

The Sun

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3, 1896.

The Centenary of the Constitution.

The delegates appointed by the Governors of the States and Territories met yesterday in Philadelphia, to organize a celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the formal adoption of the Federal Constitution by the Philadelphia Convention on the 17th of September, 1787. This step was taken in accordance with the plan drawn up at the preliminary meeting of Governors of the original thirteen States held in Philadelphia on the 17th of September last.

The event thus to be commemorated is not only of the first importance in American history, but was so recognized at the time of its occurrence. For sixty years the people of the United States have been proud to have been the first to achieve it. It had the difficulties in the way of achieving it had been disheartening. Even after the great step of assembling a Convention on the 14th of May, 1787, for the sole and express purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation, had been accomplished, the obstacles seemed almost insuperable. Nevertheless, by slow degrees a new Constitution was framed and put together. On the 17th of September, after four months of labor, the great work was finished, formally adopted as a whole, and signed by the representatives of the twelve States, Rhode Island not being represented in the Convention.

It is true that the agreement of the Convention upon the Constitution did not make it the law of the land. But the ratifications by the States extended all the way from Dec. 7, 1787, to May 29, 1793, and nobody would propose to select for commemoration even the ninth ratification, that of New Hampshire, June 21, 1788, although that made the instrument binding between the States so sanctioning it. These ratifications do not form an integral part of the Constitution, the only document mentioned in the document being that of the attesting clause:

"Done in Convention by the unanimous consent of the States present, the seventeenth day of September, in the year of our Lord 1787, and of the Independence of the United States the Twelfth."

Additional historical importance is lent to this day from the fact that it is the date of the letter sent to Congress by the Convention describing its work, with resolutions pointing out the method of putting the new form of government into operation.

It appears evident, therefore, that the day of the adoption of the Constitution is well worthy of some sort of celebration on its hundredth anniversary, next September. The great national commemoration of our first century of existence as a nation under the present form of government will, of course, come on the 30th of April, 1899, the hundredth anniversary of the inauguration of GEORGE WASHINGTON as first President of this United States. The central point of this celebration should be in New York, where the oath of office was taken by the first President, and where the seat of government was then established. This, however, need not prevent due recognition in Philadelphia, next September, of the day when the laborers of the Convention that framed the Constitution were brought to their happy close.

Bismarck and the Vatican.

Nothing could more forcibly bring out the strange anomalies in the position of Pope Leo XIII. than the fact that, while the Pontiff seems powerless in Rome, he has power enough at Berlin to carry or to frustrate measures designed for the protection of the German empire. Mighty as BISMARCK is, he cannot secure the passage by the present Reichstag of an appropriation bill without the cooperation of the Clerical Deputies, whose course will be directed from the Vatican.

That with relation to the national defence as well as to previous fiscal propositions the scale can be turned by the Clericals or Ultramontanes, who sit in the centre of the German House of Commons, will be plain upon inspection of the attitude assumed by the other political parties toward BISMARCK's urgent appeal for additions to the empire's military establishment. The Progressives, the Socialists (as the members of the Reichstag are called), and the one dominant National Liberal party are still called, and the Socialists would set their faces against an increase of military burdens at any time and on any pretext short of undisputed evidence of impending invasion. As no proof of such immediate danger to the fatherland has been furnished, they insist that the appropriation, which against their will was fixed in advance for a term of years, must suffice until the expiration of the septennial period.

On the other hand, the Chancellor's proposal is supported by the Conservatives and by the followers of Herr von Bismarck, who retain the name of National Liberals, although they only represent the shrunken right wing of the old organization. Thus we see that the firm friends and the inflexible opponents of BISMARCK's plan for quickly augmenting the fighting power of Germany nearly balance one another. The decision rests, as it has rested for many years, with Herr WINDTHROST and his Ultramontane adherents in the Reichstag, who have long numbered about a hundred. It may not be so readily assumed in some quarters, when the objection of FALK is made, that he wholly abstained from Prussia, that the Clerical party organization would be broken up, and that its members would coalesce with the Conservatives, both in the Prussian Landtag and in the lower House of the Imperial Parliament. Herr WINDTHROST had no mind to be left stranded in that fashion. He has held his party together, and now, when he is reminded of the obligations imposed by the cessation of the Kulturkampf, takes the ground that he discharged them by valuable services in former sessions of the Reichstag. That old account, he tells the Clericals, was settled in full, but the Clericals will continue to do business at the old stand and on the customary terms of cash down for goods delivered. The Chancellor's promises to pay have ceased to be negotiable.

Herr WINDTHROST is said to have enumerated several additional concessions which BISMARCK, in his rôle of Prussian Prime Minister, ought to make in order to satisfy a fraction of the Catholics, who form so considerable a fraction of the Prussian population. For instance, there are several religious orders which urgently solicit a restitution of the property which they were deprived of in Prussia. Then, again, it would be well if the Prussian Government would formulate with more precision its relation to ecclesiastical nominations, so as to make it clear that its right of interposition is purely nominal and reserved merely to save its dignity. To German Clericals, moreover, the time seems ripe for the German empire in its collective capacity to be represented by an Ambassador at the Vatican. The Kingdom of Prussia has for some years consented to treat with Pope Leo through a Minister, but BISMARCK has refused to send an Ambassador on behalf of the empire, on the plea that, although some of the constituent States

are Catholic, others are Lutheran or Evangelical. But this objection is much weakened by the fact that Prussia, the chief of the non-Catholic States, has already so far yielded to the wishes of its Catholic subjects as to maintain an Envoy at the Vatican. It is not likely that a question of raising this representative a grade or two in diplomatic rank, and of giving him credentials from the German empire instead of the Prussian kingdom, will cause a hitch in the important negotiations going forward between BISMARCK and the Clericals. If Germany really needs more soldiers, the Chancellor will have to pay whatever prices Herr WINDTHROST chooses to set on his indispensable assistance.

Duties That Are Binding.

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are Catholic, others are Lutheran or Evangelical. But this objection is much weakened by the fact that Prussia, the chief of the non-Catholic States, has already so far yielded to the wishes of its Catholic subjects as to maintain an Envoy at the Vatican. It is not likely that a question of raising this representative a grade or two in diplomatic rank, and of giving him credentials from the German empire instead of the Prussian kingdom, will cause a hitch in the important negotiations going forward between BISMARCK and the Clericals. If Germany really needs more soldiers, the Chancellor will have to pay whatever prices Herr WINDTHROST chooses to set on his indispensable assistance.

The electors have decided that a Convention shall be held to revise and amend the Constitution of New York. The present Constitution declares that when the people decide, the Legislature at its next session shall provide by law for the election of delegates to such a Convention. The Republicans will have a large majority in each branch of the next Legislature. We have no doubt that they will promptly and faithfully perform the duty imposed on the Legislature by the Constitution in regard to the Convention. We presume the Republican Senate and Assembly will not respond or in any way try to evade the discharge of this important duty. They will not, however, in any respect in the law in respect to the Convention a mass of incongruous and cranky provisions on a variety of matters which have nothing whatever to do with the subject legitimately in hand.

The constitutional provisions concerning a Convention are not more preemptory and binding on the Legislature than those which require an enumeration of the inhabitants of the State every ten years for the purpose of a reapportionment of the Senate and Assembly. Party politics ought not to stand for a moment in the way of the discharge of this duty. All that the Constitution imposes and authorizes on this question is simply an enumeration of the inhabitants. Those members of the new Legislature who are not on familiar terms with the instrument which they swear to support, can consult a copy and find the provisions referred to as soon as the Clerks supply them with a Red Book, free of charge.

Gentlemen of the hundred and twelfth century of the Legislature pass a plain Census law with no nonsense in it, and give the people an opportunity to stand up and be counted. They are a large and interesting crowd, and will not be ashamed to have the inhabitants of the other States look at them.

Cleveland and Mohammed.

When MOHAMMED was starting his religion, he began to write the Koran. That was intended to supply his followers with rules for every circumstance and situation of life. He wrote a great deal at once. But as time went on, all sorts of new combinations appeared, and MOHAMMED had to keep on writing rules and regulations to cover each case. Probably the sun never set without something new being added to his book. Finally he died. If he hadn't died, he would probably be writing yet. He had undertaken an endless job.

President CLEVELAND is in one respect an imitator of MOHAMMED. He had a new scheme for the civil service. No one knew precisely what it was. It could not be found in any political text book, Mugwump or other, or in any party platform. To put it in operation he had to explain it as he went along. The result is that he has to put his pen to paper, after the manner of old MOHAMMED, for every new case. No careful grandmother could draw nice distinctions for the conduct of youthful charges than Mr. CLEVELAND from time to time enjoins upon the officeholders. He criticizes their acts as "fair" or "unfair," or "malicious," or "pernicious," or "offensive," or "incidental," or "among friends" or "neighbors," or "manly," or anti-American, so that no one can know exactly whether he has sinned or not until he is specially advised by the Administration. With each day comes the occasion for fresh rules and more precise explanations. To maintain his system, Mr. CLEVELAND, after the manner of old MOHAMMED, will have to keep on writing till he dies.

But what a great thing for him it would be to stop writing. Nothing could be easier. All he would need to do would be to toss his Mugwump Koran overboard and turn to the Democracy. Let him give up trying to decide for every little individual officeholder what is "fair" and what isn't, or what is "decent" or what "indecent," and go ahead and turn the Republicans out of office, as the Democrats meant that he should. Then he may be happy, and he might even get a second term.

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