

Randolph Regulator.

GOVERNMENT WAS INSTITUTED FOR THE GOOD OF THE GOVERNED.

VOL. I.

ASHEBORO, NORTH CAROLINA, WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 13, 1876.

NUMBER 33.

THE RANDOLPH REGULATOR.

PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY BY THE RANDOLPH PUBLISHING CO. OFFICE—2 DOORS EAST OF THE COURT HOUSE.

One Year, postage paid, \$2 00 Six Months, postage paid, \$1 00

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SAMUEL J. TILDEN.

Reply of Hon. ABRAM S. HEWITT to the Attack of Mr. Kasson, in the House of Representatives, August 15, 1876.

Mr. HEWITT, of New York. Mr. Speaker, to me the speech which the gentleman from Iowa delivered this evening was a painful surprise and a melancholy experience. If I had not heard it, I could not have believed that a gentleman of his intellectual endowments could so far abdicate his own self-respect and forfeit the good opinion of his fellow members in this House as to have indulged in the partisan and, I am sorry to add, the malicious statements which he has made in regard to Governor Tilden. I confess that I do not intend to make any elaborate reply to what he has said in this House. I approach the subject as I would take hold of a slimy snake, with a desire to get rid of it at the earliest possible moment. But charges were made against me whom I have known for so many years and with such intimacy that it seems to me I have no other course to take than to brand the charges as utterly false before this House and before the country.

Mr. PAER. Which charges does the gentleman from New York mean?

Mr. HEWITT, of New York. I will state the charges; I was going to state them. The first charge was that Governor Tilden had been a secessionist, and there were quoted as authority for that assertion statements and passages from an open letter to the late Judge Kent, dated in 1860. The gentleman from Iowa possesses only extracts from that letter. He was good enough to allow me to look at those extracts.—Now, I have only to say in regard to that letter that neither the gentleman from Iowa nor any other person can understand the true purport and bearing of it without having the entire letter before him and without having some reference to the circumstances under which it was written. It is not saying much that since 1860 a great many people in this country have had their theories of government changed and their ideas of political duties enlarged. It is possible that in 1860, before the late strife, Governor Tilden may have entertained views in common with Jefferson, Madison and Jackson, and other great men who have given construction to the Constitution and Government of this country, which now would be modified. But all that I can see in the extract which he read relates rather to that era of the Government when the States were bound together, not by the Constitution, but by the Articles of Confederation.

The next charge that the gentleman made against Governor Tilden was in exactly these words: "That he was a disunionist." When the question was pressed home to him he traveled around the point a little, but still the charge remained that he was a disunionist. I do not know upon what he based that charge. I can only say that at the outbreak of the rebellion I was in daily and almost in hourly communion with him, and I know that no more loyal or patriotic heart beat in the United States at that date; and when the gentleman from Iowa challenges his friends to say when and where he ever made any contribution to the Union cause or ever assisted a soldier to the war, I answer him by saying that when the first call

for troops came, Tammany Hall, which had not then fallen into the hands of the ring, raised a regiment, and the grand sashem of Tammany Hall, William D. Kennedy, was colonel of the regiment. It was officered mostly by members of the Tammany Society, and being myself a member and from the state of my health unable to go to the war, although I rendered other services, I sent my nephew as one of the officers of that regiment.

Mr. LAPHAM. Will the gentleman allow me to ask him a question?

Mr. HEWITT. Yes, sir.

Mr. LAPHAM. Does not the gentleman know that the call for the meeting at Cooper Institute immediately after the fall of Fort Sumter was presented to Mr. Tilden for him to sign and he refused to sign it and refused to attend the meeting?

Mr. HEWITT, of New York. I will answer that question that it is not true that he refused to sign the call, and that it is true that he did attend the meeting, [applause,] and I defy that gentleman to bring any authority for the charge he has insinuated.

Mr. LAPHAM. It is a fact as well known in the State of New York as any other facts in its history.

Mr. HEWITT, of New York. It is not so. Mr. Samuel Sloan, the present president of the Delaware and Lackawanna Railroad Company, then a member of the Union safety committee of New York, applied to Mr. Tilden, at a time when he was engaged in the trial of a case before a referee, to affix his name to the call; and he said, "I am very busy just now; send me the resolutions after I am out of this case, and if they are entirely proper I will sign the call." When the meeting took place he attended it. The call was never sent to him and he never refused to sign it; but like the prudent and sagacious man which he is, desired to know the nature of the resolutions. They did receive his absolute and unqualified approval.

Now I say that Tammany Hall raised a regiment, and that Governor Tilden was a contributor, and a large contributor, to the fund required to fit out the regiment.

Mr. CONGER. How much?

Mr. HEWITT, of New York. I am not going to quote dollars and cents. Patriotism is above dollars and cents in some quarters; but enough was raised by the democrats of the city to fit out a regiment without asking assistance from the Government of the United States or from the city of New York. [Applause.] Now so much for the charge of his being a disunionist.

Mr. CONGER. Will the gentleman allow me ask him one question?

Mr. HEWITT, of New York. Certainly. I am here to answer questions.

Mr. CONGER. It is denied in the public press that Governor Tilden ever contributed any money whatever to the raising of any regiment or corps of the Army. Will the gentleman state to the House when and where and what amount he ever did contribute?

Mr. HEWITT, of New York. I state when, when I say the Tammany regiment was raised; and I state where, in the city of New York; and I state how much, for I do not know the exact amount, but it was all he was asked to give, and the Democrats did not beg, carrying the hat around among the Republicans, [laughter,] and certainly we did not get any help from Michigan. Subsequently to this period, I know of no man in New York who was more frequently called into counsel there and in Washington during the troublous times of the war, and when there was delay in raising the men required to recruit the armies of the United States I know that twice he was called for by President Lincoln and came to Washington and held careful consultation with him, resulting in the early and rapid filling of the quota from the State of New York. And I know that during no period of the whole of that trying time was there ever a doubt expressed in the city of New York in any quarter as to the loyalty and patriotism of Samuel J. Tilden.

The gentleman from Iowa says that when Mr. Tilden went to the Chicago convention he was in favor of a reso-

lution practically declaring that the war was a failure and ought to be brought to an end. That gentleman must have known, if he reads the newspapers, that within a very recent period, certainly within a month, there has been made public a positive statement from Mr. Manton Marble, who was the secretary of the committee on resolutions, that Governor Tilden opposed the resolution of which the gentleman from Iowa speaks; that he opposed it publicly and in private. It is within my own knowledge that after the nomination was tendered to General McClellan, Governor Tilden urged him to make such a declaration in his letter of acceptance as would nullify that portion of the Chicago platform.

Mr. RANDALL. Which was "the Union at all hazards." Those were the words.

Mr. HEWITT, of New York. Those were the words inserted in McClellan's letter. Now the gentleman from Iowa says that there never was any occasion in which Governor Tilden made a declaration in favor of the Union or the prosecution of the war for its preservation. If that gentleman would study the records of the Chicago convention for the sake of doing justice, as he has evidently studied them for the sake of doing injustice, to Governor Tilden, he would find that in that convention, and before the New York delegation, in an open meeting, Governor Tilden said that the adjustment of the controversy between the North and the South on any other basis than the restoration of the Union was impossible; that the moment any party went out of the Union the questions must be settled by war, and the war must be prosecuted until the questions were settled.

These were his declarations, published in the Chicago and New York papers at the very date of the Chicago convention, and fortunately for the gentleman, who likes very recent and modern literature, he can find those declarations repeated in a sketch published in the Louisville Courier-Journal on the 25th of April last. That is my answer to the statement of the gentleman from Iowa, that Governor Tilden never made any declaration in favor of the prosecution of the war, and that he was a disunionist.

We now come down to the next charge, that Governor Tilden was the associate of William M. Tweed on a democratic committee, that he levied a contribution on William M. Tweed of \$5,000, and that he issued a circular in combination with William M. Tweed, intended to promote the fraudulent election of a Governor of the State of New York.

It is true that Governor Tilden was chairman of the democratic committee of the State of New York; and it is also true that William M. Tweed was a member of that committee.—And if the gentleman knows anything about the organization of such committees in the State of New York, he knows that each district nominates and sends its own member; that Governor Tilden had no more to do with the appointment of William M. Tweed as a member of that committee than he has to do with the man who is supposed to regulate the moon. He was there rightfully, a member of the committee, and at the time he was so acting he had not achieved the bad eminence which he subsequently attained and which he now occupies.

No contribution was ever levied upon Mr. Tweed. Mr. Tweed did as other people have done, as I myself have done, and as I have no doubt the gentleman from Iowa has done, sent a contribution to the fund required by the committee to carry on the State election. That was levying no contribution.

Then as to the issue of that circular, the lie has been nailed here by my colleague [Mr. Cox.] If any man doubts whether that declaration of Governor Tilden, which has been read, was published in the Evening Post of the 4th of November, 1868, the files are accessible to them. I saw it with my own eyes; I know it was then

published. I know that not more than twenty-four hours elapsed from the time the charge was made in the Evening Post, and it was first made in that paper, until the denial was made in the same paper. That denial I here insert:

CARD FROM MR. TILDEN.

To the Editor of the Evening Post:

SIR: My attention has been called to an article in your journal of last evening containing a circular to which my name is appended. I hasten to assure you that you will not lose your reputation as critics by assuming, on internal evidence, as you have correctly done, that no such paper was ever written, signed, issued, or authorized by me, or with any participation or knowledge on my part. I have read it for the first time in your columns; but I have no reason to believe that it had any such evil purpose as you suspect. For myself, I refused in 1844 to sign the famous secret circular relating to Texas, which is celebrated in the history of the Evening Post, though I might have been tempted by the illustrious association in which I should have found myself. Neither before that nor since have I ever been concerned in any circular marked "secret," "confidential," or "private," nor shall I be, unless I should adopt that device for the purpose of getting some valuable truth, disguised in such a form, secured a wide publicity in the Evening Post and all the Republican newspapers.

Very truly yours,
S. J. TILDEN.
New York, November 4, 1868.

Mr. FOSTER. Was it ever known who perpetrated that forgery on Governor Tilden?

Mr. HEWITT, of New York. Nothing was ever known positively about it except that Mr. Tweed was probably the person who sent out that circular. I have never heard that there is any positive evidence to that effect. Bad as he is, unhappy as he is to-day for his crimes, I hesitate to charge him with a new crime without evidence. In that respect I hope the gentleman from Iowa will follow my example.

Mr. CANNON, of Illinois. Does the gentleman claim that the circular was issued for an improper purpose?

Mr. HEWITT, of New York. I do not know whether it was proper or improper; but I say it was charged to be improper by the gentleman from Iowa.

Mr. CANNON, of Illinois. I believe Mr. Tilden claims in his letter that it was not improper.

Mr. HEWITT, of New York. This was in 1868. Subsequently the ring, perhaps beginning their corrupt practices at that time for aught I know to the contrary, became so powerful in New York that they threatened to drive out and succeeded in driving out almost every decent man from the democratic party of that city.

Governor Tilden for more than three years, like a sleuth-hound upon the scent, followed these people patiently, secretly, diligently, spending that money of which the gentleman from Iowa thinks he is so parsimonious with a most liberal hand; yes, with a magnificence of liberality that no private citizen has ever exhibited in this country in the performance of a public duty not imposed by any obligation of law. I was with him in those transactions; I know what he did; I know his untiring efforts day and night; I know how he tracked these people to their dens of iniquity and finally dragged them forth to public execration; and not stopping there he has pursued them until they are either in prison or in exile, and judgments amounting to millions of dollars have been taken against them, and over \$600,000 in one case has been restored to the treasury of the city of New York. [Applause.]

Mr. SPRINGER. That conduct of Governor Tilden is a warning to all such people, and accounts for much of the opposition to his election.

Mr. DAVY. Will my colleague [Mr. HEWITT] allow me just one question?

Mr. HEWITT, of New York. Certainly.

Mr. DAVY. Did not Mr. Tilden meet with Mr. Tweed as delegate in the State convention which convened at Rochester a long time after these oc-

currences, and after the frauds of Mr. Tweed had been exposed, and did Mr. Tilden raise his voice against Mr. Tweed taking a seat in that convention?

Mr. HEWITT, of New York. My colleague [Mr. Cox] was a delegate to that convention and can answer better than I can.

Mr. DAVY. I asked the gentleman who is addressing the House.

Mr. HEWITT, of New York. Certainly, but I yield to my colleague for an answer to that question, because he was an eye-witness, and an eye-witness is better than any second-hand testimony.

Mr. COX. I was a delegate to that convention along with Governor Tilden and the other delegates named from the different districts.

A MEMBER. To which convention?

Mr. COX. To the Rochester Convention, to which my colleague [Mr. DAVY] has referred.

A MEMBER. In what year?

Mr. COX. I think in 1871.

Mr. DAVY. Does my colleague refer to the judicial convention or State convention?

Mr. COX. I refer to the only time a convention ever met there.

Mr. DAVY. O, no; conventions met there several times. The judicial convention met there.

Mr. COX. Not of recent years. Let me answer the gentleman's question. I know that Mr. Tilden's efforts drove William M. Tweed out of that convention.

Mr. DAVY. I asked the gentleman whether Mr. Tilden raised his voice in that convention against Mr. Tweed taking a seat.

Mr. COX. There was no necessity for his doing so, because Mr. Tweed was not in the convention.

Mr. HEWITT, of New York. Mr. Tweed had no seat in that convention.

Mr. DAVY. Was any resolution passed in that convention against the Tweed delegation taking seats?

Mr. HEWITT, of New York. The question which the gentleman asked me was whether Mr. Tilden protested against Mr. Tweed taking a seat. Mr. Tweed took no seat in that convention.

Mr. DAVY. That is not the question I put to the gentleman. I asked him whether Mr. Tilden ever raised his voice in that convention against Mr. Tweed taking a seat.

Mr. RANDALL. He did not have a seat in that convention.

Mr. HEWITT, of New York. I can give a satisfactory answer to the gentleman's question. I can say to him that Mr. Tweed at that time knew that Governor Tilden was his bitter enemy; and Governor Tilden knew that Mr. Tweed was trying to crush him; and, as the gentleman knows perfectly well, if it had not been for the staunch support and absolute confidence which the rural democracy of the State of New York extended to Governor Tilden, he would have been driven from chairmanship of the State committee, as Mr. Tweed threatened he should be. But he was kept there by the honest democrats of the State of New York until he had pulled down and destroyed this temple of iniquity and driven these scoundrels out of the places they disgraced.

Mr. DAVY rose.

Mr. HEWITT, of New York. Now I am not going to be interrupted and cross-questioned.

Mr. DAVY. I have one more question I would like my colleague to answer.

Mr. HEWITT, of New York. I will answer; but I want to say that I am an utterly unpracticed speaker. I have never before addressed a body like this without notes for anything like this length of time. If gentlemen are putting these questions with the purpose of disconcerting me, they ought to have more respect for themselves.

Mr. DAVY. I hope my colleague does not attribute any such motive to me.

A MEMBER (to Mr. HEWITT). You can hold your own very well.

Mr. DAVY. I want the naked facts of this case.

Mr. HEWITT, of New York. The

bare, naked fact is this: There was war, "war to the knife," between Gov. Tilden and Mr. Tweed; and it ended in the defeat and exile of Mr. Tweed. [Loud applause.] That is all there is about it.

I call this House to witness that I have answered and am willing to answer every question of a substantive character bearing upon the merits of this case which any man can ask me. But when gentlemen undertake to chatechise me about petty matters of details I must decline to answer.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is perfectly notorious, and certainly no man in his senses, no fair and just man, will ever for a moment intimate that there was the slightest intimacy, personal or political, at any time between Samuel J. Tilden and William M. Tweed. There never was, sir. There was that association which comes from the enforced appointment of men on committees and of their living in the same community and belonging to the same party; but the one man stood in the community above and beyond reproach, and the other was always an object of suspicion and finally of detestation.

Mr. DAVY rose.

Mr. HEWITT, of New York. I will not be interrupted more. I show a disposition to answer all reasonable questions, and I decline to be interrupted any more. Now the gentleman from Iowa—

Mr. LAPHAM. The gentleman is speaking by the grace of this side of the house.

Mr. HEWITT, of New York. I am not speaking by the grace of anybody but of my own colleague and my constituents. Now, the gentleman from Iowa indulged in one insinuation of so mean and despicable a character that I almost hesitate to refer to it. If he could have blushed—and I looked into his face as I sat near him of purpose—if he were capable of blushing he would have blushed then, but he did not. He insinuated that the private fortune of the Governor Tilden had been acquired by some dishonorable, and he did not dare to say dishonest, but he implied it, dishonest practices in connection with railways and corporations. Now, when a man makes an insinuation of that sort he should be prepared with proof. It is a mean, unmanly, dishonorable charge for any man to make behind the back of another man who is not here to answer. But I can tell that gentleman, and I hope his own record is as clear and as good, that Governor Tilden was called from 1857 to 1860 into almost every broken-down railway corporation in the West; that while he found them unable to pay even running expenses, he took them in hand and so administered them that in every case the bonds, whether first, second, or third mortgage, and the stock, preferred and common, all ultimately went above par; and he enriched the people that were wise enough and fortunate enough to have secured his services. I am personally among the numbers of those who were benefited by his wise and sagacious management; and I say so far from having been overpaid in any of these transactions, that his legal fees and his personal services were the cheapest and most poorly rewarded I have ever known in a long business career, dealing in large transactions in all parts of this country and in Europe.

I defy these gentlemen to lay their hands upon a dishonest dollar in the possession of Samuel J. Tilden. I say that the people whom he served are his friends to-day, and his best friends. And it is the service there which he rendered to the West, notwithstanding the insinuations of the gentleman from Iowa, that will give him the vote of those great Western States within whose borders he reconstructed highways which are to them to-day the arteries of commerce and public blessings, the value of which cannot be properly estimated.

And as through the whole of his remarkable career he has been the wisest of men, he has been the truest of friends, he has been the most zealous and earnest of patriots, so to-day he is the wisest, the most accomplished statesman in the land, and he will, by the blessing of God, be one of the greatest, perhaps the greatest of the Presidents of the United States, because he will have the opportunity to rescue this Government from the hands of the incompetent and dishonest men who have controlled it so long, and made it a reproach in the eyes of the civilized globe. [Great applause.]