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OF THE  
MCKINLEY  
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WE, THE  
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POLITICAL CARTOONS  
& CARICATURES



A. JACKSON.

Jefferson

SUGAR  
Schedule

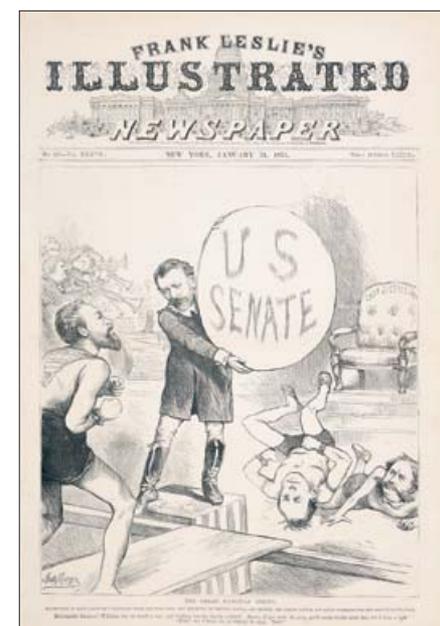
SUGAR DEA

## THE SENATE THEATRE: 19TH-CENTURY CARTOONISTS AND THE U.S. SENATE

Donald A. Ritchie

Political cartoons have been popular in America since before the Revolution. In 1754 Benjamin Franklin contributed the image of a snake cut into sections (one for each colony) and labeled it “Join, or Die.” Technological limitations prevented newspapers from making use of these cartoons, however, so most were printed as broadsides and distributed by political parties during election campaigns. Not until 1855 did the British engraver Henry Carter, under the pen name Frank Leslie, launch America’s first fully illustrated journal. *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* was a 16-page weekly publication that made use of woodcuts and steel engravings to portray a wide range of current events, everything from politics to prizefighting. The magazine’s prominent alumni included Thomas Nast, who joined its staff as a teenager in 1855, before taking his talents to *Harper’s Weekly*, and Joseph Keppler, who drew for *Frank Leslie’s* beginning in 1872. Keppler later launched *Puck*, the first magazine to use color cartoons. Other publications such as *Judge* and *Life* offered further outlets for cartoonists. Early in the 20th century, new magazines turned to muckraking and made their cartooning predecessors appear antiquated. By then, however, the newspapers were employing editorial cartoonists to carry on the tradition.<sup>1</sup>

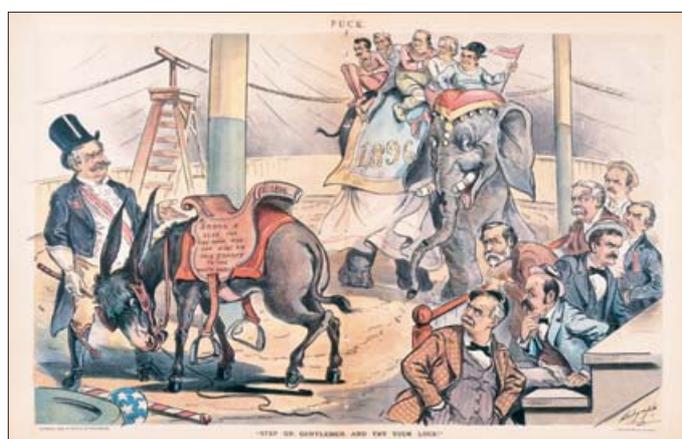
Although many of the engravings are neutral or objective reproductions of scenes, some cartoonists used their drawings to hammer home their own political points of view. In fact, cartoonists often did their best work when they were attacking an individual, a group,



This cartoon shows a typical cover from *Frank Leslie's*, America’s first fully illustrated journal that addressed current events. (See p. 327)



Thomas Nast used Shakespearean characters and stories to lampoon political figures and events of the time. (See p. 323)



The circus provided the perfect imagery to tell the story of the 1896 election. (See p. 441)

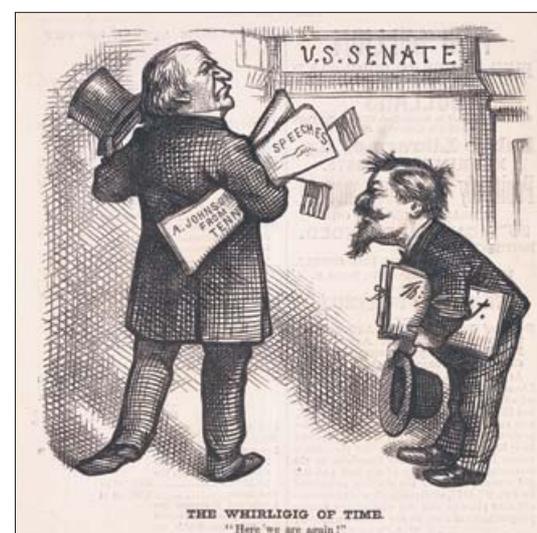
or an idea. They were especially attuned to corruption, scandal, and political mischief. In seeking to capture the nub of a complex issue, cartoonists sought readily understandable visual images. They drew on nursery rhymes, classical legends, Shakespearean plays, the Bible, the old masters, the circus, or anything else that the average reader might recognize. With both gentle and ferocious humor, they dressed political figures incongruously and highlighted the peculiarities of their physiognomy. Over time, the people and situations that readers a century ago might have recognized have grown obscure. The names of the senators have faded from public memory, and schoolchildren no longer spend so much time studying ancient Greece and Rome, which would enable them to recognize images that once were commonplace. In some cases, the cartoonists created their own symbols, which remain vivid a century later. Uncle Sam, John Q. Public, the Republican elephant, and the Democratic donkey are all the creations of cartoonists' imaginations.<sup>2</sup>

While the quality of the illustrations varies widely depending on the artist and the medium, many have retained their power and visual appeal. In reviewing “The Making of Cartoons” in 1890, the *New York Times* noted that most of the prominent “pictorial humorists” of the day had received formal art training. “You must know how to draw an object before you are able to seize upon its points of distortion,” the *Times* observed. “Furthermore, that peculiar sense of the

humorous that enables one always and without hesitation to perceive the ludicrous side of a case is accorded to few men. Literary humor cannot be acquired; it must be inborn, and it is exactly the same with regard to pictorial humor.”<sup>3</sup>

In looking over the field of cartooning in the 19th century, the *Times* marveled over how many of the best cartoonists had come from abroad. The paper cited Thomas Nast, a Bavarian, and Joseph Keppler, an Austrian, along with others from elsewhere in Germany and the United Kingdom, where humor magazines had flourished before they grew popular in America. Yet while Nast and Keppler were both immigrants, they were entirely different in their artistic styles, their politics, and their use of technology for reproducing their work. Between them, they highlight the major trends in 19th-century cartooning and account for a large share of the U.S. Senate’s collection of engravings and lithographs.

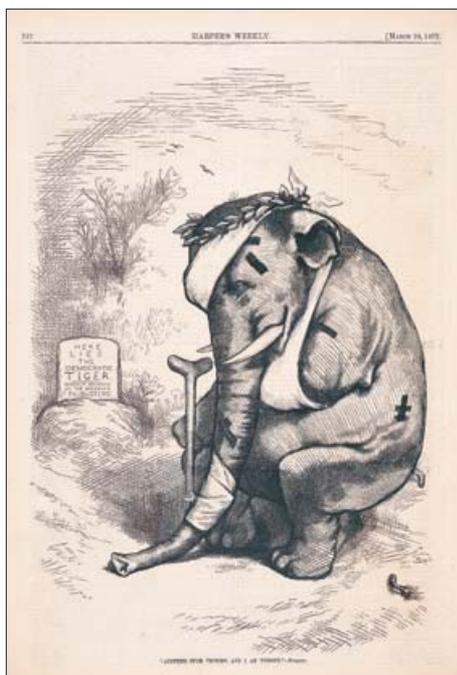
The caricatures of Thomas Nast set the bar high for all competitors who followed. Nast was born in a Bavarian military barracks in 1840, the son of a trombone player for a military band. Revolutionary upheaval in Germany in the 1840s caused his family to immigrate to New York City in 1846. The young Nast displayed such a talent for drawing in school that he was admitted to the Academy of Design. While still a teenager, he was hired as an illustrator for *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Weekly*, where he received technical training from experienced engravers and learned to work under the pressure of a weekly deadline. Finding that his talents were in demand, Nast took a better-paying job with the *New York Illustrated News*, where he sketched a variety of subjects, including prize fights, the trial of the abolitionist John Brown, and the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln. The Civil War cemented Nast’s lifelong allegiance to the Republican Party, and he remained thereafter an avid supporter of



President Andrew Johnson was the first political leader to fall victim to Nast’s gift for caricature. (See p. 331)



Here Nast employs a donkey to represent the Democrats and a tiger as the New York City Democratic political machine. (See p. 334)



Nast was the first to use an elephant as the Republican image. (See p. 337)

the great Union General Ulysses S. Grant. Said President Lincoln of his highly patriotic, pro-Union sketches, “Thomas Nast has been our best recruiting sergeant.”

In 1862 *Harper’s Weekly* magazine hired Nast. Its publisher, Fletcher Harper, told Nast not simply to illustrate scenes that he saw but to use his imagination to make pictures that would tell a story. It was Nast who first used the elephant as the Republican image and popularized the donkey (which other cartoonists already had been using) for the Democrats. He also drew a ferocious Tammany tiger as an attack on New York City’s Democratic political machine and, on a lighter note, he shaped the American image of Santa Claus through his annual Christmas drawings.

Thomas Nast drew things as he saw them. He insisted that his cartoons reflect his own thinking, not his publisher’s. Generally, he and his editors shared similar political views, but at times Nast’s cartoons put him at odds with his employer. For instance, *Harper’s Weekly* backed the Democratic candidate, editor Horace Greeley, in the 1872 election, while Nast stayed loyal to President Grant. In Nast’s cartoons, Greeley appeared as a fool and a traitor. As Nast explained his style, “I try to hit the enemy between the eyes and knock them down.” In 1877 Fletcher Harper died, and other members of the Harper family began to shift the magazine away from politics to more family-friendly subjects in order to widen its audience. Nast’s cartoons, which once had helped to sell the weekly, now appeared less frequently.

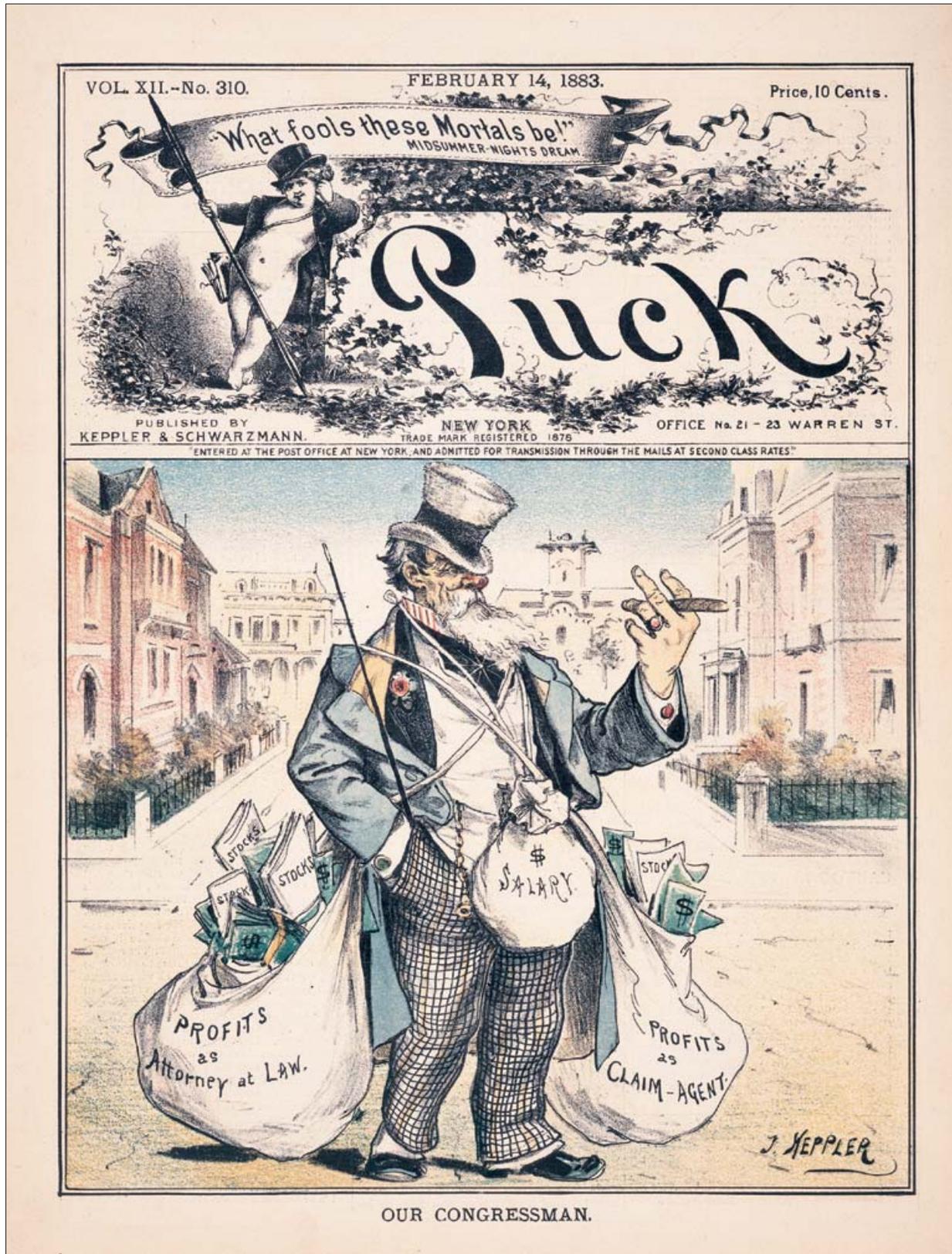
The complex political and economic issues of the Gilded Age dampened Nast’s slashing style. However, the clash of political titans

Roscoe Conkling and James G. Blaine in 1881, during the tragically brief Garfield administration, revived his political passions. During the presidential election of 1884, when Blaine ran as the Republican candidate against New York Governor Grover Cleveland, both Nast and *Harper's Weekly* bolted from the “Grand Old Party” to support the Democratic candidate. Cleveland won, but *Harper's Weekly* suffered a loss of readers and advertisers, making its management even less tolerant of the temperamental artist. Two years later, just after he had drawn his regular Christmas picture, Nast resigned from *Harper's Weekly*. He founded *Nast's Weekly* in 1893, but by then his style and politics had fallen out of fashion, and the enterprise failed. He lectured and freelanced but faded so quickly from public view that people began referring to him as “the late Thomas Nast.” Soon the cartoonist found himself in debt, so he accepted a political appointment from President Theodore Roosevelt to be American counsel in Ecuador. There Nast died of yellow fever in 1902.<sup>4</sup>

Ironically, Thomas Nast fell out of favor just as the political cartooning he had pioneered took hold in the daily newspapers. The new style of cartooning was considerably different from Nast's dark, angry, moralistic woodcuts, however. The man who had set out to challenge Nast and change the nature of cartooning was Joseph Keppler. Although two years older than Nast, Keppler was in some ways a generation younger. He had endured neither the moral fervor nor the horrors of the Civil War, memories Nast could never shake. Keppler's cartoons, printed in color, treated politics less passionately and more humorously. While color images had been available in prints like those sold by Currier and Ives, they were too expensive to publish in magazine form until Keppler's magazine, *Puck*, appeared in 1877.



In this cartoon, Nast depicts the clash in 1881 between Senators Roscoe Conkling and James G. Blaine. (See p. 358)

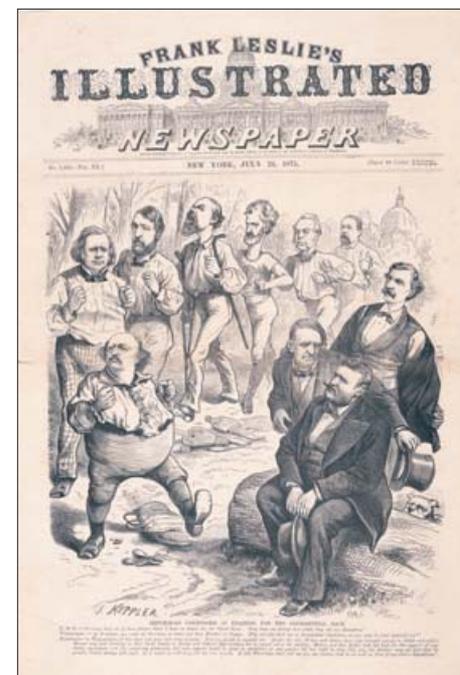


In this 1883 lithograph, cartoonist Joseph Keppler portrays members of Congress as plutocrats who drew their government salaries while also practicing law and lobbying for private claims before Congress. (See p. 362)

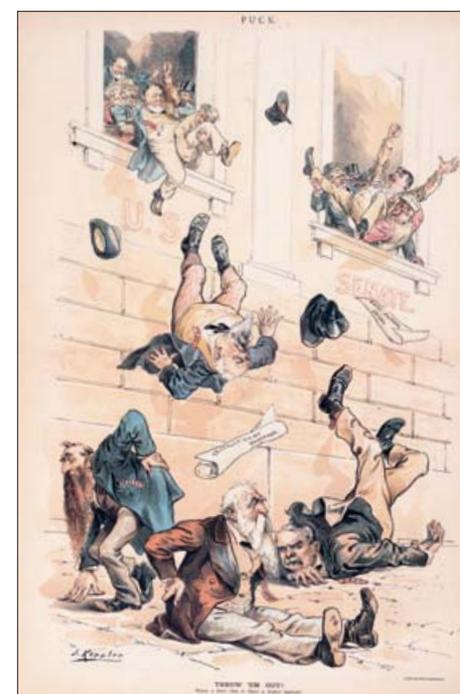
Tall, good-looking, theatrical, jovial, and witty, Joseph Ferdinand Keppler was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1838. He first demonstrated his artistic talents by decorating pastries in his family's bakery. After the failed revolution of 1848, Keppler's father and older brothers fled to America, but he remained behind with his mother and younger siblings. Keppler's talents at drawing got him admitted to the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. After he graduated in 1855, he went to Italy, painting scenery for a traveling theatrical company. (In later years the figures in his cartoons often resembled actors playing a scene on stage.) Before long, Keppler began acting in the company as well. Starting in 1865, he contributed cartoons to a Vienna humor magazine, *Kikeriki!* (German for the rooster's crow).

Keppler's father, who had settled in Missouri, urged the young artist to come to America. In 1867 Keppler and his wife immigrated to St. Louis, joining its large German expatriate population. He planned to attend medical school, but instead began performing in a German-language theater and later became a theater manager. Meanwhile, Keppler started producing a weekly German-language humor magazine, *Die Vehme* (The Star Chamber). Where other American publications of the day employed woodcuts and steel engravings, *Die Vehme* relied on a lithographic press, which cut costs by eliminating the need for an engraver. The magazine folded after a year, sending Keppler out looking for work as "a half-starved Bohemian."

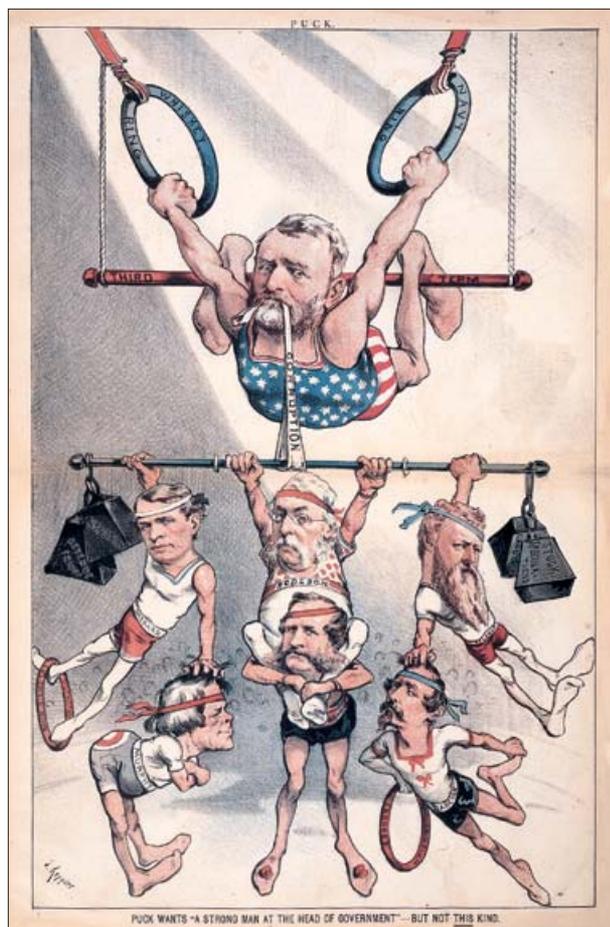
*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly* had long been looking for someone to challenge its former artist, Thomas Nast, who was then at the height of his influence at *Harper's Weekly*. Leslie's hired Keppler, who



Initially, Joseph Keppler's work with *Frank Leslie's* in the early 1870s was intended to challenge Thomas Nast. (See p. 332)



Eventually, Keppler would be known for his color lithography, as seen in this 1893 cartoon. (See p. 421)

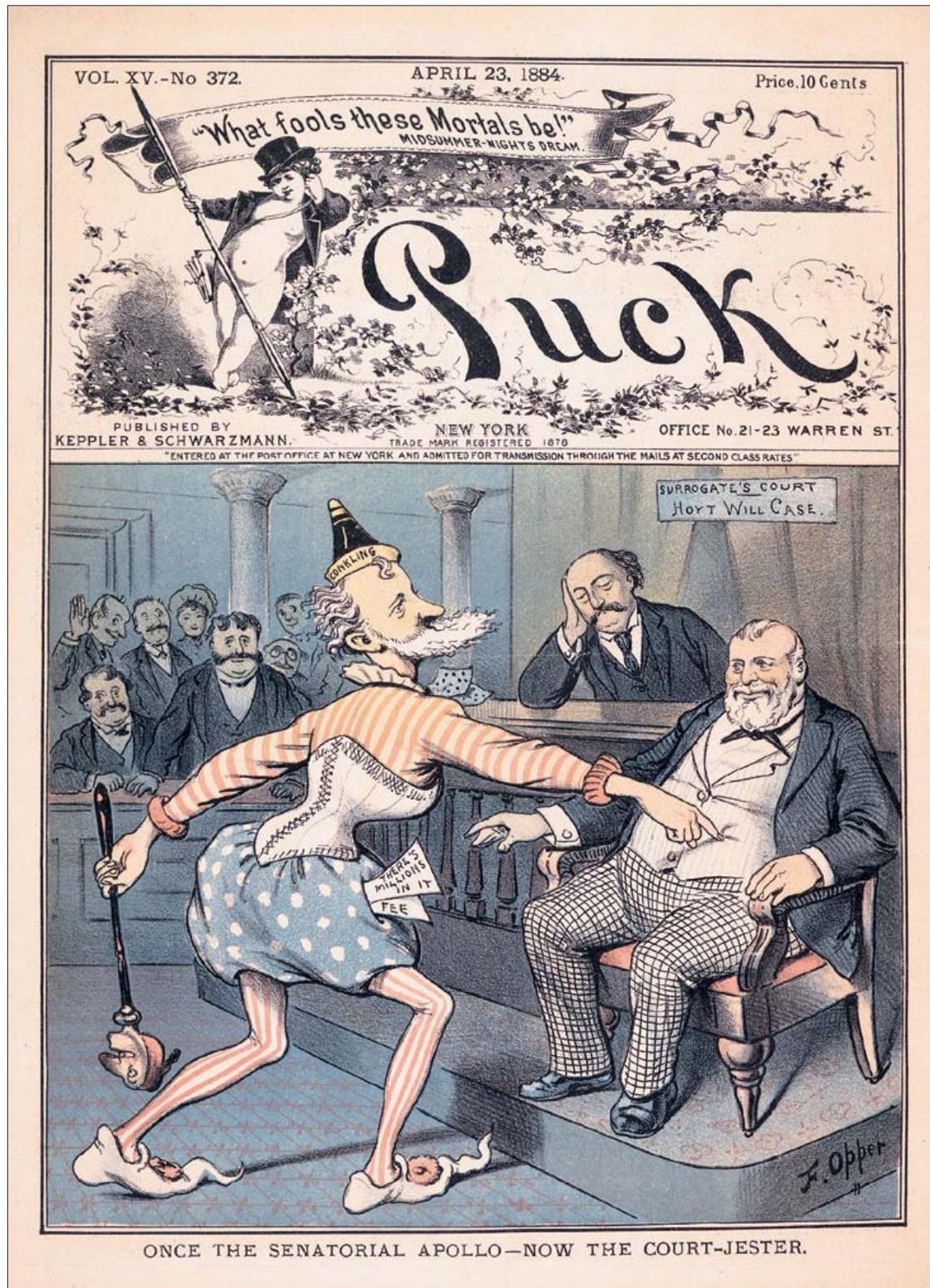


Keppler employed light satire to critique the presidency of Ulysses S. Grant. (See p. 344)

set out to unseat Nast as the nation’s leading cartoonist. Joseph Keppler’s style offered an immediate contrast with Nast’s. Keppler looked to the future while Nast could not escape the past. Keppler was light; Nast was dark. Keppler was a satirist; Nast remained an angry partisan. Like Nast, however, Keppler employed recurring symbols and themes, such as making James G. Blaine the “Tattooed Man” or drawing the diminutive Benjamin Harrison in the hat of his grandfather, William Henry Harrison, which was far too big for him.<sup>5</sup>

Having arrived in the United States after the Civil War, Keppler did not share Nast’s emotional attachment to the war and the Republican Party. *Leslie’s* leaned Democratic, and Keppler followed its lead. In the 1872 election, Keppler’s cartoons attacked President Grant and supported his Democratic opponent, Horace Greeley. He even made fun of *Harper’s Weekly’s* “Nasty” cartoonist.

Keppler felt uncomfortable following *Leslie’s* editorial line, however, and he became one of the founders of *Puck*—originally a German-language humor magazine that in 1877 began printing an English-language version as well. The magazine took its name from the blithe spirit of Shakespeare’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, along with its motto: “What fools these mortals be!” *Puck* looked different than other magazines of the day. It employed lithography in place of wood engraving and offered three cartoons in place of the usual one. The cartoons were initially printed in black and white, but later several tints were added, and soon the magazine burst into full, eye-catching color.



A typical cover from *Puck* featured a cartoon in full color. Here artist Frederick B. Opper makes light of Roscoe Conkling's decision to resume the practice of law after his resignation from the U.S. Senate. (See p. 363)

*Puck* began to add color tints in its first weeks of operation. A picture at the top of the page might be all red, while one at the bottom was all blue, and the center showed a blend of the colors. The tints were flat colors, unable to show light spots or dark shadows. Keppler, with a more highly developed sense of color, adjusted the printing process. A contemporary newspaper account recorded that “Joseph Keppler handles the lithographer’s tools more skillfully than any other caricaturist of his standing in the country.”<sup>6</sup> Other artists lacked Keppler’s confidence and speed in lithography; they simply colored a black-and-white proof and handed it to the lithographer to use as a guide. Keppler’s system started by making a pencil sketch on paper to group the figures and get a general sense of the picture. He then drew the final version of the cartoon on a lithographic stone with crayon and pen. The stone was polished and an impression was made. Keppler tinted the first proof to get a better idea of the color effect; then he prepared several other stones, each with a separate color. The impressions would be printed over one another to create a full-color effect. *Puck* needed to begin printing

a full week before the release date, thus adding a sense of urgency to Keppler’s work so his political cartoons could remain timely two weeks after he drew them.

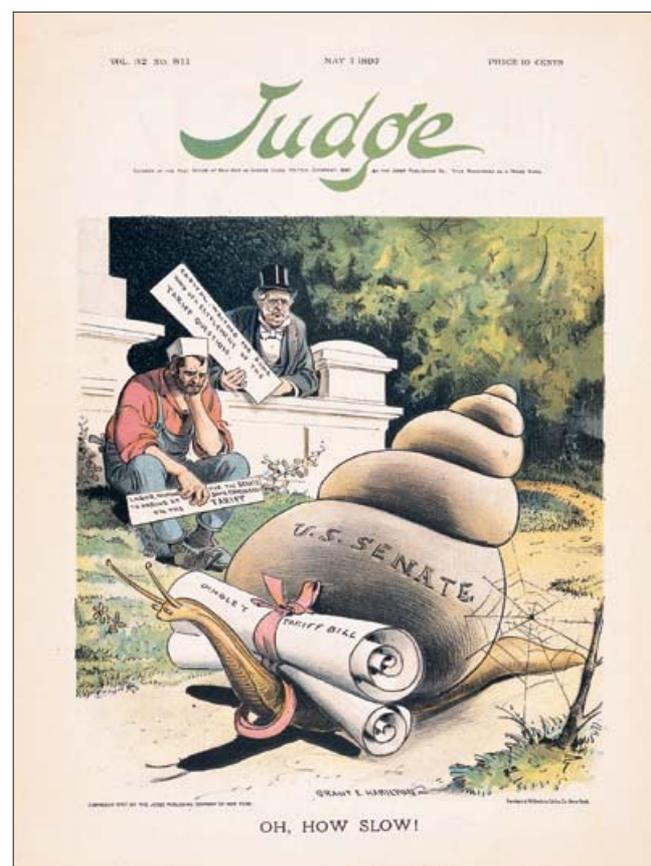
Aside from his talent and creative use of color, Joseph Keppler had a whimsical sense of humor. He once commented that to him almost every human being resembled some animal, bird, or inanimate object. “The secret of caricature is exaggeration of course,” he explained, but the artist had to determine the key elements of a man’s character in order to highlight and exaggerate them. In addition to his political cartoons, Keppler drew a series of “Puckographs,” caricatures modeled after those that ran in the British journal *Vanity Fair*. Each profiled a different American politician.



This caricature of Vice President Hannibal Hamlin is an example of a “Puckograph.” (See p. 346)

As America's first political humor magazine, *Puck* attracted an appreciative audience. Its pro-Cleveland cartoons in 1884 may well have contributed to the Democratic candidate's narrow victory in the presidential election. The Republicans responded by buying *Puck's* weak rival, *Judge*, and luring away some of *Puck's* talented staff. Within a few years, *Judge* supplanted *Puck* as the leading humor magazine. Business concerns strained Keppler's naturally nervous temperament, and he died unexpectedly in 1894.<sup>7</sup>

As Joseph Keppler and Thomas Nast faded from the scene, Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* and William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal* began running regular cartoons, both political and humorous in nature. The newspapers employed the techniques that the earlier magazines had pioneered and preserved the legacy of Nast and Keppler in the form of daily editorial cartoons. ❧



*Judge* emerged as a contemporary of *Puck* in the late 19th century. (See p. 445)

1. Stephen Hess and Milton Kaplan, *The Ungentlemanly Art: A History of American Political Cartoons* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 16–17, 76–77, 117; Donald A. Ritchie, *American Journalists: Getting the Story* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 114–118.

2. Stephen Hess and Sandy Northrop, *Drawn and Quartered: The History of American Political Cartoons* (Montgomery, AL: Elliott and Clark, 1996), 24–35.

3. “The Making of Cartoons,” *New York Times*, 20 July 1890.

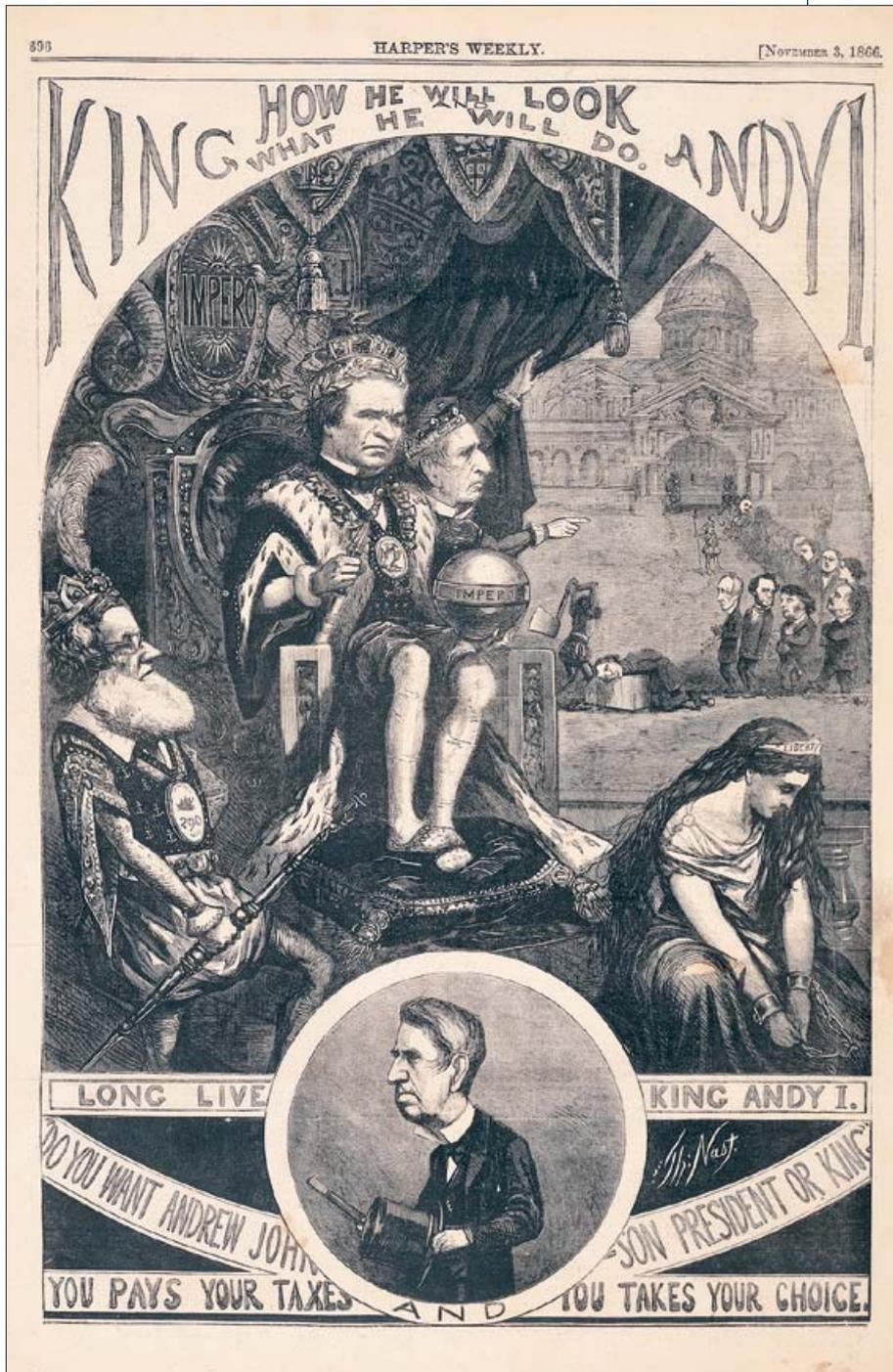
4. For Nast's biography see Ritchie, *American Journalists*, 114–118; J. Chal Vinson, *Thomas Nast, Political Cartoonist* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1967); Morton Keller, *The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968); and U.S. Senate Commission on Art, *Between the Eyes: Thomas Nast and The U.S. Senate* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Curator, 1993).

5. For Keppler's biography, see Richard Samuel West, *Satire on Stone: The Political Cartoons of Joseph Keppler* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988); and Hess and Kaplan, *The Ungentlemanly Art*, 102–109.

6. “The Making of Cartoons,” *New York Times*, 20 July 1890.

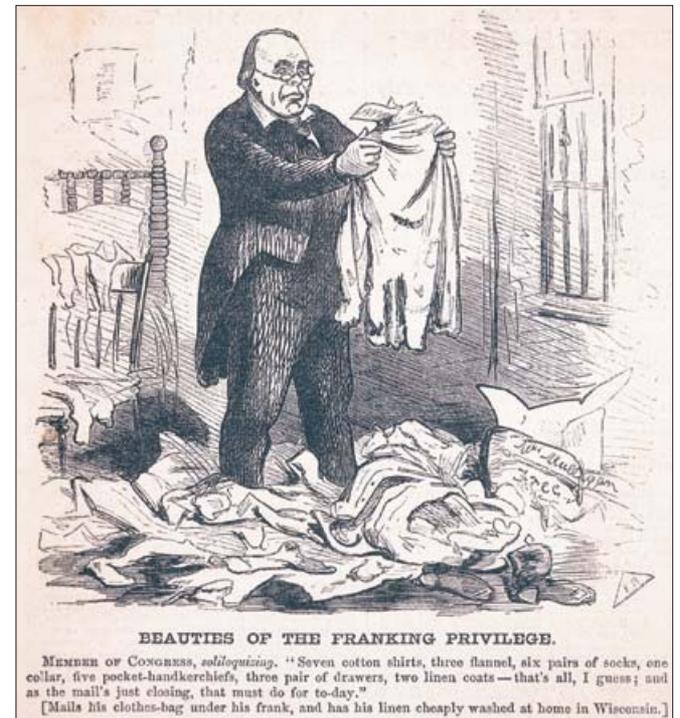
7. “Death of Joseph Keppler,” *New York Times*, 20 February 1894.





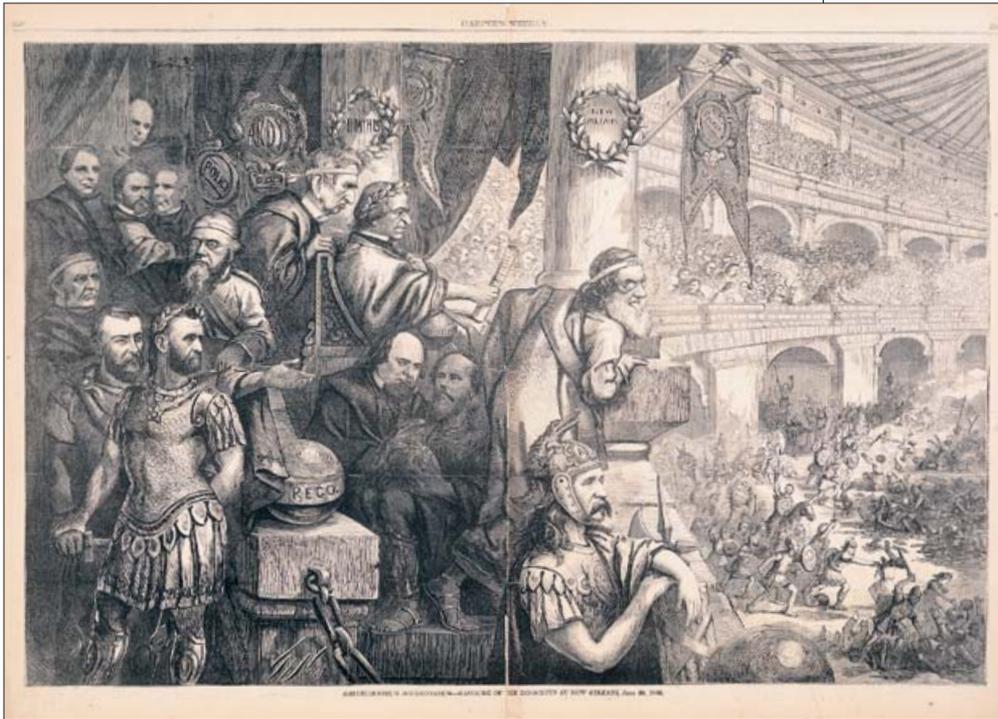
**King Andy I.**

Unidentified after Thomas Nast  
*Harper's Weekly*, 11/03/1866  
 Wood engraving, black and white  
 13 3/4 x 9 1/8 inches (34.9 x 23.2 cm)  
 Cat. no. 38.00688.001



**Beauties of the Franking Privilege.**

Unidentified after F. B.  
*Harper's Weekly*, 03/10/1866  
 Wood engraving, black and white  
 5 1/4 x 4 3/4 inches (13.3 x 12.1 cm)  
 Cat. no. 38.00536.001



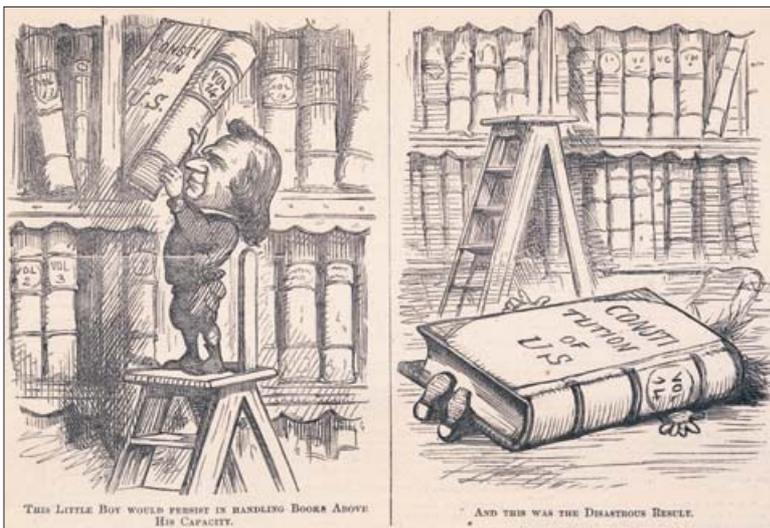
**Amphitheatrum Johnsonianum—Massacre of the Innocents at New Orleans, July 30, 1866.**

Unidentified after Thomas Nast  
*Harper's Weekly*, 03/30/1867  
Wood engraving, black and white  
14 x 20 ¼ inches (35.6 x 51.4 cm)  
Cat. no. 38.00678.001



**A Brace of Dead Ducks.**

Unidentified  
*Harper's Weekly*, 03/14/1868  
Wood engraving, black and white  
6 7/8 x 4 ½ inches (17.5 x 11.4 cm)  
Cat. no. 38.00445.001



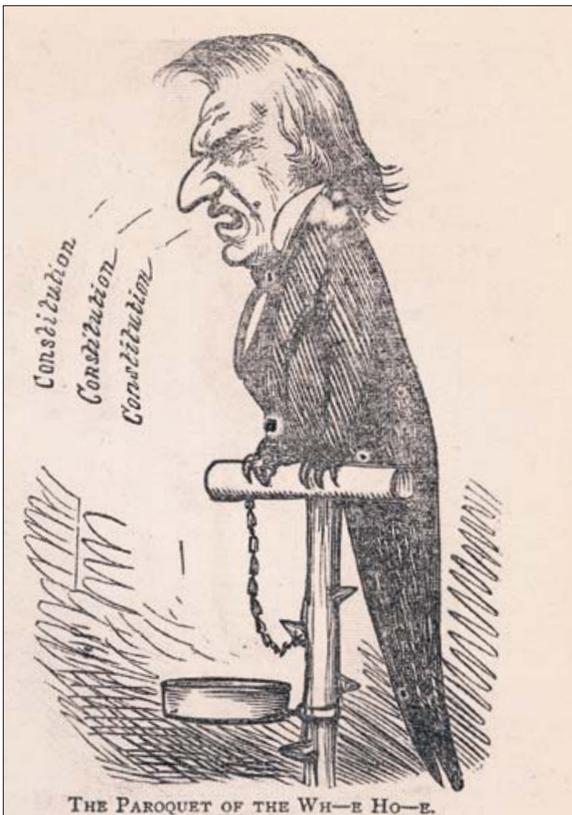
**This Little Boy Would Persist in Handling Books above His Capacity. / And This Was the Disastrous Result.**

Unidentified  
*Harper's Weekly*, 03/21/1868  
Wood engraving, black and white  
5 x 7 inches (12.7 x 17.8 cm)  
Cat. no. 38.00194.001



**Wash-Day in Congress.**

Unidentified after Matt Morgan  
 Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 12/30/1871  
 Wood engraving, black and white  
 9 x 12 3/4 inches (22.9 x 32.4 cm)  
 Cat. no. 38.00675.001



**The Paroquet of the Wh—e Ho—e.**

Unidentified  
 Harper's Weekly, 03/21/1868  
 Wood engraving, black and white  
 3 3/4 x 2 1/2 inches (9.5 x 6.4 cm)  
 Cat. no. 38.00447.001



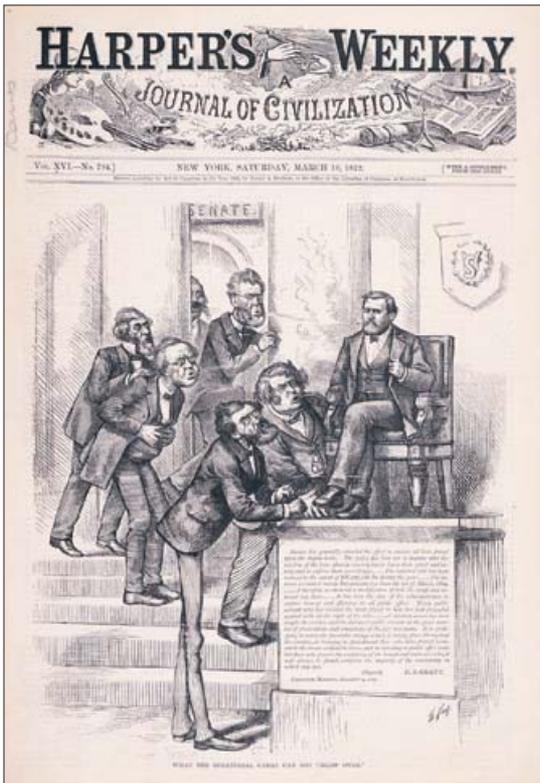
**"Time Works Wonders."**

Unidentified after Thomas Nast  
 Harper's Weekly, 04/09/1870  
 Wood engraving, black and white  
 13 3/4 x 9 inches (34.9 x 22.9 cm)  
 Cat. no. 38.00909.001



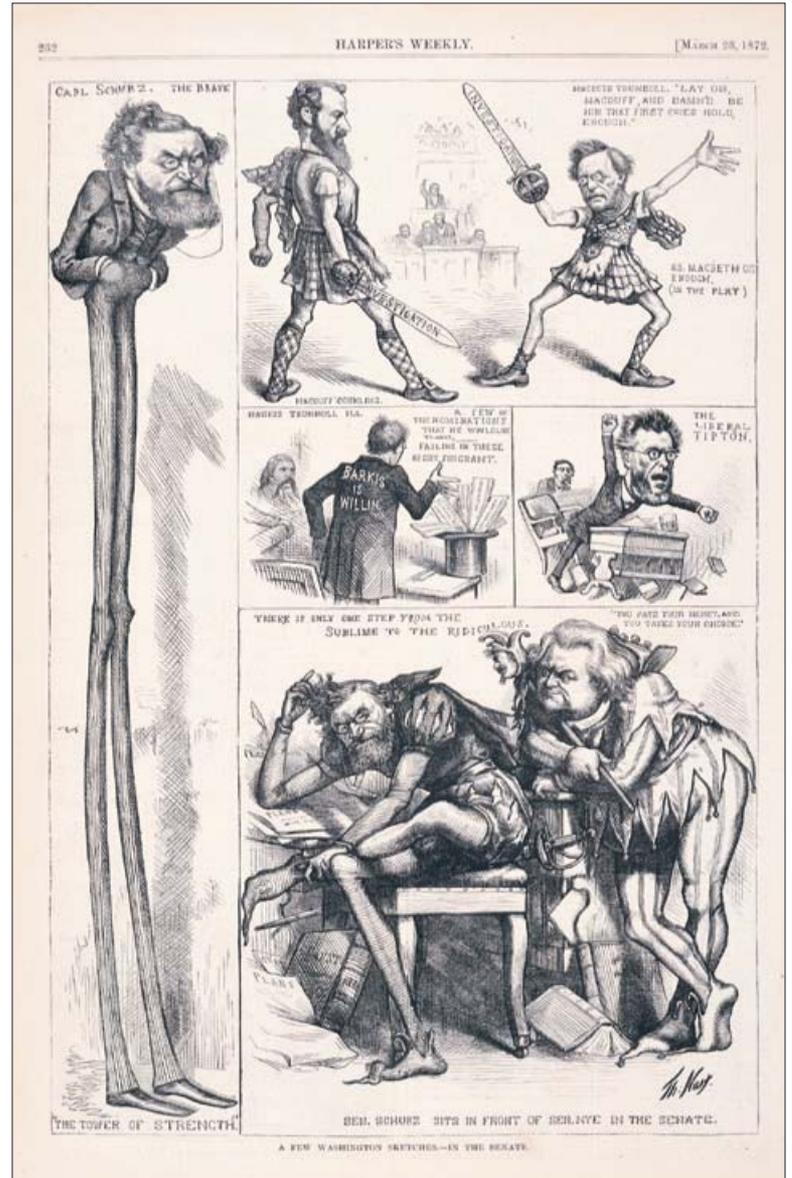
**The "Liberal" Conspirators (Who, You All Know, Are Honorable Men).**

Unidentified after Thomas Nast  
*Harper's Weekly*, 03/16/1872  
 Wood engraving, black and white  
 9 3/4 x 13 3/4 inches (24.8 x 34.9 cm)  
 Cat. no. 38.00628.001



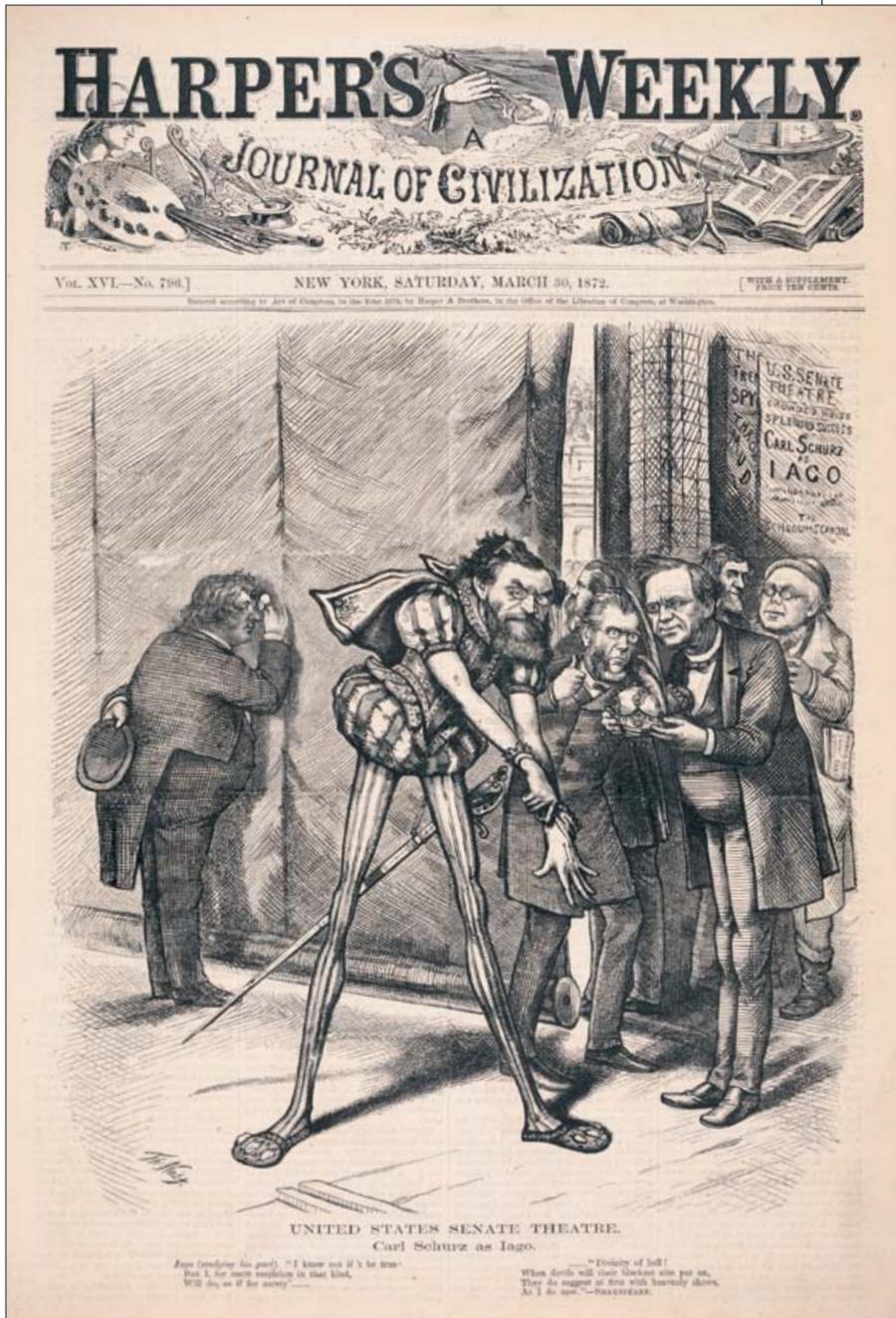
**What the Senatorial Cabal Can Not "Blow Over."**

Unidentified after Thomas Nast  
*Harper's Weekly*, 03/16/1872  
 Wood engraving, black and white  
 11 3/16 x 9 1/8 inches (28.7 x 23.2 cm)  
 Cat. no. 38.00531.001



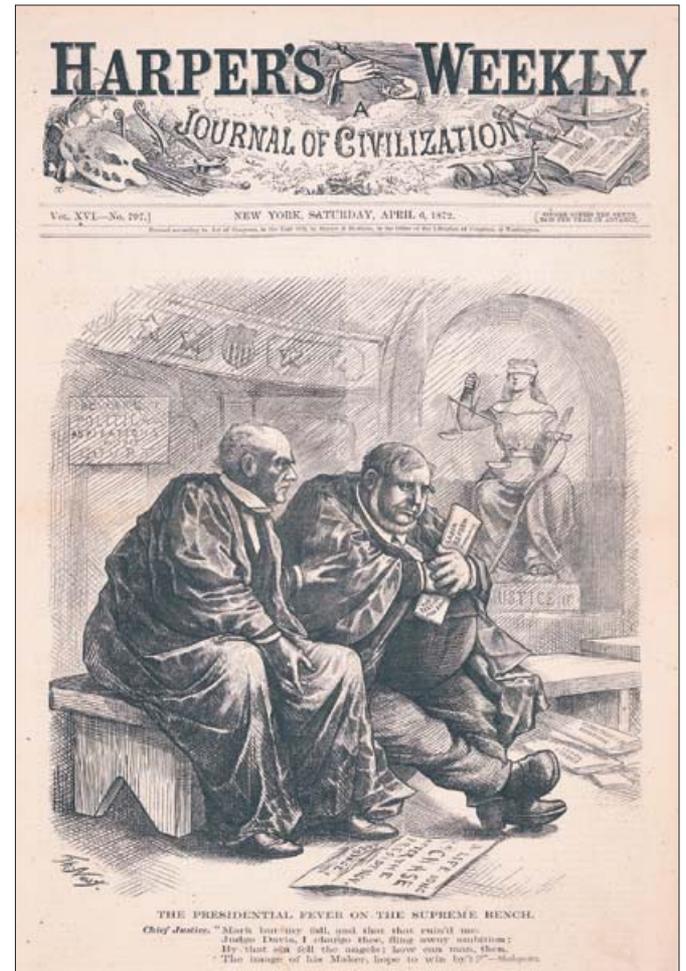
**A Few Washington Sketches.—In the Senate.**

Unidentified after Thomas Nast  
*Harper's Weekly*, 03/23/1872  
 Wood engraving, black and white  
 13 7/8 x 9 1/8 inches (35.2 x 23.2 cm)  
 Cat. no. 38.00546.001



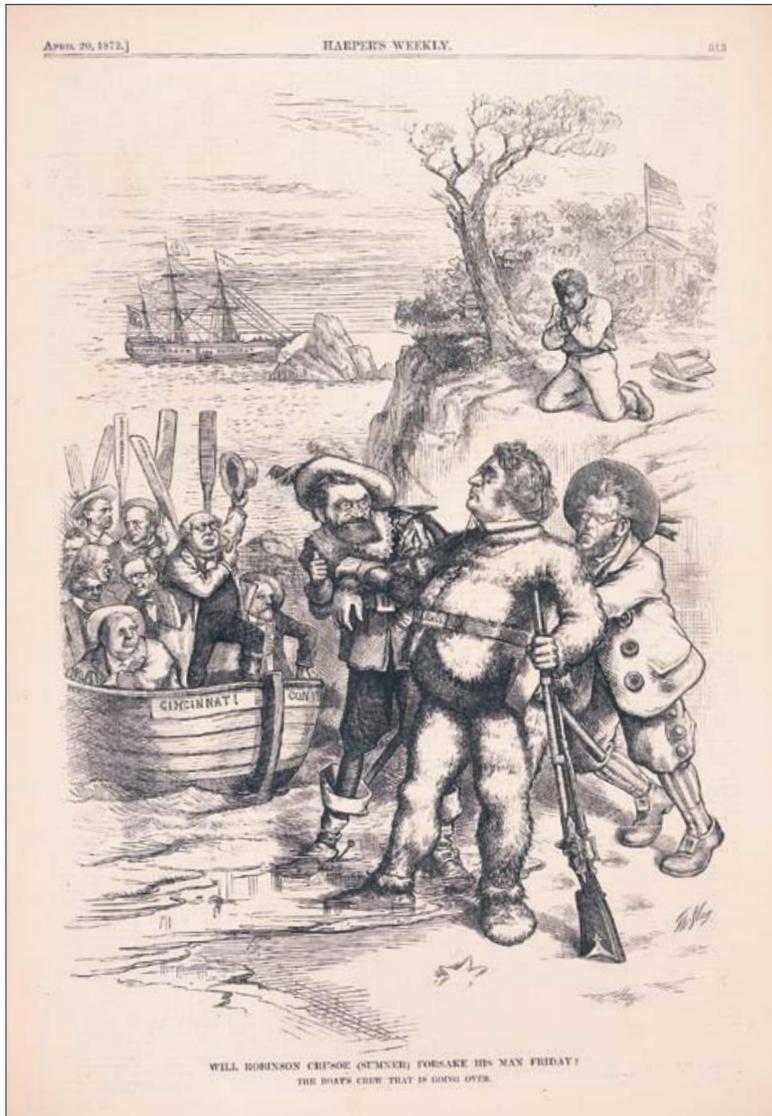
**United States Senate Theatre.**

Unidentified after Thomas Nast  
*Harper's Weekly*, 03/30/1872  
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 Cat. no. 38.00371.003



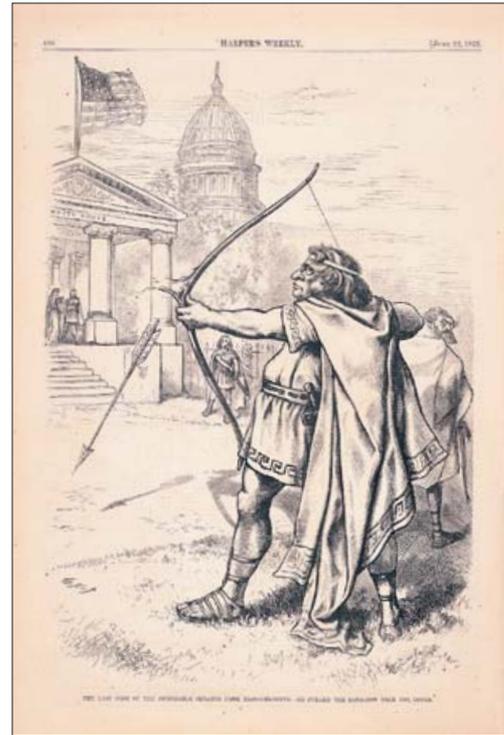
**The Presidential Fever on the Supreme Bench.**

Unidentified after Thomas Nast  
*Harper's Weekly*, 04/06/1872  
 Wood engraving, black and white  
 11 ¼ x 9 ½ inches (28.6 x 23.2 cm)  
 Cat. no. 38.00877.001



**Will Robinson Crusoe (Sumner) Forsake His Man Friday?**

Unidentified after Thomas Nast  
*Harper's Weekly*, 04/20/1872  
Wood engraving, black and white  
14 x 9 3/8 inches (35.6 x 23.8 cm)  
Cat. no. 38.00125.001



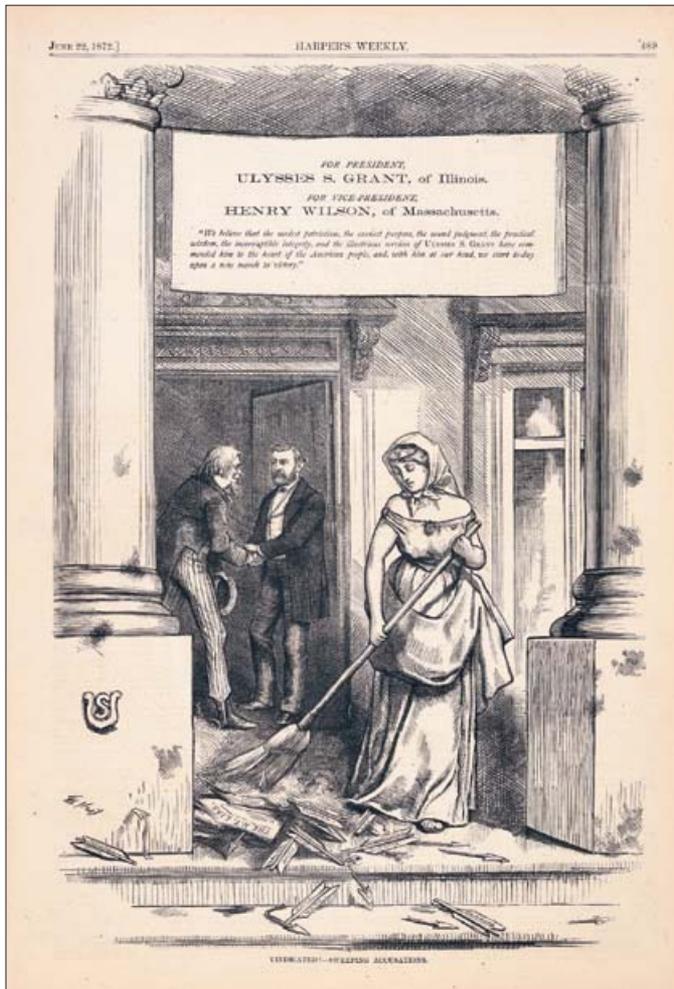
**The Last Shot of the Honorable Senator from Massachusetts.—He Pulled the Long-Bow Once Too Often.**

Unidentified after Thomas Nast  
*Harper's Weekly*, 06/22/1872  
Wood engraving, black and white  
14 1/4 x 9 1/2 inches (36.2 x 24.1 cm)  
Cat. no. 38.00627.001



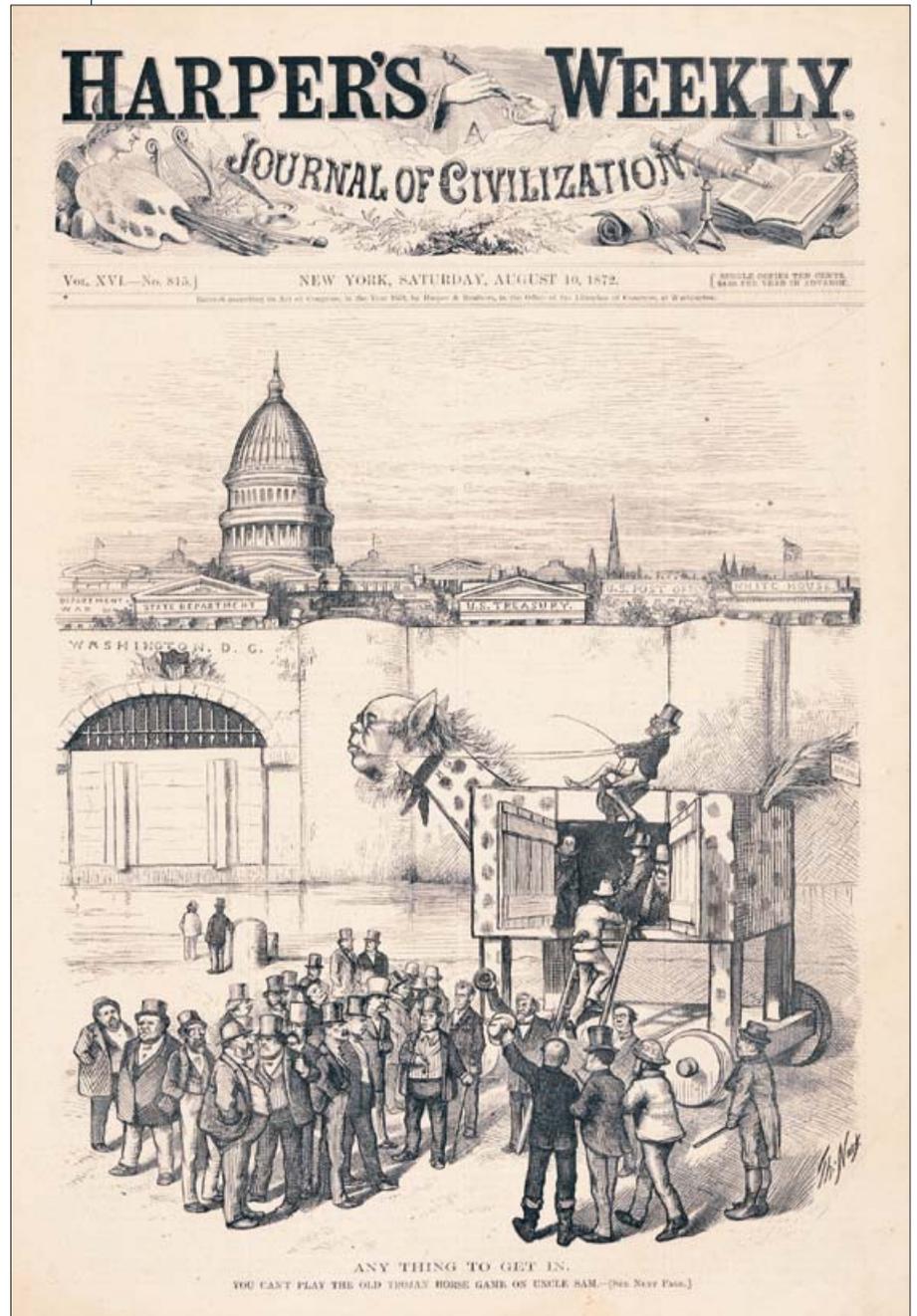
**The Old Hash Warmed Up Again.**

Unidentified after Thomas Nast  
*Harper's Weekly*, 06/22/1872  
Wood engraving, black and white  
4 3/4 x 4 3/8 inches (12.1 x 11.7 cm)  
Cat. no. 38.00677.001



**Vindicated!—Sweeping Accusations.**

Unidentified after Thomas Nast  
*Harper's Weekly*, 06/22/1872  
 Wood engraving, black and white  
 14 ¼ x 9 ¼ inches (36.2 x 23.5 cm)  
 Cat. no. 38.00626.001



**Any Thing to Get In.**

Unidentified after Thomas Nast  
*Harper's Weekly*, 08/10/1872  
 Wood engraving, black and white  
 11 7/16 x 9 ¼ inches (29.1 x 23.5 cm)  
 Cat. no. 38.00440.001



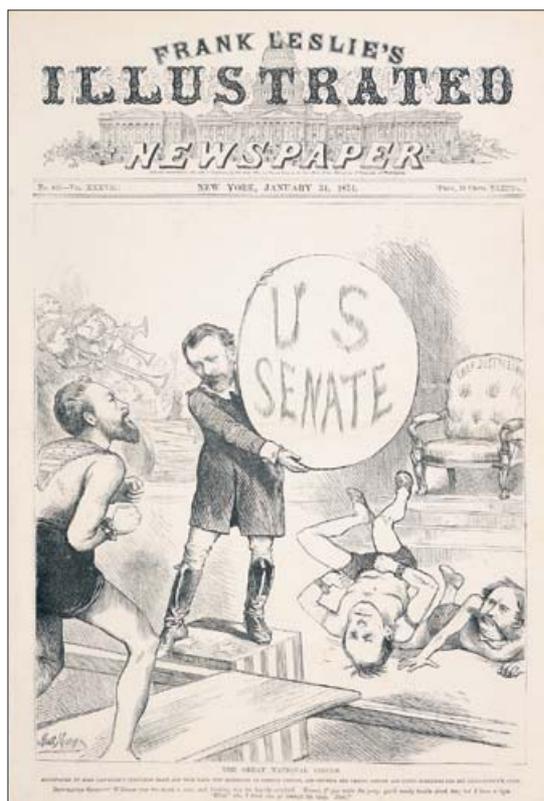
**Will the Senator from Massachusetts Do This, to Make His Words Good?**

Unidentified after Thomas Nast  
*Harper's Weekly*, 08/17/1872  
Wood engraving, black and white  
11 3/16 x 9 3/16 inches (28.4 x 23.3 cm)  
Cat. no. 38.00122.001



**"Let Us Have Complete Restoration, While You Are about It."**

Unidentified after Thomas Nast  
*Harper's Weekly*, 12/28/1872  
Wood engraving, black and white  
13 3/8 x 9 3/16 inches (34.6 x 23.3 cm)  
Cat. no. 38.00121.001



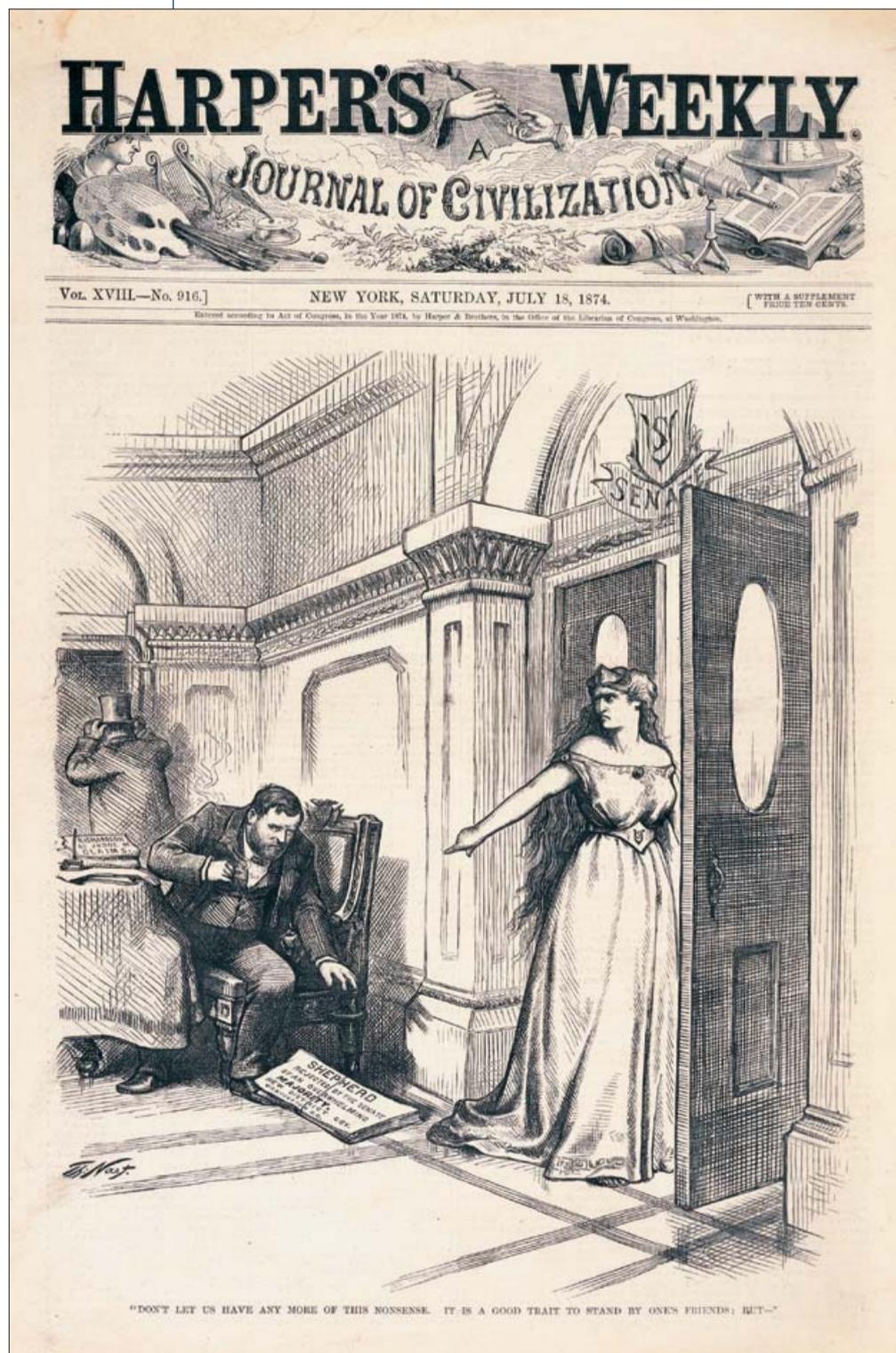
**The Great National Circus**

Unidentified after Matt Morgan  
 Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 01/31/1874  
 Wood engraving, black and white  
 12 x 9 ¼ inches (30.5 x 23.5 cm)  
 Cat. no. 38.00637.001



**Notice.—No Cartoon This Week.**

Unidentified after Thomas Nast  
 Harper's Weekly, 01/31/1874  
 Wood engraving, black and white  
 4 ¾ x 4 ½ inches (12.1 x 11.4 cm)  
 Cat. no. 38.00679.001



**"Don't Let Us Have Any More of This Nonsense. It Is a Good Trait to Stand by One's Friends; But—"**

Unidentified after Thomas Nast  
 Harper's Weekly, 07/18/1874  
 Wood engraving, black and white  
 11 ¾ x 9 inches (29.8 x 23.5 cm)  
 Cat. no. 38.00684.001