

and internal improvement;"—to take its place as a proviso to a bill entitled, "*To repeal the State tax, and to continue the improvements of the State by railroads and canals*;"—and be no further indicated in the title to that effect than what could be found under the addendum of that vague and flexible generality, *other purposes*;" usually added to point attention to something not worth a specification.

Having mastered the first step—the one of greatest difficulty, if there is truth in the proverb—the remainder of the proceeding was easy and rapid, the bill, with its proviso, being reported, read a first, second, and third time, passed the House—sent to the Senate; read a first, second, and third time there, and passed—sent to the Governor and approved, and made a law of the land: and all in as little time as it usually requires to make an act for changing the name of a man or a county. To add to its titles to infamy, the repeal of the State tax which it assumed to make, took the air of a bamboozle, the tax being a temporary imposition, and to expire within a few days upon its own limitation. The distribution of the bonus took the aspect of a bribe to the people, being piddled out in dribblets to the inhabitants of the counties: and, to stain the bill with the last suspicion, a strong lobby force from Philadelphia hung over its progress, and cheered it along with the affection and solicitude of parents for their offspring. Every circumstance of its enactment announced corruption—bribery in the members who passed the act, and an attempt to bribe the people by distributing the bonus among them: and the outburst of indignation throughout the State was vehement and universal. People met in masses to condemn the act, demand its repeal, to denounce the members who voted for it, and to call for investigation into the manner in which it passed. Of course, the legislature which passed it was in no haste to respond to these demands; but their successors were different. An election intervened; great changes of members took place; two-thirds of the new legislature demanded investigation, and resolved to have it. A committee was appointed, with the usual ample powers, and sat the usual length of time, and worked with the usual indefatigability, and made the usual voluminous report; and with the usual "lame and impotent conclusion." A

mass of pregnant circumstances were collected, covering the whole case with black suspicion: but direct bribery was proved upon no one. Probably, the case of the Yazoo fraud is to be the last, as it was the first, in which a succeeding general assembly has fully and unqualifiedly condemned its predecessor for corruption.

The charter thus obtained was accepted: and, without the change of form or substance in any particular, the old bank moved on as if nothing had happened—as if the Congress charter was still in force—as if a corporate institution and all its affairs could be shifted by statute from one foundation to another;—as if a transmigration of corporate existence could be operated by legislative enactment, and the debtors, creditors, depositors, and stockholders in one bank changed, transformed, and constituted into debtors, creditors, depositors and stockholders in another. The illegality of the whole proceeding was as flagrant as it was corrupt—as scandalous as it was notorious—and could only find its motive in the consciousness of a condition in which detection adds infamy to ruin; and in which no infamy, to be incurred, can exceed that from which escape is sought. And yet it was this broken and rotten institution—this criminal committing crimes to escape from the detection of crimes—this "counterfeit presentment" of a defunct corporation—this addendum to a Pennsylvania railroad—this whitened sepulchre filled with dead men's bones, thus bribed and smuggled through a local legislature—that was still able to set up for a power and a benefactor! still able to influence federal legislation—control other banks—deceive merchants and statesmen—excite a popular current in its favor—assume a guardianship over the public affairs, and actually dominate for months longer in the legislation and the business of the country. It is for the part she acted—the dominating part—in contriving the financial distress and the general suspension of the banks in 1837—the last one which has afflicted our country,—that renders necessary and proper this notice of her corrupt transit through the General Assembly of the State of Pennsylvania.