The Attitude of the Pittsburgh Newspapers Toward the Kansas-Nebraska Bill.

In writing the paper, all quotations from the newspapers have not been given for the reason that at times all the journals duplicated their stories. However, all the details of interest and importance have been carefully recorded, and it is proper to call attention to the fact that, while at times the sentences are not as smooth as they might be, they are nevertheless, exact quotations from the newspapers of that period. The quotations from the German newspapers are necessarily loose translations, but the original meaning has not been changed.

Douglas' name was sometimes spelled "Douglass", but we have accepted the modern spelling, and used it throughout the paper.

The Kansas Nebraska strife, which agitated the entire country during the first half of the year 1854, is discussed at length in the various Pittsburgh newspapers of that period. (*)

At times, various issues of local or national opinion, flooded the papers, and the Kansas-Nebraska issue was lost sight of, but never for a long period. It is interesting to note the conflict between the local editors, and to note the personal attacks which often creep into the editorials.

*The sources sought in writing this paper, are as follows: The Evening Chronicle; The Pittsburgh Gazette; The Pittsburgh Post, and the German paper, Freiheits Freund. There were several other newspapers published in Pittsburgh during this period, but they are not on file at the Central Library. There is a complete copy of The Iron City, but inasmuch as it was edited by Barr & McDonald, the editors of the Chronicle, I found that the editorial opinions were the same, and so did not include that paper in this research.
The first article is in the Gazette, written by one Junius, who was a Washington correspondent for this journal. On January 10th, he writes: "The bill and the report from the committee on territories must be a signal for the reopening of the slavery agitation. They (the slaveholders) never cease from aggressions; they are as treacherous, crafty and dishonest, in policy, as they are bold and unscrupulous in action." Several days later, this same man writes: "I always regarded the Missouri Compromise as a cheat and a fraud, but slavery has had the benefit of it, and now, after the lapse of 35 years, on the very first occasion that the North demands the performance of the conditions in her favor, the bill is to be repealed. To state such a proposition is to cover with infamy all who advocate it." Later, (Jan. 16), he says: "We admire their spunk and indomitable energy; three slave states in one year is doing a pretty fair business. Nebraska will come in, polluted with slavery, if the South can induce slaveholders to go there, which is doubtful. The North and the Electoral College will put itself out of breath, to catch the runaway negroes from their Southern masters, as a testimony of her fidelity to the Compromises of the Constitution."

On January 18th, the Post, which during the entire controversy, until the final passage of the bill, rarely mentions the matter in its editorial columns, carries this notice under "Congressional": "Mr. Douglas gave notice that he would, on Monday, take up the Nebraska Bill. Mr. Sumner read an amendment, which he gave notice he would offer to the Nebraska Bill, providing for exclusion of slavery."

Two days later, Junius writes: "Douglas' Nebraska enormity has emboldened the slavery propagandists, in Congress, and today, Dixon of Kentucky, a bigot of the first water on that question, submitted a resolution, repealing the Missouri Compromise in express terms. This need excite no surprise. No exhibition of treachery, craft or audacity, ought to surprise the country after what has happened during the past five years. Dixon's resolution is no worse than Douglas' bill, which accomplishes under a covert and sneaking pretense, the same thing." The next day, Junius writes: "Dixon's bill is an amendment to the Nebraska Ter-
ritorial bill, and as such, is a rather bolder sample of treachery and political rascality, than if offered by itself."

On January 26, Junius says: "The Committee on Territories is about to report a bill which divides the territory embraced in Douglas' bill, into two states. Slavery is rampant, pugnacious and extortionate." Several days later, anent a meeting which was to be held in Pittsburgh, to protest this bill, the Gazette says: "We hope that there will be a meeting in Pittsburgh, which will do honor to the city, and to the cause of freedom and the country." Speaking of this meeting, the Post, which was Democratic in views, says: "The meeting was largely attended by Whigs, Free Soilers and a few Democrats." On the last of the month, however, there is a touch of wrath, in the tone of the Post: "In speaking of the bill introduced into the United States Senate by Senator Douglas to organize the territory of Nebraska, the Tribune draws largely on the billingsgate vocabulary, for terms to express its wrath against all Congressmen." The article is headed "The Rascals at Washington."

The Gazette, is the first paper to admit that the bill has a very good chance of passing. On February 1st, it contains this article: "For our part, we think that the bill will go through the Senate, and through the House, if the administration insists on it. Nothing can stop it, but a terrible storm of indignation in the north." Remarking on Douglas' speech in the Senate the next day, this same paper states that: "Mr. Douglas' speech was insolent and bullying in its tone, coarse in its invective, and contemptible in its argument. The answers of Messrs. Chase and Sumner were firm and determined, but dignified." According to the Freiheits Freund, this opinion is prevalent: "Since the country is at peace, and the parties have nothing to do, the politicians had to stir up agitation; hence the Nebraska Bill. Douglas has his eye on the Presidency, and is playing his cards accordingly. But the little giant is no longer a little giant. The South will praise him, nourish him—but what else?"

We find that the controversy is particularly fierce during the month of February. We can't help but have
respect for the editor of the Post, who passes up many chances to pick quarrels with the other editors of the city, and we can well censure the editor of the Gazette, who is always begging for yet a little more time to air the matter. An excerpt from the paper, (Feb. 3), will make this clearer: "The people are beginning to awake. If they have but time, to become fully aroused, Douglas' bill may yet be defeated."

Here is a quotation from one of the few editorials in the Post: "That man must be blind, who does not see in advance, that it must triumph. The very certain effect of its enactment upon the future of the slavery question as a national issue, also operates to incline towards it, moderate legislators who are tired of the interminable ding-dong on Abolitionism, in the Halls of Congress. They favor it, to the end of ridding the national councils of that worse than useless nuisance." (Feb. 4.)

The Chronicle of the same date gives what seems a plausible excuse for the silence of the Democratic Post: "There appear to be but a few Democratic papers, throughout the entire country, at all disposed to break cover on the infamous proposition thrown out by Senator Douglas. The reason why the Democratic press of the North is so quiet upon the diabolical plot, is not entirely unaccountable. There never was an administration which dispensed with equal prodigality, fat living to editors of Democratic journals, or so cunningly subdivided its patronage among those not otherwise provided for."

On the seventh day of the month, we find a little tilt between the editors of the Gazette and the Post. As a rule, the Chronicle, while Whig in its feelings, took a rap at both of these journals.

Several days later, (Feb. 8), the Gazette issues this warning: "Look out, Slavery! Having broken your solemn contracts, be prepared to see the North laugh to scorn your prating about checks and balances and compromises. No faith will be kept with traitors." The very next day, the Post carries this article: "The Gazette is mad. Were it left to us, we would repeal forty Missouri Compromises, if by so doing the dangerous and worse than useless slavery
discussions could be excluded from the Halls of the National Legislature. Nor do we dread the oft repeated lie, that all who are opposed to slavery agitation in Congress are friends of slavery.”

As said before, time and time again we find the pitiful plea of the Gazette: “Only give the North time.” And yet the North had as much time to work against the bill, as the South to work for it! The Post carries an article about this time, (Feb. 11), which is interesting: “That slavery can ever find a permanent footing in Nebraska, or Kansas, no intelligent man can believe. Slave labor can never be desirable or profitable in those regions. In California, much further South, the people decided the question for themselves, and resolved on the exclusion of slavery. Once settle the principle that the question of slavery shall be decided by the people of each state and territory, and the agitators occupation is gone.”

The German paper, on the same day, breaks away from the controversy over the papal nuncio, who was in this country at this time, long enough to say that “slavery is a misfortune for the entire country, and wretched enough, without opening up new territory for it.” Junius appears on the scene at the same time, and we quote him: “The abominations of the Nebraska bill have actually sickened me, and for the last two days I have been hardly able to hold a pen. I may say with the hymnist,

'Sin revived,
And I died.' ”

During the next few days, (Feb. 13 and 14), the various Whig journalists take a dig at Senator Douglas. The Chronicle says: “The Spoilation Bill of Mr. Douglas is working its way through the Senate with commendable alacrity. Mr. Douglas may succeed, but his death knell is already sounding. The high office his ambition pants for, will be given hereafter by the millions of the North, and not by the Thousands of the South.” The Freiheits Freund also says: “We hope that Mr. Douglas will overreach himself, and that he will fall, and that with him will go the Nebraska bill. A strong opposition is forming in the North, which the Little Giant will be unable to break.”
Seward delivered his great speech against the bill on the 18th, and in the issues of the 20th and 21st, the Gazette simply bubbles over in its praises of him. The Post does not even carry an editorial comment on the speech, but the Chronicle says: "The Gazette is head over heels in the Nebraska movement, and contains this morning, a great part of Senator Seward's speech." It isn't until four days later, that the Post says in two lines: "Mr. Sumner delivered a speech against the Nebraska bill. And the Gazette covered most of its front page with the speech!"

On the 1st and 5th of March, the Post quotes Everett, the Whig candidate for the Presidency: "I believe that it is admitted that there is no material interest at stake. A domestic servant may be taken there, (Nebraska), a few laborers, but it will never be a slave state." On March 4th, the Chronicle announces the passage of the Bill as follows: "This bill of abominations has passed the Senate finally, by a vote of more than three to one; the hopes of the country now rest with the House. Freemen, Watch, and Pray!"

About this time, the German paper again appears to take an interest in the situation, and publishes speeches of protest against the bill.

In its issue of March 11th, the Gazette sounds rather optimistic: "There is a lull in the storm at Washington, on the Nebraska Bill. It is not yet reported to the House, and the opposing forces can marshal their strength." On the same date, the Freiheits Freund carries an editorial, in which it appeals to the German citizens to go to Nebraska, and thus make it a Northern community. From now on, the editorials in this paper are reprints of New York journals, and hence lose their interest for us.

On the 15th of this month, a little local spice was injected into the question, and all three papers took a hand. The Gazette called a meeting of all local clergy, to protest the bill, and the response was immediate. The Chronicle comes out with this article: "Anti-Nebraska Meeting of Clergy." "The above notice is prominently displayed this morning, in the Protestant organ, the Gazette. We, being perfectly sound on the Nebraska question, may escape the charge of impertinence, by dissenting, in toto, to any such
demonstration. The clergy overstep their function, when the border of the political arena is penetrated.” The Post says: “The Gazette says that not one of the clergymen of this city has refused to sign the Anti-Nebraska remonstrance. That is not true. Several have refused. There are some few clergy in Pittsburgh, who choose to abide by the sacredness of their calling, and not undertake to regulate political affairs.” Of course, this incident does not have a direct bearing on the question at hand, but it throws a sidelight on the manner in which the various journals took a slap at each other. The other papers promptly forget the matter, but the Gazette continues to talk about it, and as late as the 30th, we find this: “As to the disinterestedness and respectability of the demonstration made by the Ministers of the Gospel, it must be equal in that respect to the uproar of the officeholders in favor of it.”

During the month of April, the papers carry little on the subject. The Gazette carries an occasional notice of a ministerial meeting in some part of the country, held to protest against the bill. The German paper takes a shot at the Southern German organs, which are upholding the Nebraska Bill. In the latter part of the month, our old friend Junius crops up again, and he tells us that: “Mr. Benton made a powerful, caustic and witty speech against the Nebraska swindle. I venture to say that within a month, the organ of the administration will deny that it ever approved of the repudiation of the Missouri Compromise.”

In the next month, May, the storm breaks out with renewed vigor, and up to the passage of the bill in the two bodies, the Gazette and the Chronicle carry many articles about it. In an editorial of the 6th, Junius portrays what has happened during the past three years, since the discussion of slavery has been so violent, and he predicts that if the bill is passed, that it will eventually lead to a rupture between the two sections. The Post, several days later, announces that “there is now a strong prospect that the Nebraska Bill will pass the House of Representatives, as it came from the Senate, except that the Clayton amendment will be stricken out.” On the same day, (May 12), the Gazette carries this editorial: “The Outrage is to be con-
summated. Our own impression is that the administration has secured by coaxing, threats and bribery, a sufficient number of the wavering and doubtful, to carry the measure through, and that they will proceed in the most summary fashion.”

On the 16th, the Gazette announces with glee: “The Administration organs, who are so anxious for the triumph of slavery in the Nebraska bill, are overwhelmingly indignant at the course of the Anti-Nebraska members in Congress, in resorting to revolutionary methods to prevent the passage of that monstrosity. Baffled men may be allowed to vent their spleen. Let the conspirators rave!” On the next day, the same paper, on its editorial page, gave the names of the Pennsylvania members in Congress, who had voted for the taking up of the bill. The names were blocked in, with heavy black lines, and the column was headed “The Roll of Infamy.”

On the 17th, the Post carries a few lines, stating that an Anti-Nebraska meeting, which was to be held in New York City, had turned out to be a failure. The same day, the Chronicle states, that in its opinion, Douglas’ bill would pass. On the 20th, the Gazette carried a two-column editorial, entitled, “The Tremendous Designs of Slavery.”

On May 24, all the papers carry the news of the passage of the bill. We will quote all of them:

The Gazette: “The deed is done! The astonishing perfidy of the free states of the Union has been consummated by the aid of forty-four traitors to the rights, interests and honor of the North. But are the people powerless? Have they no remedy? Thank God they have the means of redress in their own hands. All that is wanting, is the spirit and the patriotism to use the power they possess. Let the cry of REPEAL be sounded. Let us do this, and the Southern slaveholders will live to curse the day that they stooped to such pliant tools as Pierce, Douglas & Co.”

The Freiheits Freund: “The Little Giant Triumphs. Sad must be the heart of every friend of this country, when he sees this unfortunate mass rule, as nothing else than a perpetuation of the stain on the republic—negro slavery!”

The Chronicle: “The deed is Consummated. The Neb-
raska-Kansas, Douglas "niggerhead" treason has been consummated by a Pierce Congress. The black flag is unfurled. The South waves it in triumph, and will not cease to flap its folds in the faces of Northern Dough-faces."

The Post: "Two more free territories are thus organized, that in a very short time will contain a sufficient population to entitle them to admission as states of the Union. And as free states they will come, as free as Illinois, Indiana, Ohio; as large and fruitful, and in no long time as populous and wealthy."

On the 27th, while all the other papers carried columns about the "infamy," the Post says: "The Nebraska Bill has passed the Senate, as it went from the House of Representatives, by a vote of 35 yeas, to 13 nays. Immediately after the passage of the Nebraska Bill, a salute of 100 guns began firing from Capitol Hill." Two days later, it carries this short, but sarcastic item, headed "Nebraska Grief!" "The Church bells were tolled for an hour at sunset, last evening, on account of the passage of the Nebraska Bill."

On the 30th, the Freiheits Freund has an editorial, which tells of the fierce opposition in the North, to the bill. It says that the North is now fully aroused, and then ends up with these words: "Too late!"

Beginning the 30th, and up through the 5th of June, the Gazette carries articles both on the front page and in the editorial page, about "this outrage." On the 31st, it states: "The North has been robbed, insulted, outraged in the most tender point, and dough-face editors tell us that it is all a humbug, and that Pierce, Douglas & Co., and the editor of the Post are not in favor of the extension of slavery. Oh no, of course not. They are ardent lovers of freedom, and opposed to slavery. Strange that anybody should doubt it." Under the same date, the Post, in a three-fourths column editorial, says: "We like not slavery, but we like good old-fashioned democracy, and we hope all its principles will be maintained and universally applied."

On the 5th of June, the editor of the Post takes his innings for all the insults that he has taken in the past five months, and he rubs it in on the Whigs, and the editor of the Gazette in particular. In a long editorial, he asserts:
“That editor (of the Gazette) knows that his clamor against the Nebraska Bill is a false alarm, a humbug got up to deceive the people, and drive them into the ranks of Abolitionism. He knows that the bill, as it passed, is far more favorable to the North than to the South, and that slavery will never exist in those territories. How long will the people be deceived?”

The next day, there is a full column editorial, entitled: “Why They Hate It.” It follows, in part: “The Kansas-Nebraska bill, which has now become a law, has excited the wrath of the Whigs and Abolitionists beyond measure. Why do they oppose it so fiercely? It has created an irreconcilable breach in their party, and utterly destroyed it for national influence. Agitators by profession, they find that slavery is driven out of the Halls of Congress; hence their impotent cry of “Repeal.” It is their only chance for continued agitation. The Nebraska Bill does not favor slavery. It favors freedom, and will soon add two new free states to the confederacy.”

The last article appears in the Post, on the 11th of June. It is a copy of the law in full, with no editorial comment.

A paper such as this, would indeed be incomplete, if the writer did not state his reactions to the various views expressed by the several newspapers. One cannot help but sympathize with the editor of the Post, for inasmuch as that journal was an administration paper, it had to choose its words carefully. But the question is bound to rise: “How were the readers of the Post kept acquainted with the situation?” For when the bill was being discussed throughout the nation, the Post carried only a few meager lines about it. The editor, then, is open to the criticism that he surpressed real news, in attempting to shield the administration. However, it cannot be said that he did not have the situation well in hand, for when the bill was finally passed, the editor of the Post was able to effectively spike the guns of the other papers in the city. The editor of the Gazette, while casting reflections on Douglas, for “mudslinging”, was himself guilty of the same offense, and at times his language appeared to be rather crude. The Chronic-
le said little on the subject, but whenever an editorial did appear, it was to the point. The editor of this paper took exception to the remarks of both the Gazette and the Post, but it seems that he had a higher regard for the Post than he did for the other journal.

From this survey of the Pittsburgh journals several conclusions are possible. In the first place it is safe to say that Pittsburgh like the rest of the country was intensely interested in the slavery question particularly in the matter of its possible extension in new territory. In the second place not even the Democrat paper favored the further extension of slavery. Much of the agitation appears to have been party politics. The moral evil of slavery gave the anti-Douglas papers excellent material for agitation. The doctrine of popular sovereignty, Douglas' “squater sovereignty” was the strongest and most natural political argument and platform of the Democrats and was fully adopted. But it would be wrong to underestimate the moral factor which is apparent in the meeting of the clergy, on March 15th. Finally that Pittsburgh was unfriendly to the institution of slavery is apparent not only from the attitude of the Democratic Post in 1854, but from the fact that with the outbreak of the Civil War seven years later, all the organs of the city combined in support of the Lincoln Administration, and in the prosecution of a war in which success on the part of the North would almost certainly put an end to the institution.

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