

Extracted from the report of the Secretary of the Treasury on the state of the finances, for the year 1864.

A.

OFFICE OF COMPTROLLER OF THE CURRENCY,
November 25, 1864.

In compliance with the requirements of the 61st section of the national currency act, I have the honor of making through you to the Congress of the United States the following report:

Since my last annual report two hundred and eighty-two new banks have been organized, and one hundred and sixty-eight State banks have been changed into national ones. Of the one hundred banks last organized, sixty-seven have been conversions of State banks, and nearly all the papers now being filed are for the change of State banks into national associations.

There are now in existence, under the national currency act, five hundred and eighty-four associations, which are located in the following States:

In Maine	18
In New Hampshire	9
In Vermont	10
In Massachusetts	67
In Rhode Island	2
In Connecticut	20
In New York	100
In New Jersey	16
In Pennsylvania	109
In Delaware	1
In Maryland	3
In District of Columbia	2
In Virginia	1
In West Virginia	2
In Ohio	84
In Michigan	15
In Indiana	34
In Illinois	38
In Wisconsin	15
In Minnesota	4
In Iowa	20
In Missouri	7
In Kansas	1
In Nebraska Territory	1
In Kentucky	1
In Tennessee	3
In Louisiana	1

The paid-in capital of the banks in the respective States and Territories, the currency delivered to them, (a considerable portion of which has not been put into circulation,) and the bonds deposited with the Treasurer to secure their notes, are as follows:

State.	Capital stock paid in.	Circulation.	Bonds.
Maine.....	\$2,749,800 00	\$1,887,880	\$2,244,500
New Hampshire.....	1,120,000 00	552,700	944,000
Vermont.....	1,490,000 00	1,311,800	1,636,000
Rhode Island.....	700,000 00	414,000	560,000
Massachusetts.....	25,909,040 00	12,536,850	16,888,650
Connecticut.....	5,176,638 00	4,084,050	4,525,500
New York.....	20,599,175 03	12,584,950	14,064,600
Pennsylvania.....	21,120,148 88	10,193,830	14,964,100
New Jersey.....	2,141,249 00	1,756,170	2,011,000
Delaware.....	300,000 00	200,000	250,000
Maryland.....	1,560,000 00	1,245,000	1,400,000
District of Columbia.....	600,000 00	477,000	534,000
Virginia.....	95,025 00	95,000	112,000
West Virginia.....	206,950 00	140,000	230,000
Ohio.....	10,035,165 86	7,505,880	8,749,850
Kentucky.....	200,000 00	162,000	184,000
Indiana.....	4,201,671 26	3,148,400	3,924,100
Illinois.....	4,147,837 25	3,396,560	3,794,600
Michigan.....	1,165,090 00	797,800	943,500
Wisconsin.....	1,040,277 00	774,500	903,050
Minnesota.....	590,000 00	442,000	603,000
Iowa.....	1,215,000 00	945,900	1,092,000
Nebraska Territory.....	40,000 00	27,000	30,000
Kansas.....	100,000 00	49,000	55,000
Missouri.....	1,621,530 00	722,000	865,000
Tennessee.....	340,000 00	234,380	263,000
Louisiana.....	500,000 00	180,000	200,000
Total.....	108,964,597 28	65,864,650	81,961,450

A detailed statement of the affairs of each bank on the first Monday of October last, with an abstract of the condition of all of them in the aggregate on that day, is herewith submitted, together with the names and compensation of the clerks, and the total expenses of the bureau for the fiscal year.

A large proportion of the circulating notes which have been furnished by the Comptroller was intended to take the place and is taking the place of the circulation of such State banks as have been converted into national ones, or of those whose notes have been voluntarily retired, or have been returned from those parts of the country in which the notes of the United States and of the national banks are alone current; so that the currency delivered to the national banks is not and will not be altogether an addition to the paper money of the country, but rather, to a considerable extent, the substitution of it for that of the State banks.

It is perhaps to be regretted that so many new banks have been organized in States where, before the passage of the act, there was no deficiency of banking capital. There would have been less cause for apprehension that banking capital in any of the States was being too rapidly increased, if, by suitable legislation of the States, State banks had been sooner authorized to avail themselves of the benefits of the national currency act, and the managers of banks, where the necessary legislation had been obtained, had more promptly discerned the inevitable tendency of the public sentiment, and co-operated with the government in its efforts to nationalize the bank note circulation of the country. It was not the intention of the originators and friends of the system, nor has it been the policy of the Comptroller, to swell, through the instrumentality of the national banks, the volume of paper money. On the contrary, the system was

designed to check overissues by requiring ample security for every dollar which should be put into circulation, and it has been the aim of the Comptroller so to administer the law as to prevent, instead of encouraging, an unhealthy and dangerous expansion of credits.

I am happy in being able to say that my apprehensions of a too rapid increase of national banks have been much lessened by the recent action of many State banks. The legislature of Pennsylvania, following the example of the legislatures of Massachusetts, Connecticut, &c., has recently authorized the banks of that State to reorganize under the national system, and the stockholders of so many of them are availing themselves of this authority, as to render it quite certain that at an early day there will be in this great central State, without a dangerous increase of its banking capital, but one system of banking. In fact, the indications are now unmistakable that the time is not far distant when the people of the United States will be everywhere relieved of a bank note circulation of limited credit and uncertain value, and supplied with one of uniform credit and as solvent as the nation. It has been the earnest wish of the Comptroller that this desirable result should be brought about through the agency of existing banks, rather than by the organization of new ones, so that the national circulation might be introduced with as little increase of banking capital as possible. A national bank note currency will be one of the compensations for the heavy debt which has been incurred in the terrible contest in which the nation has been involved. If it can be everywhere introduced, as now seems probable, without creating a dangerous bank note inflation, it will prove to be a compensation which more than anything else will reconcile the people to the burdens which the war must necessarily impose upon them. It will be so by its tendency to regulate domestic exchanges, by the stability it will give to trade, in preventing unsecured issues and bank note panics, by saving the people from losses in the use of paper money, and by its influence in securing and perpetuating that national unity which is the ark of our safety.

It is an interesting fact, that this great change is taking place—this great financial revolution, if I may so call it, is being accomplished, without disturbing the business of the country. State banks, whose conversions are facilitated by enabling acts, are being daily reorganized without a curtailment of discounts, or even a temporary derangement of their affairs. Nearly all the banking capital of Philadelphia has been recently nationalized, with scarcely an interruption of the business of the banks for a single day. In States where no enabling legislation has been obtained, the change from the State to the national system is attended with more difficulty. But even in these States, by the organization of national banks by the stockholders of State banks, and the transfer of the assets of the latter to the former, the change has been already, in many instances, effected without loss to the owners, and with very little practical inconvenience to the managers.

It is also an interesting fact, that the stock of State banks which have been changed into national associations has not been depreciated by the change; on the contrary, the shares of most of them have been appreciated, and I know of no instance in which their real or market value has been injuriously affected by it. This fact sufficiently refutes the charge, sometimes urged against the system, that it was being forced upon the country to the prejudice of the stockholders of State institutions.

It may be proper for me to state another fact in this connexion of interest to the public, which is, that the national banks are, without any known exceptions, in safe, although some of them are in inexperienced hands, and that the fears that the national banking system would be the means of filling the country with banks of fictitious capitals, and be a reproduction, on a large scale, of the stock banking systems of States in which they had proved to be a failure, if not a fraud, are, from present indications, without a real foundation.

The fact that such apprehensions were entertained or were professed to be entertained by the bankers of a State, in which a system similar in some of its main features was in practical operation, intimidated, for a while, the capitalists of other States, and retarded the reorganization of State banks, but worked no permanent injury to the national system. On the contrary, the expression of these fears has led to a thorough examination of the act, and a careful observation of its administration, and the result has been favorable to both. It has been discovered that in many important particulars the national system differs from, and is an improvement upon, the State system, which it the most closely resembles; that it restricts circulation to ninety per cent. of the bonds on deposit with the Treasurer, and prohibits the banks from issuing notes to an amount exceeding their bona fide paid up capitals, sworn to by their officers; that every interior national bank, in addition to redeeming its notes at its own counter, is compelled to redeem at par, at some commercial centre, thereby tending to prevent high rates of exchange between the different sections of the country, and that, in case of the failure of a bank to redeem its notes according to the provisions of the act, these notes, instead of being depreciated, would be at once redeemable in lawful money, at the treasury of the United States. It has been also ascertained that the Comptroller is requiring the most satisfactory references or credentials in regard to the standing and responsibility of the persons proposing to organize national banks, and is instituting a system of examinations which will do much to expose and check improper practices on the part of the bankers, and violations of the wholesome provisions of the law.

This examination of the act, and the observation of the manner in which it is being administered, have resulted in the entering up of a popular judgment in favor of the national banking system; a judgment, not that the system is a perfect one, nor free from danger of abuse, but that it is a safer system, better adapted to the nature of our political institutions, and to our commercial necessities, giving more strength to the government, with less risk of its being used by the government against the just rights of the States, or the rights of the people, than any system which has yet been devised, and that by such amendments of the act as experience may show to be needful, it may be made as little objectionable, and as beneficial to the government and the people, as any paper money banking system that wisdom and experience are likely to invent. It promises to give to the people that long existing "desideratum," a national currency without a national bank, a bank note circulation of uniform value without the creation of a moneyed power in a few hands over the politics and business of the country.

Of course this system depends for its success upon the maintenance of the faith and credit of the nation, which, in their turn, depend upon the preservation of the national integrity. If these fail, the national banking system will fail; but it will go down with all other important interests, and will be but a part of the general wreck. That such a calamity is not in store for us is the confident hope and belief of all true men of the loyal States. The anxieties and apprehensions which have existed heretofore on this point are rapidly disappearing as the loyal mind of the United States has hardened to the inexorable resolution that the Union shall be preserved, and the public credit shall be maintained, no matter what sacrifices and burdens the execution of this resolution may involve.

It is a common objection to the national banking system, on the part of some who favor a national currency, that it will deprive the government of the privilege it might safely use, and the field it might profitably occupy, by the continued circulation of its own notes. Why, it is asked, should not the government drive out of circulation all bank notes, and continue to issue, as it has done since the commencement of the war, its own notes, and thus save the interest which otherwise will go to the banks? In answer, I would remark:

The banking interest in the United States is an important one; it has grown with the business of the country, and has been largely instrumental in developing the national resources and in increasing the national wealth. Banks of issue, badly and dishonestly as many of them have been managed, and disastrous as have been the failures which bad management and dishonesty have produced, have still been of unquestionable advantage to the people. The capital of the country has been largely, and in good faith, invested in them, and thousands of stockholders depend upon the dividends upon their bank stock for support. It is an interest which has stood by the government in its struggles with a gigantic rebellion; and now, when it is indispensable that the government should control the issues of paper money, there has been created a national banking system, not to destroy the State banks but to absorb them, and that, too, without prejudice to their stockholders.

Governments should not be bankers. None has existed which could be safely trusted with the privilege of permanently issuing its own notes as money. Circulating notes have been issued under peculiar circumstances by other governments, as it is now being done by that of the United States, but the judgment of the world is against it as a permanent policy, and nothing but an overpowering public exigency will at any time justify it. Under popular institutions like ours no more dangerous, no more corrupting power could be lodged in the hands of the party in possession of the government; none more perilous to official probity, and free elections. Give to a party dominant in the legislative and executive branches of the government the authority of issuing paper money for the purpose of furnishing the country with its currency, subject as it would be to no restraint but its own pleasure, and what guaranty would there be that this authority would be honestly and judiciously used? If there were no risk in the preparation of the notes, and checks were provided to make fraudulent issues an impossibility, the power of issuing government promises as a circulating medium is too dangerous a one to be conferred upon any party, except under extraordinary circumstances.

The present issue of United States notes as lawful money, and the decisions of the courts sustaining the constitutionality of the issue, have been justified by the consideration that under a great public necessity, when the nation's life is in peril, policies must be framed and laws must be interpreted with a view to the preservation of the government. This is the paramount consideration to which all others must bend. Whatever opinions may have been, in times past, entertained in regard to the propriety of the issue of United States notes, and the expediency as well as the constitutionality of the law making them a legal tender, there are now, I apprehend, very few intelligent persons who are not persuaded that without these notes, and the character of lawful money given to them by Congress and confirmed by the courts, the credit of the nation would have given way at the very outbreak of the rebellion. When the war has been concluded, and the exigency which made the issue of government notes a necessity has ceased to exist, there will be very few to advocate the continued use of them on the ground of economy.

If, however, there were no objections of the kind alluded to, there are other objections to the permanent issue of circulating notes by the government, which must be apparent to all who have considered the object and uses of a paper currency.

Paper money has been found to be useful, or rather an absolute necessity in all commercial countries for the convenient transaction of business, and as a circulating representative of values too large to be represented by coin. Although the fruitful cause of great evils, by reason of its unregulated use, and of its uncertain and frequently deceptive character, the general utility of it can hardly be questioned. Now, what is needed in a paper circulating medium, is, that it should be convertible into coin; that it should be sufficient in amount to answer

the purposes of legitimate business; that it should not, on the one hand, by being overissued, encourage extravagance and speculation and give an artificial and unreliable value to property; nor, on the other hand, by being reduced below the proper standard, interrupt business and unsettle values. It should be supplied to just the extent of the demands of a healthy trade. It should be increased as the regular business of the country may require its increase, and be diminished as the proper demand for it is diminished.

It is not pretended that banks of issue have furnished this kind of circulation. Bank notes, with few exceptions, have been convertible into coin when there was no demand for coin, and inconvertible when there was. They have, too generally, been issued for the exclusive benefit of the bankers, and not for the convenience of the public, and they have encouraged speculation, when their true mission was to facilitate trade. It has been the bane of a bank note circulation, that it has been expanded by the avarice of the bankers, and contracted by the distrust that overissues have created.

Now, this objection to a bank note circulation applies with much greater force to government issues. There is always inducement enough for banks to keep up a full circulation, and against excessive issues there are the restrictions of law and the liability to redeem. Government notes, in the issue thereof, would be regulated only by the necessities of the government or the interests of the party in power. At one time they might be increased altogether beyond the needs of commerce and trade, thereby enhancing prices and inducing speculation; at another, they might be so reduced as to embarrass business and precipitate financial disasters. They would be incomparably worse in this respect than a bank note currency, because the power that should control circulation would be the power that furnishes it. Supplied by an authority not in sympathy with trade, they would not be accommodated to the requirements of trade. They might be the fullest in volume when there was the least demand for a full circulation, and the most contracted when there was a healthy demand for an increase. They would eventually become an undesirable circulation, because there would be no way in which the redemption of them could be enforced: they would be a dangerous circulation, because they would be under the control of political parties; an unreliable circulation, because, having no connexion with trade and commerce, they would not be regulated by their necessities.

There are objections to all kinds of paper money; but, in some form, it is a commercial necessity, and no form has yet been contrived so little objectionable, as that which is authorized by the national currency act. Under this act the government performs its proper functions by exercising one of its constitutional powers for the regulation of commerce, by fixing the maximum of bank note circulation, securing its solvency, and giving to it nationality of character and uniformity of value. It takes the promises, which are to go among the people through the national banks, put its seal upon them, and guarantees *their* redemption, as it takes the precious ore from the mines—the property of individuals—coins it into money of the United States and fixes the value thereof. It thus performs the proper offices of government. In doing so it interferes with no State rights, meddles with no man's lawful pursuits. It stands between the bankers and the people, and while it protects the latter from imposition in the use of a bank note currency, it trespasses upon no privileges of the former. Without becoming a banker, and without, as in the case of the charter of the United States Bank, conferring peculiar if not dangerous privileges upon a single corporation, it provides a national circulation, indispensable for its own use and safety in the collection of its internal revenues, and suited to the circumstances of the country.

But while the national currency act is restrictive in its general provisions, and is expected, when generally adopted to prevent expansions, there is still danger that too much capital will be invested under it during the suspension of

specie payments, and in the existing unsettled condition of our political and financial affairs. When money is plenty, and fortunes are being rapidly acquired, the country is always in a feverish and unhealthy state. This is especially true at the present time. The enormous expenditures of the government, and the great advances in prices since the commencement of the war, have made many persons suddenly rich, and, upon fortunes suddenly acquired, have followed reckless expenditures, extravagance, waste. Speculation is taking the place of sober and persevering industry, and thousands are deluded with the notion that the wealth of the nation is being increased by the increase of its indebtedness. The inauguration of a new system of banking, under such circumstances, is peculiarly hazardous, and I have been, from the time of my appointment, more apprehensive that too many banks would be organized, than that the system would not be sufficiently attractive to induce capitalists to become connected with it. The government is the great borrower. Its obligations compose a large portion of the discount line of the banks, which are making large profits on government securities at little apparent risk, and the danger is, that the national banking system, with all its restrictions, may, during the suspension of specie payments, and the continuance of the war, add to the plethora of paper money; and that, when the war is over, the banks, deprived of the existing means of investment in government obligations, and finding no legitimate use for their capitals, may be tempted to use them in encouraging operations that will eventually prove to be as unprofitable to themselves, as they will be injurious to the country. For the double purpose, therefore, of keeping down the national circulation as far as it has seemed possible to do it, consistently with the establishment of the system throughout the country, and preventing an increase of banking capital, that might hereafter be instrumental in keeping up the inflation, and retarding the resumption of specie payments, or prove unprofitable to its owners, I have felt it to be my duty to discourage, in many instances, the organization of new banks, and in more instances to refuse my sanction to the increase of the capital of those already organized. In doing so, I may seem to have exercised a power not warranted by the act; but if not sustained by its letter, I have been by its spirit, and I am willing to let the future decide as to the correctness or incorrectness of my course.

But while I entertain the opinion that the currency of the country is already too much expanded, and that it would be a calamity if the national banking system should be the means of materially increasing it, I must not be understood as sanctioning the notion, so generally prevalent, that the high price of coin is to be altogether or chiefly attributed to it, or that gold and silver are, at the present time, the standard of value in the United States. When gold sold in Wall street, on the 1st of July last, at 185 premium, many of the best stocks, as well as productive real estate, were no higher than they have been upon a coin basis.

By referring to the gold market in New York during the three past years it will be perceived that its value has been regulated by other causes than the inflation of the currency.

In January, 1862, gold in New York was at a premium of $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. It soon fell to 1, from which it rose on the 10th of October to 37, and closed on the 31st of December at 34. On the 24th of February, 1863, it had advanced to 72 $\frac{1}{2}$, but on the 26th of March (favorable news having been received from the southwest) it went down to 40 $\frac{1}{2}$, but in twelve days, on the receipt of less favorable intelligence from that quarter, it went up to 59 $\frac{1}{2}$. A few days after, upon the report of the iron-clad attack upon Fort Sumter, it fell to 46, and on receipt of the intelligence of the surrender of Fort Hudson to 23 $\frac{1}{2}$. On the 15th of October it rose to 54, but reached no higher point during that year.

On the 1st of January, 1864, it opened at 52, went up to 88 on the 14th of April, and fell to 67 on the 19th of the same month. On the passage of the

gold bill, June 22, it rose to 130, and fell the next day to 115. On the 1st of July it was forced up to 185, but on the day following (the gold bill having been repealed) it fell to 130. On the 11th of the same month it went up again to 184; on the 15th it fell to 144, and after various fluctuations dropped on the 26th of September to 87—thus rising between the 1st of January and the 1st of July, 1864, from 52 to 185, and falling between the 1st of July and the 26th of September from 185 to 87. None of these fluctuations were brought about by an increase or decrease of the currency; on the contrary, gold rose the most rapidly when there was no considerable increase of the currency, and fell in the face of large additions to it. Nothing can be more conclusive of the incorrectness of the opinion that gold is always the standard of value, and that the high price it has commanded in the United States during the progress of the war is the result of an inflated currency, than this brief statement of its variations in the New York stock market.

Hostility to the government has been as decidedly manifested in the effort that has been made in the commercial metropolis of the nation to depreciate the currency as it has been by the enemy in the field; and unfortunately the effort of sympathizers with the rebellion, and of the agents of the rebellious States, to prostrate the national credit has been strengthened and sustained by thousands in the loyal States, whose political fidelity it might be ungenerous to question. Immense interests have been at work all over the country, and concentrated in New York, to raise the price of coin, and splendid fortunes have been apparently made by their success. The loyal importer and manufacturer of the east and the produce and provision merchant of the west have locked hands with the enemies of the republic in a common effort, although for a different object, and sometimes have produced results which have created serious apprehensions that the Union might be lost for want of means to prosecute the war, or rather on account of the excessive and unnecessary costliness of the war. The government in its struggles with a gigantic rebellion has not only been contending with armed rebels in the field, but with unarmed rebels in the loyal States, backed by an immense interest in the hands of loyal citizens.

Gold has been a favorite article to gamble in. It has been forced up and down by those tricks and devices that are so well understood at the stock board. The reverses of our arms have been used by the operators for an "advance" to send it up, and our military successes have been turned to the advantage of those who were interested in a "decline." When the banks and the government suspended specie payments, and a new standard of value was created in the legal tenders, gold and silver, whose legal value had been fixed by the same authority, became an article of traffic, subject to the influences that have control of the market, and yet unfortunately everything necessary for use or consumption was made to follow their upward tendency, as if they were still the proper and only regulator of prices.

The effect of all this has been, not to break down the credit of the government, but to increase enormously the cost of the war and the expense of living; for however small may have been the connexion between the price of coin and our domestic products, every rise of gold, no matter by what means effected, has been used as a pretext by holders and speculators for an advance of prices, to the great injury of the government and the sorrow of a large portion of the people. It is unquestionably true that the abundance of money has facilitated the operations against the credit of the government, and that a more stringent market would have tended to check and restrain them, but it is a mistaken notion that the high price of coin is an evidence of an overissue of currency or of its depreciation. If it were generally believed that the war would be ended by the 1st of January, gold would fall before that time to 25 per cent. premium, if not lower, although the paper money in circulation might in the mean time be largely increased.

The expenditures of the government have created a great expansion of currency and of prices. There would have undoubtedly been an expansion, in a less degree it is true, but still an expansion, if the war had been carried on upon a specie basis. Prices of all the necessaries of life as well as luxuries, and of everything which the government must purchase in the prosecution of the war, are enormously high, and the penalty is yet to be paid, for the inflation, in increased taxation, and the ruin which must overwhelm the thousands who believe, and act upon the belief, that the apparent prosperity of the country is real, and is not to be interrupted. Fortunate will the country be if the war can be closed and prices reduced to former standards without a collapse, which will as greatly excel in the extent of its disaster that which occurred at the close of the last war with England as the present war excels that in costliness and magnitude.

As long as there was any uncertainty in regard to the success of the national banking system, or the popular verdict upon its merits and security, I did not feel at liberty to recommend discriminating legislation against the State banks. It is for Congress to determine if there is any longer a reasonable uncertainty on these points, and if the time has not arrived when all these institutions should be compelled to retire their circulation. It is indispensable for the financial success of the treasury that the currency of the country should be under the control of the government. This cannot be the case as long as State institutions have the right to flood the country with their issues. As a system has been devised under which State banks, or at least as many of them as are needed, can be reorganized, so that the government can assume a rightful control over bank note circulation, it could hardly be considered oppressive if Congress should prohibit the further issue of bank notes not authorized by itself, and compel, by taxation, (which should be sufficient to effect the object without being oppressive,) the withdrawal of those which have been already issued. My own opinion is, that this should be done, and that the sooner it is done the better it will be for the banks themselves and for the public. As long as the two systems are contending for the field, (although the result of the contest can be no longer doubtful,) the government cannot restrain the issue of paper money; and as the preference which is everywhere given to a national currency over the notes of the State banks indicates what is the popular judgment in regard to the merits of the two systems, there seems to be no good reason why Congress should hesitate to relieve the treasury of a serious embarrassment, and the people of an unsatisfactory circulation.

Some important amendments are required to the act in order that it should be fully accommodated to the wants and business of the country.

The provisions in regard to the lawful money reserve and the distribution of the assets of insolvent banks require modification.

I am still of the opinion that the rates of interest to be charged by the national banks should be fixed by Congress, and not by the States.

There are too many points at which the banks may redeem their notes. All, with the exception of those in Philadelphia and Boston, should redeem in New-York. The banks ought to be compelled by law to retain a part, if not all the coin received by them, for interest on their gold-bearing bonds, in order that they may be prepared to lend their influence in favor of a return to specie payments; and some provisions should be introduced by which, when specie payments are resumed, excessive importation of goods may be checked and dangerous exportations of coin may be prevented.

It is of the greatest importance that the national currency system should be independent of politics and freed from political influences. To effect this, and to facilitate the business of the banks with the Comptroller, I am clearly of the opinion that the bureau should be made an independent department, and removed from Washington to Philadelphia or New York.

I do not, however, recommend that any amendments be made by the present Congress. The act will do well enough as it is for another year. When the next Congress assembles, the defects in it will be better understood, by the practical working of the system, than they can be at the present time. The act can then be taken up, and, with the light which the experience of another year has thrown upon it, judiciously amended.

In reporting the names and compensations of the clerks employed in this bureau, I should neglect a duty to them and to the system if I did not respectfully suggest that a general increase of their salaries should be made, and that the increase of the salaries of those who occupy positions of high trust and responsibility should be liberal. This bureau is already an important one, and is not unlikely to be one of the most important in the department. There is not a desk in it which should not be filled by a man of intelligence, character, and good business qualifications. Without such men the affairs of the bureau cannot be safely or properly administered, and expensive as living now is in Washington, it is questionable if the services required can be secured without an increase of salaries. If there were no doubt, however, on this point, it is not right that honorable and competent men should be faithfully serving the government for such compensations as leave them, with rigid economy, in no better circumstances at the close of a year than they were at its commencement. There are undoubtedly, in the different departments at Washington, a great many drones and incompetent clerks who do not earn the salaries that are paid them, whose "attendance" should be dispensed with; but my observation, since I have been in Washington, has satisfied me that there are in all the departments a body of clerks who, for intelligence, ability, and hearty devotion to their duties have no superiors anywhere.

To them is the country indebted for the accuracy with which an immense business—a business which has increased ten-fold since the commencement of the war—is transacted. The expenses of the departments would be largely reduced if only such were employed, and they were paid respectable salaries. Cheap clerks are a costly article to the government—it is a poor economy that drives away or starves competent ones.

The Deputy Comptroller of this bureau holds an important and responsible position. In the absence of the Comptroller he possesses the power and performs the duties attached to the office of the Comptroller. The gentleman who has charge of the vaults and the currency holds also a place of great responsibility; and two or three other clerks are performing duties requiring rare qualifications. I am under great obligations to them, and so is the country, for the prompt and able manner in which they are doing their work, and the valuable services they have rendered in the organization of the bureau and systematizing its business. Important duties are devolved upon them, while they receive but a small portion of the credit which the proper performance of their duties secures to the bureau. In my judgment, the salaries they are receiving are wholly inadequate to the services they are rendering.

I respectfully recommend, therefore, in addition to a general increase of the salaries of the clerks, that the Deputy Comptroller be paid a salary of thirty-five hundred dollars per annum, and that the comptroller be authorized, with the approval of the Secretary of the Treasury, to employ three other clerks as heads of divisions, at salaries not exceeding twenty-five hundred dollars, respectively.

All which is respectfully submitted.

HUGH McCULLOCH, *Comptroller.*

Hon. W. P. FESSENDEN,
Secretary of the Treasury.