

II. A DEMOCRATIC VIEW, BY EX-GOVERNOR RUSSELL.

THE American people like politics—not the running of the political machine, but the discussion of public questions and of public men. A few like to run the machine; the vast majority like to smash it, asserting an independence which will not stand being bound and gagged, especially by selfish, ignorant, or corrupt control. By machine is meant, not spontaneous party organization or selected personal leadership, which is necessary and useful, but self-assumed control, often in the name of party, which grinds out candidates, dictates their opinions and action, gets, holds, and uses political power for selfish and personal ends, and dominates its constituency instead of guiding and uplifting it. Between the two there is a wide difference. The one is Statesmanship, leading by principle for the public good; the other Bossism, controlling by tactics, and with an iron hand, for its own purposes.

Our political experience of the past ten or twelve years has been helpful in emphasizing this difference, and in arousing public spirit, developing political courage, and reviving the interest of the people in their government, National, State, and local.

We have seen old and false issues discarded. The «bloody shirt», which never had a soul or truth within it, has been relegated to the lumber-room, to indulge in reminiscence with the old hats, torches, and banners of many a forgotten campaign. No longer can a President be made by impeaching the loyalty and patriotism of any section of our country, or by dire prediction of evils which time has abundantly falsified.

We have seen parties and leaders with the courage of their convictions. Questions which for years they feared to touch, which were straddled in platforms and abandoned in campaigns, have been boldly thrust to the front; and neither the timidity of politicians nor the threat of factional division has stopped their progress «upward still and onward» to successful, victorious solution.

We have seen the people take the deepest interest in intricate public problems. The time has passed when campaigns can be waged upon the personality of candidates or the past of political parties. Abuse and vituperation, brag and bluster, have given way to education—the serious, intelligent discussion of principles and measures. In the vigorous agitation over living issues, «pointing with pride» to what a party has been or has done excites only ridicule, unless coupled with

proof and pledge that it now has a sound policy, which it definitely declares and means courageously to enforce. Who would have believed ten years ago that the tariff would become a subject of popular discussion, or that its details could be satisfactorily settled by popular vote? Yet for six successive years it monopolized the attention of the people. On the farm and in the workshop, in village store and city factory, the voters were debating the merits of protection and free trade, and their effect on prices, wages, and industries. The campaign speaker could hardly get a hearing who did not discuss the principles of taxation and the details of tariff schedules. «Free raw material,» «the home market,» «McKinley prices,» and «pauper labor» were phrases more familiar to the public than the names of candidates; and candidates became important only as they represented definite views on this one absorbing topic.

We have seen the steady growth of a reform sentiment which, not content with criticism within the quiet of the scholar's cloister, has gone forth to wage battle and win wholesome victories; a keener demand that political power shall be used only for the benefit of the governed, not for personal or party advantage; the uprooting of old abuses; and, with all of this, greater independence in political action, inflicting defeats welcomed as blessings by patriots of whatever political stripe.

We have seen, in the marvelous career of a firm and brave man, how popular is political courage, and how loyally the people follow resolute leadership. More conspicuously than any of our generation has stood forth one who has had strong convictions, with the courage always to declare them and everywhere to fight for them; who has achieved success by character and ability, not by offices or office-holders; who, in the midst of factional discord and partizan abuse, has confidently relied on an appeal from faction to the rank and file, and from the partizan to the people; who has stood for principle without compromise, and for sound policies against heresy inside or outside of his own party; and who has impressed himself upon the people because they believed that he stood steadfast for the public welfare, without regard to personal or political consequences. One or two familiar incidents in his later life will illustrate my meaning. The campaign of 1888 was about to begin, in which he was to be a candidate for reelection. He had given the country an honorable

and successful administration; a Democratic victory seemed certain. The one thing needful was not to raise new questions nor disturb existing conditions. So prudence and timidity suggested; so party leaders and associates advised. But, disregarding such advice, Cleveland issued his historic message of December, 1887—a bold challenge to wealthy, powerful, and favored interests, but a trumpet-call marshaling the intelligence and patriotism of the country to the consideration of the most important question of a generation, which politicians and parties had hitherto feared to touch. That message was not the product of political expediency, but of conscience, conviction, and courage. It led to temporary defeat; but it gave his party new life and vigor, made him its trusted leader, immeasurably raised the standard of politics, and finally won the hearty support of the country, giving to Democracy its first opportunity since the war for important constructive legislation. Again in 1891, when the free coinage of silver was imminent, and politicians—especially would-be candidates for President—were reluctant to declare their position, Cleveland, with characteristic courage and directness, denounced «the dangerous and reckless experiment.» His party was badly split upon the question. To many his action gave great offense; by many more it was thought to be political suicide. But soon the party made him again its leader, and under such leadership won a notable victory.

These influences which have been at work are still operative. The people have not taken their government into their own hands, and fully experienced the pleasure and benefit of governing themselves, only now to relax control and permit government to become «a close corporation of politicians for exploiting the public to their own advantage.» Nor have they once demanded that parties shall discard dead issues and take definite position on the living questions of the day, only now to relapse into indifference and be content with idle generalities and halting candidates. The reform impulse for better men and better government is not ephemeral, but the best product of past campaigns, and bound again to exert a healthy and potent influence; and the people still like courage, character, ability in politics as in everything else, and despise trimming and time-serving.

In the next presidential campaign the Democratic party, if guided by past experience, must and will nominate candidates of courage and character, of definite, outspoken opinions on living questions, and upon a platform which

means something, and expresses it with a directness and emphasis not to be mistaken. The people wish, and have a right to know, the exact position of parties on silver, the tariff, a foreign policy, civil-service reform, and other main issues. The time is over when a party can get or hold power by the mere momentum of its past. We may assume, then, that the campaign of '96 will not be seriously affected by ancient political history, nor an alert, intelligent people deceived by mere boasting, exaggeration, or false pretense. Not that all this will be absent from the campaign. On the contrary, I fancy I can now see the Republican orator setting up his men of straw—the Southern brigadier, the free-trader, the English sycophant; I hear him again denouncing as un-American everything and everybody outside the Republican lines; I hear him claiming all prosperity as a Republican gift, and all adversity as Democratic deviltry; I laugh with others at the sarcasm and drollery of the gentleman from Maine, as he again contrasts virtue and vice, patriotism and disloyalty, industry and idleness, wealth and poverty, and then, with vivid imagination and cool assurance, gives each a party label. But all of this is only the *ad captandum* dramatics of the campaign orator, which amuse himself, with little effect on his audience and less harm to his opponent. Meanwhile the thoughtful citizen is asking, Which party preached and practised extravagance, squandered the surplus, raised taxation, unsettled the currency, emptied the treasury, and left behind it, if not the deluge, an established financial and economic policy which was bound to bring panic and disaster? He is also comparing dates and conditions—'93, a year of distress, with Republican laws and policy in full force; and '95, a year of marked prosperity, with such laws and policy repealed. To such voters—who, after all, decide elections—the Democratic party in '96 will gladly submit the record of its administration. What is that record? It has had to deal with a business depression for which it was in no way responsible; it has applied the remedies demanded by the conservative opinion of the country; and it has done this bravely, against bitter opposition within and without its party lines. It has repealed the Federal Election law, thus giving to the States the right to control their elections, and the responsibility for their proper conduct. It has ended McKinley protection, reducing taxation and reversing the tariff policy of the country. It has repealed the Sherman silver law, which stood as a great and growing menace to the stability of our fi-

nances; and it has by drastic measures, necessary and wholesome, sustained the treasury reserve and the credit of the nation, and saved business and the country from untold loss and suffering. This record of a party seeking the renewed confidence of the people will necessarily enter into the next presidential campaign.

So much for the past. Of more consequence are the questions now imminent, and the position of the parties upon them. Of these the most important, no doubt, is the silver question. Our country can adjust itself to any kind of a tariff, but it never can adjust itself to a dishonest dollar. Fortunately the question has become at last the subject of constant and serious discussion. The people have put on their thinking-caps, and with characteristic earnestness and thoroughness are going to think the problem out, and settle it permanently without evasion or compromise. Parties must and will adapt themselves to this situation. It is not difficult to foresee the course of the Democratic party. It has on its hands a radical difference of opinion and a first-class fight. It has had this before. It was divided on the tariff question. It fought this out within its ranks to a right conclusion, then became stronger, united, and victorious. It never would have made any progress if it had feared to face the fight or halted because of dissenters. It is now repeating that experience. Everywhere it is debating the silver question. The recent victories for sound money in Kentucky, Iowa, and Ohio show the effect of full discussion, and make it certain that the Democratic party will not commit itself to the silver heresy, nor weaken its credit and standing by seeking harmony through compromise of principle. Harmony will come, as it did on the tariff, when the party, through struggle, takes and obstinately holds a sound position. I confidently predict that in '96 the Democratic party, in its national platform and candidate, will stand for sound money, and will oppose the free coinage of silver. Both principle and expediency suggest this course. It is in line with the traditions and past of the party; with its platforms and principles; with the whole record of its administration, for which it is responsible; with its own action in opposing and repealing the Sherman law; and with its devoted loyalty to one who for eleven years has been the most conspicuous and valiant champion of honest money and sound finance. Any other course invites discreditable defeat. The party can stand defeat, and even grow stronger by it. It cannot

stand the discredit of committing itself to a passing heresy born of hard times, which time and prosperity will surely kill, but which, if successful, would unsettle business, impair credit, reduce all savings, and the value of all wages. It has now a splendid opportunity to render the country a further service, and, following the lead of Jackson and Cleveland, its past and its present, to educate and agitate for sound principles of finance as it has for a sound policy of tariff taxation. In such position it will be at issue with the Republican party. Not that that party will advocate the free coinage of silver; that would be standing for some principle, however erroneous, and the Republican party to-day is a party of compromise and expediency. But, judged by its past, it will trim and evade, to satisfy an aggressive minority deemed necessary for its success. At the critical moment the Republican party yields to financial heresy in its ranks, and the Democratic party conquers it. Through such weakness have come the many compromise measures as to paper money, inflation, and silver, which have been a constant menace to the stability of our finances. It led to Republican criticism of Cleveland's first administration for its unflinching stand for sound money; it was expressed in the Republican national platform of '88, which arraigned the Democratic party for its hostility to silver, and in the speeches of leaders like Mr. McKinley, who, in February, 1891, denounced his opponents for «dishonoring one of our precious metals, one of our greatest products, discrediting silver and enhancing the price of gold,» making «money the master, everything else the servant»; it accounts for the present ominous silence of Republican statesmen with presidential aspirations, while the Democratic administration and party are pursuing a vigorous and successful campaign of education. The old Republican malady of timidity and compromise has paralyzed Republican speech; its ambitious leaders remain silent, useless, with their weather eye open only for any little favoring breeze which may drift them onward. It is time for them to trim ship and set a course.

I write in the fall of '95. It is possible that before the next presidential campaign has opened, the silver question, through Democratic work and returning prosperity, will have lost its importance, and the two parties will vie with each other in emphatic expression of the country's settled and sound conviction. I do not, however, anticipate such a happy result. It is more likely that the question will be the leading subject of the cam-

paign. If so, I believe that the Democratic party, through discussion, education, and a struggle, will make its way to a safe and strong position, and nominate a sound candidate upon a sound platform. I as firmly believe that the Republican party will drift into compromise, not favoring free silver, but throwing a sop to its silver contingent, and nominating a non-committal candidate of doubtful record and of cautious speech, who will be expected to hold both Colorado and Massachusetts. Democratic promise will be backed by the record of the party in administration, and will win the support not only of the conservative sentiment and business interests of the country, but of the growing body of independents who place the public above any partizan interest, and who insist that candidates and conventions shall take definite position on the questions of the day. It ought to carry every doubtful State. If, on the other hand, the party is committed to free silver, it discredits its own administration, and, I believe, goes to certain defeat.

While the silver question is likely, in the next campaign, to be uppermost in the public mind, the tariff will, no doubt, as in the past, be an issue between the parties and the subject of much discussion. Between the parties there is a radical difference on the principles involved; but just how important the issue is to be depends largely on the action of the Republican Congress and National Convention. The burden rests upon that party. The Democracy, after a long contest over the tariff, has passed a law which, though a very conservative measure, is a long advance in the right direction. Business and industries have accepted it, and are contented and prosperous under it. Democrats are anxious to give it the test of time and experience. Will the Republicans acquiesce in this, or do they propose to turn backward to McKinleyism? Should they nominate McKinley without repudiating his tariff views, the tariff will at once become the vital issue of the campaign. He represents distinctly one idea. His nomination would be a challenge to the country to return to a tariff policy which it has defeated and discarded. The Democratic party would gladly accept the challenge and fight the old battle over again; but this time it would have with it the business interests, which have adapted themselves to present conditions and demand a rest from further tariff changes. The issue would be between a fair trial of a successful tariff and a return to a discredited policy. Should the Republican platform advocate reënactment

of the McKinley law or repeal of the present law, the same result would follow. The convention is not at all likely, however, to do anything so specific or dangerous. It will content itself with criticism of free trade, the usual eulogy of protection and the home market, and the usual claim that the Republican party alone represents American ideas, interests, and patriotism. This raises no very definite issue, except, perhaps, one of truth and good taste. At the same time the tendency of the Republican party is for protection always, and plenty of it, whenever it has the power and courage to carry out its purpose. Already a movement is on foot to couple with Republican protection of manufactures bounties to shipping and to agricultural exports, so as to distribute more widely the taxes Republican policy exacts, and to bind other interests to public support, all at the expense of the whole people. The Democratic party is at issue with this Republican policy. Discussion and education will go on, until with substantial agreement we get back to the sound principles and policy of the tariff of '57. The Democratic party will advance slowly in this direction, by urging, not another general revision of the tariff, but specific measures such as for free coal and iron ore, and gradually reducing taxation as time again proves the benefit of such a policy.

One other question is likely to be an important issue in the campaign, namely, the foreign policy of our country. Until a comparatively recent date there was substantial agreement that such policy should not be one of conquest or aggression, but should avoid "entangling alliances," and make Washington's farewell words, and the proper assertion of the Monroe doctrine, the bulwark of national safety and honor. The San Domingo fiasco of Grant's administration was believed to have ended permanently any other course. But recently Republican leaders have revived a defeated and almost forgotten Jingoism, and proclaimed a policy of foreign interference and annexation. By annexation of the Hawaiian Islands they would have the country try the experiment of governing a distant, divided, foreign people, and of assimilating them and their institutions. By interference at Samoa they would involve us in entangling alliances with Germany and England, and in a responsibility unusual and unnecessary. By assisting Nicaragua in resisting payment of England's claim and English occupancy they would pervert the Monroe doctrine and establish a precedent which would force us into the foreign quarrels of every petty, irresponsible

republic of Central and South America. How far these views of Republican Jingoists permeate and control that party will be determined in its next convention. The Democratic administration, in its conduct of our foreign affairs, has met constant, bitter criticism, but has resolutely refused to depart from the traditional policy of our country, and to involve her in novel and everlasting foreign complications. It has not believed that conquest or colonial acquisition is conducive to her strength or welfare, nor national honor best upheld by tyranny over a feeble but friendly power. The Republican party may make an issue over this Democratic record. If so, a most important question of far-reaching consequences will demand serious attention. For one, I believe it will take much more than the bluster of Jingoism to persuade the people that it is wise, safe, or patriotic to plunge our country into the maelstrom of international strife and ambition, and to abandon a course where we have found peace with honor, and have grown to be the most powerful, prosperous, and happy of the nations of the world.

Finally, in view of Republican declamation and assumption, it is certainly desirable that we should discuss seriously and thoroughly what is a sound American policy, what is the true American spirit, and which party is its better representative. Americanism, patriotism, is a thing of action, not of declamation. It does not become the exclusive property of the party claiming it, nor condone political crimes committed in its name. We have seen the term misused to justify a policy of sectional division and hatred, and, in violation of the Constitution, to supplant the rights and duties of the States, either by force of arms or gifts from the National treasury; to excuse a wild career of profligate public expenditure; to defend a "spoils system," which places influence against merit, and makes partizanship, not efficiency, the test of tenure of office; to uphold a system of taxation which benefited the few at the expense of the many, and imposed burdens unequal, unjust, and unnecessary; to encourage a policy which would restrict the inventive genius, the marvelous industry, and the energy of our people to a home market rather than let them place our nation at the head of the markets of the world and make America the mistress of the sea. And now this much-abused term is summoned to lead us away from the peaceful traditions and policy of the past out into the field of conquest and annexation, of strife and war. This is not the true American spirit, but the

spirit of bravado; not a sound American policy, but a policy of recklessness.

The true American spirit welcomes with fraternal love the reunion of the whole country in loyalty, happiness, and prosperity; it stands fast to the Constitution against those who would violate it for partizan or sectional purposes, and guards the people's money against the wild raids of selfish schemers; it still believes there is virtue in thrift, and that it is better that government should lift the burdens of taxation rather than set the people an example of riotous living; that taxation is not a blessing, but a necessary evil to be lessened by prudence and economy; that it is not to be used to take from one to give to another, nor to be controlled by selfish interests, but it is to be levied justly, equally, according to men's means, not their necessities, and for public purposes only. The true American policy would open the public service to all upon their merits, and make the office-holder neither the slave of the politician nor the master of the people. It urges us to a "vigorous prosecution of the pursuits of peace," and competition with all nations in the markets of the world; but not to follow their bloody footsteps in a struggle to conquer or control lands or peoples beyond our borders. It upholds, as it always has through many a Democratic administration, the national honor. It is nonsense to argue that in this there is division on party lines, or that Republicans monopolize patriotism. Let us through discussion get at the real Americanism, extol and follow it, exposing and avoiding the shams and demagogism masquerading in its name.

I have not ventured to predict who will be the candidates in the next campaign. In view of the earnest personal struggle within the Republican party, and the sectional difference of opinion within the Democratic party, he would be a bold man who would say who either candidate will be, or from what section of the country he will hail. This much we may gather from the past: the Democrats will nominate a candidate of positive and well-known convictions on pending questions and upon a platform equally emphatic; the Republicans will compromise upon their candidate and platform. This much also we may predict: that the Democratic party will have no right to demand or expect that he who has so gallantly led them in three campaigns, and twice to victory, will again be their standard-bearer. His own wish, no doubt, will be to retire on the laurels he has well won to a rest he has well earned.

William E. Russell.

THE PAINTER VIBERT.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

[The following sketch, prepared by M. Vibert at our request, will make known to the readers of THE CENTURY some of the interesting personal qualities of a painter already famous by his artistic work, and will serve as an appropriate introduction to a series of reproductions of his canvases, each of which, like the one printed on page 83, will be accompanied by a brief story from the pen of M. Vibert.—EDITOR.]



Y good Conscience, my dear comrade, I wish to ask your advice. I would not demand it of you, understand; but you will give it me all the same.»

«Certainly, my dear fellow; for it is when one most fears to listen to his conscience that he has the greatest need of it.»

«That may be, but if I have done wrong sometimes in paying too much heed to you, I possess, at any rate, the sweet consolation of having known how to please you; and to preserve the peace of our household, I do not care to risk incurring the least reproach from you. This is why I wish to consult you in the following very serious matter. THE CENTURY MAGAZINE has done me the great honor of asking me for an autobiographical sketch. A delicate commission, is it not?»

«You are under no compulsion to accept.»

«True; but they might have it written by somebody else.»

«Who would not, perhaps, say of you all the good things you think of yourself?»

«Do you, then, think me so vain?»

«Well, no. Perhaps the difficulty is that the least praise might frighten your modesty.»

«You are making fun of me; am I, then, so ridiculous?»

«You would be if I were not by to combat your secret thoughts; for you do not hope, I presume, to conceal your real mind from me. You hope to use the opportunity now offered you to let your new readers—that is to say, half the world—know that, being an excellent cook, you have invented and prepared sauces that make your compatriots lick their fingers; that, using your pen as well as your brush, you have written songs and plays that have been applauded in the minor theaters of Paris; that, following the example of Molière, and having, like him, an extraordinary talent as an actor, you have played your own productions at the club and in artistic salons; then, having a passion for building, and trying your hand at all the trades, you are not only your own architect, but do not disdain occasionally to work in iron, like Louis

XVI., or in wood, like the good St. Joseph; and finally that, in decorating your house, you have distinguished yourself as an upholsterer. In the last particular you may even say that you surpass Molière, for he, although the son of an upholsterer, was not himself one.

«Next I see you conducting the readers over your studios and your hall, enlightening them with the pompous explanation: ‘Ladies and gentlemen, see this marble monument erected in honor of La Fontaine, my favorite poet. It is I who composed and had engraved on the face of it my motto, taken from one of his fables: *Travaillez; prenez de la peine*. The golden figures which support the ceiling I carved with my own hands; I designed these ornaments; I myself gave the colors to the stuffs’; and so on and so on. Then, carried still further by the vanity of ownership, you will go to the very end of Brittany to show them your castle, the red granite walls of which dip in the ocean.

«Oh, my friend, how puerile all that would be! How little worthy of you, in the eyes of a public that thinks you a serious artist, to give such importance to these trifling details, which in your life are mere recreations! Perhaps you would like also to speak of your great talent as an *improvisateur*, and of your oratorical successes.»

«As for that, my dear Conscience, you can’t deny that the priests who began my education recognized in me elocutionary talents, because they planned to make a preacher of me.»

«Yes; I advise you to speak of the priests! You have profited handsomely by their teachings! They, at any rate, cannot be ignorant of your lively satire; you have made them feel the point of it enough.»

«Have n’t you always said that a painter should paint only what he sees? It is not my fault if I have seen them at such close quarters.»

«That may be. But to proceed. No doubt you also wish that your readers should know that, having studied closely the chemistry of colors, you yourself prepare those that you use, as well as your varnishes.»

«It is natural that I should.»