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EDITORIAL

A Delectable Presidential Controversy.

Imagine two full grown men trying to climb a greased pole at a county fair to snatch some tempting prize at the top. If your imagination can stand the strain, you will have a picture of the Presidential contest between Taft and Roosevelt. Your fantastic picture will gain in verisimilitude if you imagine the poll-climbers as old chums whose self-absorption in pursuit of the prize has got them to scratching and clawing, kicking, pushing, punching and pulling, and exchanging uncomplimentary remarks while incidentally distributing valuable information confidentially acquired. In itself this Presidential exhibition is disgusting; yet it may be worth enduring for its disclosures.



Mr. Roosevelt shows his accurate knowledge of Mr. Taft when he describes him as a man who "means well," but who "means well feebly," and who in his administration "has been under the influence of men who are neither well meaning nor feeble." Mr. Roosevelt is also to be credited with penetration when he says "it is this quality of feebleness in a normally amiable man which preeminently fits such a man for use in high office by the powers of evil." But did not Mr. Roosevelt, after years of intimate association with this amiable man who "means well feebly," and in no ignorance whatever of the fact that "powers of evil" eager to use such a man swarm about the Presi-

dential chair—did he not thrust this feeble-meaning and amiable man, with his pre-eminent fitness for the use of such powers, into that very chair? Nevertheless, not until Mr. Taft got in Mr. Roosevelt's way on the greased pole with its coveted prize at the top, did Mr. Roosevelt disclose his knowledge of Mr. Taft's pre-eminent and dangerous weakness.



Mr. Taft's portrait of Mr. Roosevelt is as true as Roosevelt's of him. With reference to the trusts, for instance, who can reasonably dispute Mr. Taft's description of Mr. Roosevelt's anti-trust policy? He observes that Mr. Roosevelt "is going to smash the bad trusts and he is going to protect the good trusts," but "gives no other guide than that of Executive discretion." And who can deny the truth of Mr. Taft's characterization of such a policy as amounting "in the end to nothing but the establishment of a benevolent despotism"? A despotism Mr. Roosevelt's policy exactly appears to be, when the froth and fume are wiped off his utterances; and as for its benevolence—well, we have Mr. Roosevelt's word for that.



In this interesting even if repugnant contest, Mr. Taft shows to better advantage in point of form, Mr. Roosevelt in point of agility. Whether hypocritical or not, the former makes an effort at any rate at dignity. He appears throughout in the role of an amiable aristocrat, well meaning but obtuse; the latter is as frisky as a light weight champion sparring for a chance to punch a heavy weight under the chin. Mr. Roosevelt displays no more dignity than a circus monkey at feeding time. This might be pardoned, of course, if he offered anything in place of it; for dignity is not the most indispensable quality for a President. It should be held in higher esteem, however, than unconcealed egotism and unrestrained invective. It ought not to be of lower esteem than Mr. Roosevelt's plentiful output of what Mr. Taft fairly summarizes as "an iteration and reiteration of high purpose without offering any practical solution to the difficulties he proposes to overcome."



It is difficult to believe that the Republican party will be very keen now to nominate either Mr. Roosevelt or Mr. Taft. It could hardly expect to elect Mr. Taft in the face of the grave accusations against him of his own political sponsor, administrative confidant, personal chum and immediate predecessor in the Presidential chair.

What better campaign material against Mr. Taft could the Democrats desire than quotations from Mr. Roosevelt's Massachusetts speeches? And how much stronger would Mr. Roosevelt's nomination be in face of the exposures of him Mr. Taft has made? His friendly discrimination in favor of the Steel trust and the Harvester trust were known before, in a way; but they are known now in a telling way. Disgraceful, therefore, and disgusting as this conspicuous personal quarrel between Roosevelt and Taft has got to be, it may serve the highly desirable purpose of thrusting them both out of the running. No harm could come of that. To find a candidate in any party more feeble in well-meaning than Mr. Roosevelt describes Mr. Taft to be, or one with a concept of Executive responsibility leading more directly to despotism than both Taft and Roosevelt show Mr. Roosevelt to be, is almost impossible and quite improbable.



Benjamin Franklin and Free-trade.

When in the palmy Big Business days of McKinleyism, the doctrine of Protection traveled in seven-league boots proclaiming its patriotism with a loud voice; one of its stump speakers—the late Congressman Horr of Michigan—named Benjamin Franklin as a Protectionist. The announcement shocked some of Mr. Horr's auditors. They were sure that Franklin had never been a Protectionist, yet hesitated at drawing inferences derogatory to Mr. Horr, and one of them looked the matter up. Turning the index pages of a set of Franklin's works, what was his amazement to find a line that seemed fully to sustain Mr. Horr's ascription to Franklin of Protection doctrines. The line ran somewhat in this wise: "Protection encourages commerce." But upon referring to the text thus indicated in the index, it appeared that what Franklin had written was: "Protection *from pirates* encourages commerce." Of course that is true, but it is not Protection doctrine; it is Free-trade doctrine. There is no worse form of piracy against which commerce needs protection than Protection; for Protection is piracy under the sanction of law.



That Benjamin Franklin really was a Freetrader is further evident from an anonymous tract entitled "Principles of Trade," which may be found in the Congressional Library. "A Well Wisher to His Country" is the only authentic signature; but there appears to be internal evidence of Franklin's own authorship. Following is the text of the tract:

Perhaps, in general, it would be better if Govern-