

The Public

Seventh Year.

CHICAGO, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1904.

Number 350.

LOUIS F. POST, Editor.

Entered at the Chicago, Ill., Post Office as second-class matter.

For terms and all other particulars of publication, see last page.

Now that the details of the vote at the recent Presidential election are reported with substantial fullness and accuracy, the political significance of the result may be reasonably inferred.

These details prove, what has all along seemed evident to us (p. 497) from the simple fact of the failure of Roosevelt's tremendous plurality to evoke any of the ordinary signs of enthusiasm, that this plurality expressed no special popular liking for him or his party, but was a rebuke to the opposing party. Although Roosevelt's plurality was in round numbers, 2,500,000 (over 1,500,000 more than McKinley's in 1900), the vote cast for him was only 400,000 larger than that cast for McKinley, and the total vote of the election was actually less, by 455,000, than the total vote when McKinley was elected.

It is not to the large Roosevelt plurality that we must look for the meaning of the election, but to the small vote for Parker. His total vote in round numbers was 5,000,000—a full 1,250,000 less than the vote for Bryan in 1900. Yet Parker himself is in most if not all personal respects the superior of Roosevelt. His weakness was not so much in his personality as in his political associations and management. He stood in popular estimation, not altogether justly perhaps, as the candidate of the plutocratic faction of the Democratic party. It was this attitude that Democratic voters in vast numbers resented. The lesson of the election, so far as it con-

cerns the two principal parties, is manifestly this: When plutocracy bargains for the organization of the Democratic party, the voting strength of the party does not go into the bargain. Not to reward the Republican party, but to discipline the Democratic party,—that was the motive of the overwhelming plurality for Roosevelt.

With reference to side parties, the significance of the Presidential vote is equally plain. The People's party, whose managers had predicted a vote for Watson as large as that for Weaver in 1892, got only 125,000, which is nearly 1,000,000 less than Weaver got. In the State of New York its vote is barely half the vote of 1892 for Weaver. As compared with the vote for the "middle-of-the-road" faction in the entire country in 1900, the vote of the united party this year is only 75,000 more. When we consider the votes that Watson received from Democrats who would not vote for Parker and could not vote for Roosevelt, it is evident that the People's party has made no disclosure of any popular strength of its own. The same observations apply to the Prohibition party, which comes in with a vote of 248,000. Although this is an increase of 38,000 over the vote in 1900, and of 116,000 in 1896, it is a loss of 16,000 relatively to the vote of 1892. The Socialist party polls 393,000 and the Socialist-Labor party 34,000, a total of 427,000. The expectations of the former had risen as high as 1,000,000 for its own candidate alone; and since the election its organs have published estimates of 600,000 down to 500,000. The aggregate increase is great in percentage over the vote of 1900, when the total vote of both parties was only 125,000; but all this gain, and more too, was made by the Socialist party

alone, the Socialist-Labor party having lost over 5,000. When the increased vote of all these parties is compared with the total vote, it exhibits few elements of encouragement to side-party politics. The entire vote of them all is less than 800,000, which is a scant 6 per cent. of the total vote of the country, and only two-thirds of that part of the Democratic vote which Bryan polled and Parker lost.

It is not to be expected that side-party enthusiasts will draw from these election returns their very obvious political lessons. For of all partisans your side-party partisan is the most intense. He condemns old party partisanship with unrestrained vigor; but his own partisanship is often so absorbing as to make him, relatively to the perpetuation of his little party, almost indifferent to the advance of its cause. While, therefore, partisans of side parties may be blind to the lessons of the recent election, men who think they see in the slightly increased vote of these parties a reason for adopting side-party tactics, may find it worth their while to reflect. If, for example, side parties which stand, as all these parties do, for programmes that appeal in some degree and with more or less intensity to a large proportion of the American people, and which, after years of propaganda and organization, with the leading candidates of three of them men of great (two of very great) popularity without as well as within their respective parties, and with one of the two great parties so demoralized that its voters abandoned it by hundreds upon hundreds of thousands—if such side-parties cannot poll more than 800,000 votes out of an actual total vote of 13,500,000, and a voting population of 15,000,000, what can be hoped of the political tactics of

trying to manufacture side-parties? When political conditions are ripe for a side-party, it will spring up and quickly crowd one of the two principal parties out of the political arena. But until then, side-parties, though they may be useful as political schools, or entertaining as political toys, will be useless or worse than useless as political factors.

There has been in the newspapers a good deal of callow criticism of Bryan's proposition for State ownership of railroads. Youthful publicists have pointed out with playful pen the absurdity of changing cars at every State line. This may be excellent Greek-letter-society fooling, but unfortunately it has fooled some who are beyond the horse-play age. Mr. Bryan's proposition neither contemplates nor involves a change of cars at State lines. Cars would cross from State to State without bumping up against the boundaries, just as they do now. The proposition has no such practical disadvantages as are thoughtlessly urged against it, and it has at least one tactical and one political advantage. Its political advantage is that it would tend to prevent a centralization of control at Washington. Its tactical advantage—and this is most important at present—is that the public ownership of railroads could begin as soon as one State favored it. There would be no necessity for converting the whole nation. Bryan's proposition offers, also, at least one more advantage. It would open the way for the adoption of better methods of public ownership, if better methods there are. Whether our aim be State ownership and operation, or national ownership and operation, or rail highways (both national and State) open to competitive operation—which seems to us the ideal method,—the line of least political resistance to the accomplishment of the object is the State ownership plan which Mr. Bryan proposes.

Washington dispatches report

that the treasury looters who have been at work for years trying to get ship subsidies are to be rewarded at last. Congress and the President contemplate giving them from \$1.50 to \$5.00 a ton on the capacity of every American ship doing foreign trade. They have been obliged to compromise, however; for they are to get this, say the dispatches, not as a "subsidy," but only as a "subvention." Ah, ha!

On the question of local self-government President Roosevelt is in alignment with George Wyndham, British chief secretary for Ireland, rather than Redmond, the Irish leader. Mr. Wyndham says that the British parliament has done for Ireland all that an Irish parliament could have done. This is what Mr. Roosevelt says of Congress with reference to the Philippines. Now consider Mr. Redmond's pointed reply:

Even if it were true, Ireland would still demand its own parliament and would prefer to be badly governed by its own people than to be well governed by aliens.

In that reply Mr. Redmond strikes the keynote not only of just government but of good government. No matter how good your superimposed government, a proud people will rebel against it and the character of a tractable people will wither under it. It is as true of a people as of an individual, that they must make their own character or they will have none. Bad home government is better than good alien government, because it alone gives the common experience that makes for common wisdom.

President Eliot criticises trades unions for attempting to restrict the output—to limit production. He characterizes this as one of the chief defects of trades unionism. And so it is. But why attack trades unionism for adopting a prevailing economic philosophy, and trying to protect workmen from the oppressive conditions which, according to that philosophy, result from not restricting output? Did President Eliot

never hear of "overproduction"? This is not a labor fad. On the contrary, for a hundred years the working poor have been taught by "their betters" that "overproduction" is the natural cause of poverty—the more you produce from nature the less nature gives you. What so reasonable, then, as that labor unions should try to limit output so as to avoid "overproduction" and escape its somewhat illogical penalty of poverty? Why blame the unions? Why not blame the college professors, and preachers, and editors, and Congressmen, and manufacturers, and merchants, who teach this doctrine of "overproduction," and practice restrictions for their own protection? Why not blame the Republican party, whose policy is one of restricting output—the output of our importers and exporters? Why not blame land monopolists, who raise the value of land by keeping it out of market, thereby restricting output and preventing "overproduction"? Why is it that labor unions must bear the brunt of all criticism for doing for the protection of labor only what is ignored, if not approved, by men of President Eliot's class when done by "business" men for the protection of monopolists? Has President Eliot called trust mongers to task for restricting output, quite as bitterly as he criticises labor leaders for that offense?

A San Francisco employers' paper, bitterly hostile to labor unions, carries this motto at its head: "The right of man to live, the right of man to work." That is an excellent motto. Let its principle be applied impartially, and not against labor unions alone, and there will be no longer a labor question in our country. It is because our laws deny "the right of man to work," and therefore deny "the right of man to live," that there is so much undeserved poverty and so much unearned wealth in the land. Out of its own mouth is this anti-labor paper condemned.

"He would have the poor meet the rich, and for an afternoon at