

451 LaSalle av. Chicago, Ill.

May 20, 1893.

Judge Albion W. Tourgee,

Mayville-on-Chautauque,

New York.

Dear Sir:

I am glad to note in today's Inter-Ocean that the "Bystander" has dropped the colored topic and taken up a live question. The American people have tired of color politics, and race legislation. My politics were Republican when the party was born in the interest of white men rather than black, though I always sympathized with the slaves, and was glad of a chance to see them freed. But I can see no good to be accomplished by keeping up a fight against the Southern States, outside of them, for negro rights. I think this fight has come near breaking the back of the Republican party, and has done the negro no good.

I think there are graver and more important national politics than the elevation of the black race in the South, good as that may be on general principles. One of these is the restoration of the merchant marine in the foreign trade. Your question has had its day in court. The hour for my suit has come. A worse thing than the rule of the Democratic party, bad as that is, is our dependence on foreign shipping, foreign merchants, foreign underwriters, and consequent foreign dictation in our government. Foreigners control our commerce, and by this lever move all departments of state. Americanism is going down before the inroads of foreignism, and good Americans with great souls like your own don't seem to see how this bad thing is being done. We have lost our strength, our ambition, our dominance at sea. Our independence is in the balance. Like Nero, our statesmen are fiddling while Rome is burning. Their course is not only scandalous, but ruinous to a degree. The silver question is a mere blind for their folly. Why should gold go abroad as soon as for-

foreign capitalists cease investments in our country? Is it because we buy silver? Not much. It is because we owe Europe. Why do we owe Europe? Because we take from her more than we repay - except by investments. How do we take this debt upon our shoulders, with imports less than exports for many years past? By something that we overlook - that we, for the most part, are in ignorance of - by the service of foreign shipping. The balancing of "trade" that emanates from the government at Washington is the veriest nonsense. It deludes the country. A balance sheet of trade, without transportation included, gives a false idea of foreign commerce. Transportation is the complement of trade. Both enter into commerce. Our balance of transportation in the average year is ruinous, unless paid by, and in investments in our country. The Republican Party is a great and intelligent body of our people, but its leaders are away off on the economy that should govern their management of the public business. We have got at



their hands a very good Tariff, and some reciprocity that is sensible, but they don't seem to know a ship from a log-house, in matters affecting our foreign commerce. The Democratic leaders have no more science on the subject. If they had, if they would enact and carry out such measures as would speedily restore our merchant marine, in ample ability to Americanize our Transportation and Trade, they would take the wind out of our sails so much that our party would think it did not blow.

You will excuse me, as an old reader of your inimitable works relating to the American negro, and permit me to express my desire to have you take up the American Ship, and help her to obtain a new lease of life. The silver question is a shipping problem. It never would have been heard of in the United States, but for the foreign dominance that reigns and rules all things American, because we have lost our place at sea.

Very truly Yours,

Wm. M. Bates.