

# The Nation.

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## The Week.

In looking about for Democratic possibilities for 1912, it is well not to overlook the most important of all possibilities, namely, the Democratic party itself. Gov. Harmon is possible; Mayor Gaynor is possible; Gov. Marshall is possible; and there are others. If only the Democracy does not become impossible by 1912, all of these men are possible. For it will probably be true in 1912, in a degree in which it has not been true since 1896, that the issue rather than the man will count. The issue may be a negative one from the Democratic point of view. It may consist chiefly in Republican misrule. But that is all the more reason why the man will count less than the party. That Harmon, Gaynor, or Marshall shall continue to shape into fine Presidential timber is therefore of far less importance than that the Democratic party shall not throw away, in the course of the next two years, the opportunity that lies close to hand. The traditional Democratic policy of killing opportunity and playing into Republican hands has been broken of late. In New York State, in Indiana, and at Washington the Democrats have recently had the choice to do the right thing or the wrong one, and have actually chosen the right. A greater opportunity will come after the Congressional elections next autumn. If the probable Democratic majority in Congress shall refrain from convincing the people that, however bad the Republican party is, the Democratic party can promise only worse, there will be a fine opening for any reasonably qualified Democratic candidate.

We cordially endorse President Taft's assertion, in the *McClure's Magazine* interview, that "the chief interest of the public in a tariff is as to whether it raises or lowers the cost of the necessities of life." This plain statement of the case is not the less useful in that it repudiates the time-worn arguments with which the protectionist campaigns of 1888 and 1890 made the country familiar. President Harrison's contemptu-

ous reference to the "cheap man inside the cheap coat," and the constant appeal to the hypothesis that high prices must mean high wages, not to mention high profits, and that therefore we ought gladly to submit to taxation for the purpose, may fairly be considered to-day as discarded arguments. This is a distinct gain in common sense, as is also the discarding of the extraordinary theory, urged by Mr. McKinley in defence of his own tariff bill of twenty years ago, that in some mysterious and occult way, "the foreigner pays the tariff tax."

The figures, however—cited by the President as proof that the tariff revision of 1909 was downward—do not appear to us convincing. The average rate of duty paid on all imported articles, since the enactment of the Payne bill, is stated to have been 12 per cent. below the average in the same months of the four preceding years. But such comparisons are not only vitally affected by an increase, for reasons peculiar to a season's trade, in imports which were not and are not taxed at all, but they depend on the movement of the various dutiable imports in relation to one another. The McKinley tariff of 1890, for example, increased import duties heavily, by the admission both of its advocates and its enemies. Yet the ratio between total import trade and duties collected from it, which had been 29.12 per cent. in the twelve months preceding the enactment of the new tariff schedules, was only 25.25 per cent. in the next twelve months, and 21.26 per cent. in the next. A question of this sort can be properly settled only by examination of the schedules themselves, with a view always to those articles in which increased taxation of the imports inevitably leads to higher prices paid by the consumer. This test has been utterly destructive to the claim of "revision downward," from the moment when the independent Republicans in Congress applied it to the schedules then under debate, to the present moment when every thrifty housewife in the country is unconsciously applying it.

Collector Loeb could have done nothing to show more conclusively his determination to execute the law than

what he effected by the rigorous application of the customs laws to ex-Gov. Rollins of New Hampshire. Not to flinch from inflicting humiliation upon a prominent man, in such a matter, is as exceptional as it is praiseworthy. There is always the argument, with which officials may salve their conscience, that the person in question has done no worse than thousands of others who have suffered no punishment. But the only way to get the law respected is to punish when you can; and this one act of the Government will do more than a thousand denunciations or warnings to prevent others from breaking the law. Along with the serious aspect of the matter there goes one which is distinctly comical. Here is a prominent high-tariff politician, a man who enthusiastically votes to compel eighty million Americans who stay at home to pay a considerable part of their income in the shape of high prices for the great cause of protecting home industries; and he comes back from a pleasure trip not only laden with thousands of dollars' worth of the dangerous foreign stuff, but trying to escape the payment of the duty by concealing it from the customs officers. Is it not to laugh?

The equipment of the speedy turbine liners Harvard and Yale with oil-burning apparatus, doing away with the use of coal, is a highly interesting development in marine engineering. More and more, on the Pacific Coast, shipping men are turning to this form of fuel, not only because it eliminates the horrors of the stoke-hole and dispenses with all but a few of the engine-room force, but because it increases the efficiency of the ship by from 5 to 8 per cent. At least this is the estimate of a well-informed writer in *Out West*; the avoidance of the necessity of drawing fires, and the steady, even heat of the liquid fuel are the prime reasons for the gain. For the passengers the advantage in comfort is very great, and the loading of fuel on the Harvard and Yale takes now an hour of pumping in place of eight hours of exhausting labor in transferring coal from barges to the ship. Oil stows, too, in about 61 per cent. of the space of coal, ton for ton, and, more than that,

the ton of oil is as efficient as two of coal. The cost of oil is, if anything, a little higher than that of coal in bulk, but the saving of labor more than offsets this.

The fight against the middleman, whom most people hold responsible for the high food prices, has begun in earnest. The farmers who organized the American Coöperative Union in St. Louis a few days ago have announced their intention of opening branches in every large city in the country, with the view of eliminating middlemen in the sale of farm products. In some European countries direct purchase from the farmer has already made considerable progress, thanks to the existence of a cheap parcels post. Consul-General Robert P. Skinner writes that in Hamburg thousands of families receive their daily pot of fresh butter from the parcels postman. The Mecklenburg farmer visits the city once a year to find customers, and returns to his home with the knowledge that his trade will be served just as carefully by the parcels post as though he were established in the heart of the city. Here we have to rely on the express companies; but outrageously high though express charges are, not a few families in this city have found that they can in this way get butter and eggs and poultry and vegetables as cheaply as at the corner grocery or butcher-shop, and usually in a much fresher and more palatable condition.

The death of John A. Kasson removes one of the last, if not the last, of the men who held high office in Washington under Lincoln. More than that, it takes away a faithful, high-minded servant of the Government in various useful capacities. From 1853 to 1860 Chairman of the Iowa Republican State Committee, he played a leading part in the drafting of the party's platform in the convention of 1860 which nominated Lincoln. Long a member of the Iowa Legislature, his varied career included, prior to 1881, two terms in Congress and four years as Minister to Austria. After two more terms in Congress he re-entered the diplomatic service as a most acceptable Minister to Germany by appointment of President Arthur, distinguishing himself while in Berlin by his usefulness as American delegate to the Congo Conference. In 1887 and 1888 Mr.

Kasson honorably represented the United States as chairman of the United States delegates to the Samoan Conference held in Berlin. His greater service was, however, as special commissioner plenipotentiary to negotiate reciprocity treaties. Under this roving commission he obtained treaties with France, England, the Argentine Republic, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and other nations during the years from 1897 to 1901. But the stupidity and indifference of Congress made these labors come to naught, Mr. Kasson finally resigning in protest. In 1898 Mr. Kasson was also a member of the American-Canadian Joint High Commission. Dignified, courteous, admirably equipped by tastes, training, and abilities for public service, Mr. Kasson was ever a rebuke to those politicians who believe that anybody can be a diplomat, and to those pessimists who used to believe that the United States could produce no diplomats to match the long-trained representatives of foreign lands.

President Butler came very close to the truth in what he told the Lake Mohonk Peace Conference:

I am one of those who look for the simplest motives in explanation of action or of conduct. My impression is that somebody makes something by reason of the huge expenditures in preparation for war. Have you ever noticed that about the time that the appropriations for military purposes are under consideration in Congress, in the House of Commons, in the Chamber of Deputies, or in the Reichstag, or just before such a time, hostilities are always on the point of breaking out in two or three parts of the world at once?

It would be a pretty dull reader of the newspapers who had not noticed this remarkable law of nature, or had not occasionally risen to the suspicion that somebody was making something out of preaching war. War is one of the glorious, inevitable things behind which skulk a host of mean motives. War means the march of national destiny, war means the inevitable swing of history, war means peace with honor, and many other noble phrases. Alas! war too often means the march of the ammunition manufacturer and the swing of the beef-packer's purse. War means the demagogue's thirst for an issue, and the jingo editor's hunger for sensation, and the young lieutenant's longing for promotion, and the gun-captain's longing to show what he can do with his new twelve-inch rifle.

Preparation of an annual index to one or several metropolitan daily newspapers, which is suggested in an article in the journal of the Special Libraries Association, is a work which the American Library Association, or the Library of Congress, might well take up, and by so doing fill a great need. The writer, Paul P. Foster, makes his plea in behalf of the editorial library and the journalist, but such a work of reference would be of real value to thousands, and the wonder is that there is none. Publication of the index to the New York *Tribune* was discontinued in 1906, and since then consultation of newspaper files has been a haphazard grubbing, in which only zeal and time could insure success. The carefully prepared index to the London *Times*, issued in monthly parts and in annual volumes, and listing every article, item, or name which appears in its columns, offers a convenient model which the compiler here might follow.

The magnificent addition that is now to be made to the resources of the Princeton graduate school may bring to a settlement the questions that were the cause of such intense controversy a few months ago. Precisely what these questions were never became quite clear to the outside world. To President Wilson's mind there was evidently contained in the dispute an issue of fundamental importance—one involving no less a question than that of the preservation at Princeton of ideals vital in a democracy. But it is to be hoped that the passage of time has resulted in a better understanding and that the great bequest of Mr. Wyman may be made the basis of a development at Princeton which will be recognized by all Americans as a welcome addition to the country's resources in the field of the higher education.

That our cheap magazines are doing some good work, few persons will deny. That along with the good work there is a great deal of matter that is unwholesome either through exaggeration or one-sidedness or an hysterical method of presentation, is an assertion that may be made with as little danger of successful challenge. Yet no less competent a critic than Mr. William Archer, writing in the *Fortnightly Review*, gives to the "uplift" work of these magazines praise that is not only extremely high,

but quite unqualified. Speaking of a certain article (with which we are not familiar) he designates it as "a picture every line of which was evidently the result of patient, penetrating investigation, and intimate personal knowledge"; and he gives like praise to an "equally masterly study" by the same hand—which has, in point of fact, by no means stood the test of subsequent examination and criticism. And speaking of the whole genus, he declares that "the sincerity and sobriety with which difficult topics are handled—the adherence to essential fact and avoidance of lurid and 'picturesque' detail—are beyond praise." Such laudation from over-sea must be very delightful to the ears of the "muck-raking" magazinists, but the description would hardly be recognized at home as everywhere applicable.

The Senate at Albany, on second consideration, has reversed its vote on the bill to provide a bond issue of \$2,500,000 to make possible the acceptance of the Harriman and other gifts offered to the people of New York State. Failure to accept this wonderful gift would have been a monumental piece of stupidity. The Palisades Park, upon which the joint New York and New Jersey Commission has been working zealously for ten years without remuneration, already stretched well up the Hudson River, nearly to Hook Mountain. As now completed it extends to Newburgh, thus maintaining intact some of the finest scenery of the Hudson and ending such vandalism as has been going on in the stone quarries of Hook Mountain and elsewhere. It will result in the removal of the new State's Prison just under way below West Point. It happens, moreover, that there is not a single large private industry or settlement to interfere with the development of this park, which bids fair to pay for itself to a considerable degree by the sale of cuttings from its splendid forests. These are now a part of the State Forest Reservation. It is an extraordinary fact that so wild and untouched a tract of land, and one full of historic associations, can be found within so short a distance of a metropolis. As Gov. Hughes wrote to Mrs. Harriman: "Great as will be the pleasure of the people at the announcement of your gift, I am sure that in the years to come there will be a constantly growing appreciation of its im-

portance to the State, and of the liberal disposition and far-sightedness that prompted it."

Monday's debate in the Senate, on the appropriation of \$25,000,000 for two new Dreadnoughts, served to elicit, so the dispatches inform us, "two historical revelations by Senator Depew." Historical revelations are read with eagerness in these days; but of these two contributions by Mr. Depew we are compelled to say that one of them reveals nothing which was not known by every well-informed man beforehand, and that the other reveals something which never happened. The first has to do with President McKinley's attitude towards the Spanish War, concerning which Mr. Depew declared that he "knew of his own knowledge" that Spain was prepared to abandon Cuba and Porto Rico if she could be assured in advance of the acceptance of her offer. The facts in this regard have been repeatedly set forth in our columns; they have been summed up by Rear-Admiral Chadwick in his recent work on the diplomatic relations of the United States and Spain. On April 10, 1898, Minister Woodford cabled from Madrid to Washington the news of the Spanish Government's assent to all the American demands, adding:

I hope that nothing will now be done to humiliate Spain, as I am satisfied that the present government is going, and is loyally ready to go, as fast and as far as it can.

On April 11, one day later, President McKinley sent to Congress a message ending thus:

The issue is now with Congress. It is a solemn responsibility. I have exhausted every effort to relieve the intolerable condition of affairs which is at our doors. Prepared to execute every obligation imposed upon me by the Constitution and the law, I await your action.

The Senator's other "revelation" was ascribed to an "intimate friend" who had imparted this information regarding the Venezuela episode of 1895:

When the President's message was promulgated, Lord Salisbury said to him: "I believe that on account of the rancor coming down from the Revolutionary war, and accentuated by certain occurrences in the civil war, America means to have a war with Great Britain at some time, and I believe now is the best time, when America has no navy." The views of the prime minister were overruled by Queen Victoria, but if Lord Salisbury had had the power possessed by some of the English prime

ministers, the issue certainly would have been tried out.

Without disparagement of the "intimate friend," we are constrained to call attention to the position of international affairs at the hour when this remarkable clash between the Queen and Lord Salisbury must be supposed to have occurred. It was an hour when England's diplomatic isolation was such as has not been witnessed at any other period in our time. France, as the subsequent Fashoda episode demonstrated, was watching England jealously. What the popular and official feeling was in Germany, the incident of the Kaiser's telegram to Kruger, four or five weeks after the Venezuela message, proved unmistakably. Russia had not forgotten 1877 and 1885. The notion, then, that an experienced English statesman was at that very moment contemplating light-heartedly collision with the United States, hardly does credit to the "intimate friend."

The sentencing of the president of the Russian Duma and of one of the principal members of that body to a term of imprisonment for participating in a duel emphasizes the disrepute which attaches in Russia to murder, or attempted murder, on a small scale. Either it is that, or else it is a case of reserving certain sports for the exclusive enjoyment of the Czar and his government, just as hunting the stag in mediæval England was reserved for the exclusive enjoyment of the King. If Halley's comet is at all interested in the recent progress of affairs in Russia, it will carry with it into stellar space the somewhat mixed impression of a great country where it is wrong to fight a duel, but where it is proper for the government to organize the wholesale murder of women and children; a country where the Czar's peace must not be infringed upon, not though thousands must be sent to the gallows by judges in whom expedition tempers justice. At the present moment Jewish families are being expelled by the hundred from Kieff and other Russian cities outside of the Pale. The fugitives must either emigrate or go to swell the mass of existing poverty in the overcrowded cities of western Russia. It means a vast amount of suffering, but it is permissible in Russia precisely because it is suffering on a large scale.



### A DEFENCE THAT PROVES TOO MUCH.

When Mr. Taft last week gave out his explanation of the Ballinger-Lawler-Wickersham affair, we made the obvious remark that if a frank statement of the facts had been promptly made when the question was first raised, "nineteenths of the pain and humiliation attending this disagreeable episode would have been avoided." But we felt it our duty to point out that, great as had been the aggravation of the trouble caused by this delay, the original facts connected with Mr. Taft's letter of exoneration were such as to justify severe criticism. We have observed that a large number of perfectly well-meaning and usually intelligent newspapers have taken the view that the President and his advisers committed an extraordinary and deplorable blunder in their policy of silence, but that in the facts themselves there was nothing whatever to regret or to censure. The antedating of Mr. Wickersham's summary and opinion, the delegation to Ballinger's subordinate of the task of preparing the case for the President, the failure to mention this detailed digest of the case as among the documents before the President when he took action, the arrival at his practical decision after only a few hours' work on an enormous mass of complex and confusing documentary material—all this was perfectly blameless and a mere matter of course; the only thing censurable was that the President, or somebody for him, did not immediately let the public know all these facts, the entire propriety of which the public would at once have recognized.

It does not seem to have occurred to any of our esteemed contemporaries who take this view of the case that it carries with it a conclusion of a most startling character. It is one thing to blunder or to use bad judgment, it is another thing to act like an imbecile. Mr. Taft, Mr. Wickersham, Mr. Ballinger, Mr. Lawler, are all of them gentlemen who have managed through long professional careers to perform duties of considerable difficulty, to attend to business of considerable importance. Now men in full possession of normal intellectual faculties do not adopt a policy of denial and evasion and obstruction to avoid producing matter which could carry with it no blame. No one man does this; four men consulting to-

gether, or having the opportunity of consulting together, certainly do not persist in such a course, week after week, month after month, without a motive. Confronted, therefore, with the alternative of adjudging these gentlemen to be utter incompetents or of inferring that there was something censurable in the matters that they were concealing, we for our part should feel strictly compelled to adopt the latter alternative, even if we had no other light upon the facts.

But the conclusion thus inevitably drawn from the first principles of human nature is amply evident on the face of the facts themselves. As we have said before, we are fully persuaded that the President believed he was doing justice in the case; but that consideration cannot justify us in suppressing the truth as to what he actually did. He received from Mr. Ballinger and Mr. Lawler, calling on him in person at Beverly, a mass of typewritten documents containing several hundred thousand words and relating to matters of great intricacy. They arrived with these documents on a Monday evening. That same night, according to his own statement, after staying up until three o'clock, he arrived at the conclusion that the charges against Ballinger were wholly unfounded. On the following day, Tuesday, he was busy in other ways, and in the evening he had a second talk with Ballinger and Lawler, and commissioned Lawler to draw up a letter as from himself, the President. This letter has now appeared in full in the report of the proceedings of the committee. It comprises, besides the expression of opinion, a detailed digest of all the evidence, made entirely from Mr. Ballinger's standpoint. Attorney-General Wickersham brought this document to Beverly, and had not seen either the full records or the President until the morning of Sunday, the 12th. On the next day, the 13th, Mr. Taft wrote the letter completely exonerating Ballinger and authorizing the dismissal of Glavis. Three months later the Senate requested the President to transmit to it "any reports, statements, papers, or documents upon which he acted in reaching his conclusions." Among the documents transmitted by the President in response to this request was an elaborate summary and opinion by the Attorney-General, filling seventy-four large

pages of printed matter and dated September 11—a document which the President did not have before him and which it was manifestly impossible for the Attorney-General to have produced or even to have roughly indicated, in the time at his disposal. And among the documents was *not* included the minute and laboriously constructed digest of Ballinger's subordinate, Lawler, prepared at the President's own request, which must inevitably have formed an important element in his disposition of the case.

There is no mystery, therefore, why all parties concerned should have desired the facts to remain secret. These facts were damaging. They were calculated, on the one hand, to deprive Mr. Ballinger of the benefit that had come to him from the President's favorable verdict, by vastly lessening the weight of that verdict with the country. And they were calculated also to do an injury to the President's own standing. Ill-judged as was the policy of delay and obstruction, it was not idiotic; it was not without a motive. The bad judgment consisted not in thinking that it would be well for all parties concerned if the facts were suppressed, but in imagining that it would be possible permanently to suppress them. That there was no bad intention on the President's part we sincerely believe. But neither regard for his good intentions nor concern for the dignity of his great office would justify us in helping to pass off upon the American people, in place of the truth, a view of the affair the inherent absurdity of which is no less patent than its disagreement with the facts.

### RAILWAYS AND THEIR PATRONS.

Throughout the prolonged discussion of the pending Railway bill in Congress there has been manifest a determination, by a large and apparently controlling element of the Congressmen of both political parties, not to relax, directly or indirectly, such barriers as already exist against arbitrary rate-making. The comment of the railways on this attitude has been generally to the effect that an unreasoning hostility has been created against one of our greatest industries. And more particularly, it has been asked why the railways should not possess unchallenged the right, which smaller industries assert and ex-