

MR. TAFT'S DIFFICULTIES.

For President Taft's position, both in relation to his own party and in relation to the country, it would be difficult to find a parallel. From his cancelling of his engagement to speak at Indianapolis, after the Indiana Republican platform had ignored him and the Payne-Aldrich tariff, it is evident that he himself sees the peculiarity of the situation; and it becomes accordingly pertinent to consider the qualities of temper, character, and habit that have brought things to this pass.

That Mr. Taft's proverbial—or, as some might now say, notorious—good-nature has been to him one prolific source of these perplexities and disappointments, is quite certain. But this is by no means a complete explanation. It is doubtless largely owing to his good-nature that Mr. Taft accepts innumerable invitations to college commencements, class reunions, miscellaneous dinners, and what not; and doubtless, too, this constant travelling up and down the land, this dining and speech-making to no special purpose, must have done a great deal to weaken that grip on the main elements of the national situation which is a chief requisite of the Presidency. But though good-nature may account for the enormous mileage of his travels, and for the number of his speeches, it does not account for the character of the speeches. To a large extent his troubles have been due to a habit of ignoring the difference between the utterances of the President of the United States and those of William H. Taft as an individual. Whatever his heart inclines him to say on the tariff, on the navy, on Speaker Cannon, on Senator Aldrich, that he says to his eighty million fellow-citizens. It was not necessary for him to shoulder the responsibility of the Payne-Aldrich tariff; it was not necessary for him to give Aldrich a certificate of high character; it was not necessary for him to range himself alongside Speaker Cannon. The Presidency of the United States is a heavy load to carry; but one burden that it does not impose is that of defending the acts of Congress or the actions of the leaders of Congress. The country at large felt very strongly that the tariff act was a betrayal of the people's confidence; Mr. Taft might possibly feel that it was well enough, but no more than that, and if he had

only had the homely wisdom to leave well enough alone, he would have been spared nearly all his troubles and mortifications.

Mr. Taft's conspicuous championship of the tariff act and his laudation of Aldrich are, we are fully prepared to believe, in great part the result of qualities in themselves admirable. His habit of judicial impartiality, and that simple frankness which is so engaging a trait of his personality, both had their share in the matter. He put himself in Aldrich's place. "Could the master of the Senate," we imagine Mr. Taft saying to himself, "the recognized repository of the high-protection interests, be expected to yield everything? Of course not. From the Aldrich standpoint, what more could I have expected than I got? It is true that I wanted the tariff revised downward in a substantial way; but, on the other hand, the platform never mentioned the word 'downward' at all. Now there *was* a downward reduction, and in some points a considerable one; Aldrich isn't half as black as he is painted. Indeed, from his standpoint, he acted very handsomely, and I am bound to tell the people that he is a good American patriot." But this capacity to see both sides of a question is not the prime quality either of a great executive officer or of an effective political leader. The desire to give the devil his due, and even a little more than his due, may be a very amiable thing in a private citizen, and it has its proper place even in the White House; but to make it anything like a dominant note in the Presidential programme is to invite disaster. The President may, without incurring criticism, refrain from passing judgment on questions that are in controversy; he cannot with impunity pass judgment that reflects neither any clear position of his own nor any marked aspect of public sentiment. Mr. Taft had stood, before and during the campaign, for a genuine revision of the tariff. If what he got was, to his mind, a satisfactory compromise, he may have been justified in accepting it without complaint, but it was deplorably bad judgment to make himself its sponsor before the nation.

Nearly three-fourths of Mr. Taft's term is still before him. There are great services which he is capable of rendering. His honesty and patriotism are universally recognized; his abilities

in many directions are undoubted. He might, by making one simple change in his Presidential practice, go far toward recovering the ground he has lost. It is not incumbent on him to travel about the country making political speeches. That is no part of the tradition of the Presidency; the only President who ever indulged such a propensity in a conspicuous way was poor Andrew Johnson. Mr. Roosevelt's speech-making belonged to an entirely different category; he was preaching Rooseveltism all the time—a thing difficult to define, indeed, but, as every one will recognize, a thing as different as possible from the ordinary making of political speeches. Usually, Presidents, when they have found time to talk to their fellow-citizens in various parts of the country, have made remarks of a broad and general character, such as are gratefully received by all. If they have departed from this innocuous programme, it was for the sake of attracting the special attention of the country to some object singled out as of cardinal importance from the President's standpoint. The every-day work of explaining particular bills, defending particular individuals, or upholding particular details of the party's record, it is far better—as well as safer—to leave to the lesser figures of public life.

A shrewd adviser or two, with just those qualities of alertness and intensity that President Taft lacks, would seem to be an urgent necessity; men who would tell him that some things which are quite right in themselves are not worth while for the President of the United States, and that other things are immensely worth while and cannot be neglected. It does not seem that this sort of help, necessary to almost any President and peculiarly necessary to Mr. Taft, is at his disposal. If he is to recover his hold on the influence which, as President, he certainly hoped to wield, he must abandon the naïveté which has thus far characterized his conduct. His qualities of judicial fairness and of untrammelled communicativeness must be offset by enough worldly caution and enough political skill to give character to his dealings with political difficulties. With ample recourse to his undoubted privilege of keeping silent when he chooses, and with the aid of some long-headed practical adviser in those difficulties which he cannot

afford to leave unsettled, the remaining three years of his Presidency might tell a tale very different from that of the first.

DEMOCRATIC AND ARISTOCRATIC SPORT.

For the average American, nothing is more abhorrent than the idea of caste which runs through the entire structure of English society, unless it be the ready and complacent acceptance by the individual Englishman of the system, even at the points where it implies and enforces his own patent inferiority. The term "gentleman," which every male American wears with aggressiveness as a chip on his shoulder, is, in England, nowhere so much a shibboleth as among those who would be the first to repel the imputation of gentility on their part. An American travelling in a continental railway carriage entered into conversation with a well-dressed and apparently well-bred Englishman. It appeared that the latter had at home a young son, concerning whose education and future career he displayed a natural solicitude. "I suppose," remarked the American, "that you will soon be sending your boy to one of your big schools, Harrow, Eton, or Rugby." Whereupon the Englishman turned with a look of some surprise, but without the slightest trace of embarrassment, and replied: "Oh, no, those are schools for the sons of gentlemen."

But the presence or absence of caste distinctions in a society is not the sole factor in determining whether that society is democratic or undemocratic. Where a man's position is clearly defined, he may mingle freely with those both above and below him in the social scale; but where official equality has levelled all distinctions, the deep-seated human instinct of exclusiveness is brought into full play as the sole means by which the few may assert their superiority, and secure their position against the manifold aspirations of the many. The result is that in America the eager desire for that superior range of associations which is the symbol of success, has produced a species of undemocratic snobbishness which only a democratic country could compass. An American took for a season or two a country seat in England, and joined the local hunt club. As it was the custom for each of the members in turn to en-

tertain the hunt at a breakfast after the weekly meet, the American signified his wish of sharing in this hospitality. "Very well," replied the English friend to whom he had confided his ambition, "but you'll have to drop your American snobbishness. The Duke of —, whose place is here, belongs to the hunt, and, since you are an American, of course you'll be glad to have him. But remember that you can't have him alone. You've got to have the butcher, the baker, and the candlestickmaker, too, whether you want them or not. For they are all members of the hunt, on precisely the same terms as His Grace, though he puts up the bulk of the money for the expenses."

There is no better illustration of the radical difference between English and American society, and of the more essential democracy of the former, than is provided by the organization of sport in the two countries. Every great national pastime affords a common meeting-ground for all classes of Englishmen. Noblemen, gentry, and yokels come together on numberless village greens each week for cricket, and, as players, there is no distinction between the highest and lowest. It has often been said that it was this admission of all classes into the sports and pastimes patronized by gentlemen, that, more than anything else, discounted the effects of the European revolutionary movement by the time it reached England. How was the "villain" to take arms against his local "overlord," for whom he defended the wicket each week? The vague, restless demand for equality was satisfied progressively as it arose, and before it had time to grow articulate with resentment. Sport has proved a cement for English society, and has created a sentiment of solidarity.

Would sport be found to have served the same purpose in this country, if the mutterings and rumblings of revolution were heard in the distance? Has a democratic conception and practice of sport tended to draw all classes together, to create an *esprit de corps* between, let us say, the steelworkers and the steel magnates, and thus to render the society of Homestead homogeneous? On the contrary, we believe that sport is tending rather to force the various sections of American society still further asunder. It is true that as a country in which sport is widely popular, America

is second only to England. But here there are sports and sports—sports for the workers and sports for the leisure classes, sports for the fashionable and sports for the unfashionable. With few exceptions, these categories are kept separate and distinct. For the most part, the out-of-door pastimes of the leisure classes have been imported from England, and have been organized on a basis which precludes participation in them by any but the very rich. Thus pursuits like fox hunting, which, if not precisely popular in their origin, have, nevertheless, become strongly tinctured with the democratic spirit abroad, where any farm boy astride a plough horse is free to follow the hounds, have here been transformed into the most potent instrument of what the French call *snobisme*. This American sport is the fine flower and epitome of American exclusiveness, too sacred to be shared—except through the pages of the pictorial newspaper, the Sunday morning after a meet.

An American, whether the field of his activities be business, college, or society, is always fighting for his own hand. It does not occur to him to extend the scope of his recreation, so as to include a greater number of fellow participants. His only associates are those who, possessing the same tastes as himself, have means commensurate with his own for satisfying them. He is not one of a class, but of a group. The Englishman's idea of a class, to which he belongs and to which he assimilates his own personal idea of himself, crystallizes his social consciousness and imposes obligations and responsibilities at the same time that it confers privileges and immunities. An aristocracy may be more successful than a democracy, not in phrasing noble ideals of human brotherhood, but in achieving a good, practical working formula of equality.

AMERICANS AS LINGUISTS.

"English is the coming language," says a writer in the *Popular Science Monthly*. "And it is coming rapidly; for while it is difficult to learn thoroughly, in the matter both of style and pronunciation, it can readily be acquired with sufficient correctness for all commercial and practical purposes." Perhaps it is because we are waiting for the English language to complete its rapid conquest of the globe, that condi-