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MOST important among the political conventions last week was that of the Maine Republicans, whose platform places Speaker Reed before the party as the leader of the anti-silver forces opposed to further compromise or evasion upon the currency issue. The entire platform was a characterization of Mr. Reed, and its important clause ran as follows:

"He is opposed to the free and unlimited coinage of silver, except by international agreement, and until such agreement can be obtained he believes the present gold standard should be maintained. He has always been uncompromisingly for the maintenance of the highest National credit by the utmost good faith towards the public creditor, not for the creditor's sake, but for the Nation's sake, for the sound reason that the most valuable possession of any Nation in time of war or distress, next to the courage of its people, is an honorable reputation. Whoever pays with honor borrows with ease."

This declaration is in sharp contrast with the currency plank adopted by the Maine Republicans two years ago, explicitly indorsing "bimetallism," and demanding "a suitable currency, abundant for all wants." It is also in sharp contrast with the somewhat confused concessions to the advocates of silver made by Speaker Reed when the wave of silver sentiment swept over the Republican party after the repeal of the Sherman Act. It is certainly another striking sign of the general feeling that the time for compromise is past. The same feeling was manifested by the Republican conventions in New Jersey, Kentucky, and North Dakota. In the last two States the platform opposed the free coinage of silver until international co-operation could be secured, while in New Jersey no reference was made to so much as the possibility of international action. In the New Jersey Convention the McKinley element was surprisingly strong, but was unable to instruct the delegates at large to the National Convention to support its candidate. In Kentucky the supporters of Governor Bradley were slightly in the majority, the McKinley supporters having met with a series of defeats near the close of the campaign. In North Dakota the delegates were instructed to support Mr. McKinley. So also were they in Nebraska, where the platform was of the Ohio type. In the Democratic conventions which were held last week in Washington, Colorado, and Missouri, the free-coinage element was everywhere in the majority. In Missouri this element was even able to elect twenty-four of the twenty-eight delegates from St. Louis, and the Convention was practically unanimous. Mr. Bland was nominated for the Presidency. In the Prohibition Convention in Michigan the majority of the committee on resolutions reported a platform ignoring the silver question, but the minority report in favor of free coinage at the old ratio was adopted by an overwhelming majority.

The vote in the House Committee on Territories in favor of Statehood for Arizona is even more surprising than the

vote a week earlier in favor of Statehood for New Mexico. It is true that Arizona is only half as illiterate as New Mexico, but, in spite of that, her percentage of white illiteracy is three times as great as the average for the rest of the Union. More than one adult out of five can neither read nor write, and a large part of those possessing the specified degree of education are Mexican in speech, in thought, and in sentiment. What makes the vote in favor of Arizona more surprising than the vote in favor of New Mexico is that her population is less than half as great. Upon the basis of population she would be entitled to only one-half of one Representative in the lower House of Congress; yet it is proposed to give her the same number of United States Senators as is possessed by the largest States. What is singular about the House Committee's vote is that the extension of the privilege of Statehood to Arizona as well as New Mexico received the support of representatives of New York, Pennsylvania, and Iowa. As was noted last week, these are the States of Platt, Quay, and Clarkson, and the signs multiply that these party managers have decided upon the admission of these two Territories as a piece of party strategy. As New Mexico would probably be a free-coinage State, and Arizona would almost certainly be one, there is some doubt as to the motive prompting anti-silver leaders to urge this policy. It seems possible, however, that some agreement has been reached as to the way in which the Representatives of the proposed States shall vote in case the choice of the next President is thrown into the House of Representatives.



It is not often that a State official blocks a plan of his party colleagues to increase the amount of patronage at their disposal, but State Comptroller Roberts, of New York, has a second time rendered this inestimable service. After consulting four prominent lawyers, he has decided not to pay the salaries of subordinates of the State Excise Commissioners appointed without competitive examinations. The Constitution, Comptroller Roberts is advised, requires that appointments shall be governed by competitive examinations whenever practicable, and therefore the legislative act making appointments upon the excise force "confidential" was a violation of the fundamental law of the State. In order to avoid the difficulty presented by the Comptroller's public-spirited position, the party managers are urging a measure to take the payment of the Excise Commissioners' force out of the Comptroller's hands. It is to be hoped that this thoroughly vicious expedient can be defeated before the Legislature or through the Governor's veto; but, if not, the Constitution remains, and private citizens have power to appeal to the highest courts to prevent any public official from making the proposed payments. Reliance upon the courts, however, is not the general attitude to be assumed by Civil Service Reformers at the present crisis. Measures are being pushed to take

the offices already classified as competitive out of the control of the general Civil Service Commissioners of the State and the principal cities, and place them under the control of special boards of examiners in each department of the service. This is simply the spoilsman's policy of divide and conquer. It is impossible for the public in State or city to watch the character of appointments to half a dozen different boards, and the examinations that would shortly be in use would let in every one whom the head of the department wished to let in, and keep out every one he wished to keep out. Civil Service Reform means the control of appointments by general qualifications as opposed to personal favoritism, and in case the appointing officer is allowed to prescribe the examinations to govern his appointments, personal favoritism becomes entrenched behind the supposed bulwarks of reform.

The consolidation of the Astor and Lenox Libraries with the Tilden Library Fund will give New York City a magnificent reference library for the use of scholars, special students, and literary workers. So far as is known, however, this great library will not undertake the work of furnishing home reading for the general public. New York and Brooklyn are in this respect a generation behind Boston and Chicago. In both the former cities free circulating libraries exist, but they are wholly inadequate to supply the increasing demand, and they have been maintained by private enterprise and beneficence; while Boston is circulating nearly 2,000,000 volumes a year from its splendid Public Library, and Chicago about 1,000,000 volumes. The history of the New York Free Circulating Libraries shows that every facility for home reading which has been offered has been most eagerly improved. Judge Howland, in an address before a meeting lately held to present the needs of these libraries, pointed out that while sixteen years ago no one in New York could procure a book to read except by buying, stealing, or borrowing from a friend, last year 81,000 books were lent by the circulating libraries to 654,000 readers. Beginning with a slender collection of books, brought together by a few ladies who were trying to interest working-girls in reading, branch libraries, one after another, have been established in different parts of the city. Liberal gifts from Mr. Ottendorfer, Miss Catherine Bruce, Mr. George Vanderbilt, and others have made possible large extensions of the work. So great has been the popular demand for books that when the Harlem branch was started, Judge Howland tells us, "on one Saturday night there was nothing left on the shelves except a book on pickles, a dictionary and a directory, which one applicant said were wanting in interest and lacking in continuity of thought." In every way it is made easy for the common people to obtain the privileges of the libraries; and that the confidence shown has been justified is proven by the fact that last year only one book was lost by theft. Some assistance is given to the circulating libraries by the city, but there has been no fair and just recognition of the duty of the public to suitably maintain this form of educational work. The time has now come when this work must be radically extended by the formation of new branches and the improvement of existing libraries. The system of local branches is undoubtedly the correct one for circulating libraries, but a central organization and intelligent co-operation are imperative. It is of the utmost importance that the metropolis should no longer be distanced by many of the smaller cities of the country in the matter of a free public library. Whether in connection with the consolidated reference libraries or independently, provision must

be made for an adequate system of furnishing books to be read at their homes by the people.

Citizens of New York who care for the higher life of the city have now the opportunity of showing their interest in a practical way. Nearly four years ago a friend of Barnard College offered that institution \$100,000 to be used in erecting a building for college purposes, on condition that the College should possess itself of an unencumbered property upon which to make its permanent home within the term of four years. In three weeks that term will expire. Meanwhile the College has purchased a noble property on Morningside Heights, in the neighborhood of Columbia College and of the other institutions which are to make that part of the city the crown of New York. The property was purchased advantageously, but it had to be taken at very short notice, and a mortgage of \$100,000 was left upon it. This mortgage must be paid in order to secure the gift of the building. \$65,000 remains to be raised within the next three weeks. Those who know how well Barnard has already done its work, how necessary it is to the completion of the educational opportunities of the city, how many girls have received at its hands a college education which would otherwise have been denied them, will find it hard to believe that the opulent city of New York will be deaf to this appeal. Barnard has long passed the experimental stage. It has demonstrated its right to live; first, by showing that its life is essential to the higher life of the city; and, next, by showing that it knows how to make the best of its life.

Austin Abbott, LL.D., Dean of the New York University Law School, died at his home in this city on Sunday morning last. He was the second of the four sons of Jacob Abbott, his brothers being the late Benjamin Vaughan Abbott; the Rev. Lyman Abbott, pastor of Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, and editor-in-chief of *The Outlook*; and the Rev. Edward Abbott, rector of St. James's Church, Cambridge, Mass., and editor of the "*Literary World*," of Boston. Aside from personal ties, he stood in a very close relationship to *The Outlook*. He was a frequent contributor to its columns, and his advice and counsel were often sought in the field in which his experience was so wide, his knowledge so ample, and his judgment so sound. Dr. Austin Abbott inherited from his father, Jacob Abbott, tireless industry, steadiness of will, a judicial temper, and a clear, simple, and unaffected style. Born in Boston in December, 1831, he received his early education in that city, in Roxbury, and in Farmington, Me., removing to this city in 1843. Here, under his father's direct supervision, he prepared for college, entering the University of the City of New York, and graduating from that institution in 1851. Two years later he was admitted to the bar of this State, and began the practice of law in partnership with his brother Benjamin Vaughan, Lyman joining the firm not long afterward. He had no sooner entered upon his active career as a lawyer than he began that work of annotation, digest, and comment in the department of jurisprudence which he kept up, almost without intermission, to the day of his death. He was an indefatigable student, and he kept himself thoroughly abreast both of the development of the law and of the practice by statute and by decision. His books on legal procedure have long been text-books in the hands of law students throughout the country. His unusual legal scholarship was constantly drawn upon in the active practice of his profession, and he was associated with the trial of many notable cases.