

FUMBLING WITH A MORAL ISSUE.

The "party of moral ideas" is in sore trouble; and of this the root lies in the fact that it is confronted by a moral issue and does not know what to do with it. All the uncertainties and divided counsels and angry recriminations and fears of party disaster which are to-day afflicting the Republican leaders and filling Republican voters with dismay, arise from the expulsive force of a moral idea now mightily stirring the hearts of the people. The issue was slow in shaping. Its beginnings might be mistaken for that rashness or ambition on the part of the authors of "new agitations," of which the philosophic Italian historian speaks. But all doubt about the solidity and permanence of the movement has long since passed away. We have now seen the new moral idea sweep State after State, breaking up the old party organization, retiring one chief after another whose position seemed impregnable, bringing new men to the front, and demonstrating its power in a thousand ways. Yet the party leaders continue to speak of it with amazement and pain or indignation. They call it hysteria or lunacy. The professed guardians and champions of moral ideas do not recognize the biggest moral idea in the politics of their day when they meet it.

In concrete form, this fresh moral impulse first showed itself in Congress nearly two years ago. In its earliest manifestations, it took the shape of a protest against the domination of the House of Representatives by a tyrannous and selfish and politically corrupt machine. It struck boldly at the Cannon-Tammany alliance. If that was not an immoral thing to be hit hard by every honest man, then there never was one. Later came the tariff framing and the tariff debates, in the course of which principles got utterance and positions were taken which clearly portended the coming revolution, and left no doubt that its energy was essentially a moral one. When ten Republican Senators openly broke with their party organization and their Administration and voted against a bill which had been made a party measure, solely on the ground that it contained provisions abhorrent to their moral sense, it was plain to the most unobservant that a new force had been let loose in our politics. And it

was a force, too, which struck deeper than party or expediency and went down to fundamental questions of right and wrong. Nothing but the strongest kind of moral compulsion could have led the insurgent Republicans to come out and renounce the unclean thing. Politically, their course seemed hazardous in the extreme, but they were as willing as our ancestors to pledge their fortunes and their sacred honor to what they believed to be truth and duty.

In those days of the origin of the quickening movement, President Taft and his advisers might be excused for having remained puzzled and hesitant. They could not then tell whereto this thing would grow. Prudence would counsel caution, and delay in taking sides. Even at the time, however, there was no justification for not having a fairer view of the motive of the dissident Republicans. To lump them all together and insinuate that they were actuated simply by personal hostility or ambition, was a huge political blunder. Whether that is acknowledged or not, the day has passed for continuing in the mistaken policy. The Western primaries have shown that a moral ferment is at work in the Republican party which has got to be reckoned with. The moral issue has now demonstrated that it is backed by votes. The abstract principle has become intensely practical. What is the President, the "titular leader of the party," as he describes himself, going to do about it? A moral issue antagonized is certain to be fatal to the man who opposes it. If the political history of our country proves anything, it proves that. But it may be almost as disastrous for a statesman to fumble with a moral issue.

The opportunity for the President is great, but he cannot wait too long before seizing it. Recent developments have shown that he regards the insurgent movement to-day with far greater seriousness than last winter, and that he perceives its significance more correctly. But so far little has been done except in the way of "placating" the Western Republicans; removing obstacles to their return to party allegiance; getting rid of those who have been stones of stumbling and rocks of offence. This is well enough, so far as it goes; any other course would be political folly. But mere palliatives and half-way

measures will not do. The whole spirit and purpose of the new moral agitation must be both understood and heartily entered into. Men have been saying, despondingly, as Benjamin Jowett did fifty years ago, that they feared they should not live to see another "great national enthusiasm." But this fresh breath of life, coming into the air of politics long gone sordid, promises just that thing. Republican leaders, however, must wake to it. They must not go on speaking of this new moral determination as a "Kansas craze." The really insane people will be themselves if they do not read aright the signs of the times.

Never was there a more unmistakable call for true leadership. Lecky said of Chatham that, with all his faults, he at least succeeded in idealizing the national politics. That 's the high work awaiting the man who can now put himself at the head of this new inrush of moral questions in our commercialized politics. As yet the movement is unorganized. It stands for a great aspiration rather than a definite programme. But it awaits a virile leader who has the imagination to perceive its vast possibilities for good and the courage and zeal to give it free course in our national life, so that moral ideals may again stir the enthusiasm and call out the devotion of citizens who have only disgust for politics without principles and politicians without a soul.

OUR NAVAL WASTE.

The recent sale of the gunboat *Hornet* for the ridiculous sum of \$5,100 is a clear illustration of the wasteful methods of the government. Just twelve years ago, the *Hornet*, then the yacht *Josephine*, belonging to Mr. P. A. B. Widener of Philadelphia, was purchased for \$117,500. After some active service in Cuba during the war, she was for several years used for cruising duty and was then transferred to a naval militia organization. Only twelve years of service sufficed to decrease her value from \$117,500 to \$7,000 in the opinion of the Navy Department, which finally accepted \$5,100. That the *Hornet* is, however, still serviceable appears from her recent voyage to New Orleans and thence to Nicaragua with a cargo of arms for one of the battling parties in that republic. Evidently, her present

owners obtained a great bargain. They ought to be able more than to recover their outlay by breaking the Hornet up. She is 160 feet long and displaces 425 tons.

Now, when the Hornet was purchased by the Government, she was in the first-class order in which our wealthy men invariably keep their yachts. Her speed may not have been quite as high as represented, but her condition must otherwise have been of the best. Yet twelve years later she is a ruined boat. Nor is this in any way an exceptional case. It is related of the Mayflower, the President's yacht, that as soon as she was taken over white paint was applied to all her costly bird's-eye maple fittings, which was later on in some places removed at heavy cost. For some time past, it has been rumored in naval circles that the Mayflower, too, would soon have to disappear from the navy list, because of her rapid deterioration and the need for such costly repairs as would exceed the limit of 20 per cent. of her value beyond which Congress has forbidden the Department to go in the repairing of any ship. Several other boats of this type have already been disposed of.

Lest it be argued that these were old vessels when bought, it is worth while to examine the longevity of ships expressly built for the Government. Here the most striking fact is that, in 1909, two torpedo boats, the Nicholson and O'Brien, were discarded as worthless, after only seven years of service in time of peace. The Winslow, new in 1897, which fought at Cardenas the next year, is under survey now and will, it is expected, be relegated to the scrap-heap. The cruiser Philadelphia, built in 1890, is on the navy list only because she is used as a receiving-ship, and the same is true of the battleship Texas, completed in 1895, and at the Port Royal yard for two or three years. The Atlanta of the original "white squadron" of 1887 is to be used as a barracks at the Charlestown navy yard, although enormous sums have been spent upon her at various times for reconstruction and repair. The Columbia and Minneapolis, built in 1893, and equipped with triple-screws, will either be sold or made over into transports. The unfortunate steel gunboat Bennington is certain to be condemned this year.

Beyond doubt the Navy Department

views with equanimity the disappearance of these costly vessels, because of the progress made by naval science since they were launched. For this reason, a number of battleships like the Indiana, Alabama, Kearsarge, Kentucky, Missouri, Wisconsin, Ohio, and Oregon are now in reserve, several of them without any likelihood of ever seeing active service again. The Dreadnought has made them antiquated and obsolete, although the Wisconsin was completed only in 1901 and the Missouri in 1903. But with all allowance for the necessity of keeping pace with naval progress, no one conversant with the facts will believe for an instant that the government begins to get out of its ships what a private owner would. This is in part due to careless handling, in part to bad repair work at the navy yards. It was to improve the latter, as well as to save money, that the Newberry navy-yard reforms were instituted in 1908, with an improvement in speed and intelligence of effort as a result. But on the Pacific Coast, complaints of inefficient work in the engineering department of the Mare Island yard have led to bitter recriminations and the court-martial of one officer. The shocking number of serious engine-room accidents in the Pacific fleet within a year would have ruined any commercial line operating a similar number of steamers.

The merchant steamer is not, of course, an exact parallel. Yet the spectacle of the Etruria and Umbria crossing and recrossing the Atlantic for over twenty-five years with unfailing regularity, and only one month's overhaul annually, is a sample of efficient operation not to be matched by any naval vessel of which we know. Not only do most of our warships deteriorate as to speed, but the enormous sums spent on them for repairs are out of all proportion to the cost of ships like the Etruria and Umbria, which were finally laid off only because their engines, designed nearly thirty years ago, consumed too much coal from the modern engineering point of view. With Uncle Sam, "everything goes." It is a matter of course that, besides the annual overhaul, there shall be a "renovation" after a three years' leisurely cruise and a "reconstruction" in due course, just as the Department now plans to spend half a million in bringing Schley's flagship of

1898, the Brooklyn, up to date—she is thirteen years old. Finally, those who would reckon accurately the cost of our huge naval establishment must not fail to count in the annual appropriation (about \$140,000,000 this year) the tremendous depreciation in the amounts already invested in war-vessels.

THE END OF KOREA.

The formal annexation of the Korean Empire by Japan is announced from Tokio as being imminent. Towards this historic act the policy of Japan has been inflexibly advancing from the moment it first became apparent that victory was with her in the war with Russia. A succession of conventions and treaties, both with Korea and with the European Powers, has marked the transformation within six years of Japanese influence in Korea into virtual Japanese sovereignty; and only one more public act will probably be necessary to make this sovereignty in fact a sovereignty in name as well. Throughout the entire process the Korean government has of course been a pawn in the game. Korea's "treaties" with Japan have been dictated from Tokio, and have been shaped by events taking place outside of Korea. The first of the latter-day agreements between Japan and Korea was signed on February 23, 1904, two weeks after the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war. In this agreement the Korean government proclaimed its "full confidence" in the government of Japan, whose advice it promised to adopt in the improvement of administrative methods. Japan in turn promised to insure the safety and repose of the Imperial Household of Korea and definitely guaranteed the independence and territorial integrity of the Korean Empire.

Diplomacy henceforth kept pace with the fortunes of war. Japan's grip on Korea was tightened in August, 1904, when the Korean government undertook to place its financial and foreign relations in the hands of advisers recommended by the government of Japan. Then came the decisive battles of the war and the general recognition that Japan's position in Korea was henceforth predominant. The treaty of Portsmouth by anticipation, though in negative fashion, sanctioned what is only now taking place, when Russia acknowledged Japan paramount in Korean