

Books and Things

VISIBLE from many points in Washington, disfiguring the Potomac waterfront, towering into the sky like two long lean curses, they will be called the McAdoo smokestacks.

Although Mr. McAdoo was not Secretary of the Treasury when the government picked out the shore of the Washington channel at the foot of Fourteenth Street as the site for a Central Heating, Lighting and Power Plant, although he merely inherited this unfortunate choice, his own obstinacy has been such that he will get no more than he deserves if the smokestacks are called by his name.

Before considering his obstinacy it may be worth while to go back a little.

It is a bad habit of the federal government to choose sites for buildings in Washington, to have plans drawn and to appropriate money, all without consulting the National Commission of Fine Arts.

On November 28th, 1913, President Wilson issued an executive order which says that "Whenever new structure are to be erected in the District of Columbia, under the direction of the federal government, which affect in any important way the appearance of the city, or whenever questions involving matters of art with which the federal government is concerned are to be determined finally, action shall not be taken until such plans and questions have been submitted to the Commission of Fine Arts."

This order, like the similar order issued by President Taft, is of course a lot better than nothing. Its defect is that it does not put the Fine Arts Commission into the game early enough. In practice it is treated as meaning that anything may be done without consulting the Commission short of the actual letting of contracts. By the time when the Fine Arts Commission has been consulted some department has almost always gone on record in favor of certain plans and a certain site. So have many senators and congressmen. What is likely to happen whenever the Fine Arts Commission disapprove what these men have approved? To official eyes the act of changing one's mind in public looks like an act of "self-stultification." Congressmen, senators and cabinet officers lose their tempers. They are in the mood to call the members of the Fine Arts Commission "self-constituted experts," which on official lips is as you know a bitter phrase.

In the present case, the Central Heating, Lighting and Power Plant case, the McAdoo smokestack case, the Fine Arts Commission were not consulted even at the late hour prescribed by the President's executive order. The contracts were let and I believe excavating was actually begun without the Commission's knowledge. Nobody in the Treasury Department was guilty of intentionally disobeying the President's executive order. The disobedience was a genuine oversight.

At its own request the Arts Commission did at last get hold of the plans and contracts. This was on January 14th of this year. On January 26th, it disapproved the plans in these words:

"From the Capitol, from the White House, from Arlington, from the Mall, from the War College and the water approach to Washington, from the Lincoln Memorial, from East and West Potomac Parks . . . the proposed plant will be a disagreeably conspicuous object in the landscape. Its close proximity to the Washington Monument will seriously affect the simple dignity of that structure and its great bulk and huge stacks will cause a deplorable change in the entire

aspect of that section of the city. Furthermore, as the location of the Lincoln Memorial by Congress in Potomac Park leaves the southern terminus of the vista from the White House southwardly toward the river the most important site for a memorial structure left in the National Capital, this site would lose much of its effect and dignity by the construction of the plant as proposed. . . .

"The Commission strongly disapproves of the plans for this structure as submitted and views with grave anxiety the location of any such plant on this site."

In this protest the Fine Arts Commission has since been supported by the American Institute of Architects, the American Federation of Arts, the American Institute of Consulting Engineers, the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, the American Society of Landscape Architects, the National Academy of Design, the National Sculpture Society, the American Civic Association and the Washington Committee of One Hundred.

In spite of these protests work at the site of the Power Plant is still going on. Senator Newlands of Nevada did his best to stop the work, and almost succeeded. The urgent deficiency bill which became law a few months ago appropriated additional money for the Power Plant and its smokestacks. Senator Newlands introduced an amendment stopping the work until the plans had been approved by the President. The Senate adopted the amendment, which was afterward killed in conference by the House conferees. Mr. McAdoo's own attitude has been steadily in favor of the waterfront site. Protests from experts have merely irritated him into bad manners.

"By some agency unknown to me," he writes to Senator Martin of Virginia, "a persistent effort has been made throughout the country to arouse architects, engineers and the public generally against what is represented as an attempt to disfigure the natural beauties of Washington. . . . In brief, an audacious attempt has been made to arouse resentment against this alleged effort to outrage the aesthetic sensibilities of the people of the country."

In other words, all that the extraordinary weight of expert opinion against Mr. McAdoo's opinion suggests to Mr. McAdoo is a suspicion that a plot exists and that the plotters are "audacious." These are the manners of a highly irritated Secretary of the Treasury. "The location" of the Power Plant, he says in this same letter to Senator Martin, "satisfies the aesthetic feelings of all reasonable men." The Fine Arts Commission and the other protesting commissions and societies are composed, you perceive, of unreasonable men. Rather an easy way of proving that Mr. McAdoo is right, don't you think? Mr. McAdoo's position in this controversy is unfortunate. He is not appearing to advantage. He has never made, but he is acting as if he believed, the following statements:

"My taste is better than that of the Fine Arts Commission."—W. G. McAdoo.

"My taste is better than that of the National Sculpture Society."—W. G. McAdoo.

"My taste is better than that of the American Institute of Architects."—W. G. McAdoo.

"My taste is better than that of the American Society of Landscape Architects."—W. G. McAdoo.

It is true, of course, that the government will lose money by stopping the work. But more money will be lost by continuing it, for when the Power Plant is finished and the smokestacks are up Congress will not wait very long before ordering their destruction. Until which happy day they will be known as the McAdoo smokestacks.

P. L.

William the Good

The Life of William McKinley, by Charles S. Olcott. In two volumes. Illustrated. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company. \$5.00.

FORTY years ago Major William McKinley, whose service in the Union army had been "gallant and meritorious," stood before the voters of the 18th Ohio district and asked to be sent as their representative to Congress. He was thirty-three years of age, had served as state's attorney for Stark county, and in a practice of nearly ten years had steadily increased an early reputation for honesty and uprightness. Nor was he unknown in political circles, for, beginning with the Hayes gubernatorial campaign in 1867, he had appeared in each canvass as a Republican orator of singular persuasiveness. He and his chief, General Hayes, who had been his regimental commander, took office, one as congressman, the other as President, in 1877. It was about this time that Hayes advised young McKinley to make a special study of the tariff. Coming from a family as well as a district long interested in the protective features of tariff-making, McKinley entered upon his congressional service with this purpose in mind.

His period of congressional service lent itself to such an investigation. With the exception of one break, from 1883 to 1885, McKinley represented his district until 1891, during a period in which the question of a reduction of the revenue raised repeatedly and with increasing emphasis the question of tariff reduction. During these twelve years McKinley was a member of an efficient majority only in his last term. The preceding years had witnessed a Democratic control in either Senate, House or the Presidency. But in the years 1889-1891 McKinley shared with Thomas B. Reed the control of the House, and together as leaders of the Republican majority they enacted more partisan legislation than had been the product of any single Congress since the close of Reconstruction. Prominent in this legislation was the tariff act of 1890 popularly known as the McKinley bill.

Although McKinley subsequently admitted that certain rates in this bill were inordinately high, he excused his action by stating that such concessions were necessary in order to pass the bill. This did not prevent him from saying of the bill just prior to its passage: "I believe in it and thus warmly advocate it because enveloped in it are my country's highest development and greatest prosperity; out of it come the greatest gains to the people, the greatest comforts to the masses, the widest encouragement for manly aspirations, with the largest rewards, dignifying and elevating our citizenship, upon which the purity and permanency of our political system depend." Here we have embodied apparently the result of this statesman's study of the tariff. The tariff was the all-important question of government and this bill pointed the way to a glorious future.

The country thought otherwise, and in the congressional election of 1890 McKinley, in common with many of his Republican colleagues, suffered defeat. In this dark hour he was prepared to place the tariff on an even higher plane. Under the caption "History Repeats Itself" he wrote: "The Proclamation of Emancipation, the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments to the Constitution, measures of incalculable value to mankind, measures of justice and right, giant's steps for humanity were followed by disaster, for the time, to the party in power. The great Resumption act which brought this country to a sound currency produced disaster to the party in power. So with every great measure which time alone can vindicate. Pas-

sion and prejudice, ignorance and wilful misrepresentation are masterful for the hour against any great public law. . . . So will it be with the tariff law of 1890. . . . Home and country will triumph in the end. Their enemies, whether here or abroad, will never be placed in permanent control of the Government of Washington, of Lincoln, and of Grant."

McKinley never returned to the House. The accession of Cleveland and the Democratic control of Congress as a result of the elections of 1892 seemed to prove McKinley a poor prophet. But presently from his place as governor of Ohio the events of the year 1893 seemed to promise the change he had anticipated. By the fall of 1894 no Republican speaker was in such great demand as the author of the tariff act of 1890. He improved the opportunity, touring sixteen states and addressing in the space of five weeks three hundred and seventy-five audiences. The overwhelming Republican victory in the congressional elections seemed truly a vindication.

For at least six years he had seemed to many more than his personal friends a man to be named for President. He now became an active candidate. Who so embodied Protection as he? His biographer says that McKinley had shown himself "the guardian angel in the halls of Congress of the industries of the country." Dolliver termed him "the advance agent of Prosperity" and Hanna undertook the organization of the pre-convention campaign.

One serious danger there was to the success of this candidacy. The rising importance of the demand for "free silver" called for a "gold" candidate. This McKinley was not, either by conviction or record. To a man of his conception of politics, the situation was met by sending an emissary to talk privately with certain leaders and prominent business men in the East. "Tell them," he said, "that if they force a declaration in favor of gold now, we shall have no support in the West. If we should favor silver now, we should gain the West and lose the East. . . . If you divide the party at the Mississippi river, the West will never yield and the election will be lost. Old party ties are strong, and if we can keep together until the convention the 'bolt' will be only a small one." The leading candidacy did much to keep the West within the party prior to the convention. The nomination of the tariff candidate held many even after the "gold" platform was adopted. As McKinley promised, the bolt was a small one. Nor did the candidate change his emphasis. He continued to assert that in thirty days or so nothing would be heard of the money question. Judge Day remarked with surer foresight "that in thirty days you will hear little else." Even McKinley, forced by Bryan's spectacular campaign, took up discussion of the issue in August.

But in the Presidency he turned again to his special subject, calling an extra session in 1897, and the Dingley tariff act became the first important product of his administration. Nor is it unexpected when we find that in his last public utterance at Buffalo he returned again to the subject that he had long identified with government itself.

Yet it is doubtful whether a reference to tariff-making in the interests of protection of industries calls to mind the McKinley known to the present generation of young men. Against his will—perhaps one might better say his inclination—McKinley became a "war President." As such he was reelected in 1900, and as such he seems surest of remembrance. Mr. Olcott has given large space to the war phase of the administration, and fortunately by access to the Cortelyou diary and the correspondence of Whitelaw Reid and John Hay as well as by inquiry among members of the