

SPiRiT OF THE PRESS.

EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS UPON CURRENT TOPICS—COMPILED EVERY DAY FOR THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

Reorganizing the Civil Service.

From the N. Y. Times. Testimony in favor of a thorough reorganization of the Civil Service rapidly accumulates. The brunt of the battle in Congress falls upon Mr. Jencks. Outside, however, he has supporters whose words should long ago have been conclusive. The general object of his labors is concurred in most heartily by those who have the best opportunities for judging of the necessity of reform. The abstract idea has become a practical desideratum. The heads of the departments confess, in general terms, the embarrassment and injury to public interests resulting from indifference to the standard of fitness in the appointment of subordinates.

Mr. Wells has declared that until the Government discards partisanship in the choice of its servants, and makes character and capacity conditions essential to the acquisition of the smallest office, it will be idle to hope for material improvement in the revenue service. Mr. Rollins, the late Commissioner of Internal Revenue, has become a practical desideratum. The heads of the departments confess, in general terms, the embarrassment and injury to public interests resulting from indifference to the standard of fitness in the appointment of subordinates.

The latest contribution to the volume of evidence upon the subject is the report of the joint committee respecting Treasury management in the matter of bonds and currency. Amidst the doubts suggested by "discrepancies," and the caution which prompts an equivocal handling of frauds, the committee found one resting-ground, clear and strong. They condemn, without hesitancy or reserve, the manner in which the subordinates, with whose work they come in contact, are appointed. They declare that satisfactory results cannot be looked for "so long as persons are employed there upon the recommendation of Senators, members of Congress, and other persons having political influence without very strict regard to the qualities essential to faithfulness and accuracy."

It is probable that the improvement which the entire civil service greatly needs will be effected save under complete and unqualified reorganization. It is probable that any change must be partial and incomplete which lacks the binding force of law. The higher grade of officers selected by the present administration may be a guarantee of some reform; but in the nature of things it must be imperfect. The influences which have heretofore corrupted the departments, and notably the Treasury, are still at work. Senators and Representatives still have retainers, or the friends of retainers, for whom provision must be had in the clerks and minor offices. And as, under any government, the heads and their deputies are in a large degree dependent upon their subordinates, the evils will probably continue. Modified they may be by more intelligent direction and more thorough supervision, but with greater or less force they will continue in operation.

Adequate amendment will come only when the service shall be reorganized on a basis from which personal and partisan considerations are excluded. Ability and character must take the place of the present recommendations; faithfulness and discipline must have their rewards in permanence and promotion. These are ends aimed at by Mr. Jencks' bill. It is less perfect, theoretically, than the measure originally introduced by that gentleman. He has been obliged to acknowledge the impossibility of carrying the comprehensive plan by which the entire civil service would be lifted out of the slough of partisanship; and he contents himself now with a compromise which should have the support of every head of a department or a bureau, and every Senator and member who would put an affirmative stamp upon a bill.

With the machinery of a new department he proposes to dispense; the higher or political offices he leaves untouched. What he proposes is a Board of Examiners, by whom all applicants for subordinate positions shall be tested, and whose certificate shall be a condition precedent of every appointment. The principle of selection will be available then as now, but the selection will be restricted to a class any one of whom will be fitted by habits and acquirements for the service, instead of a class composed of the nominees of politicians and their supporters, without training or capacity. With duties thus defined, the examining board will be a valuable auxiliary of the departments, a bulwark against the invasion of small office-seekers, which is one of the plagues of the capital, and an assurance of efficiency which every honest chief will readily appreciate.

Will Grant's Administration be a Success or a Failure?

From the N. Y. Herald. Everything in the machinery of the new administration seems to be running smoothly. The guillotine, at the rate of about one hundred per day, is taking off the heads of the Johnson office-holders, and the active Republican politicians are being cut off like a fair share of the equal rights of the black man touching the office. In a corresponding degree the Democracy have become disgusted with the doings at Washington; so that General Grant now marks the dividing lines between the two parties even more distinctly than he did as the Republican candidate on the Chicago platform.

From the results of the recent Connecticut election it would likewise appear that in advocating the proposed fifteenth amendment to the Constitution giving equal suffrage to male citizens throughout the United States of all races and colors—white, yellow, red, and black—General Grant has given a new popular impetus to this movement; for heretofore in Connecticut the Republican party, whenever it has distinctly broached the question of negro suffrage, has been signally defeated. We might, then, plausibly conclude from all these facts; and from the general demoralization of the ferrous Democracy, that the prospect for General Grant's administration is all that could be desired, and that, after dispensing his rewards to the faithful till the offices are all filled, he has only to sit down and smoke the pipe of peace with Vice-President Coffey, President of the Senate, in order to settle the question of the succession.

But all such estimates as these are shallow and fallacious. Every one of our Presidents so far who has had nothing better upon which to build than the spoils has been a failure. Tyler, Fillmore, and Andy Johnson are the most notable examples. Poor Pierce and Buchanan failed—the one because he laid violent hands upon those great compromise measures on slavery which had given peace to the country, and the other because he lacked the moral courage to grapple with secession after the manner of Jackson. Since the time of Monroe we have had but two Presidents elected for a second term—Jackson and Lincoln. The reelection of Jackson resulted from his war against the old United States Bank as a financial monster and monopoly, absorbing the liberties of the people. The reelection of Lincoln resulted from his war with a great rebellion. The States and people adhering to the Union cause were satisfied with his efforts during his first four years in the prosecution of this war, and so they re-elected him as the surest and shortest way to finish it. With these two exceptions we have not had for forty-five years a President who has raised an issue sufficient to supplant his rivals and to give him a second term, and to all of them, after John Quincy Adams, the spoils have been a stumbling-block, a delusion, and a snare.

It is evident, then, that we can form no judgment of the issue of General Grant's administration from present appearances. All the advantages of the situation are his; but there are dangers ahead of fearful magnitude. For example, during his present term he must check the swelling tide of political corruptions and demoralizations resulting from the moral pestilence of the war, and we must have a financial system established from which the people shall experience a great relief from their present burdens of taxation, and foresee the removal, too, within the present generation, of the incumbrance of the national debt, or the national election of 1872 may give us a touch of the decisive financial settlements of the great French Revolution. It is folly to shut our eyes to the drift of public sentiment on this question. The masses of the people, looking at our present financial system of debt, taxes, national banks, and bondholders, feel only the pressure of a financial oligarchy, "making the rich richer and the poor poorer," compared with which the old United States Bank was a farce, a humbug, and a bagatelle.

But can we hope for the removal of these mountains of debt and taxation and spoliation and corruptions under General Grant within the four years to 1872? No. He may cut them down to a great extent; but if he cannot utterly remove them, he must do something else for a popular diversion in his favor. Here are Cuba, St. Domingo, Mexico, and the Central American States down to Darien. They are the locks and keys of the Gulf and of the American Isthmus passages from ocean to ocean. A decisive American policy on the part of General Grant will absorb all these outlying islands and States, and add so largely to our material revenues as to reduce the national debt to a mere trifle. Then there are the Alabama claims, a proper basis upon which to negotiate the cession to the United States of her Britannic Majesty's North American provinces of the New Dominion, from Halifax to Vancouver's Island; for this thing, too, is in the order of "manifest destiny."

Here we have scope and verge enough for the most brilliant, imposing, and powerful administrations in American history. Cuba at this moment presents a golden opportunity for a coup d'etat that will electrify the country and open the way for the whole programme suggested. It is morally certain, too, that unless the public mind shall be diverted to these external attractions, it will recoil on our internal burdens of taxes and debt and culminate in a political revolution more astounding to the world at large than this last upheaval resulting in the abolition of slavery, negro suffrage, and equal civil and political rights. Territorial expansion, then, means the success, and what is called masterly inactivity means the failure of Grant's administration.

President Grant and the Republican Party.

From the N. Y. World. The approval of the new Tenure-of-Office bill closes and rounds off the brief and troubled cycle of General Grant's first month in the Presidency. No other question threatening to embroil him with his party is likely to come up before adjournment, which takes place at the end of this week. We are therefore in possession of all the materials we are likely to have in some time for estimating the relations of the new President to the political party that elected him.

In ordinary circumstances, a question of this kind could not arise. A new President has commonly a political record which closely identifies him with his party. He has generally done battle for its leading measures, and is so bound up with the party by his antecedents and known sympathies, as to preclude all doubt or inquiry as to whether he will be found in harmony with its leading representatives. But General Grant was never a Republican until he supposed his chances good for getting the Republican nomination for the Presidency. He owed his nomination not at all to his politics, but solely to his military prestige, which was supposed sufficient to turn the scale between the two political parties. The Republicans took him for fear that the Democrats would otherwise nominate a far better man. Being thus forced upon the Republican party by his independent popular strength and his presumed hold on the soldiers' vote, it was thought by many, and evidently expected by himself, that he would possess more freedom and be able to act with more independence than an ordinary party President. Had his tact and capacity been equal to his opportunities, this might not have been altogether a vain hope. This remarkable reserve which he preposed previous to his inauguration, and his selection of a Cabinet without any consultation with party leaders, had an appearance of self-reliant vigor, as if he felt strong enough to be the independent Chief Magistrate of the whole people, and not the mere instrument or ally of a political party. The World, as its readers well know, did not share this delusion; but the fact that General Grant was forced upon the Republican party, and that he stood so conspicuously aloof from its leaders after his election, caused even

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some Democrats to entertain expectations which have been speedily falsified by the event. It has now become too evident that General Grant, instead of being more independent of party influence than his predecessors, is to be more helplessly their puppet and their slave. His whole course of proceeding, thus far, has been founded on a mistaken calculation. He did not mean to be a party President, and consequently adopted none of the means for exerting the legitimate influence of a party chief. A party chief spares no diligence in courting and cultivating the leading men of his party, with a view to gain such an ascendancy that he may use them as the instruments of his will. A party chief carefully avoids trying to carry any measure in which he is not pretty certain to succeed, knowing that to be publicly pitted against his party and vanquished lowers him in popular estimation. A President who means to be a party chief selects well-known party men for his Cabinet. Their influence strengthens his administration in the opinion of the party; and when, as must sometimes happen, his public duty renders it necessary for him to go counter to party prejudices, the sanction of so many eminent men who enjoy the full confidence of the party shelters him against misapprehension and distrust. General Grant has disregarded every one of the usual means of exerting party influence. A President who controls his party, and rules by means of it, always makes a respectable figure. Jefferson and Jackson, our two strongest Presidents, were vigorous party chiefs. But a President who, instead of being the chief of his party, is its tool, cannot have the public respect; and this is the part destined to be played by General Grant. If he had had the sagacity and self-knowledge to foresee that he would have to be a party President, his whole course from the time of his election forward would have been different. As he has actually managed, he forfeited the advantages both of the position which he sought and of the position which he was not strong enough to shun. He has neither the strength of a party President nor of an independent President.

The necessity which constrained him to accept his defeat and sign the new Tenure-of-Office act, will dominate over him throughout his term. At the outset he had the House on his side, but not the Senate; at last both were against him. It is the possibility that he should recover the lost ground, and he will never again think of asserting his independence. He will not despair—no President so early in his term ever did despair—of a reelection; but he will make an entire change of tactics for securing another nomination. What he cannot hope to accomplish by a free use of the Federal patronage he will attempt by the more servile method of obsequious compliance with party prejudices. No other resource is now left him. The influence of his military prestige was spent in his first election; his political talents he has none; his Cabinet is composed of men who cannot help him; and he can make no removal from office without the consent of the Senate. It would have been sheer folly for him to have vetoed the new Tenure-of-Office act, as a veto would have kept the old Tenure-of-Office act in force, and have placed him in a position of open antagonism with the Republican party. With his objects in view, he could not afford a position of cleared antagonism, even if he could thereby have secured the repeal of all restrictive laws. For it is certain that if he is renominated, it must be by the Republican Convention, and the patronage would be of no avail for packing it after an open breach between him and the party. His original plan was to keep on terms with the Republican organization, and use the patronage as a make-weight against Republican rivals. This expected make-weight being lost, he has nothing to rely on but his favor and popularity with a party which he cannot command, and must therefore be moulded by, as clay is by the potter. His only chance of another nomination lies in unresisting subservience to the humors, whims, and prejudices of a political party with which he has never sympathized. He will be more servile than ordinary party Presidents, because he starts without any capital, and has his whole character for party staunchness and fidelity yet to establish.

On public grounds, the weakness which General Grant has disclosed is very much to be regretted. A strong Republican President, exerting a commanding influence over his party, would have aided in restoring to the Executive branch of the Government its just authority, which has been so greatly curtailed and retrenched by Congress. A vigorous and sagacious party chief in General Grant's place would probably have made no immediate attempt to secure the repeal of the Tenure-of-Office law, preferring to establish his personal ascendancy as a fulcrum for future operations. He would have had no difficulty in getting all his party nominations confirmed, and his suspensions during recess would doubtless have been sanctioned without any strict scrutiny into his reasons. After the lapse of a year or two, under a strong and popular President, the Tenure-of-Office act would have dwindled into insignificance in the estimation of the Republican party, and when it had fallen into practical desuetude it might have been quietly repealed without exciting any debate or much attention. General Grant foolishly insisted on its repeal at a time when the impeachment of President Johnson was fresh in the minds of the Senators, and a repeal had to encounter the strong tide of party passions aroused by that most exciting affair. With the moral support of the House of Representatives, voluntarily offered, he would have been strong enough for immediate purposes, and the Senate would have more easily yielded after having regularly sanctioned all the President's suspensions during the first year of his administration. By General Grant's unskillful and shortsighted management, the affair has been got into such a shape that a repeal is impossible until after a general revolution in the politics of the country. His authority as President, instead of being strengthened, has been weakened and prostrated by a premature controversy in which he has been completely worsted. The proper weight of the Executive will never be reestablished until we have a strong and able President, whose personal ascendancy will enable him to recover what Congress has so successfully usurped.

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