OUR OLD MAN JOHN

Badeau Writes of Sherman's Long Career in the Senate.

LOVE FOR HIS GREAT BROTHER

The Silver Bill Not the First Work of His Own That He Has Helped to Destroy.

There is something almost pathetic in the spectacle of John Sherman to-day, compelled at the age of seventy, after nearly half a century spent in the public service, to advocate the repeal of the measure that bears his name, and is identified with his policy, but which is now by the great majority of the nation denounced as detrimental to its interests, so much so that panics and financial disaster can only be averted by an extraordinary session of congress, called in midsummer especially to undo his work, more than half the country accusing him of having precipitated the situation, the remainder reproaching him with deserting them in their emergency. Among the foremost enemies of the Sherman bill is Senator Sherman; he has proclaimed his position in advance, and it is safe to predict that one of the earliest events in the senate now in session will be the attack on his own creation. Saturn will devour his child before the world end, his adversaries will say, he does public penance for his political sin.

It is not, however, the first time that the senator has been placed in this predicament. In 1862, at a critical juncture of the war, after the suspension of specie payments by the government, he advocated the issue of legal tender notes, and it was his efforts, with those of Chase, then secretary of the treasury, that succeeded in carrying the measure. He was the leader of the republican party in the senate in all financial matters, and by this action did as important service to the country as his brother, the general, in the field. For, the armies that overthrew the confederacy could not have been held together without money; and money at this crisis was only to be had by investing it by making the notes of the government a legal tender. Sherman saw this clearly and impressed his views on those who had to act, and thus helped to save the nation quite as certainly as the great soldier whose name he shared.

Yet in 1867 he introduced a bill of an exactly opposite character, the resumption act, which was adopted in 1870, although at first without the resumption clause; the statesman was feeling his way to the end he had in view, for which the country was not yet ready. In 1874, however, he was chairman of the committee which reported a bill fixing resumption for January 1, 1879. This bill with almost a premonition of its own future left the matter of resumption entirely dependent on the judgment and measures of the secretary of the treasury.

Five years afterward the epoch arrived and found Sherman himself secretary of the treasury under Hayes. As soon as he entered on his duties he set about preparing for the result he had so long contemplated, and six months before the date fixed by law he had one hundred and forty million dollars in gold in the treasury. When resumption day arrived there was practically no demand for gold in exchange for notes. This was absolutely his achievement, and will undoubtedly remain his strongest claim to a separate and notable place in history.

It was because the renewal of his previous action during the war, it would what had been so influentially in the nation's hour of peril. In 1862 he helped to make the paper money of the government a legal tender; eighteen years afterward he superintended the overthrow of his own work, and did his country almost as essential service in one act as in the other. Like a real statesman, he adapted his measures to the varying emergencies that were peculiar to the salvation of the state in one crisis and threatened in financial ruin in another; he acts the second necessarily as clearly as the first, and himself tore down the very fabric he had assisted to build, just as his soldier brother often turned on the enemy the very guns he once had assailed and used the same bulwarks for defense he had advanced to destroy. Many and many a time on battle did Gen. Sherman carry the earthworks of his adversary and instantly make them formidable to the men who had just been threatening him from behind them. Many a time did he attack the lines he once had held because the fortunes of the day had changed. No greater proof of the senator's sagacity can be found than the fact that at different crises he was for and opposed to the issue of paper money as a legal tender.

The situation now is not dissimilar. It is hardly three years since he introduced the silver bill, which bears his name, which many believe to be the origin of the evils that threatened the country to-day. He thought in 1890 that unless this measure was adopted still more serious ones would follow, and this sub to the whale he hoped might prevent greater disasters. Others thought the sub far too large and the disasters were certainly not averted. But seeing the results Sherman is not afraid to reverse his own act and work for the repeal of his silver bill that bears his name. Charles Lamb once wrote a farce that was unsuccessful. At the first performance he and his sister sat in the boxes and applauded as hard as they could until it was certain that the piece would be damned; then they turned about and hissed louder than anyone in the house. The senator rivals Lamb and is hissing his own production; and his pluck in the matter is as conspicuous as his sense and his patriotism.

Nevertheless it must be hard to stand up and point out the bad results of his own bill. It is true he has had as hard lines to encounter before now in his long career. He must have been a very magnanimous brother if he did not sometimes feel when the soldiers were gathering such a harvest of laurels that the one at home was thrown too much into the shade. At one time when men said "Sherman" they never referred to the senator; "Sherman" meant exclusively the general. His fame far eclipsed that of the politician. Many of the great civilians of the war period felt keenly the overshadowing of their achievements by their countrymen in the field. Lincoln and Chase and Sumner and Stanton all, at times, showed symptoms of such a feeling, not, perhaps, unnatural, for the labors in senate and cabinet were as indispensable, after all, as those before the enemy. Yet the world has always been dazzled by military fame, and even history fills far more pages with the story of battles than with records of the most essential measures of finance.

But the senator never grudged his brother the more glittering reward. Their correspondence recently published shows how indefatigably he labored to advance the soldier, how carefully he guarded his reputation, how generously he defended him. At the outset of the war the politician had made far greater advances in public estimation. He was a prominent member of congress, a candidate for speaker of the house, and in 1861 became United States senator from Ohio, succeeding Chase. He was a national man, while the soldier had abandoned the profession of arms, had failed as a banker and a lawyer, and was teaching school in an obscure district of Louisiana. But the political brother saw the ability of Tecumseh and obtained for him a command; he watched him when he was under a cloud, encouraged and advised him in difficulties, and finally saw him shoot up into a popularity that left his own far behind.

Yet their relations remained ever loyal and beautiful. The letters given to the world are almost unequaled for manly affection, for absolute confidence, for generous admiration of each other's very opposite abilities. They often differed in their political views, but each respected the opinions of the other and believed in his integrity. After awhile the glow of personal popularity abated, the days of the war were farther off, and a generation arose that had not known the trials of strife nor the elation of victory. The warrior grew less important, but the statesman became a member of the government under which his brother served. Finally the general was retired and the senator was named for the presidency.

Yet even in this distinction he may have tasted a special bitterness, for the financier and trained civilian never obtained the nomination which was freely offered to his brother who declined a civil career. Gen. Sherman often put away suggestions of the candidacy, and once absolutely refused a nomination which would in all probability have resulted in his election.

This was not his only mortification. Three times he has contended for the presidential prize; once he was defeated by Blaine, a foeman worthy of his steel, his equal in political science and ability, but twice he has been set aside for men like Harrison and Garfield, admittedly inferior to himself in the qualities essential in the presidential office. Garfield even went to a convention pledged to nominate Sherman, he was chief of the delegation from their state, and seized the very place he was sent to secure for another. Sherman, it is said, never forgave him, and it is hard to see how a sensitive man could ever look amiably on the adroitness who had clutched the prize he was expected to obtain for his chief. There have been few bitterer disappointments in our political history, for Garfield was elected to the position which Sherman might fairly claim was to have been his own.

It must have been galling, too, to serve under Hayes, and even followers from his own state, who were in the ranks when Sherman was by far the most prominent republican in congress from Ohio. 'Tis true he had distinguished comrades in this fate. Evarts, like himself, was far ahead of their chief in ability and achievement, and many cabinet ministers before and since have looked down on the president who called them to his councils. Blaine, with both Garfield and Harrison, Webster with Tyler, Frelinghuysen with Arthur, all experienced the mortification of serving under men they could not have recognized as their equals. But, perhaps, hereafter it will be a greater glory to Sherman to have been secretary of the treasury and the accomplished representative than to have sat as president in a disputed chair.

I can speak of Senator Sherman without partiality, for he once strove to dispossess me of an office that the president was determined I should reclaim. I was consul general at London under Grant, and when Hayes came in he promised his predecessor I should not be disturbed. Secretary Sherman knew of this promise, but he was under no obligation to regard Gen. Grant's wishes or mine. He doubtless hoped to induce his chief to change his mind, for when he wanted the place of collector of New York for one of his own friends he offered Chester Arthur, an incumbent at the time, to procure him my post at London. This Mr. Arthur himself told me, but the bargain was beyond Sherman's power to accomplish. Arthur refused to accept the offer and Mr. Hayes told me afterward that he would not have indorsed it. So Arthur was displaced for Merritt and I was left at London. But Arthur was rewarded by Grant's friends with the nomination for vice president, and on Garfield's death he stepped into his shoes. Had Sherman succeeded in ousting me, the presidency in 1881 would have had a different incumbent.

The letters of the two brothers Sherman betray a warmth of feeling on the part of John which to many must be revelation. He has usually been considered cold, the opposite of his magnetic, impetuous brother; but sometimes your undemonstrative people have a depth of feeling which equals that of those who seem more passionate on the surface. Gen. Grant once told me a story of a newspaper man who said he had just come from Sherman. It was the eve of a presidential nomination and the senator was an aspirant. He put his arm around the reporter and drew him aside to ask: "I am not really as cold as they say; do you think I am?" The man may have invented the story, but to me there was a touch of sadness in it. If this politician, unable to impress the world with his real nature, had been struggling all these years with the mask of manner that concealed his real feeling and obstructed its expression; if his distant behavior had repelled those whom he desired to attract; if the warm-hearted brother whose true sentiment is betrayed in the letters he now gives to the world—had grown anxious and asked a friend whether he was really so cold, many might feel a stroke of pity for the nature that has been cloaked involuntarily and so long. It may be the same anxiety that invited the reporter's sympathy and now draws aside the veil that covered his fraternal love, and tells the whole world he has a heart; he is not cold.

ADAM BADEAU.

JOHN SHERMAN.

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