

MISSISSIPPI LEVEES.

IN CASE OF WAR.

People Along the River Want Them Done Away With.

How Our Military Forces Would Be Assembled.

Methods Suggested for the Protection of Farms and Towns in Flood Times—Opinions of the Sufferers.

Some Suggestions as to the Proper Handling of the United States Troops at Home and Abroad.

"The levees must go." Such is the expression heard on every side during a trip along the Mississippi river from Cairo to Vicksburg from steamboatmen, planters, residents of river cities, river prophets and the oldest and youngest inhabitants of the districts which are in or contiguous to the flooded districts. Probably the only class of people who do not concur in this assertion are the government engineers and members of the levee boards in the different states. Even they admit that the levee system has proved a failure this year, so far as giving protection to the lands behind them is concerned, and the only defense they can offer is that the high water of 1897 is without precedent, so that no calculations based on conditions of previous years could be taken into account in coping with the floods. To this argument the disgruntled populace reply: "What has brought about the unprecedented high water but the extension of a levee system to keep the water pent up in a narrow channel, contrary to the intent of nature?" Year after year the broad bottom lands into which the river had found access have been shut off from the Mississippi; periodically it has broken from the restraint put upon it and entered the forbidden lands.

A system of outlets has been tried, but found wanting, and now the people along the river declare that the same is true of the big levee system. These people are not skilled in the science of engineering, but they appear to compose a majority of the better class of citizens, and base their conclusions on their observations in years of previous overflows. They are the class who place notices on the corners of houses and in tree trunks to mark the extreme height of the water, and who are familiar with every crook and bend in the river, its tributaries and lakes and bayous.

And what do they offer as a substitute for the great embankments which a liberal government has helped to create? They have many things to offer, but few subscribe to any substance for the levees. On the contrary, they say that they welcome the overflow, with its resultant rich deposit of silt on their impoverished land. The horrors of the crevasses, the resistless current which uproots trees and sweeps houses from their foundations are not characteristics of an overflow, but are the creatures of the levees, produced only when the big embankments fail to hold the river in its course, and, having increased its pent-up fury, finally allow it to wreak death and devastation with the force which the levees alone created. "Let the periodical overflows come," they say, "and we will welcome their calm approach and permit them to enter our fields and plantations unstrained."

Then they point to the great mounds which a prehistoric race have erected on both sides of the river commonly called "Indian mounds," and declare that this was a method former race had of meeting the waters. Many of these mounds have been taken possession of by the planters, and where they do not exist the planters have already begun their erection. On these houses and barns are built, cattle pens are erected, and they serve as most effective havens during the time of overflow.

Another method which is already employed, even behind some of the largest and strongest levees, in which the people have no confidence, as a result of years of experience, is that of building small private levees about the few acres included in their orchards, gardens and plots of ground surrounding their homes and those of the hundreds of employees on every great plantation.

Some of the people who are opposed to the continuation of the levee system are advocates of the "straightening of the river" theory. This class declares that the money now being expended by the government in levees could be applied to much better advantage in straightening out the crooks and bends which the erratic Mississippi takes, and materially decreasing the distance between Cairo and New Orleans, deepening the channel and allowing a freer access to the gulf. But here the opponents of the levees lose the support of their adherents, the steamboaters, who say that such a stream would have so swift a current as to render navigation practically impossible.

Much of the dissatisfaction which exists among the people where the levees are not under the control of the government is due to their belief that the state boards are honeycombed with corruption, and that the funds appropriated by the states serve as a grab-bag for those intrusted with their distribution in the form of high official salaries, expensive clerical forces, exorbitant expense accounts and open connivance with the contractors who work and bid under their direction and approval. Hardly a town of any size can be visited between Cairo and Vicksburg where such accusations are not made openly, and citizens who have the weight of business success or high official standing are eager to fatten statements derogatory to the probity and good faith of the local levee boards. For the "water fighters," who work night and day along the river front in the actual labor of battling with the river, they have the greatest respect, and only words of praise are heard for their honest efforts. It is against those who direct and limit their work, the power behind the throne, that the odium is cast.—*St. Louis Globe-Democrat*.

Sara Bernhardt has always had a morbid dread of fire, and this has led her to direct that all her stage dresses shall be made of fireproof material.

Two Americans, W. T. Danner, the painter, and Rodman Wanamaker, son of John Wanamaker, are among the new chevaliers of the Legion of Honor.

AN ONION KING.

How a Woodchopper Grew Immensely Rich in Michigan.

In the southwestern Michigan several fortunes have been made as rapidly as though the lucky farmers had staked out a paying claim in Creede or Cripple creek. Onion kings and peppermint kings are as numerous as to jostle each other on the highways, and their rise in several cases has not been without romance.

Tom Burns was closing his third hard winter's work chopping wood and hewing railway ties in northern Van Buren county's big swamp. He was a light-hearted young fellow naturally, but mystified his friends by sitting moodily by himself at night, shunning all company. Little by little the nature of Burns' malady became known. He was in love. His humble Indians home adjoined the rich farm of the man whose daughter had accepted his heart. No Shylock ever guarded his Jessica with greater care than did this Indiana yeoman. Burns' meager wages piled up slowly, and life seemed to have few openings for a man without money.

One day last spring, while wandering aimlessly through a wild part of the extensive swamp, Burns came across a tract of land which had once been cleared. A sudden inspiration came to him. He wrote east to the owner of the land and received permission to do what he pleased with the cleared portion. Hiring a man and team, he plowed the land and fitted it for a crop. He expended nearly half his savings in onion seed.

When the weeds began to get a good start he was nearly in despair, but he worked with feverish energy and urged his men to extra labors. All his money had gone for seed and wages. His work at last was nearly done, and he sat one day alone in his rough shed, when shouts from the edge of the clearing called his attention. A woman had found his secluded retreat. She had waited all summer for the return of her lover, and then had bid defiance to all restraint and come alone 100 miles to find him.

Even nature seemed to be kind. The fall rains which might injure his crop were delayed, and the onions grew to great size. Burns was married and installed his wife in pleasant quarters with a family where he had boarded while he went back to gather his crop. Such a yield had never before been heard of. Thousands of bushels covered the ground. The summer's work made Burns' fortune. Burns sits today in better home than his boyhood ever knew, and tells again and again of his experience in Van Buren county's swamp, where to-day many are following in the path marked out by him.—*Detroit Journal*.

WAS HE INSANE?

If So, Many of His Macaulay Ideas Were Tinged with Lurid Sanity.

"This man," said the keeper of the asylum, "is one of our most interesting patients."

"What is his peculiarity?" asked one of the visitors.

"He thinks he is the historian Macaulay. What are you working at this morning, Mr. Walk—I mean my lord?"

"I am about half through my history of America," replied the dignified-looking personage seated at the little table.

"Will you show these gentlemen the pages you have just written?"

"With pleasure."

The manuscript he submitted with a courteous bow read as follows:

"At this time the United States has not a friend among the leading nations of the earth. France, the old-time ally of the republic, has been alienated by an effusive display of American sympathy in behalf of the Germans during the Franco-Prussian war. The sensational manner in which the horrors of Russian prisons had been described in American pictorial magazines, and the popular indignation awakened by the recital, had effectually cooled the friendly ardor of the Muscovite government. The hostility of Germany had been aroused by trade misunderstandings and jealousies. An arbitration treaty with England had failed by reason of the hostility of the United States senate. Italy still cherished a feeling of resentment on account of the troubles and humiliations growing out of a massacre of Italians in New Orleans a decade before. Canada, on the north, was distinctly unfriendly, and Mexico, on the south, while outwardly amicable, had never forgotten Cherubusco, Buena Vista and Rebeca de la Palma. The struggle that was beginning between the American union and Japan for the possession of the Hawaiian islands had estranged the rising power of the orient. With its foreign relations in this unsatisfactory condition, with a sea coast almost wholly unfortified, with internal dissension of its own, with hardly a battle ship that would keep afloat in a storm, and with an annual expenditure for pensions that would have sufficed to maintain a very large standing army, the United States leaped joyously into war with several foreign powers at once, as will be described in the succeeding pages."

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ANNONCE JUDICIAIRE.

Articles de vente pour Macaulay et Memphies de Bureau, etc.

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