The Outlook

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IN each of the four important Republican State Conventions held last week the opponents of the free coinage of silver were completely triumphant. In South Dakota, which is now represented in Congress by a solid free-coinage delegation—three out of the four being Republicans—the Convention not only refused to indorse free coinage, but instructed its delegates to St. Louis to support Major McKinley and "sound money." In Minnesota, whose northeastern district is now represented in Congress by the ablest free-coinage Republican in that body—the Hon. Charles A. Towne—the State Convention distinctly denounced the free coinage of silver, taking the ground that it would "enormously contract the volume of currency." This Convention, like that in South Dakota, instructed its delegates to support Major McKinley, Senator Davis withdrawing his candidacy. In New York and Massachusetts anti-silver platforms were expected, but the explicitness of those adopted was in commendable contrast with the vagueness of those formulated lately in Ohio, Iowa, and even Rhode Island. The New York Convention, which instructed its delegates to St. Louis to support Governor Morton, defeating by a majority of seven to one a motion to substitute two McKinley delegates for Messrs. Platt and Lauterbach, declared in favor of the maintenance of the gold standard until there was prospect of an international agreement as to the coinage of silver. The Massachusetts Convention, which instructed its delegates to support Mr. Reed, declared its opposition to "any change in the existing gold standard, except by international agreement." "Every obligation redeemable in coin," the resolution went on, "must be paid in gold." With such a series of resolutions before us it no longer seems possible that the Republican National Convention can again adopt a platform which believers in the free coinage of silver can consistently support. It now seems probable that there will be three great parties in the field—two opposing any coinage of silver without international agreement, and the third demanding free coinage with or without international co-operation. The prospect of the fusion of the various free-coinage elements was last week greatly furthered by the platform adopted by the Kansas Populists. In this platform no reference was made to woman suffrage, or the public control of the liquor traffic, or the issue of notes secured by farm products or real estate mortgages. Even on the railroad question the Convention stopped with the following declaration: "We demand strict and effective control and supervision by the Government of all corporations performing public or quasi-public functions, and, if necessary to protect the public interests, the ownership by the Government of all public utilities." The entire platform was one to which practically every believer in the free coinage of silver and the issue of money exclusively by the General Government would assent. As Kansas Populists are the most radical in the Nation, their acceptance of such a platform indicates that a united silver party is feasible.

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The Naval Appropriation Bill which passed the House last week appropriated $32,000,000, or nearly three million dollars more than the bill of last year, seven millions more than that of the year before, and ten millions more than that of the year before the present depression began. This year's bill provides for the construction of four new sea-going coast-line battle-ships, to cost not to exceed $3,750,000 each; all to be built by American firms, and one to be built on the Pacific coast. Of course one of the principal reasons urged for increased expenditure along this line, at a time when people throughout the country are having to economize, was that Great Britain had this year increased her naval expenditure. Our increase will in turn be used in Germany, Austria, and Italy as a reason why those military powers surrounded by hostile nations should not fall far behind the appropriation which the American Republic sees fit to make, despite the security given it by its location and the far greater security given it by its traditional policy against foreign entanglements and the naval aggrandizement which leads to such entanglements. No nation any longer seems ready to set an example to other nations in the ways of peace. It is possible that the Senate or the President may heed the voice of the people if they speak out against such a worse than useless waste of the people's money.

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The United States Supreme Court, by a majority of one, has restored vitality to the Inter-State Commerce Law. That law, it will be remembered, aimed to lessen discrimination between places and to prevent discrimination between shippers. It sought to accomplish the first by forbidding railroads to charge more for a "short haul" than for a "long haul." If the roads through competition established a low rate between two great cities, it was thought that this prohibition would prevent their charging more from one of these cities to a town half way between them than for the whole distance. This aim, however, has been partially thwarted through Judge Brewer's incomprehensible decision that, while a single line could not charge more for a short distance than for a long one, two connecting lines might make such an overcharge. The prohibition of discrimination between shippers has been evaded by many secret methods which it was impossible effectively to check, after a Circuit Court had rendered a decision—doubtless correct—that railroad managers might refuse to testify in such cases, on the ground that their testimony might incriminate themselves. To cut off this method of escape from furnishing evidence, Congress in 1893 passed an act exempting railroad officials from prosecution because of any violations of the Inter-State Commerce Act concerning which they might testify. But

railroad officials refused to accept the immunity from prosecution offered by the new statute, and claimed that the law was still in violation of the clause in the Constitution declaring that no person "shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself." The case just decided by the Supreme Court was a suit against the Auditor of the Allegheny Valley Railroad, who refused to testify in relation to charges of rate discrimination against the general freight agent and treasurer of his road. He was committed to jail for contempt of court, but of course furnished bail. The decision of the Supreme Court recommits him to jail. It should be stated that Justice Brewer was one of the five who upheld the law; the others were Chief Justice Fuller and Justices Brown, Harlan, and Peckham.

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This decision is the most important rendered since that overthrowing the income tax. Its scope is stated by Chairman Morrison, of the Inter-State Commerce Commission, as follows:

"The Court has given us to-day a power we have been waiting eight years for. It has given us the power to get testimony without which we could not enforce the law. Knowing that the Supreme Court is behind the law, railroad officers will not be so free to violate it as they have been heretofore. I don't think there will be any doubt about the enforcement of the law in the future. The favored corporations that have undoubtedly been getting lower rates than less favored ones will now have to stand on an equal footing with the rest."

The decision of the majority of the Court, prepared by Justice Brown, is so sound from the standpoint of morality and public policy that we cannot believe that it will ever be reversed because of any technically legal reasoning. The strongest argument against the constitutionality of the law in question was that a witness still testified "against himself" when his testimony degraded him in the public estimation, even if he were exempted from public prosecution; upon this subject the Court held as follows:

"A person who commits a criminal act is bound to contemplate the consequences of exposure to his good name and reputation, and ought not to call upon the courts to protect that which he has himself esteemed to be of so little value. The safety and welfare of an entire community should not be put into the scale against the reputation of a self-confessed criminal, who ought not, either in justice or in good morals, to refuse to disclose that which may be of great public utility in order that his neighbors may think well of him. If he secures legal immunity from prosecution, the possible impairment of his good name is a penalty which it is reasonable he should be compelled to pay for the common good. . . . To say that, notwithstanding his immunity from punishment, he would incur public odium and disgrace from answering these questions seems too much like an abuse of language to be worthy of serious consideration. But even if this were true, under the authorities above cited, he would still be compelled to answer, if the facts sought to be elucidated were material to the issue."

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The trustees of the New York Public Library, representing the consolidated library interests of the city, have applied for the reservoir property covering the block bounded by Fifth and Sixth Avenues, Forty-first and Forty-second Streets, as a site for the great building which will be needed to shelter the Astor, Lenox, and Tilden collections. This is the second logical step in the creation of a great metropolitan library. The trustees have studied the whole city with reference to the best possible site for such an institution, and their judgment as to location will undoubtedly be indorsed by the popular judgment of the city. The proposed site is likely to be central for an indefinite period of time when one remembers that the real New York is spreading out on all sides from Manhattan Island. The trustees not only ask for the property as a gift from the city, but they also ask for an appropriation of two and a half millions of dollars for the erection of a suitable building. They ought to have both the land and the money. New York stands in sore need of such a library as is now within its reach, and the trustees will have no right to house such a library in anything less than a building of noble architectural and artistic quality. The new building of the Boston Free Public Library has set a shining mark. It is due to the New York of the future that the metropolitan library should be as nobly housed, and that the new building should be an education in architecture, sculpture, and mural decoration. The opportunity is a great one; it is really National in its importance. We cannot believe that the trustees or the city will fail to appreciate it.

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The Greater New York Bill has passed, as we understand the matter, in the absurdly inconsistent form in which it was proposed at our last comment upon it. Its first section declares that the cities and their environs are united. A second section declares that their government is to remain as now—that is, that they are to continue to be three cities. A third section provides for the appointment of a Commission to draft a charter for the new municipality. Of course this is, to use a common phrase, "putting the cart before the horse." To unite nearly three millions of people under a constitution yet to be framed is an absurd political anomaly. The bill is now before the Mayors of New York, Brooklyn, and Long Island City. If either one of these Mayors disapproves the bill, it must pass the Legislature again, but it can be passed by a simple majority. It is not, however, by any means certain that the Legislature will pass the bill over such a disapproval. A vigorous effort is now being made to unite all the cities in the State in a concerted movement for municipal reform, and if this effort is successful, it is not improbable that the Legislature may yield to the pressure, and may provide for a Commission to frame a charter and leave the question of its adoption and the consequent consolidation to be determined after the charter has been framed and offered for consideration. It is hardly necessary to reaffirm our profound conviction that no such charter should be imposed on these cities without submitting it to them for adoption and rejection, exactly as a State Constitution is referred to the people of the State.

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Now that the Raines Bill is a law, the metropolitan papers are permitting its helpful provisions to become known. While the fate of the measure was still uncertain, the "respectable" dailies seemed to vie with the disreputable in abusing it. Even well-meaning weeklies joined in the general clamor. But now that the fight is finished and the liquor-dealers are to some extent defeated, a calmer atmosphere prevails. Rational discussion is now the rule, and men who opposed the bill for no other reason than that the "Tribune" and the "Evening Post" opposed it, learn to their surprise from the latter journal that "from the time the Raines Bill made its first appearance there has been a consensus of opinion among all respectable people in favor of all its restrictive features." Concerning its political features it now merely states that it is "not so clear." This attitude is thoroughly reasonable. A part of the power over the saloons formerly exercised by the local Excise Boards will be transferred to the State Commissioner, and unless Colonel Lyman, who has just been appointed to that position by Governor Morton, shall prove to be an honorable public servant, we shall have a Republican political machine in place of the Tammany, Troy, Buffalo, and other usually Democratic machines destroyed. Concerning Colonel Lyman we know little. Mr. Platt and the machine politicians