

Liberty

Hillsborough Recorder

UNION, THE CONSTITUTION AND THE LAWS—THE GUARDIANS OF OUR LIBERTIES.

Vol. XLVII.

HILLSBOROUGH, N. C., WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1867.

No. 24018.

MINORITY REPORT

Of the Judiciary Committee on Impeachment.

Representatives James F. Wilson and Frederick E. Woodbridge handed in a report, dissenting from the conclusions arrived at by a majority of the committee.

They say: On the 3d day of June, 1867, it was declared, by a solemn vote in the committee, that, from the testimony then before them, it did not appear that the President of the United States was guilty of such high crimes and misdemeanors as called for an exercise of the impeaching power of this House. The vote stood—yeas five, nays four. On the 21st instant this action of the committee was reversed, and a vote of five to four declared in favor of recommending to the House an impeachment of the President. Forty-eight hours have not yet elapsed since we were informed of the character of the report which represents this changed attitude of the committee. The recentness of this event compels a general treatment of some features of the case as it is presented by the majority, which otherwise would have been treated of more in detail.

The report of the majority resolves all presumptions against the President, closes the door against all doubts, affirms facts as established by the testimony, in support of which there is not a particle of evidence before us which would be received by any court in the land. We dissent from all of this, and from the temper and spirit of the report. The cool and unbiased judgment of the future, when the excitements in the midst of which we live shall have passed away, will not fail to discover that the political bitterness of the present times has, in no inconsiderable degree, given tone to the document which we decline to approve.

Dissenting, as we do, from the report of the committee, both as to the law of the case and the conclusions drawn from the facts developed by the testimony, a due regard for the body which imposed on us the high and transcendently important duty involved in an investigation of the charges preferred against the President impels us to present at length our views of the subject which has been committed to us by a most solemn vote of the House of Representatives. In approaching this duty we feel that the spirit of the partisan should be laid aside, and that the interests of the Republic, as they are measured by its Constitution and laws, alone should guide us, and we most deeply regret that, in this regard, we cannot approve the report of our colleagues, who constitute a majority of the committee. While we would not charge them with a design to act the part of partisans in this grave proceeding, we nevertheless feel pained by the tone, temper, and spirit of their report. But regrets will not answer the demands of the present grave and commanding occasion, and we therefore respond to them by presenting to the House the results of a careful, deliberate, and, as we hope, a conscientious investigation of the case before us.

Messrs. Wilson and Woodbridge then proceed to discuss the constitutional question with regard to impeachment, &c., showing, by reference to legal authorities, that an impeachment cannot be supported by any act which falls short of an indictable crime or misdemeanor. English precedents are referred to at length, and copious extracts are made from testimony of the committee, in order to refute the reasoning and conclusion of the majority. They conclude as follows:

A great deal of the matter contained in the volume of testimony reported to the House is of no value whatever. Much of it is mere hearsay, opinions of witnesses, and no little amount of it utterly irrelevant to the case. Comparatively a small amount of it could be used on a trial of this case before the Senate. All of the testimony relating to the failure to try, and admission to bail of, Jefferson Davis; the assassination of President Lincoln; the diary of J. Wilkes Booth's place of burial; the practice of pardon brokerage, the alleged correspondence of the President with Jefferson Davis, may be interesting to a reader

but is not of the slightest importance, so far as a determination of this case is concerned. Still, much of this irrelevant matter has been interwoven into the report of the majority, and has served to heighten its color and to deepen its tone. Strike out the stage effect of this irrelevant matter, and the prominence given to the Tudors, the Stuarts, and Michael Burns, and much of the play will disappear. Settle down upon the real evidence in the case, that which will establish, in view of the attending circumstances, a substantial crime, by making plain the elements which constitute it, and the case, in many respects, dwells into a political contest.

In approaching a conclusion, we do not fail to recognize the stand-points from which this case can be viewed—the legal and the political. Viewing it from the former, the case upon the law and the testimony fails. Viewing it from the latter, the case is a success. The President has disappointed the hopes and expectations of those who placed him in power. He has betrayed their confidence, and joined hands with their enemies. He has proved false to the express and implied conditions which underlie his elevation in power, and, in our view of the case, deserves the censure and condemnation of every well-disposed citizen of the Republic. While we acquit him of impeachable crimes, we pronounce him guilty of many wrongs. His contest with Congress has delayed reconstruction, and inflicted vast injury upon the people of the rebel States. He has been blind to the necessities of the times, and to the demands of a progressive civilization. He remains enveloped in the darkness of the past, and seems not to have detected the dawning brightness of the future. Incapable of appreciating the grand changes which the past six years have wrought, he seeks to measure the great events which surround him by the narrow rules which adjusted public affairs before the rebellion and its legitimate consequence destroyed them and established others. Judge him politically, we must condemn him. But the day of political impeachments would be a sad one for this country. Political unfitness and incapacity must be tried at the ballot box, not in the high court of impeachment. A contrary rule might leave to Congress but little time for other business than the trial of impeachments. But we are not now dealing with political offences. Crimes and misdemeanors are now demanding our attention. Do these, within the meaning of the Constitution, appear? Rest the case upon political offences, and we are prepared to pronounce against the President, for such offences are numerous and grave. If Mexican experience is desired, we need have no difficulty, for there almost every election is productive of a revolution. If the people of this Republic desire such a result, we have not yet been able to discover it; nor would we favor it if its presence were manifest. While we condemn and censure the political conduct of the President, and judge him unwise in the use of his discretionary powers, and appeal to the people of the Republic to sustain us, we still affirm that the conclusion at which we have arrived is correct.

We therefore declare that the case before us, presented by the testimony and measured by the law, does not declare such high crimes and misdemeanors, within the meaning of the Constitution, as require the interposition of the constitutional power of this House, and recommend the adoption of the following resolution:

Resolved, That the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from the further consideration of the proposed impeachment of the President of the United States, and that the subject be laid upon the table.

JAMES F. WILSON,
FREDERICK E. WOODBRIDGE.

A fat cow of Durham grade was recently slaughtered in London, which weighed, when killed, 1,950 pounds, and yielded 310 pounds of rough tallow.

The Italian Government has granted universal amnesty to the adherents of Garibaldi.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY UPON THE FINANCES.

This report, always looked for with great interest, is of more general importance at the present than at any former time in the financial history of the country. This report, it will be observed, is made annually by law, not to the President, but to Congress—the body to which is confided the entire subject of revenue, taxation, and the maintenance of the public credit.

The Secretary opens the report with the assurance that the finances of the United States, notwithstanding the continued depreciation of the currency, are in a more satisfactory condition than they were a year ago. Nearly five hundred millions of interest-bearing notes, certificates of indebtedness, and of temporary loans, have been paid or converted into bonds, and the public debt has been reduced by sixty millions.

"The policy of contracting the currency, although not enforced to the extent authorized by law, has prevented an expansion of credits, to which a redundant, and especially a depreciated currency is always an incentive, and has had no little influence in stimulating labor and increasing production. Industry has been steadily returning to the healthy channels from which it was diverted during the war, and although incomes have been small, and trade generally inactive, in no other commercial country has there been less financial embarrassment than in the United States."

A contrast is drawn by the Secretary between the critical condition of the finances at the close of the war and the present comparatively satisfactory state of things. The Secretary relied much upon the authority to issue the seven-thirty Treasury notes. The people, with the zealous and able support of the public press, without distinction of party, promptly took up the entire issue, to the great relief of the Government. The national banks, too, gave efficient aid, by liberal subscriptions, to the effort for the support of the Government credit.

"The condition of the country and the Treasury determined the policy of the Secretary, which has been to convert the interest-bearing notes, temporary loans, &c., into gold-bearing bonds, and to contract the paper circulation by the redemption of United States notes. For the last two years this policy has been steadily, but carefully pursued, and the result, upon the whole, has been satisfactory to the Secretary, and, as he believes, to a majority of the people."

The Secretary suggests, as the time when specie payments may be wholly resumed, the 1st of January, 1869, or, at the farthest, the 1st of July, 1869.

The conditions indispensable for resumption are:

"First. The funding or payment of the balance of interest-bearing notes, and a continued contraction of the paper currency.

"Second. The maintenance of the public faith in regard to the funded debt.

"Third. The restoration of the Southern States in their proper relations to the Federal Government.

"If the opinion be correct, the question of permanent specie payments, involving as it does the prosperity of the country, underlies the great question of currency, taxation, and reconstruction, which are now engaging the attention of the people, and cannot fail to receive the earnest and deliberate attention of Congress."

The Secretary proceeds to discuss, with great force and clearness, the great question of a return to a specie standard. The views presented by him in his report two years ago, in favor of a return to specie payments, were promptly approved by a resolution of the House of Representatives, and seemed to be heartily responded to by the people. Congress limited the extent of contraction, and the Secretary has conformed with it, continuing the reduction, with the exception of some months, when the state of business rendered it injudicious.

The continuation of this policy he considers as obviously wise, and proceeds to show that it has had the happiest re-

sults. He refers especially to the demoralizing influences of unconvertible Government currency, to which no one can be blind.

The report goes into an argument to show that the contraction should be applied to the legal tenders, rather than to the national bank notes. It does not approve the proposition of substituting the legal tenders for national bank notes, and recommends that the policy of contraction be continued.

In connection with the permanent resumption of specie payments, the report treats the subject of the preservation of the national faith, wise and stable revenue laws, vigorously enforced, economy in the public expenditures, and a recognition of the obligation of the Government to pay its bonds in accordance with the understanding under which they were issued.

Commerce and industry cannot thrive, nor can national faith be kept without a resumption of specie payments. He says:

"An irredeemable currency is a financial disease which retards growth instead of encouraging it; which stimulates speculation, but diminishes labor. A healthy growth is to be secured by the removal of the disease, and not by postponing the proper treatment of it in the expectation that the vigorous constitution of the patient will eventually overcome it."

The excessive duties levied upon some foreign imports are shown to be very prejudicial to our foreign commerce, navigation, and ship-building. Reduction is recommended of such duties.

As to the internal revenue, he recommends the system of reduction proposed by Mr. D. A. Wells.

The Secretary makes a statement to show that it was the design and understanding of Congress that the five twenties be paid in gold, both interest and principal.

Upon the popular question of taxing the United States securities, the Secretary sympathizes with the view that they ought to pay a share of the public burden. He proposes a plan for this purpose, as follows:

"After giving the subject careful consideration, the Secretary can suggest no better way of doing it than by an issue of bonds to be known as the consolidated debt of the United States, bearing six per cent. interest, and having twenty years to run, into which all other obligations of the Government shall as rapidly as possible be converted—one sixth part of the interest at each semi-annual payment to be reserved by the Government and paid over to the States, according to their population. By this means all the bonds, wherever held, would be taxed alike, and a general distribution of them be secured. Such taxes, including the levies for the county and municipal purposes, now, as a general thing, exceed one per cent., but when the debts incurred for the payment of bounties are paid, (and in most of the States they are already in the process of rapid extinction,) and economy is again practiced in the administration of State affairs, this indirect assessment will be quite likely to equal the tax assessed upon other property. If the debt to be funded shall amount to \$2,000,000,000, the amount to be reserved and paid to the State annually would be \$20,000,000, which would give to each of the States, in gold, the sums named in the report."

Among recent "strikes" is a strike of Queen Victoria against the London butchers. She refuses to pay them for her establishment the large prices they have been exacting. This course, which was taken to benefit the poor, has already, it is said, produced a perceptible reduction in the price of meats in the markets of England.

Four hundred bushels of potatoes to the acre are said to be an average crop this season in Oxford county, Maine. A starch mill in Andover has ground twenty-five thousand bushels of them into starch already, this year.

The Munich (Conn.) Bulletin says that the largest cotton-manufacture in the world is building at Tuffville, near that place.