuses and conventions, at all times an evil, requires to be either modified so that the wishes and will of the people shall be truly represented, or else utterly abolished. The people have, frequently, owing to the corruption of the convention system, been presented with the alternative of either voting for a selfish and unprincipled man, or one notoriously incompetent to fill the station he sought, or by their vote against him, attacking the policy which he represented, and which was dear to their consciences. Under this system, as now conducted, we have seen nominated and elected to legislative offices, men who were utterly unable to discuss measures of importance in the halls of legislation, or to defend the principles of the party with which they were identified, and who did not make up for this deficiency by that plain common-sense and unshaken integrity so necessary for the efficient legislator. Such things are calculated to alienate any party from popular affection. The condemnation which they ultimately obtain, is thus dealt on a deserving set of political principles as well, and the peace, prosperity, and progress of the State seriously endangered, from the temporary suspension of a proper policy in the administration of public affairs.

8. That the pillars of the State are the laboring population, whose brawny arms create the wealth, and whose every day sense forms the safeguard of the nation; that their health, comfort, and happiness are to be sedulously guarded, as a matter of public welfare; that no combination of capitalists shall be allowed to oppress or injure them; that all excess of labor which tends to injure their physical comfort, or debar them from mental improvement, should be restrained; that the practice of causing minors and females, especially, to labor for many hours per day over the time suited to their physical strength, in factories and elsewhere, not only debars them from mental improvement, and deteriorates their physical condition, but tends to raise up a race of people in our midst, dwarfed and stunted in body and mind; and that all such things, as calculated to render honest labor degrading, are fit subjects for specific and decided legislation.

9. That our country is our mother, whose honor is as dear to us as our personal honor, or the peace of our firesides; that her cause is our cause, and an insult to her is an insult to be resented by each of her sons; that when she is engaged in war with a foreign land, the citizen who displays sympathy with her foes, or encourages them to protract the conflict, is a traitor, whom it would be an excess of courtesy to pronounce dishonorable; and that representatives, who, from their seats in the halls of legislation, encourage the enemy, have attained a depth of political infamy equalled by that only of one man in the history of these United States.

10. That the people of this country are devoted to the checks, compromises, and balances of the Constitution; that they recognise the independence of the three several departments of government as one of those great principles whose preservation is the surest guaranty for the continuance of our freedom; that to destroy or cripple the qualified negative of the President—falsely called veto power—would be to place our rights at the mercy of any set of legislative despots who might prove false to their trust, and would reduce the form of government from that of a well-balanced republic to an elective aristocracy.

11. That banking is only a legitimate business when pursued upon legitimate principles; but to call for charters which exempt stockholders from individual liability is to request the mantle of the State credit for the shoulders of fraud and falsehood; and that each State is prohibited by the general constitution from coining money, or emitting bills of credit, and consequently cannot confer on corporate bodies a power which it does not itself possess.

12. That the accumulation of large bodies of lands in the hands of an individual, is an evil whose effects must be felt in the future; that such an aggregation of the soil, as it tends to decrease the number and discourage the efforts of tillers of the soil, is unwise and anti-republican, and savors too much of the feudal times to accord with the spirit of our institutions or the temper of our people; and that a law should speedily be passed limiting the quantity of the public lands which may be disposed of to individuals.

13. That our people, as years of experience have decisively demonstrated, may be trusted to choose any and every office-holder; that official patronage is more likely to be exercised discreetly by them than by individuals; and that, as all officers should be of right chosen by them, no motives of sound policy demand that they should restrain themselves from the exercise of such a right.

14. That the foreigners who immigrate to this country should not be denied the protection of our laws, nor a participation in the blessings of good government; that it is good policy to extend to them, after a reasonable time of sojourn, the rights of citizenship; that the present naturalization laws have proved themselves by experience to be highly politic and proper, and that, in their admission to offices of trust and emolument, the place of the citizen's birth should neither recommend nor disqualify.

15. That the present system pursued in appointing officers in the army and navy is calculated to deteriorate the service; that appointments should cease to be a matter of favor; and that the proper apprenticeship for the future commander is before the mast in the navy, and in the ranks from the army.

16. That it is the duty of the democratic party to advocate the reform of all abuses in government; that when an abuse exists and a remedy is offered, the sole questions to be asked are concerning the justice, practicability and pre-eminence of the proposed measure; that whether it offends the prejudice or affects the pockets of individuals, is not to be discussed; and that the democratic party, as the true party of progress, while it is conservative of the constitution, to guard it from the inroads of a loose construction of its provisions, has a natural and invincible antipathy to that false conservatism which retains abuses and preserves venerable wrongs.

The committee also presented a plan of electing a general committee, and Mr. English then moved the adoption of the whole. Mr. E. A. Penniman, ex-Senator from the county of Philadelphia, got up in great haste, and said he was in favor of the plan of organization; but he objected to the tone of the report, which he denounced as uncourteous. He did not know that he was opposed to the principles avowed in the declaration, but thought it inexpedient to agitate them at this time. The Baltimore platform had been defeated, and we were defeated with it. (Cries of "No, no!" and great confusion.) He thought it ought to be brought before another meeting—that the committee had better be instructed to report at a future meeting. Besides, some things were not explicit; nothing had been said on the free soil question. After some other remarks, the gentleman sat down, and was followed by Thomas Dunn English, who said that he could not sit quiet under remarks so baseless as those that he had heard; and when so respectable a body as the committee were assailed and their motives aspersed, he must give vent to just indignation. The committee had merely brought forward the views generally entertained by the progressive democracy—had, in effect, only amplified and applied the principles laid down at the Baltimore convention. As to the time, there was none more suitable than now. He then alluded to the fact of the recent whig and free soil meetings held in the city, and contended this was the proper moment. The speaker then went on to defend the report of the committee, and attacked the positions taken by Van Buren and the free soilers, and finally sat down amid the cheers of the audience.

T. Fiske next addressed the meeting in support of the report, and read from a paper a portion of an essay in regard to banking, which he had intended, at first, to have incorporated in the report of the committee. This essay denounced the whole banking system as a fraud, and was received with great enthusiasm. This was followed by an eloquent speech from Wm. Little, when a warm discussion arose, sprinkled with sarcasm, spice and personality, in which Andrew Miller, late Recorder of Deeds, Morris R. Hamilton, Thomas Dunn English, E. W. Powers, and E. A. Penniman participated. All kinds of words flew around, and very naughty expressions left the lips of grave men. Mr. Little accused Andrew Miller of having caused the defeat of the democratic party, by his former endorsement of Taylor; and Miller retorted, by expressing his regret that the "John Donkey" had expired; whereon Thomas Dunn English leaped up and said that the "Donkey" had died because Andrew Miller would not edit it. After this very rational discussion had ceased, the question was put on the report of the committee, and enthusiastically adopted. Another debate now sprung up, in which J. C. Van Dyke and T. B. Florence, the late candidates for Congress in the 1st and 2d districts, with others, joined. The occasion of this was the continuance of the committee to provide for the election of delegates to a general convention. Finally the motion prevailed, and the committee were also instructed to lay the declaration of principles before the several wards and townships of the city and county. The meeting then adjourned, with any amount of cheering.

The movement is one of some moment, when we consider the principles adopted. It will be seen that most of the positions of the land-reformers are incorporated, and that a thoroughly radical tone pervades the proceedings. The meeting was very crowded, very noisy, and very enthusiastic, and the debate which sprung up was one of the most piquant and racy we ever listened to. We are sorry that we have not room to transfer it literally.

Message of the Governor of South Carolina.

We have received the message of Governor Johnson, of South Carolina, to the Legislature of that State, and we herewith present a synopsis of it to our readers. The report of the Comptroller, in relation to the State finances has not yet been received.

On the subject of education, Governor Johnson says:—The increasing prosperity and usefulness of the South Carolina College, is so much a matter of pride, that the attention of every one is constantly directed towards it. The extensive additional accommodations for the students, projected by the Board of Trustees at its last annual meeting, have, by the liberal means provided by the Legislature at its last annual session, been completed; and yet there is no room to spare. The students number now 255, including the graduating class, which is thirty-eight in number.

In regard to the free schools, he says:—Defective in the frame work of their original structure, they have dragged on a wretched existence, if, indeed, they can be said to exist at all, down to this day, at an immense cost, without any apparent benefits, except in the towns and cities, where, from the denseness of the population, the funds appropriated for their support can be concentrated so as to make its influence felt.

The necessity of internal improvements is referred to. On this subject Governor Johnson uses the following language: All who are familiar with the upper portions of the State, know that few, if any of its productions, will bear the expense of transportation, by the ordinary means, to a market, and leave any profits to the producer, except the article of cotton, which is not grown at all in the region bordering the mountains; and even that, at the present low prices, leaves but a small net income when the charges of transportation are deducted. All descriptions of grain may be transported to our markets from any of the Northern cities at a less expense than from the mountain region, where it is grown in abundance; and, with facilities of transportation, might and would be increased to almost any extent. Lime, which is found in abundance in York and Spartanburg districts, of superior quality, is shut out, even from the market in this place, on account of the difference in the expenses of transportation, by the Thomaston lime. For the same reason our great marts are closed against the iron produced in the interior, and they are supplied from Europe and the Northern States. The same remarks will apply to almost every article of production, the transportation of which is expensive on account of its weight or bulk; and I venture to predict, that unless greater facilities of transportation are supplied, the healthiest and most favored portion of the State will become tenantless. Heretofore, they have found a market for their agricultural productions amongst their cotton growing neighbors, but at the present low prices, they will find it their interest to raise their own supplies.

We extract the following on the subject of slavery:—The constant and never ending agitation of the question of slavery between the slaveholding and non-slaveholding States, apart from the issues really involved, will of itself in the end inevitably lead to the most disastrous consequences. The passions of communities, like those of individuals, are roused and inflamed by constant vituperation, however unimportant may be the matter in controversy; and the degree of resentment engendered by it, is in proportion to the magnitude of the matter involved. To us the question is vital, the issues of "life, liberty and property" are involved in it, the poison of fanaticism is so infused in the masses, that I have charity enough to suppose that many worthy men conscientiously believe that involuntary servitude is a damning curse, and would willingly turn our slaves loose to cut our throats. But the mockery of the more liberal and enlightened politicians of the non-slaveholding States, in disclaiming the authority of Congress to interfere with the institution in the States where it now exists, but protesting against its extension beyond its present limits, is more galling. Do they not know that the encouragement and protection given to fugitive slaves have rendered property in them of little value in the border States? Do they not know that, circumscribed to the territorial limits they now occupy, they will in a few years exhaust much of the now productive soil, and in their rapid increase in numbers overwhelm their owners, and drive them to seek an asylum elsewhere; and that by excluding them from additional territories already or hereafter to be acquired, they will, through the agency of Congress, accomplish indirectly what they concede to be unconstitutional? I will not speak of our equal rights as citizens of this confederation. The argument has been long ago exhausted, and demonstration as palpable as a mathematical conclusion will avail nothing.

The probability is, that whether we will or will not be permitted to carry our slaves into the territory acquired by treaty with Mexico, will be definitely settled at no distant day. If against us, the question will necessarily arise as to the measures we ought to pursue. All the other slaveholding States have precisely the same interest in this question that we have, and we know that many, if not all of them, feel the same solicitude about it that we do, and it may reasonably be supposed they would readily unite with us in any measure promising relief. With our united, moral and physical strength, in a just and honorable cause, we can successfully oppose any power that can be brought to bear upon us. Concert, as to time and manner of action, is indispensable to this unity; and the question now is, when and how this is to be brought about? Is the present time propitious?

We know already, or have abundant reason to suppose, that the present chief magistrate of the United States, adopting the Missouri compromise as a rule, will, if Congress, in its folly and madness, in total disregard of reason and right, exclude us entirely from the Mexican territory, interpose the conservative veto power. It is known, too, that in the election of his successor, many of the slaveholding States cast their votes for the candidate who will be elected; and that in all the rest there was great division, more, probably, than the results have brought to light; and, I take it for granted, that it was upon the faith, that, being a Southern man, he would not be unmindful of Southern rights. It cannot be supposed, then, that the States which will vote for him, and the minorities in those States which will vote against him, can be brought to act together in anticipation that our rights will be violated under his administration, he having the power to prevent it. The present time is, therefore, in my judgment, unpropitious for action. We ought, notwithstanding, to provide for any contingency. The blow may be struck when we are unaware of our danger, and no time ought to be lost in projecting means to unite the slaveholding States in some common mode of action, when the occasion shall arise; and a free discussion and interchange of opinion will greatly promote this object in preparing the public mind to meet its consequences. As before remarked, unity of time and concert of action, are indispensable to success, and a Southern convention is the most direct and practical means of obtaining it.

No one State can reasonably hope for success, when acting alone in opposition to the opinions of all the others. The effect of such an attempt would expose them to be overwhelmed in detail. What, it may be asked, will South Carolina do if she is left alone to fight this battle? There are spirits in her bosom that would willingly perish in defence of her rights. But would it be wise to seek such a destiny, as long as there is hope of succor?

In alluding to Mr. Whitney's project of building a railroad to the Pacific, he says:—The project is one of the most sublime that has ever been conceived by man. One is astounded by its magnitude, and yet with adequate means no one will now question its practicability—nor will it be doubted that, if carried into execution, it would greatly promote the settlement of the wild lands through which it is proposed to carry it, bringing us into communion with our fellow citizens inhabiting those remote regions, and greatly facilitate commerce.

Supposed Murder in Springfield, Mass.—We learn that the body of a machinist named Clark, who was in the employ of the Western Railroad Corporation, at Springfield, was found yesterday morning near the shop in that town, where he worked, with his throat cut most horridly. The circumstance created much excitement in the town, and when our informant left yesterday afternoon, a coroner's jury were investigating the circumstances attending his death. The prevailing opinion in Springfield was, that deceased who, was an inoffensive man, of good and strictly temperate habits, had been most foully murdered by some fiend, who probably mistook him for some other person.—*Boston Advertiser, Dec. 2.*

The Tremendous Gale at Buffalo.

[From the Buffalo Advertiser, Nov. 30.]

We have had more high wind this fall than in any season within our remembrance. Last night—or rather early this morning—we were visited with the severest gale we have experienced since the fall of 1844, at the time of the highest flood known to the "oldest inhabitants." The wind blew from the west, and was at its height from two to five o'clock this morning. The damage done to the buildings, and shipping in the harbor, is considerable, though not serious in any single instance. Much lumber and timber has been displaced from the yards, and quite a large quantity will be lost or destroyed. The water was quite high upon the Flats, though the grading of the streets, particularly Ohio street, and the construction of docks, protected the eastern section of the city to a great extent; yet, notwithstanding these barriers, the water being driven up through the side canals, pretty effectually flooded the low lands. Canal boats were thrown out of the Clark & Skinner and Main and Hamburgh street canals, and left high and dry by the receding of the water. A portion of the floor of the depot of the Buffalo and Attica Railroad was torn up, and wood, and other movable articles in the vicinity, scattered in admirable confusion in every direction. We understand that the water was the highest between six and seven.

On the west side, below the ship canal, the water swept over the space between the lake and canal, and many families occupying the small tenements along the banks were compelled to leave. On the upper side of the canal, the water came up to within a few feet of the gas works, and several boats were thrown out and left upon the land as the gale subsided.

Quite a number of chimnies were blown down, and several buildings unroofed.

The roof of the coal shed of the Gas Works was partially blown off, doing damage to the extent of about $150.

The building owned by George R. Babcock, on Lloyd street and the canal, in which was the law office of Babcock & Welch, was unroofed; as also a portion of Bugbee's steam mills.

The shipping in the harbor sustained much damage by vessels being driven against each other, by which spars and other timbers were broken. One schooner had her sides pretty well jammed in, and several yawl boats were smashed. One schooner came in about half-past seven, when the gale was near its height. She had but a speck of canvass up on her fore spars, but she shot ahead very rapidly, and rounded the pier and came in beautifully. Another passed down the river at the same time.

Although the driving of many poor families from their homes, will cause much suffering, yet no lives have been lost, and the loss of property is trifling.

This gale, as does almost every heavy one, shows the absolute necessity of a sea wall, to protect the canal from ultimate destruction between this city and Black Rock. The lake is making approaches towards it, and something will have to be done to prevent the entire absorption of the strip of land intervening.

[From the Buffalo Courier Dec. 1.]

We have to record one of the most severe gales on Wednesday night and yesterday morning, with which our city has ever been visited. During its greatest height, our citizens were alarmed by repeated cries of "Fire," but happily there was but little damage done by that element. The alarms were mostly caused by chimnies burning out.

The wind was at its height between two and five o'clock in the morning, when very considerable damage was done to the shipping in the harbor and to buildings. The docks protected the eastern portion of the city; still the water was driven through the slips and side canals, flooding the low lands and throwing vessels out of the Clark and Skinner and Main and Hamburg street canals, leaving them high and dry when it receded. It also did considerable damage to lumber lying on the banks of the creek. On the other side, the water came up within a few feet of the gas works.

Of the buildings injured, we notice the depot of the Attica and Buffalo Railroad, the floor of which was torn up; Bugbee's Elevator partly unroofed, and the buildings of Geo. R. Babcock, Esq., wholly unroofed. The loss in the last instance will be $500 or more. The roof of the coal shed of the gas works was also partially blown off, damage $150.

The scene in the vicinity of the Eastern depot, where there are numbers of shanties tenanted by Irish laborers, partook of the painful and amusing. The floors of most of the shanties were entirely submerged and the inmates compelled to put out as fast as possible. Many were very busy in picking up the wood, boxes, and odd ends of lumber that came floating up,—so much competition going on, in fact, as to bring on an occasional "shindy." What became of the shanties appeared to be a matter of no consequence—the wood they must have.

The greatest loss to one poor family seemed to be a brace of fine pigs, the pets and darlings of the household, which lay dead in front of one of the cabins. To the rich the loss would be trifling, but to these hard working laborers it appeared almost irreparable. The distress of the men, women and children, who all joined in the general wailing, was really heartrending. We trust the benevolent will remember the sufferings of these and other unfortunate people who are losers.

The water was at one time seven feet higher than the average. The accidents and injuries to the shipping were, as near as we can learn, as follows:—

The steamer Lexington had her bulwarks, stanchions, yards, &c., carried away by the lower lake schooner Jessie Wood—the bulwarks of the schooner were also torn away, and she was otherwise materially injured, together with the schooner Queen Victoria.

The schooner Green Bay, lying on the west side of the creek, broke loose and carried away the propeller Charter Oak, which, in turn, carried away schooner Blue Bell, damaging the latter vessel to the amount of $400 or $500.

The steamer Queen City, lying at the foot of Commercial street, was run into by the schooner Virginia Purdy, which broke loose from the opposite shore—one of her arches and two state rooms badly injured.

The steamer Hendrik Hudson also broke loose from her moorings and tore up the bulwarks of the brig Globe, but received little damage herself.

The steamer Great Western broke loose and was driven on to the dock, a little above Bugbee's Elevator and is in a bad position—the New England also. The steamers Baltic and Key Stone State were also driven across the creek. The schooner Washington Irving is also high and dry near them.

The brig Paragon and schooner Pilgrim are driven hard on the bank in Kinnie's slip, together with the schooner Eudora. The schooner Commodore Chauncey also broke loose, had her bulwarks stove in, and was considerably injured otherwise.

A couple of vessels were seen going down the Niagara river in the morning, but we have heard nothing from them. One was supposed to be the brig Iowa, but we learn that the Iowa lies a wreck at Point Abino. We may expect to hear of other marine disasters, and, we fear, of loss of life, upon the lakes. The gale here has ceased.

[From the Buffalo Republic, Dec. 1.]

Our city has been visited, since our last, with a gale, which, for its disastrous consequences, is without a parallel, since the disastrous gale of '44. Added to the fears inspired by the wind, were the repeated alarms of fire which occurred since 4 o'clock. We are gratified in being able to announce but little damage from fire. Two wooden shanties, occupied by Irish families, just below the Michigan street bridge, were burnt to the ground. The machines found great difficulty in approaching the scene of conflagration, from the very nature of the ground, it being very low, and at the time covered with water, from the overflowing of the creek. No. 3 was the only machine which actually afforded any assistance. Fifty dollars will cover the entire damage occasioned by the fire, this morning; but the loss from wind was much greater. A three-story brick building situated on Loyd street, opposite Thomas' Exchange, was completely unroofed. Loss at least $500. It is really surprising that there was not some farther damage done by the roof, which was blown a distance of 100 feet. A two-story brick building, on Exchange street, near the freight depot, was also unroofed. Loss considerable. Bugbee's Elevator partially unroofed. A two-story brick building, on the east side of Michigan street, was unroofed. Damage considerable. Much other damage was sustained in different parts of our city, from the fall of chimneys, blowing down of signs, etc. It is yet difficult to ascertain the damage done to the shipping.

The water in the creek was at one time seven feet higher than the average water mark. By the assistance of Capt. Burnett, harbor-master, and from what we could learn from other sources of information, we are enabled to give the following items of marine intelligence:—

The steamer Queen City, lying at the foot of Commercial street, was run into by the schooner Virginia Purdy, which broke from her moorings on the opposite side of the creek, and had one of her arches taken off, and two of her states rooms demolished. She was also otherwise injured.

The steamer Lexington had her bulwarks, stanchions and sails carried away by the Canada lower lake schooner Jessie Wood, which got under her guard. The schooner Queen Victoria and the Wood were considerably injured.

The propeller Charter Oak broke adrift from her moorings, and had a good deal of her upper works carried away.

The schooner Hope was driven into port with great force this morning, but sustained, we believe, no essential damage.

A schooner, name not ascertained, was forced to seek a harbor at Black Rock.

The schooner Pilgrim is lying on her beam ends on a bank in Kinnie's slip.

The Paragon is in the same or worse predicament.

The schooner Eudora is out on a bank in same slip.

The steamers New England, United States, Baltic, and Reed's new boat, the Keystone State, broke loose from their moorings on the south side of the creek, and were driven over to the north side. The United States and New England are high and dry on the north side of the creek.

The brig Globe, steamer Hendrik Hudson, schooner Commodore Chauncey, and two other vessels, broke from their moorings, and the Chauncey had her bulwarks stove in and otherwise injured.

A canal boat is said to have sunk at Tonawanda, loaded with 2,200 bushels of wheat.

There are all the positive disasters we have heard of. We shall doubtless be called upon to chronicle yet more serious ones. The water in the creek is going down, and no further damage is apprehended from the gale. There will undoubtedly be great suffering among the many poor families who are driven from their homes by the high water. In fact, already do we hear of cases of the most heart-rending description. We trust our citizens will extend a helping and timely hand to the sufferers.

Additional Intelligence from the California Gold Region.

[From the New Orleans Picayune, Nov. 24.]

Lieutenant Loeser, U. S. A., arrived here yesterday, in the schooner Desdemona, from Jamaica, with despatches from Gov. Mason, of California, to the U. S. Government. Lieut. Loeser left Monterey in August last, for Payta, in Peru, which place he made in forty days. He came thence by the way of Panama and Jamaica to this city.

In company with Lieut. L. came David Carter, who went out to California in the employment of the government, early in the commencement of the war. From the latter we learn that there was no excitement in California, except that produced by the reports from the gold regions of the Sacramento and its tributaries. The mania for gold digging had reached such a length that it was difficult to procure workmen in Monterey, except at the most extravagant wages. Desertions had taken place from the United States forces, and from the marine, to such an extent that the U. S. ship Ohio had to supply men to take the sloop Warren lower down the coast, out of the way of the infection. From the latter vessel a boat's crew deserted, in open daylight, for the gold regions.

Company F, 3d Artillery, and the dragoons, left at Monterey, had suffered little from desertion, but the citizens generally had gone off in quest of the precious metal.

Lieut. Loeser brings over with him specimens of gold obtained in the valley of the Sacramento. Some of the pieces are the first found in the country. The extent of the gold region has not been ascertained, but the ore has been found in a territory 150 miles in extent and 50 in breadth. Mr. Carter thinks that many of the accounts of the great abundance of the precious metal in the region in which it is found are exaggerations, but that it is discovered in large quantities is absolutely known. He informs us that the ore is procured at some risk and with great labor, yet that it must abound in the country—considering the "quantities" brought to Monterey, and the imperfect means employed in separating it from the soil.

The tract of country constituting the gold region is a level plain. Whether the particles of gold have been washed down from the mountains or heaved up by volcanic force, no one knows, but the latter is generally believed to be the true theory. Mr Carter has himself seen drops of virgin gold weighing two ounces, and there are those who assert they have met with it in bulks of greater weight.

As yet, all attempts to employ capital in procuring gold have resulted disastrously. Those who have organized a company to collect the precious metal have lost their outfits, for the persons hired for such a service invariably leave their employers and set up business on their own account—taking with them the implements entrusted to them. The gold is not confined to the beds of the rivers, but every where within prescribed limits it may be had by digging up the earth, and washing the soil from the metal.

The effect produced in California by this new source of wealth has been anything but beneficial to the colony or advantageous to the public service. The New York volunteers, as soon as they were disbanded, repaired to the gold region, Col. Stevenson with them, and every article of merchandize, food or clothing had risen in value to an exorbitant extent. The epidemic was universal. The crews of whale ships and other commercial vessels had deserted for the enchanted region, as well as the enlisted men in the United States service.

Money in coin, which was plenty enough for all purposes before gold was discovered, had grown so scarce that the duties upon imported goods could not be paid except by hypothecating "dust." Those who could not procure better means of collecting gold, wandered off in its quest with tin pans buckets, and whatever else could be used to separate the metal from the earth by washing.

We annex a letter and a proclamation from Col. Mason, showing the troubles which this gold fever has brought upon the custom house. Our informant thinks it will require a large force to protect the interest of the United States from the depredation of the "diggers," who form the largest, most desperate, and vagrant class of "foreigners" in that territory. Large numbers of them have perished during the sickly season, on account of their reckless course of life and insufficient means of comfortable living.

San Francisco, July 22, 1848.

Sir—We beg leave to submit to your Excellency the proceedings of a meeting held last evening at the City Hotel of this place.

We pray that your Excellency will take into immediate consideration matters of such vital importance to the commercial as well as to the other interests of the country, and will be pleased to forward us your decision at as early a day as your valuable time will allow.

We are, respectfully, your Excellency's most obedient servants,

W. D. M. HOWARD,
C. V. GILLESPIE,
JAMES C. WARD.

To his Exc'y Col. R. B. Mason, Governor of California.

Headquarters Tenth Military Department, Monterey, California, July 31, 1848.

Gentlemen—Your communication of the 22d, together with its enclosure, has been duly received.

I will instruct the Collector at San Francisco to receive gold dust in payment of duties at the custom-house, with the privilege reserved to the payer of redeeming one-half by a payment to the Collector in gold or silver coin, any time within ninety days, and the other half by a like payment, any time within one hundred and eighty days. This, however, is to be a mere temporary arrangement, owing to the present scarcity of coin in the country.

It would give me pleasure to comply fully with the wishes expressed by the public meeting held at San Francisco on the night of the 21st instant, by making the whole redeemable in one hundred and eighty days; but it would have the effect of entirely cutting off the receipt of any available funds in the custom-house for six months to come. That is a longer time than it will be prudent to dry up the only source of revenue that the country affords, and would be too wide a departure from my instructions, which are very positive, to collect the duties "exclusively in gold and silver coin," before the goods, wares or merchandise leave the custody of the Collector; or, in other words, before they are suffered to go into market. I am willing to allow the goods to go at once into the market, and to wait three and six months for the duties—although I am ordered to collect them in cash—provided the gold dust is taken at a rate low enough to make it certain that the merchant will redeem it at the stipulated time, and if he does not, that there will be no doubt that the duties can be realized at once by putting it up at auction, if the money be immediately required. You will readily perceive the situation in which I am placed; a large amount of duties will be received at San Francisco; should some ten or twenty thousand dollars of this gold dust, received at the custom-house—reckoning at the rate per ounce at which it will be received—fail to be redeemed at the stipulated time, and I should be forced by want of funds to throw suddenly this large amount into market, to be sold for cash, and it should not bring that sum, I at once become and am held personally and individually responsible and accountable to the Department at Washington for the loss sustained in consequence of the departure from my orders and instructions.

I am very sure that none of the merchants of your town would desire to see me assume a risk of becoming pecuniarily involved by departing from my instructions for their accommodation; and, therefore, I feel by departing from my orders in this instance, in permitting goods, wares and merchandise to go at once into the market, and waiting three and six months before the duties can be realized, that the precautions I take to guard both the public and myself from any loss, are not unreasonable or greater than the occasion calls for.

I shall strongly recommend in my first communication to the department the immediate establishment of a mint in Upper California. I am, respectfully, your obedient servant, R. B. MASON.
Col 1st Drag., Gov. of California.

To W. D. M. Howard, C. V. Gillespie, James C. Ward, San Francisco, California.

PROCLAMATION.

Headquarters Tenth Military Department, Monterey, California, July 25, 1848.

Whereas many citizens have gone to the gold mines of the Sacramento, without making proper provisions for the families they have left behind them; and whereas many soldiers, tempted by the flattering prospect of sudden wealth, have deserted their colors to go to the same region, regardless of their oaths and obligations to the government, endangering the safety of the garrisons, and thereby the tranquillity of the country, it is made known that unless families are guarded and provided for by their natural protectors, and unless citizens lend their aid to prevent desertions from the garrisons of the country, the military force now in California will be concentrated in the gold region, to the exclusion of all unlicensed persons.

Persons employed at the mines are reminded that up to this time they have enjoyed the high privilege of digging gold on government land, without charge and without hindrance. In return for this privilege, they are bound to assist in apprehending deserters, and in giving notice to the nearest military officer where any are concealed. A dragoon force will soon be at the mining district, and will traverse it in every direction, to arrest deserters from the army and navy, and to apprehend such citizens as harbor or employ them; for these citizens are as culpable as the deserters themselves, and, if arrested, will be tried by a military commission, and punished according to the laws of war. Should the officer in command of this force receive the cordial aid and support of the citizens, he will be enabled to check the serious evil which now threatens the safety of the country. But if citizens are not willing to lend their aid and assistance, but one alternative remains, viz: that of taking military possession of the mining district. It is hoped that there are enough reflecting men at the mines to see how much the prosperity of California will be retarded unless they pursue the course that is pointed out to them.

It is desirable to develope the riches and wealth of California, but the military safety of the country must be secured at all hazards. R. B. MASON,
Col. 1st Dragoons and Gov. of California.

The Population of Illinois.—The election shows that the increase of our population since 1844 has been very great. The aggregate votes polled amount to rising one hundred and thirty thousand; and a comparison of present returns with those of '44, shows that in a large number of the southern counties the voters were not out in force. The result makes it clear that the census of 1850 will give us at least a million of inhabitants.—*Springfield, (Ill.) Register, Nov. 4.*