

or at the end of a quarter century! Has the executive power the right to deprive Congress of its constitutional control of the revenue system of the country for a quarter of a century? And will the American people consent to be impoverished for so long a period by such an assumption of power by any executive? These are questions worthy of grave consideration. Whose imagination can adequately portray the condition of our country a quarter century hence? My poor powers shrink from the task. One thing, however, is certain—if we avoid such “entangling alliances” as this and grow at our normal rate, the American people will, a quarter of a century hence, number nearly if not quite one hundred millions.

What will be their condition as to wealth, refinement, and power I will not attempt to suggest, but a brief retrospect may help you to conceive it. Permit me, therefore, to repeat a few remarks I made from this desk on the 12th of June, 1871.

The Results of a Quarter of a Century.

A quarter of a century ago there was no San Francisco. Not a cabin or a hut stood within the now corporate limits of that beautiful and prosperous city. California, Nevada, Arizona, and New Mexico were still Mexican territory. Neither science nor observation had detected the deposits of gold and silver, or the agricultural capabilities of that vast region of country. The great railroad centre of the West, Chicago, had not yet come into public view. The less than 10,000 people who had gathered at the confluence of the Chicago river with Lake Michigan, had no presentiment that the swamp in which they dwelt would, in less than twenty years, be filled up and raised nearly twenty feet, to provide drainage for the streets of the most enterprising and remarkable city of its age in the world. Michigan then had a population of less than 250,000, and Missouri and Iowa each but 100,000; and civilization had not yet penetrated the wild region known as Minnesota Territory, where the census takers, four years later, found but 6038 people. Four years later there were but 91,635 people in California, which had then been ceded to us by Mexico, and admitted to the Union as a State, and whose recently discovered deposits of gold had attracted immigrants from every clime. There was no government in Kansas and Nebraska, that whole fertile region being in possession of the Indian and buffalo. The name of that busy centre of river and railroad commerce, Omaha, had not been heard by English-speaking people, and the vast mineral, grazing, and agricultural region through which the Union and Central Pacific Railroad is now doing a profitable and rapidly increasing business, was