

The Weekly Colonist.

Tuesday, July 4, 1865.

THE LAST GREAT VICTORY.

We have all witnessed the extraordinary history of America during the last four years. We have seen a war the most memorable in the chronicles of the world, whether we look at its causes, its magnitude, or its results.

We have observed the Northern States blustering and blundering at the commencement,

then sadly perplexed and sorely dismally, and at last calm, powerful, confident and victorious. In each of these stages we have watched, and the world has watched, the difficult task of centralising authority in a Government based exclusively on the popular will, but we have seen how, one by one the civil rights were relinquished until at length a great military power directed by the mind of one man took the country into his sway, keeping that military power became associated with victory, marched its legions wherever it willed, and subdued the internal foe. It had grown from an irregular, cumbersome mass into disciplined and compact strength, compelling obedience within the State and enforcing respect without; but the traditional danger was at hand—a military despotism would never relinquish in peace the power it had acquired in war. History repeats itself, and we all know the fate of the military republic. Well, it was hard, no doubt very hard, that history should be dispensed with—such records could be ignored. The classic minds of Europe's statesmen were shocked that a republic in the nineteenth century should not submit to the fate of Rome and Greece, or even of the Robespierrean France. There was something wrong evidently, and history had got out of its groove. The record of events was not the only thing despised—the science of history was at fault, and that none of the terrible calamities that were to have happened have come to pass.

The great war is over, and the military authority that rose up like the prophet's gourd, is dissolving almost as rapidly. The civil power is quickly assuming those functions which have been so long suspended.

The Court-martial and military tribunals have handed in their powers, and the civil law reigns again supreme. This is the greatest of all the victories. Before it pale the taking of Richmond and the surrender of Lee.

Sherman's feats in Georgia or his subsequent advance are insignificant when compared with this great moral triumph. Never in the history of the world has the majesty of popular freedom so vindicated itself. *Sic nos populi supremus est lex.*

Everything has been made subservient to the safety of the people. The most powerful monarchy, the most absolute dictatorship, has never been more implicitly obeyed—he has never made its mandates felt throughout the length and breadth of the land more thoroughly than this American republic, and yet with all the power, with all the influence wielded by individuals, there was no more thought of any person retaining that power when he was called upon to relinquish it, than there is for the land to retain its moisture when the sun calls upon it for its daily tribute. We record the fact with a gratification that is hemmed in by no confined prejudices of nationality; we rejoice that civilisation has made such rapid strides, that the intelligence of mankind has reached that point when the people collectively, not the siftings of classes, can be entrusted with the greatest privileges that man can exercise. To Englishmen everywhere it is a source of no mean satisfaction to think that the great problem of self-government has been so signalised by a branch of the Anglo-Saxon race, and solved under ordeal the most terrible and the most trying. Not only, however, is it a satisfaction; there is a lesson to be learnt, instruction to be received. We want to know the tansman that has worked such wonderful changes in any portion of the human family as to induce a people in a great crisis to relinquish rights to the Government for the sake of the country, and then, when the task is over, to induce the Government to return the privileges thus temporarily conferred. We know that no country in Europe could such a tacit arrangement be carried out with integrity. We should have a reign of license or *empire à stat.* It is, therefore, as we have said, instructive to examine the causes of this remarkable state of the character of our American neighbors—whether they are in the form of Government, the habits of the people, or the education of the masses. This form of Government, which throws on every individual a certain responsibility, has a great deal to do with the matter, as is beyond doubt. De Tocqueville, as well as Mill—French as well as English writers ascribe a marvellous power to this political education which is forced upon every person who claims to be a citizen. But there is something more than the political instruction required; there is the education which is obtained at the school and at the college—privileges so common that the poorest family may obtain it for their children. When we think how much ahead the United

States is in this respect over the generality of nations, we are not at all surprised that she should be patient in adversity, and collected in the hour of victory—that historical comparisons should be thrown away upon her, and that she should show, after her recent disasters, even a greater adoration for the cause of law and order.

—*Lincoln—Great Britain.*—

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