

*SHALL WE DISMEMBER THE COAST
SURVEY?**

THE proposition to turn the hydrographic work of the Coast Survey over to the Navy Department has been so long urged and so often rejected that its revival at the present moment seems singularly inopportune. Twice at least within the last twenty years it has been exhaustively considered and adversely reported on by committees of Congress when all the circumstances were much more in its favor than they are at present. Prominent treasury officials under the first administration of President Cleveland were known to be so hostile to the management of the survey that an investigation not only unfriendly, but very far from judicial in its character, was undertaken with the approval of the President. The report set forth that abuses had crept into the management, some of them of long standing. The resignation of the superintendent was forced, and it only remained for Congress to take the necessary action to transfer the survey. At the following session a committee of Congress, having Senator Allison at its head, made a thorough investigation of the whole subject. The result of this inquiry was to leave things as they were.

The effort to effect the transfer was renewed with great vigor in 1893. A majority of the naval committee was believed to favor the change, several of its members being warm advocates of the measure. But, after a careful hearing of all that was to be said on both sides, the committee reached a conclusion adverse to the transfer. What has happened since to lead to a change? Nothing whatever. On the contrary, the establishment of the Department of Commerce with the Coast Survey as one of its bureaus removes the last reason for considering the subject. No work is more appropriate to the Department of Commerce than that of providing facilities for navigating our coasts. Charts and soundings are of the first importance not only to our coasting ships and our entire mercantile marine, but to all ships from abroad which

enter our ports. Of course, a naval ship has as much need as a merchantman for these means of navigation. There is nothing required on a chart for naval use different from that required for the ordinary purposes of commerce. Accordingly, the Coast Survey was very naturally included among the bureaus to be transferred to the new department.

Extraordinary though the proposition to reverse this action may now appear, the reasons against it are so strong and so near the surface that they hardly need to be cited if the question is to be decided on its merits. Looking at the matter from a purely abstract point of view, the question is whether such a work as that of making charts of our coast can be most efficiently and economically undertaken by the navy or by a civilian organization like the present one. Let us carefully weigh all that is said in favor of the proposed transfer. Hydrographic surveying is part of the business of a naval officer. He learns as much about it while at the Naval Academy as the absorbing character of his other studies will permit. The question whether, during the limited periods which he can possibly devote to such work, he can acquire as much skill as a civilian wholly engaged upon it, is a question which the reader can decide for himself. But the mere fact that naval officers can do the work does not prove that it should be placed under the Navy Department rather than under that of commerce. The arguments on the question whether naval or civilian methods are the more economical have, on the whole, been favorable to the civilians. But even here one important item has been too little considered, and that is the cost of the naval officer himself. The mere salary of the latter is but a part of what it costs the government to educate and train him. In estimating his cost, we must include not only what is expended in his training and his off-duty pay, but his retired pay also. To reach a correct conclusion on this point, we shall probably have to double the pay of every officer of the navy from the time when he gets his first commission up to the date of his retire-

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ment. Of course, we must include in the estimate the millions being expended at the Naval Academy for the improvement of its facilities. To expend such sums in training officers to perform duty that civilians are now carrying on at far less cost would be a most unjustifiable expenditure of the public money.

The slight reason for the employment of naval officers on civil duty which formerly existed has entirely disappeared with the lapse of time. For several years after the civil war we had more officers than were necessary for the management of our ships and the administration of shore stations. Under these circumstances there was no objection to their employment on such outside service as might be appropriate. But all this has now been changed. The cry in every department of the naval service is for more officers. We hear daily stories of the department's inability to man its ships properly. Why should the service be deprived of its trained officers if this is the case?

The practice of foreign nations has been cited in favor of the proposed action. It is true that the hydrographic surveys of the leading countries of Europe are carried on to a large extent by their respective naval departments. But this statement needs to be supplemented by two others. Both the administration and the personnel of foreign surveys are to a greater or less extent distinct from those which relate to naval duty properly so called. In France the surveys are all conducted by a special corps of 'hydrographic engineers,' and not by line officers at all. In England, by custom, the hydrographer of the admiralty is permanently withdrawn from military duty. He can, of course, be restored to it if such a course is desirable, but practically this is seldom, if ever, done.

These features of foreign hydrographic surveys have always been successfully antagonized by our naval authorities, and we can not suppose that they have changed their minds on the subject. The transfer of the Coast Survey to the Navy Department, whatever may be the intentions of those who favor it, practically means the administration of the

survey and the performance of its most difficult work by officers of the navy, each temporarily withdrawn from naval service proper for this special duty, which he is expected to abandon for life about the time when he has obtained a respectable measure of skill in its performance. A civilian organization under the Secretary of the Navy, however plausible it may be made to appear, is an impossibility in the present state of naval opinion.

The law organizing the Department of Commerce gave the President authority to transfer to it bureaus from other departments of the government, that of the navy included. There is good reason to believe that this provision was expected to lead to the inclusion of the National Observatory, and perhaps of the Hydrographic Office also, within the new department. The transfer of the former is loudly called for by all the facts of its history and present position, and if any unification of the government hydrographic surveys is to be carried out, it should be done by transferring the Hydrographic Office also, for it has no necessary relation to the Navy Department whatsoever, and properly belongs to the Department of Commerce.

NUTRITION EXPERIMENTS.

IN response to the many inquiries regarding the investigation on nutrition now being carried on at New Haven, Professor Chittenden, Director of the Sheffield Scientific School, has made the following statement:

Through the courtesy of Secretary Root and Surgeon General O'Reilly of the Army, the War Department will cooperate with the Sheffield Laboratory in a physiological study of the minimal amount of proteid or albuminous food required for the maintenance of health and strength under ordinary conditions of life. In carrying out this purpose, twenty men have been detailed from the Hospital Corps of the Army, and will be in New Haven on Monday, under the charge of Lieutenant Wallace DeWitt, Assistant Surgeon in the U. S. Army, and three non-commissioned officers. The Scientific School has fitted up a house on Vanderbilt Square, at the corner of Temple and