

TWENTY-ONE YEARS.

THE national anniversary of 1886 is the twenty-first since that which immediately followed the downfall of the rebellion. The nation has thus come to its majority in the new existence which began with the end of the civil war and the abolition of slavery. The intervening period has been in a sense one of nonage, and it is hardly fanciful to regard the reunited nation as having only now come to the full stature of manhood.

For the first time in their history the people of the United States now feel an assured confidence in the perpetuity and safety of the nation. The danger of disunion shadowed the whole existence of the republic down to the war; the fear that irreparable harm might yet be done the country by the section which attempted secession has possessed a large share of the population since the war. One thing alone could demonstrate the integrity of the reunited nation, and that was proof that its government was as secure with the party which was strongest in the South in power as with the party which was strongest in the North. So long as hundreds of thousands of men believed that a party which contained half the people would plunge the country into ruin if it should come into power, real confidence in the republic could not exist. Nothing short of a year's peaceful administration of the Government by the party which they so dreaded could convince these hundreds of thousands of men that the country is truly safe. This test has been applied, and a host of people are drawing long breaths of relief at the evidence that their honest apprehensions were baseless, and that there are no longer any "rebels" against whom they must "vote as they shot." It is simple truth to say that there is now a more general, settled, and well-grounded confidence in the future of the republic than ever before since it was established.

This confidence largely grows out of the discovery that the nation no longer has a negro problem to settle. Before the war, slavery always threatened the attempt at secession which was finally made; for some time after the war emancipation did not give assurance of the black man's future. The race still suffers keenly from injustice, and it will long be handicapped sadly by its generations of servitude. But experience has shown that the negro is as safe with one party in power at Washington as with the other, and that his former masters are ready to give his children the education which is seen to be as essential for them as for the whites, in the interest of the latter quite as much as in that of the blacks. The education of colored children in free schools maintained at the public expense by the old slave States is proof that the negro problem is at last in process of solution.

Still another great gain is the staggering blow which has been dealt at the domination of the spoils theory of popular government. Pernicious and demoralizing as this theory was when originally formulated two generations ago, it was not until the population had reached 50,000,000, and the number of offices exceeded 100,000, that people realized all the dangers which it threatened. The "clean

sweep" demand typified and embodied the doctrine of the spoilsmen, and when a new administration, involving a change of parties for the first time in a quarter of a century, refused to make a "clean sweep," the axe was laid at the root of the evil. A vast deal remains to be done before we shall have a thoroughgoing reform of the civil service, but the spoilsmen have already met their Waterloo—and they show that they know it.

There are dark shades as well as light in the national picture. While the black labor of the South is emerging from ignorance, the North is awakening to the danger of ignorant white labor. The fact that great bodies of men in the East and West have avowed and endeavored by force to establish the doctrine that a man shall not have the right to earn a living unless he subjects himself to the odious despotism of a secret, oath-bound "union," is an unwelcome revelation of the lack of intelligence among the masses of the newcomers from abroad. A body of workmen who had been educated in the public schools of this country would never have tolerated such a proposition, and while some native-born Americans have participated in the recent assertions of this doctrine, its chief strength has been found among the ignorant laborers who have come to us from the lowest classes of every European nation. The work of emancipating such men from the shackles of ignorance is no small task.

The growth in the power of corporations is an unhealthy sign. The undue influence of these great aggregations of capital in our legislation, the demoralizing effect of their methods upon public men, are plain to the most careless observer. The wide ramifications of more than one vast monopoly, as they are sometimes exposed to view, are well calculated to alarm the timid. It is not strange that people are found who consider the dangers threatened by corporate power hardly second to the worst that the country has yet encountered.

The admiration—even the worship—of wealth, which characterizes a large share of the population, is a sign of the times which the thoughtful observer must note. Material success, as evidenced in the possession of a great fortune, is undoubtedly more highly valued now than ever before. The very rich man is the popular hero to an extent previously quite unknown in this country, and hardly ever equalled elsewhere. A million dollars now invest the most ordinary person with a degree of consideration which the most commanding talent may not insure the poor man, and too often ability stands no chance in a contest with a long purse when the two appeal for what should be that loftiest mark of public esteem—a high office in the State.

The "spread-eagle" oratory of the Fourth of July in the era before the war has gone out of vogue. The sobering effect of that great struggle is reflected in the quieter treatment of the anniversary. There was always something hollow about the oratory of that bygone period, for speaker and hearers alike realized, even if they tried to forget, the absurdity of celebrating the birth of freedom in a land which permitted slavery. The orator "let the eagle scream," and the audience applauded the national bird, in

the hope of forgetting the "irrepressible conflict" of which everybody dreaded to think. The conflict having at last come and ended, so long ago that the baby then born is now a full-grown man, we approach the anniversary with a well-grounded confidence such as our ancestors never felt. If we do not make so much noise as they did fifty years ago, it is because we have learned that it is wiser to reflect upon the dangers which still confront us than to pretend that the republic has yet reached perfection. The comforting reflection is always present, however, that no peril can exceed those which we have escaped, and that a nation really united and free is prepared to meet any dangers.

SOME CRITICS OF THE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY.

THE invocation of the Divine blessing on our enemies is a natural accompaniment of the prayer to be delivered from our friends, and if there is a man living whom a decent sense of gratitude should move to pronounce that invocation, it is Maj. Powell, Director of the Geological Survey. This officer is now intrusted with the annual expenditure of a lump sum of \$400,000, in his own way, through agencies selected by himself, in the preparation of a geological map of the United States. In deciding what a geologic map is, and how it is to be made, what regions should be first covered, what agencies to employ; in the adoption of methods of administration and in the fixing of compensations to be paid, he is subject to no legal limitation or control whatever, except such as the Secretary of the Interior may be able to exercise. Not two months ago it was authoritatively reported as the unanimous opinion of the joint commission on the survey that this power should be in some way restricted. And yet, last week, a proviso intended to limit the expenditure of the money strictly to the object named in the appropriation was voted down, with so near an approach to unanimity that not even a count was called for. Two days later the Committee on Appropriations in the Senate recommended a reduction of the Director's salary by \$1,000. On a division this recommendation only received five votes. We doubt if there is any instance in the history of the country of an officer of the Government, in time of peace, exercising such powers and receiving such an endorsement in both houses of Congress.

If we ask why this endorsement was so emphatic, the natural answer will be that Congress was willing for the moment to sacrifice the usual precautionary provisions in making appropriations, for the sake of leaving untrammelled the administration of an officer whom they knew to be executing the duties of his office with the highest ability and integrity. If we go still further, and inquire why this confidence, we shall find it to be very largely the result of a series of unfounded attacks upon the Survey which have been made in various journals during the past twelve months. If there was anything open to criticism in the Director's conduct of his work, the authors of these attacks were singularly unfortunate in failing either to bring it to light or to guess at it. The published statements of the Director himself, and the result of examinations both by officers of the Treasury and of the

Interior Departments, show that all adverse statements were either pure fabrications and random guesses, or were founded on misconstruction of the law or of the facts. The more completely the affairs of the bureau were looked into, the less room was found for criticism. The natural result was that the principle involved was entirely overlooked in the reaction against such a mass of falsehood. Congress is evidently convinced that the present Director knows better how to spend his appropriations than Congress can tell him, and is not disposed to frame laws which, while guarding against the abuse of his trust by a careless and incompetent officer, would only trammel a careful and efficient one.

Under these circumstances we regret the publication of an ill-advised criticism of the Survey just issued from the Government Printing Office by the Chief of Engineers. Nominally, it consists of extracts from the report of Capt. George M. Wheeler upon the International Geographical Conference held at Venice in 1881. The extracts, however, are really a republication of the whole book except the sixty pages devoted to the work of the Congress. Why those were omitted, it is difficult to say. The body of the work is a description of the Government land and marine surveys of the leading countries of the world, including the United States. The moral of the story is everywhere kept in the foreground, and is, that in all countries, except our own, topographical surveys are under the direction of the military branch of the Government, and marine surveys under the naval branch. This moral is so obtrusive as to detract from the confidence the reader should be able to repose in the fulness and fairness of the statements. Lest it should be forgotten, it is reinforced by "little digs" at the scientific men of our own country. Capt. Wheeler speaks of the fashion among a certain class of scientific official specialists in the United States, who apply the name Geodetic Survey to a portion of their work. He tells us that no general topographical survey on a trigonometrical basis for the United States has yet been instituted. As the Geological Survey has for several years past been carrying on this work, we must charitably interpret this statement as meaning that no official knowledge of such a survey is in the possession of Captain Wheeler's department. Our readers will recollect the curious fact that the Engineers' Survey ten years ago had no official knowledge of the work of the Hayden Survey, but went on resurveying the regions which Hayden had already completed.

What connection the report on marine surveys has with any work of the Corps of Engineers or with the Geographical Congress, it is difficult to see. It looks very much as if this part of the report were an afterthought, prepared exclusively to support the project for transferring the Coast Survey to the Navy Department, which would be the natural complement of transferring the work of the Geological Survey to the War Department. A rapid glance at it shows no information which could not have been as readily compiled in Washington as in the countries in question. Of the Coast

Survey Capt. Wheeler says: "In the United States the anomaly exists of a hydrographic survey *legally* consisting of a civilian head, with primarily army and navy officers and astronomers, etc., as assistants, under the administration of the Treasury Department." Following the example of the rest of the report, the main object is to make it evident to the reader that all marine surveying is in foreign countries conducted by naval officers under the respective navy departments. The report is made as available as possible for home use by placing in the background, or entirely ignoring, the most essential feature in which the organization of these foreign services differs from that proposed for our own in the event of its transfer to the Navy Department. They are, for the most part, not made or directed by "sailor men," officers in the line of naval command, but by a selected and specially trained "staff corps" which our navy has not and does not intend to have. Thus Capt. F. J. O. Evans, R. N., who is named in the report as Hydrographer to the Admiralty, was a "staff captain," who, in the order of command of a ship at sea, would have been preceded by any lieutenant on board. The Hydrographic Office of England is, in fact, not classed as naval at all, but as one of the civil branches of the Admiralty. In France the surveying is, for the most part, not conducted by sea-going officers at all, but by the corps of hydrographic engineers ("ingénieurs hydrographiques"), who never had a naval education. In Germany, also, the chief of the Hydrographic Office belongs to the "marine staff," and his office is a permanent one. All this is very different from our plan of having sea-going officers of the line take their turn in conducting the work of the Coast Survey for three years at a time, as they command a navy-yard or a ship; and Capt. Wheeler, by ignoring it, deprives his report of all the weight it should have as an official paper.

THE RAILWAY POSTAL SERVICE.

For some unexplained reason the railway postal service was not covered by the civil-service rules when the present Administration came into power. It ought to have been, but it was not. There is no reason in the world why clerks in the large post-offices should be appointed and promoted by competitive examination, and the clerks in the railway postal service should not. On the contrary, the service rendered by the railway clerks is even more laborious, and calls for greater skill, intelligence, integrity, and bodily endurance, than that rendered by the clerks in the post-offices.

Mr. Vilas ought, when he came into office, to have obtained from the President an order putting this branch of the service also under the rules, in view of its very great importance to the public, and especially the commercial public, to whom the prompt delivery of letters is a matter of so much concern. The whole railway postal service is in fact organized and exists for the promotion of promptness. It sorts the mails en route, and therefore makes a clear saving of the time, which would be passed in this way in the post-office. But this sorting is

done under great difficulties—that is, is done with defective light and under the oscillation caused by the rapid motion of the train, and much of it is done at night, and therefore calls for strong eyes, vigorous bodily health, and thorough devotion to duty.

Mr. Vilas seems to have been fully conscious of all this when he came into office. Whether he sought to have this branch of the service brought under the rules we do not know, but he issued the following order within a few weeks after taking charge of the Post-office:

"March 31, 1885.—Railway postal clerks who have become efficient and valuable men, against whom no just complaint of neglect, inattention, or want of fidelity, honesty, or efficiency can be brought, need have no fears of being disturbed so long as they continue to render meritorious and faithful service."

Now, we are sorry to say that he does not appear to have lived up to this order for a single month. From the very first this most important branch of the public service was in a greater or less degree given up to the politicians. They were allowed to make it a receptacle for the worthless henchmen whom they could not, in the old fashion, get into the great post-offices covered by the rules. Railway postal clerks who "had become efficient and valuable men," and against whom "no just complaints" could be made, have been not only "disturbed," but removed to make room for new and untried men, who had nothing to recommend them but their political influence. Men who have rendered and were rendering "meritorious and faithful service" have found that it did not protect them against arbitrary dismissal. In other words, the Postmaster-General's pledges have proved valueless, and because valueless, a discredit instead of an honor to him and to the Administration.

This is not all, nor the worst of the matter. The state of disorganization and inefficiency they brought about in the railway service has of course done much to deprive the public of the benefit of the greater efficiency introduced into the large post-offices by the new rules. No matter how well the work of the New York Post-office is done, for instance, in making up and despatching the mails, it may be largely wasted or neutralized by the inefficiency of the sorters in the mail-cars on the roads. We can testify as a matter of experience that this is true. Irregularities and delays in the transmission of the newspaper mails have increased during the past year, and we have found almost invariably that they were due to diminished efficiency in the railway postal service.

The postal clerks have organized a trades-union, and are threatening a strike unless the Postmaster-General redresses certain specified grievances, the principal of which is the repeated violations of the promise which we have quoted above. We are as much opposed as any one can be to the formation of unions with striking powers, among any body of men engaged in a public service. No policeman, or railway official, or telegrapher ought, we hold, to consider himself at liberty to join in any movement against his employers which involves the infliction of enormous loss and inconvenience on the public. Anybody who tries or arranges to make his private quarrels a