

THE CIPHER DISPATCHES.

In the Summer of 1878 THE NEW-YORK TRIBUNE found itself in possession of a mass of telegraphic dispatches which had passed between certain leaders of the Democratic party in New-York City and their confidential agents in various contested States, at the time of the canvass of the electoral vote in 1876. The whole number of these dispatches was not far from 400. About half of them were in plain English; these, although they were sometimes useful in determining the meaning of messages of another kind, related generally to transactions of little importance. The rest were in cipher, and a slight examination was sufficient to show that they covered political secrets of the first consequence.

We first began dealing seriously with these dispatches during the Summer of 1878. The fact that the publication of the famous "Gobble" message had soon brought forward a person familiar with the cipher in which it was sent, led to the belief that a similar result might be reached again. Specimens of the various ciphers were accordingly published, from time to time, accompanied with comments intended to attract to them wide attention. Our hope, however, was completely disappointed. No one seemed to know the key. Absolutely no help came from any quarter. All manner of suggestions were received, and many were tried, but none proved in the end to be of the slightest practical value, save a single one communicated by Secretary Evarts. That gentleman suggested that possibly a thorough student of pure mathematics might be able to divine a law on which the ciphers were constructed. Copies of a few of the dispatches were thereupon sent to a mathematical professor in a distant city who had kindly offered to attempt a translation, on the condition that his name should under no circumstances be made public; and although (having comparatively little material to work with) he did not succeed in discovering the system upon which the ciphers were constructed, and never sent a single translation until after the same thing had been translated in the office, his work had, nevertheless, considerable value, as corroborating the results attained by others before they had reached the point where their work proved itself.

Finally, I committed a large number of the dispatches to Mr. John K. G. Hassard, chief of THE TRIBUNE staff, and a serious and determined effort for their translation was fairly begun. Shortly afterward, Colonel William M. Grosvenor, also of THE TRIBUNE staff, who had become greatly interested in the specimen dispatches thrown out, asked for a chance at the same work, and a considerable number of the dispatches were confided to him. These gentlemen at first worked independently of each other, and without communication. For a time both groped blindly, if not hopelessly, in what seemed the impenetrable darkness of the ciphers. About the same date each began to get glimpsings of the system on which the double cipher was constructed. When, after weeks of labor, they first compared notes, Mr. Hassard had found two transposition keys and was just finishing a third, while Colonel Grosvenor had found three others. The system being thus discovered, the rest were found much more rapidly. The last was discovered by both gentlemen on the same evening, the one working at Litchfield, Conn., the other at Englewood, N. J. Each hastened to transmit the key to me, and the two letters came upon my table the next day within an hour of each other.

A dictionary cipher baffled research much longer. Its character was easily determined in the office, but the dictionary on which it was constructed could not be found. One circumstance, however, at last demonstrated that the dictionary in question must be one of the editions of Webster, for one or two words occurred in some of the dispatches sent in this cipher which were not found in any of the modern English dictionaries, excepting Webster's. Mr. Isaac N. Ford, of THE TRIBUNE Staff, had meantime laboriously gone through forty or fifty dictionaries of all sorts and sizes, omitting, unluckily, the very one which had at first been suspected, for the reason that it happened to be the only one not on the shelves of the downtown bookstore where these searches were made. Just as the hunt was narrowed down to this particular dictionary, the mathematical professor telegraphed that this dictionary was the basis of the key, and in twenty-four hours the ciphers it contained were unlocked.

After the main work had been done, a number of dispatches among local politicians at the South, apparently of minor importance, sent in ciphers of a different character from any previously translated, were attacked by Mr. Hassard. Among these were the double number and the double letter ciphers. I had intrusted in all about 400 dispatches to Mr. Hassard and Colonel Grosvenor. When they had finished their labors only three of that whole collection remained untranslated. These are in ciphers of which there are no other examples, and they have not yet been mastered.

Valuable aid was rendered by many of the younger gentlemen in the office, and as the hunt became keener, almost the entire Staff took part in it. The credit of translation, however, belongs absolutely to Mr. Hassard and Colonel Grosvenor. They received no assistance from any outside quarter, excepting from the mathematical professor before mentioned, and received from him no translation whatever, and no important clue, until after they had discovered it themselves.

W. R. Tribune Office, January 14, 1879.

SECRET HISTORY OF THE ELECTORAL CANVASS IN 1876.

The history of the electoral crisis in November and December, 1876, as disclosed by the cipher dispatches of the Democratic leaders and their secret agents, covers a period of about twenty-eight days, from the 5th of November, when it first became apparent that the Presidency depended upon the count of the vote in two or three doubtful States, until the 6th of December, when the electoral ballots were duly cast for Hayes and Wheeler. By deciphering these telegrams THE TRIBUNE has discovered that agents were at once sent out from No. 15 Gramercy Park, the residence of Mr. Samuel J. Tilden, to South Carolina, Florida and Louisiana, and that others, at the West, received telegraphic orders to proceed immediately to Oregon, in order to "capture" one or all of those States for the Democratic candidate. They all resorted to bribery, communicating to Mr. Tilden's nephew, Colonel W. T. Pelton, the particulars of the bargains they concluded, and receiving from him a distinct and formal approval.

I. In Florida the secret agents were Manton Marble, C. W. Woolley, and John F. Coyle. Marble communicated to Gramercy Park, first a proposition for the purchase of the Florida Returning Board at the price of \$200,000. That was rejected as extravagant, and the figure was reduced to \$50,000, at which price Colonel Pelton signified his willingness to close the transaction. It fell through in consequence of a delay in the receipt of the message of acceptance.

2. In South Carolina the purchasing agent was Smith M. Weed. He telegraphed to Colonel Pel-

ton, on the very day of his arrival at Columbia, a proposal to buy the Canvassing Board for \$30,000; to which Pelton appears to have readily assented. This figure was too low, and the negotiation, after lasting six days, was closed at the price of \$80,000. It was arranged that Weed should meet a messenger at Baltimore, who was to carry the money in three packages; and he particularly requested that Colonel Pelton should act as this messenger himself. Weed accordingly arrived in Baltimore from Columbia on the 20th of November, and Pelton arrived there at the same time from New-York; but again a little delay upset the scheme. Subsequently a plot was formed to buy four members of the South Carolina Legislature, for \$20,000, and having thus obtained control of the State Government, to put the Hayes electors in jail, and lock them up in separate cells until the day for casting the electoral votes had passed. The result of this villainy would have been to deprive South Carolina of any vote, and to throw the choice of a President into the House of Representatives, which would have elected Tilden. The plan failed because the four members could not be bought.

3. In Oregon the Democratic Governor withheld a certificate from one of the Hayes electors on the ground of ineligibility, and, instead of allowing the other electors to fill the vacancy, gave the certificate to a Tilden elector named Cronin, who had clearly been defeated. The secret agent in Oregon was one J. N. H. Patrick. He telegraphed to Colonel Pelton that it was necessary to "purchase a Republican elector to recognize and act with" Cronin, and the price was \$5,000. This proposal likewise was accepted, and the money was sent to Oregon, where it arrived only on the 6th of December, just too late to be of any use.

THE CASE OF MR. TILDEN.

A scene of intense dramatic interest was witnessed at the Fifth Avenue Hotel on Saturday. In a low, dark room, excessively hot and densely packed, the whole world sat at the reporters' tables, or crowded close with note-book in hand, to catch the faint whispers that fell from a worn and haggard old man. With the look of a corpse except in moments of excitement, with slow, far-away voice and slow, painful movements, drooping left eyelid, parchment-like cheeks, and quivering hand, Mr. Tilden repeated his statement, evidently prepared with great care, in a voice much of the time hardly audible four feet away. His manner showed intense and increasing nervous excitement, by great effort restrained; the body rose and fell in the seat incessantly, as if he were trying in vain to rise, and the seemingly half useless left arm shook like a leaf. Then the excitement burst restraint, the face flushed almost purple, the lip quivered, the right arm repeatedly smote the table with great force and passion, and the voice rang through the room with painful intensity, like the shriek of a drowning man. After every such effort, the sentence died away, as if the voice were stopped by closing waters. The effect was almost that of a death-bed declaration. Had the matter thereof equalled in force the solemnity of manner, this declaration would have had a great effect. Not, indeed, that the people would have been more ready to lift to the Presidency a man so broken, and so manifestly living only in bitter and torturing memories. But the matter was by no means equal to the manner in impressiveness, nor could any unprejudiced hearer avoid contrasting the declarations of Mr. Tilden with his own admitted conduct toward men whose deeds fill a dark page in the history of the country.

Mr. Tilden's testimony was doubtless as strong as, after four months of preparation and consultation, it was possible to make it. That it was not exceedingly strong was due to the inherent and insuperable difficulties of his position. It was not possible for him to state that, in respect to Weed, Marble, Woolley, Coyle or Pelton, either in watching their doings, knowing their character as he did, or in reproaching their acts when they became known to him, his conduct was consistent with the spotless virtue and unwavering purpose which he professed. It was not possible for him wholly to conceal that low moral tone which half excused Pelton for trying to buy votes, because he was swift to believe without evidence that others had done or attempted the same thing. His only intense feeling was not wrath because of crimes committed, but wrath because of loss sustained. Pelton was tolerated and kept when he was known to have done wrong. Years afterward he was disowned with indignation only when the public had found him out.

Mr. Tilden's declaration of his ignorance of corrupt negotiations seems as broad, full and emphatic as it could be. If there were mental reservations, as it now appears there were in his published card of October last, of such character that an exact statement of truth had the public effect of a statement that was false, they do not yet appear. He claims to have had no knowledge that Pelton was communicating in cipher with the Democratic agents at the South; no knowledge that Weed had gone to South Carolina, until he returned; no knowledge that Woolley had gone to Florida, or Patrick to Oregon; no knowledge of any corrupt proposal as to South Carolina, until it was arrested by Mayor Cooper's refusal to provide money for it, and no knowledge even then or afterward of the true nature of the negotiations in that State or the others. These assertions, if fully believed, acquit Mr. Tilden of one charge only to convict him of another quite as fatal to his position as a Presidential candidate. For they are to be compared with certain facts now fully established:

I. Mr. Tilden knew W. T. Pelton thoroughly. Democratic newspapers, by way of preparing the stage for the wilderness, are accumulating proof that Pelton's conduct, especially in regard to money matters, had been such that no confidence could be placed in his integrity, and these denials were best known to Governor Tilden, who had suffered by them. Yet at a most critical and delicate time, when "the air was full of rumors of corruption," as Mr. Tilden himself testifies, he did suffer Pelton to conduct the confidential communication between New-York and the Democratic agents at the South. He knew that corrupt proposals must reach such a man. A word from him to Mr. Hewitt, Mr. Cooper, or Mr. Pelton himself, would have stopped such communication, and caused all proper agents of the party at the South to be warned to communicate only with Mr. Hewitt. If he had ever said, "Pelton is indiscreet, and may make scandal," or "Pelton is corrupt, and may buy or promise to buy," there would have been an end. Mr. Tilden admits, and the world knows, that he did not speak that word. Why not?

II. Mr. Tilden knew Weed, Woolley, Coyle and Marble. He had seen under the veneering, and knew Marble for the Joseph Surface of the age. He had been the chairman of the Democratic State Committee in 1868, and necessarily knew of Mr. Woolley's part in the impeachment of Johnson. He had been Governor, and necessarily knew the proclivities of the most skilled lobbyist at Albany. It was his duty to know whether such men represented the Democratic National Committee, at the very points where corruption was most probable.

III. It is absolutely impossible that Samuel J. Tilden was ignorant of all the cipher telegrams which came from the South, unless he made an effort to be ignorant. It was his habit and his very nature to give extraordinary attention to the details of political contests. If it is true that he did not get constant reports from the men sent South, it can only be because he suddenly made an extraordinary effort to suppress natural anxiety and impatience, and to put behind him the habits of a

lifetime, in order not to know who was telegraphing, and to whom, and what about. That Colonel Pelton had been in charge of correspondence, not because he was trusted by the committee, but because he was thought to represent Mr. Tilden, was of necessity known to Mr. Tilden from the angry attacks of Democratic papers upon the "Bureau of Nincompoops." If Mr. Tilden did not find out what his nephew was doing, it was because he was determined not to know.

IV. Confronted with the fact that Colonel Pelton had asked aid in crime from Mr. Cooper, it was not possible for Mr. Tilden to let the bargain go on without making it his own, in the eyes of Messrs. Cooper and Hewitt. But when Pelton was recalled, why did Mr. Tilden ask no questions? He swears "it was not necessary." Yet Pelton remained as before in charge of telegraphic correspondence of the Committee. Mr. Tilden, even then, did not stop that, nor try to stop it, nor make the slightest effort to know what had been done, or would be done during the weeks that still remained. All this scandal proves the falsity of the answer, "it was not necessary" to ask. Had he asked at that time, November 21, and stopped the telegraphing, or caused Mr. Hewitt to see the telegrams, the second job in South Carolina, and all the jobs in Florida, Oregon and Louisiana, would have been prevented. He did not ask nor utter a word to prevent them. Why?

V. At that time, about November 21, it became known to Mr. Tilden what Smith Weed had been doing. He now swears that he "took Weed to task" for taking part in such transactions, after Weed's return. But after that the second job in South Carolina was arranged by Weed himself, by telegram from New-York. After that, and as late as December 4, the extraordinary legal dispatch was sent to South Carolina—"Important judgment on quo warranto to be obtained Thursday. If order to deliver paper appearance to office be disobeyed, immediately commit for contempt, or if the right of electors attempt the exercise of authority by meeting, attach for contempt. Prepare beforehand and enforce immediately would be appropriate. Would be humane to imprison them separately during Wednesday. All probably depends on your State. Leave nothing undone." Verily, "the voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau."

VI. Mr. Tilden claims that it was safe to let Pelton alone because he could get no money. But this is patently untrue. Pelton did get money to send to Oregon, and from a bank in which Mr. Tilden was especially well known. There were hundreds of unscrupulous Democrats who have given larger sums than Pelton needed, for much smaller victories. If there were no others, there was John Morrissey and the Democratic gamblers who had at stake over \$1,200,000. Did Mr. Tilden reason, "Pelton will no longer dare to go to Cooper, or to come to me; therefore other money, not by candidate or committee, will be found, and I shall know nothing about it"? Did he reflect, "Then I can prove that I denounced and stopped the attempt"? If that was not his reasoning, why did he never inquire, interfere and stop Pelton's charge of correspondence through his apparent representation of Mr. Tilden himself?

VII. After the act for which Mr. Tilden took Weed "to task," he retained that person as his manager of forces in a Democratic convention. After Marble had said that votes were for sale in Florida, Mr. Tilden took care to ask no more, but continued on intimate terms with him. After Pelton's journey to Baltimore to meet Weed, and for more than a year after the full public exposure of the Oregon business, Pelton remained in Mr. Tilden's house. This treatment of men known to be guilty will, by the public, be held conclusive proof that Mr. Tilden's profession of absolute and unswerving hostility to bribery is not true. He was hostile to any bribery that could be traced to him, and particularly hostile to any bribery that was found out, and destroyed his own prospects. No other form of moral indignation has been shown in his conduct. But he virtually placed W. T. Pelton in a position where he was sure to have opportunity to buy votes, knowing well that he was a man who would buy votes if he could, and that he could find the money; in that position he held Pelton by carefully refraining from any word of natural caution or protest; and he took extraordinary pains for weeks not to find out anything about the use Pelton was making of his peculiar powers. This is Mr. Tilden's record, upon his own testimony. What else will appear, when the dispatches sent to G. W. Smith shall have been traced to the person who actually received and opened them, we shall probably see. The Louisiana matter has not yet been brought to light.

A CRY FOR MORE FREEDOM.

From The New-York Tribune.

In the doubtful dusk of the morning gray,
With hammer and drill and jimmy and crank,
Some high-toned men they plundered a bank,
And the precious spoil they carried away.
What desolation the owner found!
And he said, "A lesson it teaches me;
I'll set a file of soldiers around;
These high-toned coves hev ben too free—
It seems to me
They hev ben too free!"
And he stationed soldiers, solemn and still,
And his vaults he pled with the gold again;
Then came on tiptoe the high-toned men
With hammer and crow and jimmy and drill;
"As we're crushed in the tyrant's fangs!" they cried,
"As they met the troopers; 'we're slaves, may be!
The spectacle cruelly wounds our pride;
If they went off we should feel more free—
Withdraw 'em and we
Should feel more free!"
The high-toned men they lingered there,
With jimmy and drill and hammer and crow,
And they kept a-walking to and fro,
With a persecuted and saddened air,
And a mule-team waited beside the wall.
"You troopers go off and let us be!"
They said, "We ain't don' nothin' at all,
But if you 'uns went we should feel more free.
We all agree
We should feel more free."
And the high-toned men uttered dismal croaks,
And flourished their jimmy and hammer and saw,
And shouted, "You'd ought to obey the law
Which says that you shan't be a watchin' folks!"
Then the owner said, "I remember you!
You were here afore and you went for me;
'F ye hev full swing what wouldn't ye do?
Fact is, I guess you hev ben too free—
Perhaps," says he,
"A leetle to free!"

THE VALOROUS BLACKBURN.

Now that the retreat has been begun it is a good time to recall some of the gifted and valorous Blackburn's remarks concerning the weakness of yielding. In his famous "wiping out" speech he declared that the Democratic side of the chamber would "never yield or surrender unless this Congress shall have died by virtue of its limitation. A principle cannot be compromised. It may be surrendered, but that can only be done by its advocates giving proofs to the world that they are cravens and cowards. We cannot yield and we will not yield. We are planted on our convictions. There we will stand. He who dares is a dastard, and he who doubts is damned." Whether Blackburn has "dallied" or "doubted" is not revealed, but there is no doubt that the whole party is "damned."

"TURN BACK THE HANDS!"

The party in power in the Legislative Department of the Government has served its notice upon the country. It may as well be accepted at once. In the Senate Mr. Saulsbury, for his party, arrogantly assumes the responsibility of power, as with a resonant crack of the whip that brings back the old days bids the Republicans in that body be not only patient, but silent and submissive, while he and his political associates work their own sweet will. Confederate generals direct the councils of the organization that controls the Senate, apportion among themselves the committees and among their constituents the patronage, dictate the course of legislation, and shape the policy of the party. At the other end of the Capitol Mr. Stephens, late Vice-President of the Confederacy, Mr. Reagan, late Postmaster-General of the Confederacy, Mr. Chalmers, late a Brigadier-General of the Confederate Army, with others more or less prominently connected with that disastrous political venture, have given out that the people having called the Democratic party back to power to relieve the country from the evil consequences of eighteen years of Radical misrule, it is the duty of the present Congress to enter immediately upon the task. In both Senate and House there is uncommon anxiety on the part of the gentlemen newly invested with power to enter at once upon its exercise. Instead of shrinking from its responsibilities, they are eager to assume them. And we must give them credit at least for apparent sincerity. They certainly do act as though they fully believed in themselves, and believe that they had actually been sent for in a crisis. In their expressions, their tone, their manner, their whole behavior, they indicate as plainly as possible their belief that their reappearance in Congress is the result, not of their own, but of the country's confession of error and repentance. They have come back, they say, in so many words, to correct the mistakes and sweep away the legislation of the past eighteen years. They have confidence in themselves, to say the least.

And who, pray, are the gentlemen stepping so confidently to the front, and bidding everybody else stand back while they take the Government in hand? Their unsparing condemnation of existing laws and their startling proposals of radical changes invite us to a scrutiny of their record, and an inquiry as to their fitness for the revolutionary proceedings they have in contemplation. What is the record of these men who assume responsibility with such jaunty self-confidence? It is not far to seek. In 1852 they were intrusted with almost unquestioned power in all departments of the Government and nearly all the States. There was scarcely an opposition. What was their statesmanship? In three years they had set on foot an agitation which cost them their majority in the House and created sectional division in parties; and this continued without their gaining anything they set out for, until the Government passed completely out of their hands in 1860, and then they entered upon a conspiracy to break up and destroy it. What fitness does the record of those eight years show? They tried for four years a Government of their own. Does that record show such a large capacity for statesmanship that we should send out for them to come back and take the old Union in charge? Here are financial questions to be solved by legislation. What certificate of fitness for this work do they bring? Only this: that they left the Government in 1861 in such straightened circumstances and impaired credit that its bonds were at a discount, and it could scarcely borrow money in the markets of the world; and that in their own experience of a confederacy they succeeded only in making a currency which was so worthless as to be a source of mirth among themselves. And they have come back to a Government whose credit has been raised by the legislation of those eighteen years to a par with that of the wealthiest nations in the world; to a Government which the same legislation has put in a position to redeem its obligations in the money of the world. This is the legislation they feel called upon to sweep away, and this the certificate of their fitness for financial administration.

Here are serious questions of the relations between capital and labor: what special fitness have they shown for legislation upon this subject? Only this: that eighteen years ago they struck out for themselves in a new Government whose corner-stone was the system of slave labor. There is to-day no such system in existence, and their acquaintance with that of free labor and its relations with capital dates only from the fall of their abortive Confederacy. Here is the system of internal revenue which seems to have aroused the interest of the late Confederate Vice-President, Mr. Stephens, who says it should be thoroughly overhauled and changed: what constitutes their fitness for this work? Only this: that their rebellion made the system necessary, and that its collection in the Southern States is attended with more trouble and expense than anywhere else because resistance to the law is more general there. There are laws to be passed and appropriations to be made for the postal service: what constitutes the qualifications of these gentlemen for this duty? Nothing that we know of, except that they come from a section which has never paid for its own postal facilities, but has always exhausted the surplus derived from the profits of the service in the Northern States, and required additional appropriations from the Treasury to furnish its mail accommodations. Did Mr. Reagan, the ex-Postmaster-General of the Confederacy, show special fitness for legislating upon this subject when he recommended the payment of a mail contractor who was shown by the records of his own department to have been paid once already? Mr. Stephens expresses a purpose to repeal the law taxing State Banks, so that the several States may charter banks of issue, as of old. No one who is old enough to remember the convenience and the beauties of the State bank currency we enjoyed before the war will after this question Mr. Stephens' wisdom as a legislator upon that subject. States which repudiate their bonds might perhaps charter banks whose notes would circulate with those of the National banks or with greenbacks. It does not now seem probable though.

But the great thing which all Democrats unite in saying that the party was brought back to power for is to repeal the infamous election laws. And what is their special fitness for this sort of legislation? Well, only this: that among the first offenses for which this party was repudiated by the people twenty years ago was its outrageous frauds upon the ballot-box in Kansas, in the attempt of these gentlemen who have come back to govern us to steal that State; that, from that time on, they have notoriously defrauded the ballot-box whenever and wherever their needs required, and opportunity offered, notably so in this city and that they have regained their ascendancy in the National Legislature by means of the most unblushing frauds at the polls in the Southern States that were ever known even in that party's history. That qualifies them to be the protectors of the ballot and to legislate wisely for the freedom of elections. These are the men and this the party who have come back to take charge of the Government and sweep away the legislation of "eighteen years of Radical misrule." They make no bones of saying so. They are not slow to announce their mission nor are they modest in picking up the incidental official spoils. As for us, we make no complaint; we have no disposition to say a word to revive the animosities of the war. But the calmness with which these people come forward to make our laws upon all these varied questions, and the assurance with which they assume that they have been called in to overturn existing things and build anew, must naturally challenge inquiry as to their qualifications for so large a task, and the preparatory school in which they were fitted for it.