

The Public

servedly high place in the councils of genuine democracy.

Let no one suppose that the bitter antagonism of plutocracy to Bryan rests upon his adherence to the silver-coinage policy. There are plenty of silver coinage men to whom no such antagonism attaches. Plutocratic hostility to him is due to two causes. In the first place, he is known to favor silver coinage because he believes it to be democratic; and, in the second, he deservedly commands universal confidence in his unyielding integrity. As was innocently objected to him in the recent campaign, "he is dangerous because he is honest."

So much for the action of the Ohio convention, on the assumption that it deliberately intended the slight upon Bryan and Bryanism that the plutocratic press attributes to it.

But Mayor Johnson declares, doubtless upon the assurance of his friends who were there, that there was no such intention. In an interview published in the Cleveland Plaindealer of the 13th Mr. Johnson says—

I am just as ardent an admirer of William Jennings Bryan as I ever was, and I stand in the same position on the silver question that I formerly did. I do not believe that the action of the democratic state convention was a repudiation of Mr. Bryan at all; it simply indicated that the convention wanted the battle this fall fought out on strictly state issues. This not being a presidential year there was no reason why any reference should be made to either the Kansas City platform or to Mr. Bryan. The eastern papers have carried strong accounts about the repudiation of Bryan and silver by the Ohio democrats, but I do not believe that Ohioans see it that way at all.

Even if Johnson were mistaken, even if the plutocratic press and reactionary democratic leaders are right in treating the omission from the platform of all reference to Bryan and the Kansas City platform as indicating a reversion of party control to the old and recreant leadership, nevertheless it would be folly to meet this reaction in blind passion. It must be met with definite purpose and intelligent methods. Likewise it must be met with that superlative form of courage which men call patience—the patience that endures until the time is ripe to strike. The sugges-

tion of a bolting party now is suicidal. Nothing could be more earnestly desired by the reactionary re-organizers. Every democrat who goes into a third party movement in Ohio this year weakens by that much the power of the democratic democrats of the state to prove by the action of the convention two years hence, or in the next presidential year, that the old leaders are after all not in the saddle.

Nor should the jubilation of the reactionaries be allowed to foster the impression that the most important action of the state convention was the omission from its platform of references to the national platform and to Bryan. That was not its most important act. The most important act of the Ohio convention, for the real democrats of the nation as well as for those of the state, was the adoption of Johnson's planks on taxation. Johnson's tax reform is democratic. It is radical. It attacks plutocracy where its armor is weakest, and it cuts deep. It was adopted by the convention in spite of the determined opposition of McLean and the other plutocrats. It should be made the burning issue of the campaign. Its indorsement by the people of Ohio would put a quietus upon the jubilant outcries of the reactionaries.

By the adoption of those taxation planks the power of McLean, heretofore unquestioned, has been broken. In two years it can be destroyed. And with the destruction of McLean's power in Ohio will go all the plutocratic manipulation that has bedeviled democratic politics in that state since he began to influence its management.

The duty now before the democratic democrats of Ohio is not to abandon the democratic party to plutocratic control, but to get full command of it and head it unmistakably toward radical democracy. And manifestly the way in which to do that is to make the best possible fight, within the party and not guerrilla fashion, for a legislature which can be depended upon to vote against McLean for senator, and to give legislative sanction to the far-reaching tax and franchise reforms to which the party is now committed. Were that successfully

done, the seal of popular condemnation would be ineffaceably stamped upon the plutocratic proclamation that the Ohio democracy has discarded Bryanism and gone back to bourbon leadership.

NEWS

The event of the week is the steel strike. Though this strike began on the 30th, there was supposed to be a possibility of settlement until the 13th, and it did not actually become formidable until the 15th.

As explained two weeks ago (p. 200), the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, which, under the leadership of its president, T. J. Shaffer, has declared and is conducting the strike, is striking neither for higher wages nor for shorter hours, but for the life of the organization. Before the consolidation of the various steel plants into one great trust, some of the plants were accustomed to making contracts with their employes which prohibited the latter from becoming members of unions. In that and other ways these plants prevented the organization of their employes. So long as the plants that did this were independent, the matter was not vital to the Amalgamated association. But it became vital when the nonunion plants were absorbed in the trust and still continued their custom of preventing organization. The Amalgamated association soon realized that the trust would not long continue part union and part nonunion. Obviously it must be wholly unionized, or by gradual extension of the customs and labor contracts of the nonunion plants the Amalgamated association would be crushed by the trust. But a direct demand for the unionization of all the plants was not made by the association. Its demand was that all obstacles to organization should be removed, the association maintaining that if the nonunion employes were left in freedom they would join the union. Even this demand was not made in specific terms. The specific thing demanded by the Amalgamated association was an agreement making the new wages scale apply to all the mills of the trust, whether union or nonunion. In other words, the organization put itself in the position of acting for the protection not alone of its own members but also of workmen who do not belong to it. Like the an-

thracite coal miners' organization, it extended its jurisdiction voluntarily over the whole mass of workmen in the entire industry. This raised the issue. The trust magnates knew the purpose of the association, and fore-saw that this demand if accorded would have the effect of opening up all its plants to union influences. They therefore rejected the demand. Though willing to agree as usual upon a wages scale for the year, and willing also to pay nonunion workmen the union rates, as matter of private arrangement with the nonunion men individually, they were not willing to agree with the union to make the scale applicable to both union and nonunion mills. To have done so, would, they felt, have been to agree virtually to the unionization of every mill in the trust. It will be seen, therefore, that the strike that has ensued is at bottom a conflict over the question of labor organization in the mills of the steel trust—whether they shall be union or nonunion. The first result of the trust's rejection of the association's demand was the strike ordered on the 30th. As reported two weeks ago (p. 200), some 35,000 men then struck in the sheet mills, and were soon followed by a strike of some 15,000 in the hoop mills. These figures appear now to have been excessive. The actual number of strikers in both sheet and hoop mills did not exceed 30,000. As most of those mills were then temporarily closed, the effect even of this large strike was not noticeable. Now, however, the mills are ready to work, and the magnitude of the strike is evident. Conservative estimates put the number of men now on strike at 51,500.

The orders for extending the strike on July 15 were issued by Mr. Shaffer on the 13th, after a conference between the committee of the Amalgamated association and representatives of the great billion-dollar steel trust. The conference met at Pittsburgh on the 11th. After a session of two days, Mr. Shaffer, in behalf of the Amalgamated association, offered the following compromise proposition:

We hereby repeat our request for the signing of the scale for all mills owned and controlled by the sheet, hoop and tin plate companies. We agree, if the scales are signed as stated above, to classify Monnessan tin plate works as a special mill, and arrange a special scale for it. Also there shall be a reconstruction of the scales for the mills working hoop and cotton ties

exclusively. And we also agree that if our work of organizing mills outside the possessions of the above named companies should cause the shutting down of plants and the calling out of men there shall be no interference with the operation of the mills belonging to or operated by the American Sheet Steel company, the American Steel Hoop company and the American Tin Plate company during the scale year. This agreement is to abrogate all contracts signed by the men of these companies, in which they agree not to join or be connected with the Amalgamated association or any other labor organization.

The trust representatives would not accept that compromise, and the conference dissolved. After its dissolution they made this informal explanation to the public of their position:

The conference between the Amalgamated association and the sheet, hoop and tin companies failed to come to an agreement because the Amalgamated association did not recede from its original position, which was that the three companies in interest should sign the scale for all their mills without regard as to whether these mills had in the past belonged to the Amalgamated association or not. The manufacturers did not refuse them the right to organize, but having many men in mills not in the Amalgamated association who did not wish to become association men, claimed that they must respect these men in their wishes as well as those who are members of the Amalgamated association. In order to effect a compromise, the manufacturers offered to sign for several mills which have always in the past been out of the association. No compromise was offered by the Amalgamated association. The American Tin Plate company has only one nonunion mill. It requested the privilege to make a special scale for this mill and sign same. This was refused and the companies were given to understand that the men in all tin mills would be called out, even though the scale had been signed for all the mills and the privilege as requested above would settle all differences between the tin plate company and the Amalgamated association.

Immediately upon leaving the conference Mr. Shaffer declared a general strike, to take effect July 15, in all the sheet, hoop and steel mills; and he has been obeyed to an unexpected extent. Reports from western Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, Illinois and Indiana, where these classes of mills are located, tell of a general stoppage of work. Even mills that have been running as nonunion shops for years, are tied up. As yet the

strike has not been extended to any other plants of the great steel trust than those of the three classes mentioned above—sheet, hoop and tin—but if necessary it will be extended to all. Should that be done it will involve 200,000 men, and be the largest strike in the history of the modern labor movement.

On the stock market the strike had the effect on the 15th of reducing preferred stock of the steel trust from $91\frac{1}{2}$ to $86\frac{1}{2}$, and common stock from $41\frac{1}{2}$ to 37 .

Besides reports of the steel strike very little news of importance has appeared this week in the daily papers. From the Philippines the dispatches indicate that the fighting is not yet over, and there are ominous intimations of arbitrary retaliatory acts against the natives. "Many native murderers," says one dispatch, "have been hanged or imprisoned." One surrender, that of Gen. Gobarro with 70 men, is reported; and a native chief is credited with having forbidden slavery and slave-trading in the Zamboango district, in the island of Mindanao. Like the Americans in the Philippines, the British are still struggling with their problem in South Africa. Sporadic fighting in a small way is taking place, and evidence of the complete abrogation of responsible government in Cape Colony accumulates. References to solemn hearings before "the vigilance committee," accounts of British attacks upon Boer laagers in Cape Colony and the capture of Cape Colony rebels, and brief reports of the hanging of these rebels for treason, interspersed with allusions to the "suspension of responsible government," all indicate that the war is active far within the borders of Cape Colony itself. What the facts really are is hidden from the outside world by the censorship. Among the few items of war news is one to the effect that Lord Kitchener has captured the papers of the Orange Free State government, in a skirmish at which President Steyn himself but barely escaped capture.

NEWS NOTES.

—The Trans-Mississippi Commercial congress began its session at Cripple Creek on the 17th.

—Charles Nordhoff, the eminent journalist and author, died at San Francisco on the 14th, aged 71.

—Gov. Allen sailed from Porto Rico on the 13th for the states, bringing