

Tweed to the Rescue

The New York correspondent of the St. Louis Republican gives the following reminiscence of Tweed: "It was the year before his downfall and we were both aboard an eastern train, the Boss *en route* for his home in Greenwich. A freight train was on the track before us, and we were detained in a muddy, barren bit of country over an hour. Some of the passengers got out and walked down the road to the scene of the disaster, where a number of men were clearing the track, amongst 'em, of course, the writer of this, who can never keep out of a muss if there's one to get into. The freight train had not only gone all of a heap off the track, but two cars had collided and crushed between 'em a poor brakeman, who laid that chill spring morning on the side of the road in great agony. Tweed strolled along, but the instant he saw this suffering man he went to his assistance, and in a few minutes he had the poor fellow on a car-cushion, borne between a couple of men on to the next station, where I have no doubt Mr. Tweed looked out for him. Presently the Boss started back to the train alone, and a lady and myself followed leisurely behind. At a point in the road Tweed stopped and then turned out of sight, and when we gained the same point, behold, with his coat off, there was the king of New York, bringing all his weight to bear on the hind wheel of a two-wheeled cart that had stuck deep in the mud of a neighboring road. A cord of wood was neatly piled upon it, an old, feeble man was the proprietor of the concern; the jaded horse pulled in obedience to the lusty cry of Tweed; the old wood-cutter stood behind with a stake, shoving it up against the wheel every time the Boss gave a lift. The mud was soft, and deep, and stick, and the well-polished boots of the philanthropist were buried in it. His face was red, for he was doing a good bit of muscular exercise. The train was half a mile a way and the wreck equally distant. He didn't dream a soul beside the stuck old woodman looked at him, and he was doing a real kindness with the will and vim of a sympathetic Christian heart and the strength of his whole body. Up came the wagon and the Boss pulled his coat from the wood-pile, got into it, clambered the bank to the track, and rolled on to the train."

An Old English Legal Fiction.

It is curious to notice from time to time how strangely English institutions are influenced by fictions and traditions which have no substance in them, but which nothing short of a resolution would induce English people to change. One of the most common and least understood of these fictions is the stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds. We may suppose that a member of any representative body in any civilized country of the world wishes to cease being a member, and to retire into private life, he sends in his resignation, and there is an end of it. But a member of the British House of Commons cannot resign his seat. He may become disqualified from sitting in that assembly by accepting some place of honor or profit under the crown, or by some other cause, but Parliamentary law does not permit him to resign. If, therefore, a member desires to retire from the House, he must set about and find an office which he can ask, even from his political opponents, without much risk of refusal, and, having got his office, he is disqualified as a member of parliament from sitting in the house of commons, and then, by resigning his office, he is at liberty to retire from public life. It seems a roundabout way of doing a simple thing, but it is the only way of doing it. The stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds is the office generally applied for in the circumstances. The Chiltern Hills are in the center of Buckinghamshire—M. Disraeli's county—and it is perhaps the most benighted county in England. The Chiltern Hills are covered with beautiful beach forests, and in the old day these forests were infested by robbers. To restrain the robbers and to protect the peaceable inhabitants of the neighborhood from their inroads, it was usual for the crown to appoint an officer, who was called the steward of the Chiltern Hundreds. Though the beach forests remain, the robbers have withdrawn to the more perfect seclusion of the slums of East London, and the office is now an obsolete sinecure, and but for the secondary object of enabling a member of parliament to adopt a roundabout way of resigning his seat, it might be abolished to-morrow. But the English cling to their fictions, and for the last century and a quarter, whenever a member of the House applies for the Chiltern Hundreds, it is granted (generally, though not invariably,) on the understanding that the member instantly resigns it, and, his seat being vacated by his acceptance of office, a new writ is issued for the constituency which he has represented.