

The Public

Fifth Year.

CHICAGO, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1902.

Number 244.

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.

The general character of President Roosevelt's message is reflected in its reference to the Philippine policy of his party. Its exalted author says of that policy that "we have not gone too far" but "we have gone to the limit." According to this veracious state paper, everything has been nicely fixed by Mr. Roosevelt's party so as to be just about right. His party seems to him to keep the middle state, leaning neither on this side nor on that. It holds affairs in perfect equilibrium.

In regard to prosperity the balance has been effected with such great delicacy of adjustment that even so much as a hostile wink might easily produce disastrous consequences. Though Mr. Roosevelt is considerate enough to admit that Republican prosperity is not the creature of law, he claims for the laws—American protective tariff laws, of course—that they have been instrumental in creating the conditions that make prosperity possible, and earnestly admonishes Congress that by unwise legislation it would be easy to destroy prosperity. A mere menace to protectionism, without so much as touching its sacred substance with hostile hand, "would produce," says the equilibrative Mr. Roosevelt, "paralysis in the business energies of the community."

This claim that protection is instrumental in making prosperity possible is certainly not over-regardful of "the limit," in view of the fact that countries which have no nicely adjusted tar-

iff protection are as prosperous as our own. And though the example of those countries did not confront Mr. Roosevelt, his own common sense ought to tell him that while legislation might check general prosperity it is only such as is restrictive that does so. Legislation that repeals restriction has the opposite effect. This may check the prosperity of the few, but only because it expands the prosperity of the many. Privilege is dependent for prosperity upon restriction; it must be protected. But productive industry suffers under restriction; it wants no protection, except against pirates. What it needs is freedom.

One thing about the President's message in its references to the tariff is highly gratifying. He asserts the fixity of the principle of protection as our national policy. This view of American politics is either true or it is not. If true, then the party to be perpetually intrusted with its conservation is Mr. Roosevelt's. If protection is our fixed principle, those Republicans are right who insist that when the tariff is altered in detail it must be altered by the friends of the principle. That leaves no room in American politics for a tariff-tinkering party. Protection is either good policy or bad, a sound principle or a vicious one. On this issue the people can divide into parties. They can be protectionists or free traders; they cannot be protectionists on one side and assistant protectionists on the other. Mr. Roosevelt leaves no room for cavilling. Protection is our permanent policy, as he proclaims; or it is not, as those who oppose his policy must maintain. His position here is highly gratifying because its tendency is to force the Democratic party to be openly and unreservedly what it is in spirit—the free trade party.

In a homily on capital and labor in his message the President says many true things. But characteristically he says them all in the abstract. In the concrete these same good things seem to have no meaning for him. For instance, he observes that "every employer, every wage worker, must be guaranteed his liberty and his right to do as he likes with his property or his labor so long as he does not infringe upon the rights of others." What could be truer than that? It is a universal principle, just as Mr. Roosevelt assumes it to be, and as sound in morals as the eighth commandment, of which it is an expression. But Mr. Roosevelt, though he speaks with the air of a Moses at the foot of Sinai, doesn't believe in the sentiment, if he understands it. Either that, or else he complacently stultifies himself. For the man who understands and believes in that sentiment cannot be a protectionist without stultification. If everyone "must be guaranteed his liberty and his right to do as he likes with his property or his labor so long as he does not infringe upon the rights of his neighbor," then he must be guaranteed his liberty and his right to exchange his property or his labor as freely with a Canadian, a Mexican, a European, an African or an Asiatic as with a fellow citizen of his own. He infringes no one's rights by preferring to trade his property or his labor with another, though the other be a foreigner. Yet the purpose of protection, the principle of which Mr. Roosevelt adopts, is to prevent just that freedom in the use of property and labor. It aims not to guarantee men the right to do with their property and their labor what they like, but to compel them, on pain of forfeiture of some of their property and labor, to do what special business interests demand. The

only tariff policy that accords with the property rights that Mr. Roosevelt thinks he believes in is the policy of free trade.

Of the President's recommendation for the shackling of trusts, nothing better can be said than that it is "powerful weak." The one thing that could be done by Congress to cripple trust monopoly he opposes, because it would conflict with the protection policy of his party. It will be interesting to observe the disposition that his party in Congress makes of the recommendation he does submit. The responsibility now rests there for action against the trusts. Mr. Roosevelt will not prosecute under the existing anti-trust law because he thinks it inadequate, and asks Congress for one that will cover the ground. Now watch for the bill that Congress enacts. Watch sharp!

Any comment upon the President's message would be defective if it ignored his revolting references to the Philippines. Think of an American president, the chief servant of a people committed to the proposition that all men are created equal—think of his officially boasting that this government has conferred upon the people of a peaceful republic which it had wantonly conquered and crushed by force of arms, something more than ordinary Oriental freedom! The Czar of Russia or the Sultan of Turkey might make such a boast. The Emperor of Germany can make it. So can the King of England and Emperor of India. And has our republic lived to so little purpose that it can claim no greater credit for the extension of the guarantees of liberty over the world than can be claimed for kings and emperors, czars and sultans? Then have we fallen indeed. From Washington with his admonition that we spread liberty abroad by example at home and not through foreign entanglements, and Lincoln who seemed a second incarnation of Jefferson, down to Roosevelt who turns for his highest standards of liberty for Orientals to Oriental despots and

European potentates, is a long, long descent in the evolution of democracy.

But for one thing there would be something hopeful and inspiring in Mr. Roosevelt's truly democratic letter regarding appointments of Negroes to office. That one thing, however, deadens enthusiasm and puts a check upon hope. It is the fact that experience has proved his ability to say so many good things which he doesn't very strenuously mean. Ever since Mr. Roosevelt swapped his convictions, away back in 1884, for a political career, to which single-eyed he has since sedulously devoted himself, his good words have been subject to a usurer's discount. So with his excellent letter on the Negro question one is forced to wonder whether it's author may not have had in view more the possibilities of Negro delegations to the next national convention than the principle of equal rights for God's image in ebony.

Abram S. Hewitt has done at last what all Democrats of his kind will have to do and what he ought to have done long ago. He has stopped masquerading as a democrat by publicly announcing his withdrawal from the Democratic party.

Mr. Hewitt was never a democrat. A pro-slavery man, he belonged to the Democratic party when it had least title to be regarded as democratic; a plutocrat, he afterwards tried to secure for it the good will of American plutocracy. Frustrated in this purpose by the superior attractions which Mr. Hanna offered, and the stubborn resistance of men like Bryan, Mr. Hewitt voted for its plutocratic adversary in 1896 and 1900, while still professing to it the allegiance he now renounces. In 1896 the act was pardonable, for the economic form of the issue obscured the political significance of the contest. But there was no valid excuse for a real democrat in 1900. The formal secession of such a man is a good thing for the democracy of the Dem-

ocratic party. The fact that he was "a life-long Democrat" is a shabby plea. For a man of his advanced age to boast of being "a life long Democrat" is to boast of having been an apologist for human slavery.

The advantage to the party of losing the support of such men as Mr. Hewitt is not because the party has a superfluity of support, let us say by way of answer to the sneers of their apologists who ask whether the party has so many votes it can afford to spare any. By Mr. Hewitt's confession it would appear that the party has not been getting their votes any way. But even if it had been getting their votes, their open opposition would be preferable to their treacherous affiliation. This is not because votes are not needed. It is because those men demoralize the party and foster the distrust of democrats in the other party. For every plutocratic Democrat the party loses, as it has lost the plutocratic Mr. Hewitt, scores of democratic Republicans will become attached to it in consequence.

"Reorganization" on the plutocratic basis is now out of the question. The recent elections proved that. As an observant correspondent of the St. Louis Globe-Democrat wrote soon after the results were known, those elections conclusively demonstrated "that there is more than one element in the Democratic party which can refuse to support the party when the party does not do things in a way to please it." The democratic Democrats also can bolt. In other words there is a difference of principle in the party, which no "reorganizing" process can reconcile. It is the conflict between its plutocratic and its democratic elements. Should the latter retain control the former would bolt, as they have done heretofore. Should the former gain control the latter would do the bolting. Either way there is no possibility of a victory for the plutocratic Democrats. For every plutocratic purpose the plutocratic Republicans suffi-