

arrest the attention of those who suppose that we can succeed without shock or injury in the attempt to circulate, upon its merits, all the silver we may com under the head of the present financial condition. The condition in which our Treasury may be placed by a persistence in our present course is a matter of concern to every patriotic citizen who does not desire his Government to pay in silver such of its obligations as should be paid in gold. Nor should our condition be such as to oblige us, in a prudent management of our affairs, to discontinue the calling in and payment of interest on our obligations, which we have a right now to discontinue and thus avoid the payment of further interest thereon.

The so-called debtor class, for whose benefit the confined compulsory coining of silver is insisted upon, are not dishonest because they are in debt, and they should not be suspected of a desire to jeopardize the financial safety of the country in order that they may cancel their present debts by paying the same in depreciated dollars; nor should it be forgotten that it is not the rich but the monied-classes whom it must suit to have such a regulation enforced by the Government and their debtors.

The pittance of the widow and the orphan, and the incomes of helpless beneficiaries of all kinds, would be disastrously reduced.

The depositors in savings banks and in other institutions which hold, in trust the savings of the poor, when their little accumulations are scaled down to meet the new order of things, would, in their distress, prefer to realize the devaluation of the present value of their lawful money which would improve their condition. We have now on hand all the silver dollars necessary to supply the present needs of the people, and to satisfy those who from sentiment wish to see them in circulation, and if their coinage is suspended they can be readily obtained by all who desire them. If the need of more is at any time apparent, their coinage may be renewed.

That disaster has not already overtaken us furnishes no proof that danger does not wait upon a continuation of the present silver coinage. We have been saved by the most careful management, and unusual expedients by a combination of fortunate conditions, and by a confident expectation that the commerce of the Government in regard to silver coinage would be speedily changed by an action of Congress. Prosperity hesitates upon our threshold because of dangers and uncertainties surrounding this question.

Our country shuns from trade, and investors are unwilling to take the chance of the questionable shape in which their money will be returned to them, while enterprise halts at a risk against which care and sagacious management do not protect. As a necessary consequence, labor lacks employment, and suffering and distress are visited upon a portion of our fellow-citizens especially entitled to the careful consideration of those charged with the duties of legislation.

No interest appeals to us so strongly for a safe and stable currency as the vast army of the unemployed.

I recommend the suspension of compulsory coinage of silver dollars directed by the law passed in February, 1878.

THE ARMY.

The report of the Secretary of War is herewith submitted. The attention of Congress is invited to the detailed account which it contains of the administration of his department and his recommendations and suggestions for the improvement of the service.

The report consisted of the date of the last consolidated return of 154 officers and 24,702 enlisted men. The expenses of the departments for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1885, including \$13,164,394.60 for public works and river and harbor improvements, were \$45,850,994.

Beside the troops which were dispatched in pursuit of the small band of Indians who left their reservation in Arizona and committed murders and outrages, two regiments of cavalry and one of infantry were sent last July to the Indian Territory to prevent an outbreak which seemed imminent. The forces were sent to the country, in the expedition of intruders upon the reservation who seemed to have caused the discontent among the Indians, but the Executive recommendation warning them to remove was complied with without interference.

Troops were also sent to Rock Springs, in Wyoming Territory, after the massacre of Chinese there, to prevent further disturbances, and afterward to Seattle, in Washington Territory, to avert a threatened attack upon Chinese laborers and domestic violence there. In both cases, the mere presence of the troops had the desired effect.

SEA-COAST DEFENSES.

The Board on Fortifications or Other Defenses, appointed in pursuance of the act of Congress, approved March 3, 1885, will in a short time present their report, and it is hoped that this may greatly aid the legislation so necessary to remedy the present defenseless condition of our sea-coasts.

BRIDGES OVER NAVIGABLE WATERS.

There should be a general law of Congress prohibiting the construction of bridges over navigable waters in such manner as to obstruct navigation, with provisions for preventing the same. The existing statute, the Government cannot intercede to prevent such a construction when entered upon without its consent, though when such consent is asked and granted upon condition, the authority to insist upon such condition is clear. This is represented that, while the officers of the Government are, with great care, guarding against the obstruction of navigation by a bridge across the Mississippi River at St. Paul, a large pier for a bridge has been built just below the existing bridge, a malignant character of the river. If such thing as to be permitted, a strong argument is presented against the appropriation of large sums of money to improve the navigation of this and other important highways of commerce.

NAVAL AFFAIRS.

The report of the Secretary of the Navy gives a history of the operations of his departments and the present condition of the work committed to his charge. He details in full the course pursued by him to protect the rights of the Government in respect of certain vessels unfinished at the time of his accession to office, namely, the steamer *Dolphin*, a dispatch boat, claimed to be completed and awaiting the

acquaintance of the departments.

No one can fail to see, from the recital contained in this report, that only the application of business principles has been insisted upon in the treatment of these subjects, and that whatever controversy has arisen was caused by the execution on the part of the department of the contract obligations as they were legally construed.

In the case of the *Dolphin*, with entire justness to the contractor, an agreement was entered into providing for the ascertaining by a judicial inquiry of the complete or partial compliance with the contract in her construction, and further providing for the assessment of any damages to which the Government may be entitled on account of a partial failure to perform such contract, or the payment of the sum still remaining unpaid upon her price in case a full performance is adjudged. The contractor by reason of the difficulty of ascertaining, being unable to complete the other three vessels, may have taken possession of by the Government in their unfinished state, under a clause in the contract permitting such a course, and are now in process of completion in the yard of the contractor, but under the supervision of the Navy Department.

Congress in its last session authorized the construction of two additional new cruisers and two gunboats, at a cost not exceeding in the aggregate \$1,000,000. The effect of this purpose having become available on the 1st day of July last, steps were at once taken for the procurement of such plans for the construction of these vessels as would be likely to ensure their usefulness when completed. These are of the utmost importance, considering the constant advance in the art of building vessels of this character, and the time is not lost which is spent in their careful consideration and selection.

All must admit the importance of an effective navy to a nation like ours, which is exposed to a single sea coast to protect. Yet we have not a single vessel of war that could keep the seas against a first-class vessel of any important power. Such a condition ought not longer to continue. The nation that can not resist aggression is constantly exposed to it. Its foreign policy is of necessity weak, and its negotiations are conducted with disadvantage because it is not in a condition to enforce the terms dictated by its neighbors.

Inspired as I am by the hope, shared by all patriotic citizens, that the day is not far distant when our navy will be such as befits our standing among the nations of the earth, and rejoiced at every step that leads in the direction of such a consummation, I deem it my duty to especially direct the attention of Congress to the close of the report of the Secretary of the Navy in which the humiliating features of the present organization of this department is exhibited, and the methods by which the waste of its present strength are exposed. The conviction is forced upon us, with the certainty of mathematical demonstration, that before we proceed further in the restoration of a navy, we

need a thoroughly reorganized Navy Department.

The fact that within seventeen years more than \$75,000,000 has been spent in construction, maintenance, and repair of our fleet, and the further fact that, instead of an efficient and creditable fleet, we have only the discontent and apprehension of a nation undefended by war vessels, added to the disclosures now made, do not permit us to doubt that every attempt to revive our navy has thus far, for the most part, been misdirected, and all our efforts in that direction have been little better than blind groping.

Unquestionable, if we are content with the maintenance of a navy department simply as an ornament to the Government, a constant watchfulness may prevent some of the scandal and abuse which have found their way into our present organization, and its incurable waste may be reduced to the minimum. But if we desire to build ships for present usefulness instead of naval reminders of the days that are past, we must have a department organized for the work, armed with all the best and most effective means our country affords and prepared to take advantage of the experience of other nations, systematized so that all efforts shall unite and lead in one direction; and fully imbued with the conviction that war vessels now are useless unless they combine all that the ingenuity of man has up to this day brought forth relating to their construction, I earnestly commend the portion of the Secretary's report devoted to this subject to the action of Congress, in the hope that the suggestions touching the reorganization of his department may be adopted by the first step toward the reconstruction of our navy.

THE POSTAL SERVICE.

The affairs of the postal service are exhibited by the report of the Postmaster General, which will be laid before you. The postal revenue, whose rates of gain upon the rising prosperity of 1882 and 1883 outstripped the increasing expense of our growing service, was checked by the reduction in the rate of letter postage, which took effect with the beginning of October in the latter year, and it diminished during the two fiscal years \$2,740,004, in the proportion of \$2,270,000 in 1884 to \$520,000 in 1885.

Natural growth and development have, in the meantime, increased expenditure, resulting in a deficiency in the revenue to the expenses of the department of \$5,250,000 for the year 1884, and \$8,333,333.33 in the last fiscal year. The anticipated and natural result of the revenue having been opposed and retarded by the unfavorable business condition of the country of which the postal service is a faithful indicator. The gratifying fact is shown, however, by the report, that our returning prosperity is marked by a gain of \$380,000 in the revenue of the latter half of the last year over the corresponding period of the preceding year. The change in the rate of first-class matter which may be carried for a single rate of postage, from one-half to one-half of one cent, produced by one-half of the rate of newspaper postage, which, under recent legislation, began with the current year, will operate to restrain the augmentation of receipts which otherwise might have been expected to such a degree that the scale of expense may gain upon the revenue, and cause an increased deficiency to be shown at its close; yet after a long period of revulsion, by proper economy, it is confidently anticipated that even the present low rate is now as favorable as any country affords, and will be adequate to sustain the cost of the service.

The operation of the Postoffice Department is for the convenience and benefit of the people, and the method by which they pay the charges of this useful arm of the public service, so that it is just and impartial, is of less importance to them than the economical expenditure of the means they provide for its maintenance, and the improvement of its agencies, so that they may serve its highest uses. A proper attention has been directed to the prevention of waste and extravagance, and good results appear from the reports to have already been accomplished.

DOMESTIC MONEY ORDERS.

I approve the recommendation of the Postmaster General to reduce the charges on domestic money orders of \$5 and less from 8 to 5 cents. This change will materially aid those of our people in most of our agricultural families that might have been expected to such a degree that the scale of expense may gain upon the revenue and cause an increased deficiency to be shown at its close; yet after a long period of revulsion, by proper economy, it is confidently anticipated that even the present low rate is now as favorable as any country affords, and will be adequate to sustain the cost of the service.

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