EUROPEAN POLITICS.

THE FRANCO-RUSSIAN ALLIANCE.

The Growth of French Interest in the Russian Visit—The Result of the Visit, Immediate and Prospective—A New Equilibrium in European Politics Caused by It.

PARIS, Nov. 5.—The evolution in European politics commenced two years ago by the visit of the Czar to the French fleet in the waters of Cronstadt, has just been completed by the reception given to the Russian ships and sailors in France. There can be no doubt that the despatch of a portion of his fleet to Toulon was in the mind of Alexander II., a new public affirmation of the Franco-Russian entente as a counterpoise to the Triple Alliance. The time chosen for this visit sufficiently indicated this fact, and made of it a political movement rather than an international act of courtesy. It came like an answer to the military manœuvres that the Emperor of Germany had previously made in Lorraine, our old territory, hardly a few leagues from our frontier; and as if to fling us a challenge, associated with them the Crown Prince of Italy, and placed him upon the staff of the German army. But at the same time this visit had the character of a warning given to the Italian Government, which a few weeks previously seemed inclined to seek in a war, suddenly engaged against France, the means of escaping from financial embarrassment. Perhaps there was also in this naval manifestation another warning addressed to England, which during the past year had been displaying an undisguised ill will toward France, and a disposition no less evident to make common cause with her enemies. As for the French Government, it was naturally very happy to see the evidence before the eyes of the world of the end of that political isolation which for twenty years kept peace or war dependent upon the good pleasure of Berlin, and held Europe under the pressure of the league formed by the imperious ability of Bismarck.

But if the diplomatic thought in the visit to Toulon was perfectly clear for everybody, I don't think that anybody expected the explosion of popular sentiment which we have witnessed for fifteen days. It should be borne in mind that the first announcement of the arrival of a Russian fleet in French waters moved the political world much more than it excited public opinion. It was received in France with lively satisfaction, but to this satisfaction there was linked no project of an international explosion. The first programme for the reception of the Russian sailors did not go beyond the usual festivities on such occasions. The part borne by the authorities was much greater than that of the population. The somewhat sour commentaries of the journals of Berlin and London were the first to contribute toward bringing out the importance of the event. Then came the news that England was about to send her ships to the Italian ports of Taranto and Spezzia. This sudden decision, coming at such a time, had the appearance of a counter demonstration intentionally hostile, or at least unfriendly, to France. Vainly they attempted later on to represent the presence of the British flag in Italian waters as a very simple affair, an ordinary naval excursion. Public opinion, which has become very sensitive in France in such matters, looked upon it as an indirect menace, intended to make us remember that if Russia is with France, England will be with Italy. Political susceptibilities were aroused by what appeared to be a challenge addressed to our new ally as well as to France, and wounding to each.

The population of Toulon, particularly sensitive in things of this nature by its historical recollections, its southern temperament, and the maritime character of its population, immediately undertook to increase the éclat of the Russian visit. The Parisian press echoed the sentiment. It started the idea of taking advantage of the circumstance to make a resounding celebration of the Franco-Russian alliance, and the enthusiasm increased from one end of the territory to the other. Paris naturally became the principal centre of the affair, because it is the centre of all the movements of the country, and because the presence of the Russian officers in Paris for a whole week furnished more constant food for it there than anywhere else. But its exultation this time in nowise resembled the excitement which it has so often displayed, which might for the most part be attributed to local effervescences. Contrary to the regular order, the Parisian population received the impulse from outside, at least as much as it gave. It only continued the exuberant reception which had been commenced at Toulon, and was continued later on at Lyons, at Marseilles, and wherever the Russian officers halted or even passed through. The celebration extended to localities situated far and away beyond their route; and this is what gave to the thing a peculiar stamp and a real grandeur, in spite of the fact that it may appear to have been exaggerated in its details to those who have only witnessed it at a distance. The repeated festivities, the crowds constantly in the streets, the incessant cheering, and the houses draped with flags and illuminated presented nothing novel. One might say that it was an enlarged reproduction of what is to be found in all popular effervescences. But the thing that is rarest of all, which was never seen before in France, was the wondrous unity of all classes of society, in the country as in the towns, which was prolonged without interruption for fifteen days, and accomplished the marvel of imposing silence upon all our internal political dissensions.

This feature is far more salient than all the others. Admiral Avelan, on receiving a deputation of journalists who came to him with an invitation, used the word "supernatural" to describe the receptions of which he was the object since he set foot upon the soil of France. "You have just said it, Admiral," replied a member of the committee. "Your arrival has performed a veritable miracle. It has suspended our dissensions for some days. You have before you men professing the most opposite opinions, and you have united them in the desire to give you a welcome. There was in France in mediæval times what they called 'The truce of God.' Thanks to you, we have to-day what I will call 'The truce of the Russians.'" The phrase might seem like a piece of happy flattery, but really it was the expression of a truth with which everybody was struck. A temporary suspension of our quarrels and arguments when the approaching session of Parliament should render them most active, explains better than anything the point toward which the political mind was turned and how it was absorbed with one and the same idea during the second half of October.

If there had been nothing more than French demonstrations, the facility with which we allow ourselves to be carried away by attractions which flatter our illusions might diminish the political importance of what has just taken place. The certainty of having henceforth for an ally a power like Russia changes to a such a degree the state of things in Europe that we might be pardoned for interpreting too much according to our own desires the advances which have been made to us by the Czar. But there is no room for the assertion that our demonstrations have been one-sided or for denial that the union is equally complete and equally sincere on both sides. The intention of bringing the alliance up to the point of intimacy is manifestly reciprocal. We have not been alone in giving full scope to our expressions in the festivities lavished almost beyond measure upon the Russian sailors. St. Petersburg and Moscow sent us daily the echo of the acclamations uttered in France. An uninterrupted succession of telegrams was constantly running from the banks of the Neva to those of the Seine, bringing assurances of solidarity of the official corps as well as of private associations; and Russian journalists have come to fraternize and exchange toasts with our journalists. In a country like Russia, where nothing is done without the knowledge and consent of the Government, these are facts whose significance cannot be misunderstood. The marks of sympathy lavished upon the French flag at Cronstadt might be interpreted as merely an indication of a friendly disposition toward us; but the visit of the Russian vessels to Toulon, with the circumstances attending it, is equivalent to an official proclamation of an alliance between the two countries. If a more explicit confirmation were needed it could be found in the final despatch of thanks addressed by the Czar to M. Carnot, and in the reply made by the latter. It can be found especially in the official visit which the Grand Duke Vladimir, the brother of the Emperor of Russia, made to the President of the republic the day after the departure of Admiral Avelan. That visit was equivalent to a ratification of all the words exchanged in the toasts of the preceding days.

It may be that the burst of enthusiasm on the part of the French population made the affair travel farther and faster than was proposed in the Russian Chancellery. It may be that it led the halting diplomacy of M. de Giers beyond the habitual lines of wise deliberation, which might have induced him to prolong still further the policy of sparing the feelings of Germany. But at all events, it is a great thing for Europe to get out of the dangerous situation where it was held by the exclusive preeminence of the Triple Alliance. In vain did that Alliance present itself as a guarantee of peace; it was in reality a menace, or at least a perpetual peril of war. Its strength without any counterbalance kept up among other nations the fear of some outburst on its part, and this fear was not groundless, because on more than one occasion the Alliance exhibited warlike inclinations. The possibility of meeting another alliance able to cope with it will serve henceforth to put a check upon it and to defend it against its own tendencies.

Such is the true meaning, the true signification of the pact just concluded between Russia and France. No other signification can be given to it. They are commencing already to recognize this fact in Berlin as well as in England, and they will recognize it completely when the irritation caused by the new understanding which has put an end to the state of things created by the war of 1870 shall have ceased. The Franco-Russian alliance is the reestablishment of the European equilibrium under a new form and on another basis. Not that France has renounced completely the hope of regaining one day possession of her two lost provinces, but for some time past she has understood that it was necessary to give up the idea of revenge which she had conceived twenty years ago. In addition to the aversion to war, even in case of victory, which grows greater with the duration of peace, our people have become well aware that the first nation to throw Europe again into combat would have, at least morally, all the world against her on account of the disasters which the war would bring upon Europe. This idea has been slow to make its way into the French mind, and it was not without difficulty that it finally triumphed over the patriotic rancor, which refused to remain silent under our defeats and give up the hope of recapturing Alsace and Lorraine. But by degrees the people resigned themselves to it. They began to understand that if such a change became possible it could only be through the progress of unforeseen events, which should be wisely awaited. It is now several years since the warlike fever completely passed away from us. Our regeneration and the reorganization of our army, far from exciting military impatience, has calmed it down all the more perhaps because the sentiment of our recuperated strength has given to our national pride the certainty of no longer having to undergo the humiliations of a conquered nation.

The world refuses to believe in the sincerity of our conversion to pacific ideas. It persists in viewing our sentiments toward Germany as a constant danger of war, ready to break out at any moment, and the diplomacy of Berlin does all in its power to keep up and spread abroad this conviction. It endeavors to represent the incontestable moderation of our foreign policy as a personal matter with our Governments, and particularly with M. Carnot, imposing peace upon the country contrary to its natural tendencies. Nothing could be more false. The general will is completely in accord with the Government in avoiding outside complications instead of trying to create them. The world have had an opportunity to become convinced of this recently in the presence of the provocations, more or less direct, which public opinion allowed to pass by without even appearing to notice them, without even deigning to reply to them by a single newspaper article. A still more striking proof has just been exhibited on the occasion of the festivities attending the celebration of the Franco-Russian alliance. It had been given out in advance as certain that they would be accompanied by demonstrations hostile to Germany, by menacing cries addressed at least to the Triple Alliance. Those who counted upon such incidents to change the character of the manifestation and perhaps chill the sympathies of the Czar and his confidence in us, have met with great disappointment. During fifteen days of continuous acclamations, in which one might say without exaggeration, that all the voices of the nation joined, not one word was uttered or one single act committed which could be considered alarming or unfriendly. Everything that was not Russian was completely forgotten. The absence of discordant notes was so marked that it astonished, even in France, those who had followed the transformation of the public mind. It would be puerile to endeavor to explain it by an order of prudence given to the crowd. Multitudes do not exhibit such political obedience, especially when they are counted by millions composed of the most heterogeneous elements that can be furnished by the different parties of a country. Silence of that nature is not to be obtained at the word of command; it must be spontaneous. Beyond a doubt, France no longer dreams of war.

Russia, on the other hand, has no reason to wish for war. She is busied with reëstablishing her finances, which the famine of '91 and the cholera of '92 have thrown into confusion. It is a work in which peace for her is a necessity. No doubt there are in sight possible complications on the side of the Balkans, where she does not give up the hope of restoring her old supremacy. But her conduct shows that there, like everywhere else, she desires to proceed by diplomacy, and not by arms. The understanding working out between her and Austria is a sure indication of her desire to advance by pacific means. The friendly relations which exist between her and Turkey give another proof of this. Those who have followed attentively the evolution of Russian policy during the past few years are able to discover that her final aim is to isolate the German empire, not to crush it—to hinder it from becoming the arbiter of Europe, as it hoped, and too loudly proclaimed its intention to be, after Sadowa and Sedan. This is the aim of the Czar; he travels toward it with the patient certainty which unforeseen events beyond his control can alone change. His views are clearly reflected in the journals of St. Petersburg. "The time has passed," says the *Nouvoe Vremia*, "when the conduct of Germany and Italy can raise in European political circles the fear in the near future of an international difficulty. Europe knows now that the general peace is not threatened either by Russia or by France, and that the two powers are strong enough to await events." To be at liberty to await events and to prepare for them, instead of meeting with surprises, such as were witnessed when Germany was all powerful, constitutes the policy of St. Petersburg. The *Gazette de Moscou* confirms this in terms still more explicit. "The famous diplomatic tricks aided by the menace of bayonets have had their day," says the Muscovite journal. "Russia does not wish to trouble Europe, and will not permit any other power to trouble it." These lines contain, I think, the true sense of the change in the political situation of Europe just celebrated with so much éclat.

I do not know whether there is a treaty of alliance signed between France and Russia under the form of a diplomatic document. I do not believe there is, because such an act would require in France more or less parliamentary intervention, and this intervention might entail difficulties without number, considering the intemperance of language of our Deputies and their want of skill in handling international questions. But there is no need for an exchange of signatures between Governments sure of their honesty and their reciprocal sympathy. Such a precaution is only necessary to unnatural alliances, which endeavor to bring into one political coöperation nations of opposed interests and temperaments. Bismarck forcing Austria and Germany on the one hand, and Austria and Italy on the other to abandon their secular antagonisms and their recent conflicts, in order to guarantee the results of the war in 1870, felt the necessity of assuring their common action by a written engagement. But between France and Russia such a precaution would be superfluous. The Franco-Russian alliance has for sufficient guarantee the affinity between the two peoples and the absence of all questions likely to divide them. It has virtually existed at all times, and whenever it was interrupted it was by wars which were the issue of political combinations and never wars of race, of interest or of conquest. A distinctive trait in the history of the two countries is exhibited in the fact that not one of the struggles that have temporarily placed their armies *one against the other*, has left behind it any durable rancor or any bitter recollection, not even the expeditions of Napoleon I. in 1812, the invasion of France in 1814, or the campaign of the Crimea in 1855. A mutual sympathy, not easy to explain, but none the less certain, has outlived everything else. Long ago French statesmen recommended the Russian alliance with an energy of which the dynastic preferences of Louis Philippe and of Napoleon III. unfortunately lost sight.

In 1828 Chateaubriand, then Ambassador of France at Rome, wrote as follows: "Placed at the two extremities of Europe, France and Russia do not touch each other with their frontiers. Ther have no battlefield upon which they can meet; they have no rivalry in commerce, and the natural enemies of Russia are also the natural enemies of France. In time of peace let the cabinet of the Tuileries be the ally of the Cabinet of St. Petersburg and nothing can move in Europe. In time of war a treaty between the two Cabinets will dictate laws to the world."

Is not that the exact programme, traced three-quarters of a century ago, of what has been realized to-day? About the same time the Duc de Rieudieu, Minister of Foreign Affairs under the Restoration, expressed an identical thought. "France and Russia," said he, "can never have any motives to injure each other. Their interests are not opposed. No rivalry can exist between them. The prosperity of one can do no harm to the other, and their union is sufficient to maintain the peace of the world."

These citations are taken, not from private letters, but from the official correspondence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They show that the Franco-Russian alliance is by no means a sudden conception under the force of circumstances, or a thing of fancy. This alliance is the realization of a national political idea entertained many years ago and developed by time. That is what will constitute its force and its duration. It is also what constitutes and justifies the transports of joy with which it has been welcomed in France, in spite of whatever exaggeration may have appeared in their form. E. MASSIGNAC.

TOLD IN THE CLOAK ROOM.

THANKSGIVING STORIES EXCHANGED BY MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE.

A Special Providence in Tennessee—What They Eat in Arizona—The Kentucky Way—A Popular Guest—A Georgia Gander Pullin'—Relative Merits of Turkeys.

WASHINGTON, Nov. 17.—After the heat and bustle of a political campaign Thanksgiving dinners are in order. No one enjoys these dinners more than Representatives in Congress. They recall the days of their youth and bring many happy reminiscences. Senators, Representatives, clerks, doorkeepers, and pages are here on an equality. Family reunions are the order of the day. There is always a quorum at the table. There are lively discussions, but no acrid ones. Everything gives way to the music of the knife and fork. The smoking turkey itself and the tempting viands, to say nothing of other delicacies, if not productive of eloquence, are incentives to good cheer. All cares and annoyances are forgotten. Reminiscences of past days are told, and each man lives in the present without regard to the future.

It may be interesting to know how members of Congress from various sections of the country enjoy their Thanksgiving. In conversation with some of the genial members of the House in the cloak room, some valuable information was obtained. The Hon. Denton McMillin was peculiarly glowing, in describing Thanksgiving day in Tennessee. He said that it is the most delightful of all days except Christmas. All business is suspended. In the mountains and in the valleys there are family reunions. Frequently friends are invited to the feast and there are happy and joyous times. The Tennesseeans mostly spend the day quietly and pleasantly at home, ending it with a feast, based upon the biggest, fattest, and finest turkey the barnyard, the forest, or the most convenient market can afford. The greatest dinner that McMillan had ever enjoyed was at a log house when he was a callow youth just returned from a Kentucky university. A large turkey had been secured. On the day before Thanksgiving it had been carefully picked and drawn. That night, however, some appreciative darkey had thrown the family into consternation by abstracting the bird. The theft was discovered about 10 P. M. Meantime a terrific gale arose. It almost reached the fury of a tornado. The log house stood the blast. The wooden shutters were closed, and the howling wind outside made the log wood fire dance as if in glee, sending a shower of sparks up the chimney. Suddenly there was a smash against the wooden shutter outside. A blood curdling sound was heard. Securing a lantern, the head of the household went out and quickly returned. He had in his hand two huge turkeys with bronzed legs and ruffled feathers. One was a gobbler, the other a hen. They had been torn from their roosts in the mountains, borne miles on the gale, and thrown against the rude cabin by the hand of Providence to take the place of the turkey that the negro had abstracted. Providence had made no mistake in this case, for the family were good old-fashioned hard-shell Baptists. They returned thanks on the spot, and on the following day enjoyed as fine a Thanksgiving dinner as was ever given in Tennessee.

Marcus Aurelius Smith, the entertaining delegate from Arizona, was questioned concerning Thanksgiving festivals in that far off Territory. He said that they were different from most Thanksgivings in the East. As the Territory was new there were very few grandchildren to grace Thanksgiving dinners. The *piece de resistance* at the table was usually a gigantic wild turkey. It was always cooked on the old Kentucky or Virginia plan. The side dishes included venison and bear meat, if anybody wanted it. A delicious dish was bear paws *a la Mexicanos*. Tenderfeet did not regard them with favor, because when brought upon the table they looked like the feet of a negro roasted and basted. Nothing, however, was more delicious, served with cactus or prickly pear sauce. They furnished a dish fit for the gods. Then the baked sweet potatoes grown there were extremely savory. The sweet potatoes in Arizona, if Mark Smith is to be believed, are sweeter and more exquisite than those grown in any other part of the universe. He says they taste as though they had been raised by some Kentucky gentleman in the Garden of Eden. There are frequent innovations in family Thanksgiving dinners in Arizona. Being broad and liberal in everything, they do not allow their tastes to be hampered by conventionalities. In some places, where they cannot get champagne, they are reduced to the necessity of drinking whiskey. In localities along the border mescal is a substitute for whiskey. A few drinks of mescal make a man feel as though he had six heads, twelve feet, and twenty-four hands. Of all the people on the globe the Arizonians are the most hospitable. It would well repay a stranger to visit the Territory on Thanksgiving Day. He could have a dinner without price or money every hour in the day, with venison, antelope steaks, bear meat, champagne, whiskey, and mescal thrown in.

When Asher Caruth of Kentucky heard the talk about Thanksgiving a roseate flush overspread his face, and the spirit of anticipation in his eye and his tongue began to drip with eloquence. Of all the dinners in the South, he said, a Kentucky Thanksgiving feast was the best. It might not be as great as in New England, but the Kentucky dinner was the appreciated acme of bliss. The air was always cool and bracing. The fire seemed to burn brighter than in any other State. The barnyard was more musical, and the baying of the hounds made a refrain that thrilled the heart with pleasure. The music of the banjo was heard, and there were juba dances and Virginia reels, which fairly excited the soul. Each family had its gathering; all enjoyed themselves intensely. There was a good dinner, turkey, of course, with cranberries and all the jellies and gravies that Aunt Dinah could prepare. Children and grandchildren met at the homes of parents and grandparents, and recalled the incidents of the past year. It was what old Aunt Chloe would call a "rale claiyah up time in family matters." The new babies were chucked under the chin, and all the merits of the spring colts were canvassed. Troubles with servants were detailed. Family matters generally came under discussion, and predictions were made as to winner at the Lexington, Latonia, and other famous jockey courses in the coming spring meeting. There was one well-known Kentucky lady, Mr. Caruth said, who was always present at every Thanksgiving dinner in the State.

"At every dinner in the State?" repeated the Hon. David B. Culberson of Texas in astonishment.

"Yes," replied Mr. Caruth, "at every dinner in the State."

"Good ravens!" interrupted Mark Smith. "What's her name?"

"Belle Nelson," replied Mr. Caruth.

Ed Barrett of Augusta, a representative of Georgia, was enthusiastic over Thanksgiving Day in the great Empire State of the South. He says that to see it in its pristine purity you must go to Gainesville. There are great times in Waynesborough, Milledgeville, Lithonia, and mountain towns like Dahlonega, but nothing in comparison with what occurs at Hawkinsville. In that town all the preachers, deacons, and church members are greatly exercised. They gather in a body, like the Christian soldiers described by Bunyan in the Siege of Mansoul. If Satan himself was in command against them their indignation could not be greater. It is directed against what the Georgian calls a "gander pullin'." This gander pullin' gives more offence to them than the proposed fight between Mitchell and Corbett creates in the minds of Brooklyn clergymen. The ungodly in Hawkinsville still indulge in and buy the toughest ganders the country affords. They pick and thoroughly grease their necks and heads. They then adjourn to the outskirts of the town. The gander is hung to the limb of a tree, several, if not more feet above the ground. Those who participate in the pullin' mount their horses some fifty yards away, and break for the tree at full speed, making a grab at the gander as they pass beneath him. The wary old bird keeps his eyes skinned. He is as quick as a flash. No heron, frog hunting, handles his head more deftly. Even if the rough rider grasps the gander's neck the grease favors the bird. This tournament is kept up until some big-handed citizen of Hawkinsville with an iron-like grip is fastened upon the gander and drags it from the tree. Then another gander is strung up and the tournament is resumed. The Christian soldiers among the spectators view the scene with horror. Sam Jones and Sam Small preach about it occasionally, and even Bill Arp reprobates it. The whole country is aroused, but the indignation dies away, and its embers are never again fanned into flame until Thanksgiving approaches.

While Representative Barrett was talking old Bill Sterrett, the only genuine representative from Texas in the Capitol, lounged into the cloak room with a Bobby Burns cigar half way down his throat. He listened to Barrett with perfect nonchalance. When the Georgian concluded Sterrett pulled the cigar out of his mouth and said:

"Since the war, I do not know of any part of the South where there is a general observance of Thanksgiving Day. I have never yet lived in a community that really felt sufficiently thankful for its condition to kill even a pullet, much less a turkey. This is on account of the tariff and other things which helped to build up the North. My first recollection of Thanksgiving was in Kentucky during the war. We had assumed a position of neutrality. This was immediately followed by an invasion of both the North and the South. We got it both ways. Our minds were turned to other things than raising or roasting turkeys, and we really had nothing to be thankful for. Then, after the war, the building up of wrecked homes and putting into cultivation places laid waste, cutting down briars in old fields and splitting rails for fences, were surely not calculated to make us feel thankful or joyful. After this was done, we were called upon to subscribe, in the way of taxes, for the building up of the Northern section of the country, and paying pensions to the fellows who had burned our fences and destroyed our homes. This made us pay about three times what we ought to pay for the ordinary necessities of life, and I did not not see anything to be thankful for in this. I was thankful once, however; it was when we had a warm spell and the price of turkeys went down so that I was able to buy one."

What further Sterrett might have said no one can tell, as Col. Dick Bright of the Senate entered at this moment and seized the Texan's hat. It had the letters "R. J. B." inside of it. Sterrett had entered Bright's room and carried off Bright's hat by mistake, leaving an old cowboy affair in its place.

"It was a perfectly natural mistake to make," spoke Bill, as Bright returned him his hat. "There are two or three fish hooks on the inside of your hat, Colonel, and as I had been fishing lately with Tom Murray, with my usual luck, I assumed that the hat must be mine. I always carry my fish hooks in my hat and my bait in my hip pocket."

There were other Thanksgiving stories related. Congressman O'Neil of Boston had a great deal to say about the turkeys he raised on his farm in that city. He says that no turkey has such a flavor as the turkeys that are fed on doughnuts and pork and beans exclusively, and are stuffed with oysters before roasting.

Congressman Wilson of Washington took exception to this. The turkeys on Puget Sound, he allowed, were far better. They lived on the ambergris, which not only fattens them, but gives them an exquisite flavor which remains upon the tongue for days. Indeed, it has an effect similar to that produced by the eating of the pape botte upon Louisianians.

Everybody in Washington deplores the fact that William C. Whitney is not a member of the Cabinet in Mr. Cleveland's second term. He sent a turkey each Thanksgiving Day to the employees in all the departments, including those in the House and Senate. Not only this, but he allowed each one to go to the market and pick out his own turkey. On this Thanksgiving Day the heart of every old employee will turn toward William C. Whitney as the needle in the compass turns toward the pole, and every one is wishing him, wherever he is, a joyous Thanksgiving.

AMOS J. CUMMINGS.

THE MARYLAND SHIP CANAL.

The Various Routes Suggested for This Lately Revived Enterprise.

WASHINGTON, Nov. 15.—The project of cutting a waterway between Chesapeake Bay and Delaware Bay is a very old one. That it should be revived at the present time, which is certainly not the most favorable for an enterprise so costly, is a tribute to the expectations formed of its success from a business point of view. The main object, of course, is to bring Baltimore nearer the transatlantic steamer route. There would be a very great saving also in the distance by water between Baltimore and Philadelphia; but that alone might not be sufficient to justify the undertaking, although if the project of a ship canal across New Jersey should ever be carried out the advantage of the Maryland canal to Baltimore might then be still greater.

At one time it was urged that Congress should grant a subsidy to this canal on account of its uses as an interior coast-line defence and the facilities it would afford for transferring war ships between the Chesapeake and the Delaware Bay according as either should be the made the point of naval attack by an enemy. The answer has been, however, that it would be cheaper and better for the Government to expend money in fortifying both bays against attack, especially as the ends of the canal would have to be protected any way in such a plan. Each bay should be supplied at least with torpedo defences covered by the guns of powerful forts, and this could be done at a small part of the cost of building the canal. At all events, the prospect of the Government's constructing the canal has long been so faint that its proposed revival at the present time is as a commercial enterprise.

Chesapeake Bay and the Delaware River have for more than three score years been connected, as is well known, by a shallow canal thirteen miles long, through which propellers and schooners pass. This canal cost only $2,225,000, and it is one argument for a Federal appropriation now that one-fifth of the whole amount was given by the United States, while $100,000 was paid by Pennsylvania, $50,000 by Maryland, $25,000 by Delaware, and the remainder from private sources. This canal was first operated July 4, 1829, and has ever since been in use.

A little more than twenty years ago the Maryland and Delaware Ship Canal Company was chartered, but it accomplished little. It proposed, as was understood, to construct a canal across the peninsula by what is known as the Sassafras route. The act of Congress of June 18, 1878, authorized a survey of the peninsula for routes, and such a survey was made during the latter part of that year under the personal supervision of Mr. N. H. Hutton. Major W. P. Craighill made a report on it, which was laid before Congress.

Six routes were then estimated for. They were the Choptank, Tye, Queenstown, Centreville, Southeast Creek, and Sassafras. This last was declared by Mr. Hutton to be the shortest in time and cheapest, but it would require the maintenance of very costly approaches and also the overcoming of very serious obstacles if it was to be used in winter. The Centreville and Queenstown routes were said to be the most direct, and rank second in point of time, but to cost much more than other routes, while also having expensive approaches to maintain on the Chesapeake side, and to be liable, like the Sassafras, to obstruction by ice in winter. The Choptank route ranked third in time of transit and second in point of cheapness, while its especial advantages were greater freedom from obstruction by ice and economy in the maintenance of approaches.

It would appear that the routes now under consideration are the Sassafras, the Choptank, and a southerly one which would start at some point not far from opposite Baltimore and proceed directly to Lewes and the Delaware Breakwater, thus making the ocean advantages the primary ones to be considered.

The Sassafras route, sixteen to seventeen miles long, would cost, it is estimated, only $4,000,000, and the time of transit would be but fifteen and a half hours. Its comparative cheapness is largely due to the fact that it would utilize the Sassafras River. The Choptank, which is the southern route, would be over thirty-seven miles long, requiring nineteen and a half hours in transit, and would strike the ocean at Lewes. It has two forms, one costing $10,500,000, and the other, which seems to be now under consideration, $18,250,000. It is thought that this might be better than the Sassafras route, not only because it would require no ice along the Delaware, but also and chiefly because it would be much less in danger of blocking by the ice. The third route spoken of above would be about fifty miles long, and cost $24,000,000. It would cut off much distance, but the question whether the tolls would pay the interest on its great cost and its maintenance is serious.

If the Sassafras route were not exposed to the objection of the ice, perhaps it would have been selected for its cheapness. But it is felt that it is best to get the benefit of the canal at all seasons. A bill once introduced into Congress provided that the canal should be not less than 100 feet wide at the bottom, 26 feet below mean low water, and 178 feet wide at low water level, with locks 60 by 600 feet in the chambers, and sufficient for vessels drawing 22½ to 23 feet. But if undertaken purely as a commercial project other measurements might prevail.

A NEW LIGHT FOR SANDY HOOK.

The Lighthouse Shown at the Fair Will Replace the Waackaack Beacon.

Among the exhibits at the World's Fair was the iron lighthouse which is to take the place of the Waackaack beacon near Sandy Hook. It is still standing in Chicago, but will be taken down in time to be put in place by May 1 of the coming year. It is to occupy the site of the present lighthouse, which, during its erection, will continue to do duty from an adjacent coign of vantage to which it will be removed. Moving a lighthouse is a job that frequently falls to the Lighthouse Board.

The new lighthouse is ninety-six feet high, thirty feet higher than the present one. The diameter of the tower, or rather tube, through which the stairs wind is six feet. It will take but a few weeks to put it in place when it is once on the ground. Its lens is of French make, and, although of the second order, is remarkably powerful. The lens, which is three feet in diameter, cost $2,543.41. The light of a lamp will be cast by it about sixteen miles, which is four miles further than the range of the Point Comfort beacon, of which the new lighthouse is to be a companion. It will be in the rear of and on a line with the Point Comfort beacon, so that the lights of the two may furnish bearings for ships passing through the middle channel. Both lights are fixed.

The lens, as well as the new lighthouse, has been on exhibition at Chicago. When first put on exhibition a small lamp was kept burning in it, but so many people injured their sight, as well as temporarily blinded themselves by looking into the lens at short range, that the light had to be removed.

IRRIGATION IN WESTERN KANSAS,

And the Eastward Movement of Population.

TOPEKA, Nov. 8.—A recent press despatch from Topeka states that:

"Mr. George E. Studebaker, of McPherson, Kan., who was sent by the Ancient Order of United Workmen to southwestern Kansas to investigate the needs of destitute members of the order, says that not a spear of grass or a sign of vegetation is visible, and that the ground is so parched and dry as to prevent its preparation for wheat sowing, and that all those able to leave the country have done so. He will report to his lodge that, in his opinion, the best thing that can be done for the relief of the people of the drought-stricken plains will be to provide them with the means of removal to more productive regions."

At least three times in the brief period since the first attempt to settle the region west of the ninety-ninth meridian, have the settlers been forced, by impending starvation, to abandon homes and improvements in which had been sunk the savings of a lifetime; and at least thrice have those induced to hazard their all in attempts to cultivate the arid wastes, constituting fully a third of Texas, Kansas, and Nebraska, and a fourth of the Dakotas, been forced by complete and repeated crop failures to accept the conclusion that this portion of the continent is uncultivable outside the very limited areas susceptible of artificial watering. Notwithstanding these repeated failures and the abandonment of the country by most of the impoverished settlers, a succession of two or three fairly favorable seasons has seen another army of eager home seekers occupying the deserted homesteads and placing implicit faith in the assseverations of the land speculator and the town-site boomer that the climate was changing, had changed, and that a sufficiency of rainfall had now been assured by the ploughing of a few thousand acres and the laying down of narrow bands of steel by the railway builder.

Six or eight years ago this whole arid region experienced a veritable boom; speculation was rife; immense amounts of Eastern capital were loaned to the innocuous settlers by the "investment companies"; innumerable towns were laid out, and water and gas works built with the proceeds of municipal bonds, in villages of a few hundred; a new Eldorado opened to the promoter who would agree to and did vote municipal bonds for every conceivable purpose, and thus aided in erasing the Great American Desert from the map of the United States.

Unfortunately the seasons again became unpropitious; this arid belt failed to become the granary of the world; the water works, the electric plant, and the gas works either failed to materialize or went to speedy decay; the promoter sought other climes, while the Eastern investor is left with abandoned farm and town site as security for the loan made in complete faith, upon the guarantee of an "investment company," that is now in the receiver's hands; the poverty-stricken farmer has returned as far East as his means carried him, and much of the country has been again abandoned to the prairie dog and the jack rabbit.

During the boom days, one inclined to take exceptions to the highly colored claims put forth for the plains region and to direct attention to past cycles of years of deficient rainfall, the altitude that caused excessive evaporation and accompanying radiation from a parched and indurated surface, would be assured that in the event, the improbable event, of a recurrence of such seasons, a cheap and efficient mode of securing full crops was at hand in an inexpensive process of irrigation from the "underflow" which, it was represented, was beneath all these regions, and would, at small cost, insure yields surpassing those of the most favored districts where rainfall alone was depended upon.

The rainfall of the boom years and abundant yields from a soil defective only in the frequent absence of needed moisture seemed to warrant and confirm many of the claims made as to the great fertility of these beautifully lying lands; and the influx of home seekers was so great that the population increased more rapidly than ever before in a purely agricultural region.

Before the illusions of this third and greatest army of seekers of homes upon the arid plains had been dispelled by one of those cycles of dry years that are as certain to return as the years to roll around, the population of the thirty-nine Kansas counties lying west of the ninety-ninth meridian reached 200,000, as shown by the State census of 1888; yet so deficient were the rainfalls of 1888 and 1890, and so severe the privations resulting from the deficient crops of those years that fully a fourth of this number had abandoned their homes before the recurrence of the favorable seasons of 1891 and 1892. The great crops of wheat grown in 1891 and 1892 induced many to return, and the spring of 1893 saw a population of 143,000 in the counties that numbered 200,000 in 1888. From the testimony of Mr. Studebaker and others not interested in the drought-stricken region it appears probable that the numbers have, as a result of the complete destruction of the crops of 1893, been greatly reduced by the emigration of those having sufficient means to remove their families to more productive lands, and that where the means have not been sufficient to remove all, the bread-winner has, in many cases, gone elsewhere in search of the employment which would enable him to keep the wolf from the door of his desolated home.

In the September report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture we get a very clear idea of the absolute character of the crop failure in this region for the current year.

In the Kansas agricultural reports the State is divided into three very nearly equal districts, known as the eastern, central, and western belts. The western belt consists of thirty-one counties, and covers an area of about 16,000,000 acres. Of this immense area some 943,000 acres was sown with wheat in 1893, and from that the cultivators harvested a crop reported at 310,000 bushels, or an average of something more than a peck an acre. The seed sown exceeded five pecks an acre, or more than four times the quantity harvested. The oats crop of the thirty-one counties was sown upon 123,000 acres, from which the harvest gave a product of some 417,000 bushels, or about a bushel and a half for each bushel sown. The State report for September does not deal with the year's corn crop, but the corn crop of this western belt is known to be a more pronounced failure, if possible, than the wheat crop.

In 1890 the crops of this region were but little better than in 1893. There were good crops of small grains in the intervening years. The five years show conclusively how hopeless is the lot of the poor man who attempts to secure a living by the cultivation of any part of these arid wastes not susceptible of irrigation at small cost.

Western Kansas crops may be accepted as typical of the whole elevated eastern plains. The soil of this region is such that only water is required to render it exceptionally fertile, and high have been the hopes that the needed improvement might be made at no great cost by irrigation. It is true that most of those entertaining this hope have of late years come to recognize the fact that the water of the streams would suffice to fertilize but a very small fraction of the immense areas requiring its artificial application, but in some unaccountable way there has grown up a belief that this whole region is underlaid with a shallow lying yet thick stratum of loose material, through which, in a great sheet, the mountain waters find their way to the sea, and that all which is necessary to render this region fertile and exceptionally productive is to tap this inexhaustible reservoir.

Thus far no appreciable proportion of the plains area has been fertilized either by this hypothetical "underflow" or the overflow; and an inquiry into what has been done in this direction discloses that there has been little accomplished beyond showing that it requires an immense amount of water to irrigate a small area, that there have been innumerable attempts to fertilize wide areas with wholly insufficient supplies, and that the lack of success in the past indicates what may be expected in future.

As early as 1888 some 340 miles of irrigating ditches, intended to water more than 300,000 acres, had been constructed in western Kansas, yet the census of 1890 shows less than 21,000 irrigated acres producing crops in the State. The paucity of results, as related to miles of ditches, is understood when it is remembered that nearly or quite all the irrigating ditches of Kansas depend upon the waters of the Arkansas River, that the whole volume of this stream, as gauged at Pueblo in the summer of 1888, was sufficient for the irrigation of less than 200,000 acres, and that east of Pueblo there are, before the borders of Kansas are reached, irrigating canals intended to serve several times 200,000 acres of Colorado land.

The Arkansas and all other streams debouching upon the plains east and south of Colorado are robbed of their waters by the irrigators of that State, which was thus enabled to show an area of some 881,000 acres out of a total of 3,631,000 acres of irrigated lands in the United States at the time the census of 1890 was taken.

The meagre results of irrigation, meagre so far as watered area is concerned, the failure of "dry" farming upon the plains; the repeated settlement and abandonment of so much of the plains country, and the direful distress of those who are stranded upon these wide wastes, after years of fruitless efforts at cultivation; make manifest the unfitness of the lands west of the ninety-ninth meridian for cultivation under existing conditions; and the inability to irrigate more than one per cent. of the area shows the impossibility of reclamation until prices shall have so much advanced that the price received by the cultivator for one good crop will recoup him for losses sustained by the failure of nine others.

Should such conditions ever obtain, as is by no means improbable, even then these lands will be fit for occupancy only by those who have the ability, pecuniary ability, to tide over two and even three seasons of successive crop failure; hence there will be no rush to settle as are so better provided than the majority of those seeking homes upon the public domain.

The arid belt is clearly defined, and may be broadly stated as extending from the ninety-eighth meridian to the valleys of the Pacific coast region. Over the most of this hopelessly sterile tract, sterile in large part simply for reason of the absence of water for irrigation, population will ever be sparse, and no increase opulent away from the mining districts, and that section of less than five per cent. which it is possible to irrigate at great cost.

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