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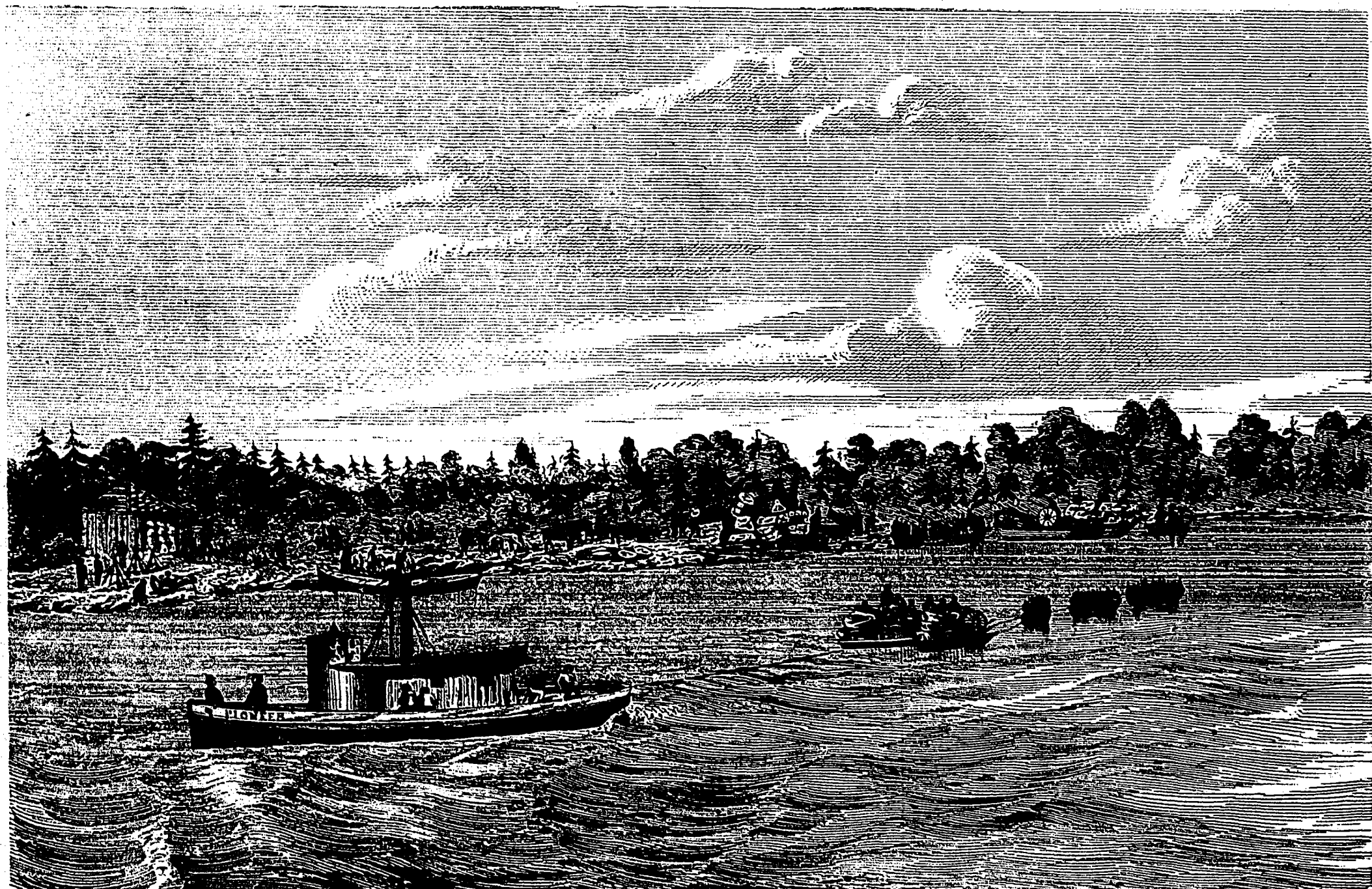
COMMERCIAL LEGISLATION IN THE UNITED STATES

It is never safe to predicate the fate of any practical measure while it is before the American Congress. Bills are introduced, or motions offered, either by private members or through the committees, with no special party responsibility for their success or failure, unless they happen to be of a political character. In the absence of a responsible Cabinet, bound to initiate and carry through legislation or to resign, it is impossible that law-making or amending can be conducted in any other than the haphazard way it now is in the House of Representatives as well as in the Senate; so that the reference of a resolution to a committee is no more guarantee that it will take effect than is its being reported from a committee, that the Senate or the House will adopt it. Hence the many buncombe motions and resolutions on all sorts of subjects with which Congressional proceedings are diversified; and hence especially the many nonsensical resolves concerning the British American Provinces with respect to political and commercial questions. Canadians have been too often betrayed into attaching great importance to some of these motions, and have wasted much

needless discussion upon them; another instance has just occurred.

The Finance Committee of the Senate some weeks ago reported in favour of reducing the duty on coal; and the resolution was referred back, and again reported as amended, making coal free. The vote in the committee in favour of free coal was large, and strong hopes were entertained that the obnoxious duty would really be abolished, in which case, of course, the Governor-General in Council would suspend the operation of that clause in our Tariff Bill imposing a duty on coal imported into Canada. Here then would have been reciprocity re-established with respect to one very important item; for while the free admission of coal from Nova Scotia into the eastern cities would have greatly improved the trade of that Province, the increased competition with Ohio and Pennsylvania coal would have cheapened the article to the purchasers in Quebec and Ontario. The prospect was indeed a pleasing one, but jubilate was sung too soon. There are coal interests yet to be developed in Maryland and West Virginia, and protection must be sustained, so the Senate voted on the Finance Committee's resolution yeas 18, nays 25, and the duty on coal remains as before.

This result ought not to be considered surprising. The Americans cannot well begin by striking down one monopoly at a time. They have established too many already; and their probable destiny is to go on establishing more, until by the equal distribution of protection the system will defeat itself and prove to be merely the fettering of trade and the cramping of enterprise. It is only when protection is unequal that it serves somebody's interests at the expense of those of somebody else; and as necessity compels the injured party to seek for relief, his special branch of the general industry has to be admitted to the charmed circle. Of course for the mere labourer there is no protection. He is exposed by immigration to the competition of labourers from all sides. His competitors are attracted to the field by the glitter of the nominally high rate of wages paid—a rate created fictitiously high through the very influence of protection to capital. But the labouring classes are numerically the strongest in the United States, and when the pressure becomes sufficiently hard to unite them in one body for their deliverance from the tyranny of capital, they will secure political power, and perhaps sweep away the whole fabric of protection by a single act. Nothing but the dread of this sudden



RED RIVER EXPEDITION.—PURGATORY LANDING.—SEE NEXT PAGE.