

THE MUGWUMP JUSTIFICATION.

Nothing but time could have furnished a justification for those who, in 1884, took upon themselves what we admit was, under the circumstances, the very great responsibility of severing their connection with the Republican party, and assisting in the transfer of the executive branch of the national Government to the Democrats. How great this responsibility was, may be inferred from the fact that in the opinion of the great majority of the Republicans, some or all of the following consequences were very likely, if not certain, to result from the accession of the Democrats to power. We cannot do better than quote Mr. Carlisle's enumeration of them in his speech on Thursday night, although we have frequently set them forth in these columns ourselves:

"It was said that the election of a Democratic President would be immediately followed by the prostration of our manufacturing industries, the derangement of our finances, the debasement of our currency, and the destruction of the public credit; and that even the civil and political rights of the people would not be secure. According to these partisan prophets, the Supreme Court of the United States was to be reorganized and the constitutional amendments annulled; the Confederate debt was to be paid and the Confederate soldiers pensioned; the colored race was to be reenslaved in the South; the doctrine of secession was to be reasserted; the soldiers and sailors of the Union were to be deprived of the pensions and bounties heretofore granted to them, and all the terms and conditions of the adjustment which succeeded the late civil war were to be entirely disregarded."

This is not rhetorical exaggeration. It is a simple and strictly accurate description of the view, taken by a large proportion of the Republican party, of the attitude of nearly one-half the American people towards their own political system. Now, we were in 1884 of opinion that the mere existence of this belief was in itself a public danger; that good government under a constitution like ours was not attainable except through the competition of two great parties for popular favor, and that it was essential to the working of this competition that both should be held competent to administer the Government, however much they might differ on questions of policy. We held that the notion that there was only one party fit to execute the laws, must soon debauch that party by making it reckless and indifferent to public opinion, and that it had, as a matter of fact, debauched the Republican party, and that we could not have healthy politics without upsetting it.

The Mugwump vote in 1884 did upset it. It restored the regular working of party government in the United States by putting the opposition in power. It dissipated by actual experiment the terrible superstition that nearly 5,000,000 of voters were ready to ruin the country if they got a chance. We may safely ask all those Republicans, and especially the younger ones, who broke away from their party in that year, whether the experience of the last four years, on this point at least, has not fully justified their course. What American is there who cannot today, as the result of President Cleveland's Administration, speak more hopefully both of the present and future of American institutions than he could in 1884, even after

conceding the truth of all that has been said or can be said touching the President's failure to meet the expectations then entertained of him as a reformer? His Administration has demonstrated once more that the United States Government is safe; not only in the custody of a certain class of Americans, but in the custody of any American majority, however made up. Surely this is an immense gain; surely it is of itself enough to make all Independents feel happy in looking back on their work of four years ago.

But this is not all. The secession of 1884 was also due in part to the belief that the Republican party had lost all its earlier impulses and aspirations, and had fallen irretrievably under bad influences, and that real reform was not to be looked for at its hands. That this was not a mistake, we think the history of the past four years has conclusively proved. In the first place, the Republican party, in exercising in that interval its legitimate function of a hostile critic, far from finding fault with the President's failures to reform, has reproached him for nothing except promising to reform, and has in every way in its power encouraged him to violate his promises and practise the abuses which his supporters expected him to abolish. In the second place, through all its organs in the press, it deliberately retained its hold on Mr. Blaine up to the meeting of the late Chicago Convention, as the best living exponent of its spirit and methods, thus proving that the nomination of 1884 was not the result of haste, inadvertence, or defective information. It then confirmed this action of the press by electing a convention which was only prevented from nominating him again by his own blundering and that of his agents, in an attempt to give the nomination the air of a compulsory return to public life of a wearied patriot. This view of the matter, too, has been amply confirmed by the platform drawn by the Convention, which, after much "arraignment" and declamation, actually proposed no positive legislation except a reduction of taxes, which is to include the abolition of those on whiskey and tobacco! On this platform, it has nominated a gentleman against whom personally we have not a word to say, but whose claims on the confidence or respect of the Independent voter may be inferred from the fact that, although he voted for the Civil-Service Law, he vigorously opposed the prohibition of the worst feature of the spoils system—the assessments on officials for party purposes—and disgusted even James G. Blaine by his activity and persistence as an "influence" at Washington. His position on the great question—the greatest question in politics, in fact, for every civilized community to-day—the nature and incidence of taxation, may be inferred from the following passage from a speech in Chicago on the 20th of last March:

"I am one of those uninstructed political economists who have an impression that some things may be too cheap; that I cannot find myself in full sympathy with this demand for cheaper coats, which seems to me necessarily to involve a cheaper man and woman under the coat."

This at first blush sounds simply like the somewhat heartless expression of a successful lawyer's contempt for the small cares of that great mass of mankind who have to think well over every dollar they spend. But it is something far more serious than this. It is the language of a man who, assuming him to be honest and sincere in his public talk, has never either read or reflected on the nature of the sacrifices which the Government of a country demands from the bulk of the population when it asks them to give part of their earnings for its support. And there is a curious light thrown on this extraordinarily foolish talk by the fact that this candidate, who has such a contempt for cheap clothes, is put on a platform which calls for cheap whiskey. No Mugwump of 1884 can look on these things without feeling that in that year he chose the better part, and that time has only made his way plainer.

TRANSFORMATION OF PARTIES.

A FOREIGN observer, after a careful study of our political assemblies and our election methods a few years ago, expressed the opinion that the Republican party "contained the intellectual and moral bone and sinew of the American nation." The judgment was undoubtedly correct at the time it was rendered, but it is already evident that it will not hold true in the year 1888. A transformation of parties has been going on for four years past, and is now proceeding more rapidly than ever before, which changes the political attitude of the intelligence and morality of the nation, and ranges the preponderance of these ruling forces on the side of the Democratic party.

Democracy was in its early days the party of the people, really as well as nominally. But the rise of the slave power changed the nature of the organization. The dominant force in its councils came to be the oligarchy of slaveholders, a body numerically small, but politically most influential. Under its sway the party fell constantly further and further away from the principles of true democracy, as laid down by its founder, Thomas Jefferson, and became more and more thoroughly the party of a class. It broke its pledges, it repealed the compromises which it had declared for ever binding, it surrendered its convictions.

It was inevitable that such a policy should array against the Democracy the intelligence and the moral sense of the country. It was from this source that the Republican party was drawn. It owed its origin to the protest of the North against the attempt of the South to extend slavery, and at first it went no further. As Lincoln put it in one of his joint debates with Douglas in 1858, the issue was simply, on the one hand, to keep slavery out of new Territories and restrict it for ever to the old States where it then existed; or, on the other hand, "surrender and let Judge Douglas and his friends have their way and plant slavery over all the States—cease speaking of it as in any way a wrong—regard slavery as one of the common matters of property, and speak of negroes as we do of our horses and cattle." On that issue it was cer-

tain that "the intellectual and moral bone and sinew" would ultimately be found in the new party which Lincoln represented. The course of the Democrats during the war and during the reconstruction period only served to mass these forces more and more compactly on the Republican side.

The growing demoralization which characterized Grant's two administrations, and the disgraceful performances which followed the election of 1876, arrested the drift of the better forces towards Republicanism; but the inertia of party is exceedingly strong, and the most disgusted members of the organization still indulged hope for its rehabilitation—a hope which was encouraged by the nomination of Garfield in 1880. The selection of Blaine in 1884 was a rude shock, which forced many thousands of the most conscientious Republicans to vote against the candidate of their party; but most of them still clung to the hope that this was only a temporary aberration, from which it would recover.

The truth was, however, that the nomination of Mr. Blaine was more than a functional disturbance: it was the symptom of an organic disease which had attacked the very vitals of the party. *Nemo repente turpissimus*, is hardly less true when applied to organizations of men than to the individual; no party suddenly becomes most base. When it presents as its perfect flower a dishonest man, it is only because it has gradually been sapped of its virtue, so that it yields easily to the temptation of vice when veneered with "magnetism." The elevation of Mr. Blaine signified that the Republican party was no longer the party "of the people, by the people, for the people," which Lincoln led.

At last the party has thrown off all disguise, and openly appears as the champion of special interests against the masses of the people. At first the advocate of moderate protection for a limited period to "infant industries," as a mere incident of the taxing prerogative, it has now become the advocate of "protection for protection's sake," as a permanent feature, and the most important feature, of our governmental system. In 1876 and again in 1880 it "avowed the belief that the duties levied for the purpose of revenue should so discriminate as to favor American labor," thus clearly recognizing the principle that duties should primarily be levied only because they are necessary to support the Government. In 1884 it still virtually recognized the same principle by pledging itself to reduce the revenue, then larger than was demanded by the necessities of the Government economically administered, and promising to "relieve the taxpayer." But in 1888 it has turned its back upon its whole record; it ridicules its own former doctrine that duties are properly "levied for the purpose of revenue"; it condemns economy and demands extravagance, in order that more revenue may be needed; and when even extravagance seems to be insufficient, it proposes to repeal the tax on whiskey rather than lower any of the taxes on the food and clothing of the people.

The moral side of the tariff issue is here plainly revealed to the apprehension of the

dullest mind. The "uncrowned king" of Republicans has himself presented it with remarkable force in his "Paris Message." Nobody can improve upon his argument of last December against the Republican platform of June, when he protested against the repeal of the whiskey tax because "there is a moral side" to the question, because the consequent cheapening of whiskey would increase its consumption enormously, and because "it would destroy high license at once in all the States."

In his 'Twenty Years of Congress' Mr. Blaine has shown how the Republican party came to absorb the intellectual and moral bone and sinew. In speaking of the Republican Convention of 1856, he says: "The Democracy saw at once that a new and dangerous opponent was in the field—an opponent that stood upon principle and shunned expediency, that brought to its standard a great host of young men, and that won to its service a very large proportion of the talent, the courage, and the eloquence of the North." A generation later it is the Democratic party, chastened by repeated defeats and sobered by responsibility, which stands upon principle, and there can be no doubt that its appeal will attract the same elements which were drawn to the Republican party thirty years ago. Already one sees signs of the revolution in the changed attitude of such men as the Rev. Dr. Storrs and ex-Mayor Low of Brooklyn. Already, too, one sees the difficulties of the "defensive campaign" which the Republicans must make, in the sneering editorial of the *Tribune* on Mr. Low as "a Sunday school politician." The watchword of the Republicans in 1888 is the absurd cry, "Do you want British free trade?" as the watchword of the Democrats a generation ago was the equally silly cry, "Do you want your daughter to marry a nigger?" It is a melancholy end for a party which once contained, and deserved to contain, the best forces of the nation.

THE PROHIBITIONISTS AND THE WHISKEY TAX.

THE attempt of the Republican party to masquerade in the livery of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union is meeting with ridicule from the very women who fashioned the garments. The sham was so apparent that no statesmanship was necessary to detect it. When, therefore, Miss Frances E. Willard, President of the Union, found that the Republican party, which has steadily advocated high license in local politics, had endorsed her demand for the repeal of the national liquor tax, her sentiment, instead of being that of self-congratulation, was that of scorn. In her address before the National Prohibition ratification meeting on June 22, she expressed this sentiment with all the emotional earnestness of which she is the mistress. She summed up the situation in the following words: "The party stands arrayed against itself in its State and national policy. The house is divided against itself and cannot stand."

It is the obviousness of the last sentence

which gives to it its significance. For the past few years the restrictive taxation of the liquor traffic has been the one moral idea which the Republican party has everywhere endorsed. Yet the highest possible high license cannot compare in importance with the internal-revenue system. The Crosby bill as it passed the Republican Legislature proposed a tax of \$300 upon each saloon where distilled liquors were sold; the internal-revenue system imposes a tax which averages \$500 for every saloon, restaurant, drug-store, and grocery where liquors of any description are sold. The number of saloons and restaurants in the nation is but 90,000. The national liquor tax is \$90,000,000. Were a high-license fee of \$1,000 everywhere imposed and enforced, the concentration of the traffic would be such that the burden would not be equal to that which the internal-revenue system now imposes. Mr. F. N. Barrett of the *American Grocer*, whose estimates regarding the consumption of liquor were published by the Internal Revenue Department, calculates that half of the liquor consumed is bought not by the glass, but by the gallon. The effect of the internal-revenue tax upon the price of this portion is easily estimated. The cheaper grades of whiskey can be manufactured for twenty cents a gallon. The tax raises this price 450 per cent. Had the Crosby bill been made a law, the further increase would have been confessedly slight. Yet the party which advocated that, in the interests of morality, this further increase must be made, is now willing to make real the Irishman's dream of "whiskey a shilling a gallon, and no hanging for stealing," in order to preserve to the protected classes the extortions of the war tariff undiminished.

The argument which will be heard time and again during the coming campaign, that the Prohibitionists also are in favor of repealing the internal-revenue tax, is worthy of consideration. There is no doubt that the Prohibitionists are the sincere friends of temperance. Why, then, do they seem to endorse the position of the Republicans?

This question is easily answered. In the first place, they do not endorse it. At the ratification meeting mentioned above, Chairman Dickey violently denounced this plank in the Republican platform, and Miss Willard sharply distinguished between the Republican idea of free trade in alcoholic liquor and the Prohibition idea of no trade at all. This distinction is a thoroughly tenable one, and will be endorsed by every Prohibitionist in the country who has not crazed his own intellect by violent talk about "blood money."

In the next place, the chief argument of the Prohibitionists against high license does not apply to the national liquor tax. They have found in their municipal and State campaigns that the revenues derived from the saloons stand in the way of their agitation. Even the more sober-minded among them have thus come to regard high license as the liquor traffic's chief bulwark. It was very natural, then, that some of them should have supposed that the national liquor taxes would have a similar effect. The Re-