

CHAPTER XXX

CONCLUSION

IN reviewing the record of the past fifty-two years, I have endeavored to be accurate and make plain the important events and incidents as they occurred during that stormy period.

The Act of Congress creating the Territory of Kansas, was approved on May 30, 1854, and from that day the real struggle for the life or death of human slavery in this country began. The Proslavery statesmen of the South, having already advanced on Washington and captured the Executive and Judicial Departments of the Government, proceeded to enforce slavery in Kansas, and tried to protect it with a shotgun brigade from Missouri. This was the beginning of the Civil War, which ended at Appomattox. The shotgun brigade was, ere long, driven back to Missouri, where they struggled heroically with "John Barleycorn" until called into active service by Governor Jackson and General Price, and started on a run from Boonville to the happy hunting-grounds.

To give a detailed account of all the atrocities committed by them in Missouri and Kansas would require many volumes. In fact it is best to let the darkest of their many crimes rest beside them in graves of oblivion, where most of them are now sleeping. When they started out on their perilous journey, they knew not where they were going. They were simply rounded up by shrewd politicians and driven like dumb cattle to the slaughter pen. But it was a lesson to them and a warning to future generations. That the result of the war was a blessing to the people of the South goes without saying.

The institution of slavery, which oppressed the people and wasted their opportunities for a century, no longer stands in their way. They are now disenfranchised and rapidly adapting themselves to the new order of things; and ere long will lead the world in the production of many of the necessaries of life. They have the climate, the soil, the water, the timber, the mineral, the labor, and all things essential to success.

The most serious question that confronts them, and the whole American people at the present time, is a lack of confidence in each other and in the integrity of business industries. Of course, the Government at Washington comes in for a share of criticism, and, sometimes deservedly so; but a want of confidence among the people themselves is the real danger that is now staring them in the face.

The corporations, trusts, and individuals who think they are fooling all the people all the time, are simply fooling themselves. They may ply their games and run with loosened rein for a while, but it is only a question of time when they will be rounded up and placed where they belong. Legions of such pirates are abroad in the land, seeking whom they may devour, and the sooner they call a halt and retrace their footsteps, the better it will be for them.

The high-handed, criminal outrages committed daily, openly, and notoriously in violation of the law by chartered companies, corporations, trusts, combines, bank and train robbers, officials, and Legislative fixers, are bearing heavily upon the people engaged in business conducted on legitimate lines. They have already crushed many and driven others to the wall. They have demoralized legislatures, debauched legislation, ignored the law, and defied the authorities. If this is not treason, plain and flagrant, then, pray tell us what it is?

Any person who reads the history of the past; the rise, progress, and downfall of other Republics, will

not fail to see the dangers that now confront the Government and people of the United States. That this Government has cut loose from a safe harbor and is sailing recklessly in the wake of nations that have gone down under the weight of their own folly, is as clear as the noonday sun. Anybody, whether or not he can read, ought to be able to see the whirlpool into which we are drifting.

I may be unnecessarily alarmed over the dangers that threaten from within and without; and I hope I am. But judging from the temperament and characteristics of the American people, and knowing something of the history of other republics, I fear the worst. Somehow I feel that a storm is gathering, and that it is time to reef our sails and pull for the shore. The purple clouds all around seem angry and ominous.

The people at home and abroad are in a state of unrest. Nations are building Dreadnoughts and frowning at one another, and seeking to become world powers. Grafters, trusts, and the hog combine, screening themselves behind special protective privileges granted by Congress, have destroyed competition in trade at home, and are rapidly absorbing the net earnings of every legitimate business and industry within the range of possibility.

Fakers, free-booters, bank robbers, and highwaymen, are plying their vocation, seemingly without fear, favor, or affection. The right of suffrage vouchsafed to the American voters, as the foundation upon which our Government stands, has become an article of commodity in many localities, and is bartered away with a flippancy that seldom attracts attention. Members of the Legislatures of a number of the States of this Union have been known to sell their votes to be used in the election of United States Senators, and then go before the courts and with brazen, impudence acknowledge their crimes.

In the face of all these things and other political

and official crimes and misdemeanors that might be mentioned, how long, may I ask, can this Government stand up and look honest people in the face? Well hath the poet said:

Hide, hide, my country, thy diminished head!

But our Government and people are not alone in their political debauchery. All nations at times lose their bearings and stray off after strange gods. Greece, Rome, and many other countries of the East, wandered away from their moorings so far that they never were able to get back; while Spain, after playing the colonial empire business for several centuries, finally found herself stranded in the Philippines and was sent home in rags.

It is to be hoped that our Government, while yet in the bloom of youth, will square its action by the rule of right and prove to the world what a republic can do.