THE DEMOCRATIC NOMINATION.

The nomination of Mr. Tilden at St. Louis surprises only those who were satisfied that the Democratic party had lost all shrewdness and capacity. Its course over since 1860 has been marked by such a steady series of blunders that it was undoubtedly hard to believe that it would now make a display of sagacity or even common-sense; that, after having nominated Horace Greeley in 1872, it would be ready to nominate its ablest man in 1876. And yet this is what it has done, and done apparently without much difficulty. No other candidate has seemed to have any chance from the beginning, and Mr. Tilden’s success has not been the result of accident, but of steady political work, such as he knows how to do and such as hardly anybody else can rival him in. He had, before the Convention met, made his nomination absolutely necessary to the party. That of anybody else would have made the contest with Hay’s hopeless. The Democratic Convention has, therefore, done what conventions so rarely do—nominated for the Presidency the person plainly marked out beforehand by public opinion as the one most likely to draw to its ticket all the support, a Democratic ticket can, under the most favorable circumstances, hope to get from any quarter.

What effect his nomination will have on the fortunes of the Republican candidates it is yet too early to predict. Indeed, we hardly feel competent to form an opinion of any kind on the subject until we have seen Mr. Hay’s letter of acceptance, for that letter must be considered the platform on which he goes to the country. To judge him by the Cincinnati resolutions would be unfair, the more particularly as these resolutions were evidently the result of the want of positive party convictions on any leading questions of the day. Mr. Hay, with these resolutions in his hand, is one kind of candidate; Mr. Hay, with his own letter in his hand, may be a much stronger one. There is nothing sufficiently clear and distinct in his political career to enable us to dispense with the production of a political programme of his own. His antecedents, as we remarked a fortnight ago, give us an assurance that he will be personally pure, that his cabinet will be composed of prominent and able men, and that he will not tolerate fraud or jobbery within the range of his sight or knowledge; and that his big ditties and boasts and political adventur will not be any longer among the influences which shape the policy of the Executive. But they do not give us the assurance that he has the force and energy and determination which the crisis calls for. It may be that he knows what row needs to be done, and that he is the man to do it. But the Republican platform and his nomination are not of themselves sufficient to satisfy us of this. We need to hear from him personally on this subject, and we have little doubt that until we do, large numbers of those who have hitherto voted the Republican ticket will, in view of Mr. Tilden’s nomination, suspend their judgment.

As regards Mr. Tilden himself, we have little to add to what we have herebefore said of him in these columns. If the question before the country, on which the popular verdict is about to be asked, were whether slavery ought to be abolished, or whether it is possible to subdue the South by force of arms, or whether the Constitutional Amendments were the best mode of reconstruing the States lately in rebellion, there would be little difficulty in deciding that he is not the man for the Presidency. But when the questions before the country are the reform of the Administration, of the currency, and of the system of taxation, and the restoration of the supremacy of the law over all officers of the Government, there would, if he were not the nominee of the Democratic party and had not been one of its leaders since 1860, be in our minds little difficulty in deciding that he is the man for the Presidency. Of his ability to fight the prevailing forms of corruption, of his courage and determination in doing it, even when the offenders are men of his own political faith, he has given an excellent example in the governorship of New York. That he is fully master of the currency question, and is a consummate man of business, and a lawyer of no ordinary talent, and especially of that sort of talent which shows itself best in dealing with the knotty and intricate problems of affairs, are things well-known to all who are at all familiar with his character or career. The belief which has widely prevailed that he would, in any political place of great power or profit, be surrounded by the worst element of the Democratic party, seems to have been sufficiently refuted by the fact that this element is nowhere so strong as in his own State, and that there, nevertheless, he has not hesitated to engage in bitter warfare with it, and to bear its unrelenting hostility. Its adherence will probably never be so valuable to him again as it would have been at St. Louis, and there, nevertheless, it was arrayed against him. In short, conceding that a man may work for the Presidential nomination for himself, nothing can well be more honorable than the means by which Mr. Tilden has secured it. He has been, in the position which he fills, the restless purser of the rings by which the knives of both parties have made fortunes out of the canals; he has been the firm supporter of hard-money in the teeth of the inflationist views of a large proportion of the Democratic party; and he has sought neither favor nor accommodation from the Snutch faction which has brought so much discredit on the party. Finally, he has brought the party to speak out boldly, even if obscurely, in its platform in favor of specie payments and of civil-service reform, and to nominate its ablest and least objectionable candidate. These are not services to himself or to his party simply; they are services to the whole country. Whether Mr. Tilden be elected or not, we are indebted to him for having raised politics to a higher level, and for having wiped out, as far as it can be wiped out by mere utterance, the national reproach that a party containing nearly half the voters was avowedly given over to obstruction or mischief, and occupied itself solely with lamenting the irretrievable and proposing the impracticable.

As regards the platform, we feel bound to say that it seems to us greater superior to that drawn up at Cincinnati. In fact, to us, who believe that the great course of the politics of the day are cant and insincerity, and its great needs, honesty and directness in speech and action, it is difficult to avoid placing the Democratic Convention, judged by its speech and action, on a higher moral plane altogether than the Republicans. We say this while recognizing fully the higher average of character of the latter, and while acknowledging that the platform, being prepared by a small knot of men and adopted without or with but little discussion, cannot be surely taken to express even the average opinion of any convention. But it must be admitted that the small knot which prepared the platform at St. Louis had apparently more sharply defined convictions about public questions, and a deeper appreciation of the needs of the hour, than the small knot which prepared the platform at Cincinnati. We, for our part, consider the Democratic declaration in favor of civil-service reform, while as full as that of the Republicans, more creditable, as made by a party which is out of office, and which has not, like the Republican party, made one such declaration already, and then, with the means of carrying it into execution in its hands, not only falsified it, but through its leading men ridiculed it. As regards the demand in the St. Louis platform for the repeal of the Resumption Act, we think it cannot be too severely condemned, even when coupled with a promise to return to specie payments by some other process: this demand, objectionable as it is, has nevertheless an honest ring about it compared with the deliberate evasion by the Cincinnati Convention of any mention of the Act at all; when it was known to be the object of much attack, and was put on the statute-book by the Republican party itself. So, also, we will say frankly that, in these days of deceit and forgery, we think an outspoken anti-Mongolian plank, such as the Democrats have produced, is a better evidence of a generally sound moral condition than the evasive utterance by which the Republican party—with its devotion to equal rights—has sought to produce the impression, while promising nothing, that it thought Mongolian immigration injurious to the state, and would do something to stop it. And, unless platforms are to be accepted as un-
meaning Lits of vigilant, to which we trust the people will never agree, we must contrast, to the heavy disadvantage of the Republicans, their endorsement of the present scandalous Administration of General Grant with the indictment of it presented by the Democrats. Whatever be the character or antecedents of the Democrats, and however unlikely they may be to do better themselves, what they say of General Grant's Administration is true, or the language which honest men ought to use; while what the Republicans say of it is false, and lays anybody who says it, however pure or respectable, open to just and grave suspicion. In short, it is not unfair to hold that any party which openly approves of that Administration is unfit at this crisis to rule the country. If the Republican candidate in his letter of acceptance reproduces the utterances of the platform on this subject, he will place reformers in a position of great difficulty; for if the Administration of General Grant be a creditable one, and the condition to which it has brought our affairs be unobjectionable, or only slightly objectionable, most of the current talk of reform is idle or mischievous.

The situation may be summed up by saying, that while Mr. Tilden's official antecedents and his training and opinions on the leading questions of the day are all in his favor, and while the Democratic platform, quâ platform, is a more creditable and plain-spoken document than that of the Republican, the history of the Democratic party and of those with whom Mr. Tilden has acted in politics during the last fifteen years has been such that it will be difficult for the great body of Republicans, however much dissatisfied, they may be with the Republican policy, platform, or candidate, to entrust the large and delicate interests which have grown up since the war to Democratic hands. There is a wide margin given under all constitutional governments, and it is particularly large under ours, for the free play of executive sympathy and executive notions of proportion, and on this account, however scrupulously Democrats might obey the law, the best portion of the Republican party still dread to see them armed with authority and discretion. Nor can it be doubted that a large and most respectable body of voters have been allured beyond recall by the nomination of Hendricks, and will, being forced to choose, make the hard-money issue paramount to any and all considerations of administrative reform. They will say, with undeniable cogency, that the diversity of opinion about the currency which prevails in both parties and is reflected in both platforms, does not appear in the Republican nominations, while in the Democratic the second place on the ticket is conceded without opposition to the foremost advocate of disunion money. On the other hand, the impresson made on the public mind by the recent exposure of corruption and by the inability of the Republican party to deal with any of the leading problems left by the war, have produced a readiness or widespread desire for change, which will tell against the Republicans and will probably grow during the canvass. It has been somewhat quieted by the goodness of Mr. Hayne's character; but on the other hand, it has been stimulated by the exhibition of blunted moral perceptions and of lowered standards of political integrity at the Cincinnati Convention, in the selection, as the favorite candidate, of a gentleman against whom there was strong evidence of participation in jobs, whose nomination came near being made, and whose successful opponent was picked out by an accident. Thousands of voters will say that nothing thoroughly or permanently good can come from a party in this condition, and that a complete change and clearing-out are absolutely necessary, and that, although the immediate results of Democratic success might be bad, it would lead the way eventually to a purification of which, under the ascendancy of the Republican party in its present debauched condition, we can have no hope.

In any event, the contest is sure to be close; and we may heartily congratulate the country upon the fact that both candidates are worthy of a majority of the votes, that both platforms promise with more or less distinctness solid improvement, and that, if the righteous indignation of the country has as yet accomplished nothing else, it has undoubtedly this time saved the electors from a choice of evils.

"EDUCATED MEN" IN CENTENNIAL POLITICS.

The return of the college anniversaries has brought up once more for discussion the old and now vexed question of the value of university education as a preparation for the work of active life, and, in connection with this, the question whether the influence of the class of persons called "educated men" on public affairs is growing or declining. The despondent view of the matter was put forth last year in the Phi Beta Kappa oration at Cambridge by ex-President Woolsey; the hopeful view has this year been produced in the same place, and on the same occasion, by Professor Damar of Brown University. The statistics may be said to favor the former rather than the latter—that is, it appears to be true that the proportion of college graduates filling official positions is now smaller than it was one hundred or fifty years ago and is falling off, and the control of our politics and legislation is passing more and more into the hands of the class known as "self-educated" or "self-made men"—that is, men who have had no formal teaching except what they have received in the common schools, or who have had no formal teaching at all, but have, by a sort of scrambling process, acquired as much information as was necessary, in conjunction with native shrewdness and pertinacity, to accumulate a fortune. In fact, the control of this class on public affairs is now so strong that, as we have seen in a recent case, the appearance of a regularly educated man on the scene as a candidate for a high place is resented as a sort of intrusion, and the whole class to which he belonged denied the jus honoris, under the contemptuous designation, to use the words of a prominent American senator, of "dish literary folly." The optimistic way of meeting these facts is somewhat of this kind—that, though it is true the active participation of educated men in the administration of public affairs is doubtless much smaller than it used to be, office-holding is by no means necessary to the exercise by them of great influence in political and social life; that if they mingle freely with plain people, and avoid arrogance of demeanor or any irritating assumption of superiority, they will always find, whether in the primary meeting or at the convention or the mass-meeting, that they are listened to with respect and attention; that their opinions have great weight, and do furnish a really potent contribution to the political thought of the day, while their character is constantly and in all the ordinary concerns of life furnishing them with the means of retaining a steady hold on the confidence of their neighbors, and, through this, of silently and imperceptibly moulding public opinion. This is a brief and rough summary of Professor Diman's position, and it also describes the position of nearly all those writers who care about the matter at all, and have enough traditional or other respect for mental culture and enough patriotic hopefulness to be anxious to make it appear that, whatever figures may say, the higher education has not, after one hundred years of national existence, lost its political virtue in the eyes of the bulk of the American people, and that the exclusion of the educated class from public office means little, or does not mean what some people take it to mean.

The defect in this view, and it is a serious one, lies in the fact that it treats educated men as a class separate from the rest of the community—a kind of accidental order, whose business it is to offer sacrifices, examine oracles, and utter oracles for the benefit of the community, and to which the community may give ear or not as it feels inclined; a position, in short, somewhat like that of the Greek kings after they were deprived of their political power and relegated to purely religious functions. It is assumed that if educated men get a respectful hearing in the primary meeting, and now and then in the convention, and even find place for a letter or article in the newspapers at deep intervals, or an occasional article does in any way take shape, then they have too solid ground for complaint. But the truth is that educated men are not a separate order apart, and we trust they never will be. The only thing that distinguishes them from the rest of the community, as educated men, is that they
probably know more upon certain subjects, probably have their minds in a more manageable and receptive condition, and have higher standards of excellence in certain fields of activity. Their principal value for political purposes lies in the fact that they generally have in their possession or within their reach a much larger store of human experience than the common run of their neighbors; or, in other words, are much more familiar with the history and result of the thousands of experiments, both social and political, which the race has tried in various ages and countries, and are, therefore, apt to be better able to calculate the probable result of any proposed measure in their own country. In saying this, we of course leave out of view the large class of scientific specialists, soldiers, engineers, mathematicians, astronomers, whose assistance no civilized community can dispense. We are talking simply of the great body of those, whether college graduates or not, whose youth has been passed in some process of intellectual training and in the systematic acquisition of more than one branch of knowledge, and who have got the habit of reflection on subjects not purely personal and the power of reasoning with fair accuracy.

Now, these men, though they may differ from the mass of their countrymen, do not differ greatly. The main features of their character are much the same, and so are their springs of action. They have about the same hope and ambition. They like money and distinction just as do the rest of the world. A good office, and high pay, and power, and general respect, have as much attraction for a "man living for self," as for an artist and ignorant politician. Men get no special vocation or consecration or change of heart from a college degree, or from "ripe scholarship," or "profound and varied culture," and it is not desirable that they should. What is above all things to be wished for in this and every other community, is that its educated men should enter the arena like other people to contend for the prizes for which all others are contending, and glow with the ambition by which others are stimulated. We know very well that Mr. Emerson has painted a picture of the educated man which makes him out a being entirely independent of such toys as money and distinction, and puts within himself all that is necessary to his happiness and growth; but Mr. Emerson's scholar is a philosopher, and is too rarely met with to have any importance for the purposes of the present discussion, though we have no doubt whatever that the Emersonian type of the scholar has done as much harm politically, in spreading the notion, which the politicians have eagerly embraced, that the educated man's proper place was a library in some remote village, without other connection with affairs than came from voting once a year for "the regular ticket of the party of human rights." When educated men are told that, even if they cannot have office, and must resign all share in the work of legislation and administration, they ought not to feel troubled, as their knowledge and training will be found useful at primary meetings and nominating conventions, and their presence act as a benediction as they go about in the discharge of their ordinary duties; that their proper function is preaching and living a blameless life; and that theyought to be above looking for any direct or palpable result from their sermons or example, they are asked to accept a position which it is not in human nature to accept, and which no body of men of superior intelligence has ever accepted anywhere without some special sanctification. If they did accept it, they would be an order of priests and not a body of unusually capable civilians. Few trained men have ever yet, in any age or country, felt and retained a strong interest in politics without feeling a strong desire to legislate or administer, and though it is not necessary to the maintenance of this interest that every trained man should get an office or even a chance of office, or feel himself fitted for office, it is necessary that he should see the man of his kind, with whose views and aims he sympathized, getting office, or at least know that it was within their reach if they chose to seek it. The remark of Pascal, that it is not contemplation but action that leads to self-knowledge, is as true in politics as in other fields. Men who occupy themselves with public affairs will come to occupy themselves with them with zest and energy only so long as they see a fair chance that their views will be embodied in legislation, or that their way of doing things will be adopted in administration. Once convince them, however, that neither they nor any persons of their antecedents or opinions or views have much or any chance of subliming their ideas to the test of practice, and when religion nor patriotism nor party nor home will keep them long in the political arena. The story is as old as civilization. As soon as any large and active-minded class, who claim no divine commission, are shut out from active co-operation in the public business, they become a selfish and secluded faction or coterie devoted to the advancement of their own fortunes, the pursuit of sensual pleasures, or of a feeble and soulless aesthetic culture. Preachers you cannot make them, and improving examples of conjugal and fraternal virtue they will not be content to remain.

As this year, besides being the Centennial year, is a year of widespread purification and of considerable and not unwholesome retraction, apology, and self-commendation, we would suggest as the best, because truest and most candid, explanation of the diminishing participation of educated men in public life in America the following facts, for such we take them to be: (1) The unprecedentedly rapid growth of population within fifty years, through the accretion of great masses of uneducated persons; (2) the rapid spread among these masses of the Jeffersonian democratic philosophy, with its doctrine of equality, its contempt for accumulated experience, and its strong conviction of the excellence of simplicity of the work of government; (3) the adoption of the "spoils" system in the administration, and the diffusion through it of the belief that special appointments or training were not necessary for any office, and that one man could, if his opinions were sound, fill it as well as another; (4) the filling even of such offices as those of judges and attorney-generals and State engineers by popular election, thus making even specialists seem to derive their fitness for high places rather from a majority vote than from their education and experience; (5) the extraordinary national prosperity of the country in spite of the passage of the Government into the hands of the ignorant and unarmed, creating the belief that the necessity of high intelligence for public affairs was an Old-World delusion; (6) the general success of our foreign policy, owing possibly to the exceptional comtnital of important negotiations to trained hands, and possibly to the high tone which our distance, strength, resources, and unassailableness have enabled us to assume; and (7) though last, not least, to the low quality of the instruction which, down to a recent period, passed as "university education." The truth is that, through all these causes, the tradition of government by the educated has been lost, and it is a serious loss. We have for forty years being trying to govern without education, and the experiment is now, we hope, in its last stage. But we believe the best way to end it is to be perfectly frank about it, and to say not that the higher education fits a man to be a conscientious voter, or a powerful exhorter, or devoted husband, or trusty lawyer, but that it is the best possible training for nearly all offices of Government, and that in so far as anything in our machinery either of election or administration helps to keep those who have it out of public life, it is bad and ought to be removed. This is the plain truth of the case; and we earnestly urge all those who have been trying not to believe it, and been pretending that on the whole it was best for a President or Secretary of the Treasury to begin life in a small store or pass his youth in an engine-house, to make 1576 the opening of a course of absolute withersness and coward in such matters, and of a habit of doing things as they are and describing them as they see them. It is in this that political as well as moral salvation lies.

THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION.—VII.

AMERICAN ART.

PHILADELPHIA, JULY 1.

The American art-display, with all its shortcomings, is by far the best illustration that has ever been made of this country's talent in its completeness, the range being from Boston to San Francisco, in geographical
Copyright of Nation is the property of Nation Company, L. P.. The copyright in an individual article may be maintained by the author in certain cases. Content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder’s express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.