

meet it by providing more effective supervision over these officers, and making them amenable to the Executive instead of to the County judges. Past experience has abundantly shown that some such change was necessary. In a few counties, the duties cast on the judges by the former law were faithfully performed; in many more it was unfortunately otherwise. Apathy, indolence, favoritism and an erroneous application of the merciful rules devised by the English law for the protection of persons charged with crime, have each played their part in producing a laxity which practically left a mass of petty abuses, and some not petty unredressed. In some Counties also, the fact that judges were overworked, caused what were regarded as their least important duties to be neglected.

The new system of supervision may not be found all that its promoters predict, but under party government any abuse of the power just assumed by the Executive is likely to meet prompt exposure. And after all, the constant submission of such matters to popular scrutiny is the best guarantee against abuse of power. So far, however, as this part of the change is concerned, it will require a long time to demonstrate its success or failure, and much will depend on the wisdom of our rulers.

It is scarcely likely that the relative jurisdictions of County and Division courts will be allowed to remain long in even this amended shape. Formerly the Division Courts had jurisdiction over debts up to one hundred dollars, and over claims for damages not exceeding forty dollars. The extended jurisdiction covers debts ascertained by the signature of the defendant up to two hundred dollars, and claims for damages up to sixty dollars. The next step will probably be to include open accounts, as well as ascertained debts of between one and two hundred dollars. Ultimately the effect will, probably, be the entire abolition of the County Courts, which could not but result in a great saving of expense to both suitors and the public at large. Nor need there be any fear that the interests of justice will suffer permanently at the hands of the officers of the lower courts. The very fact of more important business than heretofore being entrusted to them will turn attention to every phase of their operation, and compel all necessary amendments. The judges of both courts in the great majority of counties, is one and the same person, and cases of sufficient importance may have the consideration of a jury in one court as well as the other, with the advantage in favor of Division courts of a smaller number of jurors with a proportionate decrease of expense to the country.

AN AMERICAN SHIPPING CONVENTION.

The collapse of American shipping, which was coincident with the civil war, was not quite so great as appearances indicate. Many American ships hoisted foreign flags, but the sale which was supposed to accompany the change of flag was often fictitious; the nominal purchaser being a confidential agent of the seller and the latter securing himself by a mortgage for the full value of the vessel. The transfer purchased a neutral's immunity, while it forfeited the benefits of the coasting trade. Once the vessel was denationalized, it could never recover its former status. The fact that these vessels are owned by Americans gives them no advantage: they have only the rights of foreign ships.

A "National Convention" is to meet at Boston, early in October, to consider means for the revival of American shipping. In this connection, the qualifying word "national" has an ominous look. It seems to point to the perpetuation of the obsolete navigation laws, which are a great hindrance to American shipping. If American shipping is to hold its own, on the great highways of the ocean, the narrow fetters with which it is bound must be cast off. Liberty to purchase vessels where they can be had cheapest must be obtained; all the burthens which now fall on shipping must be lightened, if they cannot be removed altogether; where harbor dues are unnecessarily high, they must be lowered; consular charges, so far as they have grown into an abuse, must be removed; the raw materials which enter into the construction of ships must not be subjected to high duties.

It is simply impossible that American shipping can prosper under the burthen with which it is loaded. When the ships of all nations were of wood, and the United States had the reputation of building the best and the fastest sailers, the navigation laws could not do much mischief. But when iron superseded wooden ships, to a great extent, the conditions were at once changed, the tables were turned. For some reasons the Americans have not been able to compete with other countries in the building of iron vessels. They have scarcely made the attempt. Some allege the dearer labor of the States to be the cause; but this will hardly do, for the argument, if good, would carry us a great deal farther. But whatever the reason, the fact remains: the Americans are not builders of iron ships. And wooden vessels compete at a disadvantage with those of iron. It has come to pass that other nations possess mercantile marines better fitted for their work than that of the States.

The best and cheapest tools, other things being equal, do their work most economically; and it is no wonder that the American finds himself beaten on the ocean. He may, by an exclusive tariff, give a monopoly to trades carried on at home; but on the world's highways he cannot guard himself against competition. What he could do would be to get the best tools, on the best terms, for the work he has to do, and when he debates himself this privilege he voluntarily renounces success.

It is very doubtful whether the view which the forthcoming convention will take of the situation will be one that will help the interest in whose name it will speak. The ship-builders will of course try to pack the convention. They treat their customers as their natural enemies. The ship owners, as a body, naturally lean in favor of liberty, so far as construction and the right of purchase go. They only join the monopolists, when the coasting trade comes in question. It is very probable that an effort will be made to bracket the two monopolies together, and not only continue the present injurious restrictions, but to supplement them with other retrograde provisions. There are people who argue that the national Government ought to give a bounty to every ton of shipping built in the country; but there is little reason to expect that Congress would sanction such a proposal. If schemes of this kind have no chance of success, it is not likely that the deliberations of the convention will produce any great result; for the advocates of free ships are almost certain to be outnumbered. The creation of a Bureau of Commerce at Washington may very likely be recommended, but the commercial marine is not to be raised from its present desperate condition by a stroke of administration. The way out of the present difficulty is plain enough, but the blindness of self-interest may fail to see it.

Though it is scarcely possible to exaggerate the desperate state of the commercial marine of the States, there are some to be found who are equal to the task. Those persons aver that if ships were to be had for nothing, Americans could not work them at a profit. And yet these people admit that all things considered, an American can run a ship at as low a cost as an European. It is impossible to believe, what is here implied, that all the merchant ships of the world are running at a loss.

Some minor defects the convention may be the means of curing. The existence of some central point of registration, such as a bureau at Washington would afford, might save trouble to persons who want to find out whether a vessel is mortgaged; and it would afford the mortgagee an assurance that the vessel on which he had made a loan would not be