

The Purposeless Party.

One of the main reasons why the Republican party can count up, in its brief history of a very few years, so many of what is, in political point of view, may be considered successes, is that, from the beginning, the party was founded upon no fixed principle or purpose. Of course, there was the single end in view, the attainment of power; but how this power was to be reached, and, above all, how it was to be held when once in hand, has been dependent from the start upon the happenings of the hour. From the beginning, the party plan has been to cast its net in a boundless sea, the surface of which only could be seen, trusting to chance that every drag would bring to shore a few more fish, and, perchance, a few floating carcasses. Considerately, a great many of the things that have come into the net have been much gain. Those to whom the whole of life is but a lottery count themselves not less lucky when they chance to find a bill or coin lying in the street than when they win by gambling on the board or table, or by risking in a raffle. It is not the strangest thing in the world that a series of successes of this sort should lead the gamblers to believe at last that they are really engaged in a reputable business founded upon a substantial and respectable basis.

Hence, we are ready for the howl of indignation which will rise from the rank and file of the Republican party when it is told that their party began and has proceeded from the beginning as a clumsy sort of purpose as it has proved itself to be devoid of principle. Yet we all remember the derisive laughter with which that party, from one end of the country to the other, greeted President Johnson, when that faithful public servant announced that, at least, had a "policy." With the Republican party "my policy" was the great joke of the century. The idea that a man should have in mind some definite plan for the restoration, not the reconstruction, of the Union which four years of hard fighting had shaken, but not shattered, and that he should fit a plan upon such a supposition as the Copperhead, which the Republican party had already ignored as something too definite, restrictive, and positive for purposeless people, was so immensely facetious that even the grave *Tribune* was periodically funny therewith. To men of no purpose, plans founded upon fundamental law and the irrevocable requirements of constitutions are of no account whatever. Those who wander in the dark take no heed of obstructions in the way, or, at best, blindly put out their hands to brush those obstructions aside, or to teach them so as to avoid and get around them. It was the source of never-ending amusement to the late Thaddeus Stevens, the unprincipled leader of the purposeless party, that there were but two men in the entire party who believed the Reconstruction Acts to be constitutional, and these men were characteristically classed by the great moral reformer as "two damned fools."

And yet this reconstruction business is the only thing in which the Republican party seems to have proceeded with a purpose. That purpose was not the restoration of the Union, nor even, as it appeared for a while, the reconstruction of the Union in such a manner as to turn ten States into outlying territories, to be ruled by military satrapies. There was no plan beyond the vague and notion sometimes using the language of a week or a week, and from month to month, for the advantage of the party. The history of the past four years shows that, so far as reconstruction is concerned; nothing has been reconstructed but reconstruction itself. That process has been pursued with a persistence which has kept the party busy. The doings of one session of Congress have been undone, or done over again by the next session of the same Congress, and the so-called legislation of one Congress has been supplemented to the very verge of nullification by the succeeding Congress. A patch has been plied to the Constitution to be overlaid by another patch cut from the same sheet. Six States have been admitted to representants in Congress only to raise the question how they can be turned out again. The negro has been elevated only to be a nigger, troublesome pest to his civil creators, since the purposeless party only wanted his vote, and took no thought of what was inevitable, that if Sambo would fit to vote, Sambo would deem himself fitted to hold office. In all this wild soaring after the indefinite and deep diving after the unfathomable, and with reconstruction reconstructed till the very word is a subject for ridicule, the purposeless party has never proposed a single plan for retrieving the country of the enormous difficulties which now overtake it, and which it may overtake in one common ruin. Nothing has been suggested which looks to the reduction of the gigantic debt which the purposeless party has fastened upon the nation. The vast army of blood-sucking place-holders has not been cut down by so much as a single platoon. The talk of reform in the civil service narrows down to fresh schemes for supporting the friends and relatives of the party in power from the public treasury. The foreign relations of the country have been so mixed and muddled by the purposeless incompetents who have undertaken to manage the affairs of the world, as to any Monarch yearning to披上 into a war with Great Britain, and to tumble into one with Spain. Congress does not know whether it is safer to adjourn or to continue in perpetual session. Even the means for promoting the mere ends of party are nearly exhausted, and the wants of the people have not been considered. This is the position of the purposeless party to-day, or of the party with a single purpose, that of plunder.

numerous paymasters, commissary and quartermaster accounts, dating back to the Mexican war, and including an infinite number of accounts belonging to the rebellion, from first to last, are not yet adjusted; and so great is the disorder in the department that any particular account can scarcely be discovered under the mountains of pay-rolls and other loose records. Sutlers, for instance, who have thousands of dollars credited on pay-rolls, have waited four or five years in vain for the payment of their claims. To work up all the arrears the whole of the dismissed clerks would have their hands full, and three times as much money might be required in adjusting all the accounts, to settle with the Government, as can be economized by dispensing with a few hundred clerks. Nothing, moreover, promises any improvement in the future, so long as the system remains unchanged.

The fact is, however, that it was an easy thing to dismiss them. The new Cabinet was desirous of seeming to perform its promise of reform, and, finding immense difficulties in the way of carrying on its programme on a large scale, has decapitated the poor devils to inaugurate an appearance of business.

The Cabinet will scarcely succeed in making the knowing ones believe that it dispenses with the clerks because it is a great state of economy, or that it will be followed by the curtailment of expenses on a larger scale. There are thousands of other unnecessary officers employed. But their appointment is made by authority of laws which the Executive must enforce, and which cannot be arbitrarily changed. For a time of peace, our regular military force is too large.

As between a nation with vast and irresistible power, and a component part of that nation with comparatively feeble power, there must be different degrees of indestructibility. The indestructibility may be absolute in one case, but it is far from being so in the other. We know that States are not indestructible; for States have been destroyed, as well as overwhelmed in destruction. Practically we have, without the presentation of hypothetical cases, the best of evidence of the non-existence of an indestructible Union composed of indestructible States: the fact that such a thing has no potential existence.

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