

master general appears to have placed himself in a position which calls for some explanation. We allude to his denial of the validity of what, at page 609, two weeks ago, we described as and then supposed to be a construction by the Publishers' association of a post office ruling. The Publishers' association had announced that—

the post office officials at Washington, D. C., have just ruled that a subscription to any publication entered as second-class matter must be discontinued when the time for which it is paid in advance has expired.

In consequence of that announcement, the third assistant postmaster general, on December 30, instructed postmasters to notify all publishers in their respective cities that there had been no such change in the rules or practice with regard to subscriptions to legitimate second-class publications, adding:

The report grows out of a ruling in an individual case of a New York publication which was carrying an enormous list of expired subscriptions which were largely first induced by premiums and where due notice had been given to the subscriber, who had failed to renew or to order continuance with a promise to pay, expressed or implied. When general rulings are made they are published in this Bulletin for the information of the public and all postmasters.

This explanation is now badly discredited by the Publishers' association, which, in defense of its own good faith, gives out the following official letter, dated December 17, from the third assistant postmaster general:

In reply to your letter of the 14th inst., you are informed that the department holds it to be not within a publisher's privilege to mail at the pound rate of postage, as to subscribers, copies of his publication to persons whose subscriptions have expired; and the inclusion within the number presented for mailing as to legitimate subscribers of copies addressed to persons who are not legitimate subscribers, will deprive the publisher of his pound rate upon the whole, unless the illegitimate portion be separated therefrom.

It would appear, therefore, that the third assistant postmaster general has got himself into a tangle which in some of its aspects is significant of too much indifference to at least one of

the ten commandments. What did he mean when on the 30th of December he gave out a public notice to the effect that the department had not made the ruling described by the Publishers' association, if it was true, as he had written officially on the 17th of December, that the department had made precisely that ruling?

Mayor Johnson's efforts to redeem his promise to give to Cleveland a three-cent rate of street car fare (p. 612) is now far on its way toward redemption. After much difficulty he has secured from the city council an ordinance authorizing bids for street car service upon the basis of a straight three-cent fare, with no tax on receipts, and the rest is only a matter of business—open and legitimate business, not lobby "business."

Meanwhile the Cleveland mayor, whose "equitable taxation" clothes the republican governor has put on and found too large for a comfortable fit, is working with the Democratic delegation to the legislature from the Republican county of Cuyahoga upon plans for proposed legislation. This legislation ranges, to say nothing of tax bills, from a two-cent-a-mile fare on steam railroads to municipal ownership of municipal monopolies. The first bill on the latter subject is thus described by the mayor:

This bill concerns the question of street railroads alone. It is to give the city power to acquire, construct and operate street railroads. It provides that the city may issue bonds for this purpose, limitations being placed on these issues, of course. The city council shall first, by ordinance, outline the plan to be followed and the routes to be operated. After that is done and when everything is in readiness for the measure the question shall be submitted to the vote of the people.

Asked if this measure could be enacted in time to apply to the new street railway system provided for by the recent ordinance, the mayor said:

I am no prophet. I wish that might be the case. Of course I would prefer municipal to the private ownership of that road, but I would rath-

er have a three-cent fare now than to have to wait a long time for the other plan.

Pursuant to his expressed preference for municipal ownership of municipal monopolies, Mayor Johnson has induced the city council of Cleveland to petition the legislature for power to adopt such a system. The resolution came before the council at its regular meeting on the 13th. It called for the merit plan of employment as part of the system. Mayor Johnson, who has the right, ex-officio, of debate upon the floor of the council, made a strong argument for the resolution, in the course of which he laid stress upon the importance of the merit clause. Notwithstanding that the council has a Republican majority and that the president of the council and one other Republican member bitterly opposed it as part of a scheme to give the Johnson administration more political power, the resolution was adopted by the extremely significant vote of 18 to 4.

In a well-tempered article, an editorial contributor to that excellent democratic weekly of the Pacific coast, the San Francisco Star, criticises our position (p. 563) on the question of Chinese exclusion. Not only is this criticism well tempered, but, what is quite unusual in newspaper controversy, it fairly and intelligently meets the essential issue as we raise it. We had admitted the right in principle of a people to resist hostile invasions, whether invasions with arms or in peaceable form; insisting, however, that the defensive necessity must be apparent in order to justify defensive action. Accepting this principle, the Star urges that nothing remains but a question of fact, namely, whether Chinese immigration, if not restricted, would really be equivalent to a hostile invasion. But on this issue it demands the right of decision for the people of the Coast. There is no avoidance, however, of our contention that such questions should not be left to the decision of interested and probably prejudiced localities. The Star's

critical article admits this contention in so far as it relates to the principles involved, but denies it as to questions of fact. It claims, accordingly, that the question of whether Chinese immigration would amount to a hostile invasion should be left to the determination of the Coast, as the locality familiar with the facts. That claim cannot possibly be allowed. It is like claiming for the plaintiff in a lawsuit, that while the interpretation of the law in the case should be left to a disinterested judge, the verdict should be left to the plaintiff himself, he being so well informed about the facts. What the Star contends for would never be conceded with reference to an armed invasion. The country would not and ought not to go to war with China because the people of the Coast demanded it on the ground that they knew that a Chinese army was being fitted out for purposes of invasion and that their location and interests made them peculiarly familiar with the facts. Before a nation can justly enter upon defensive war, the nation itself and not merely a hysterical locality must be convinced of the defensive necessity. Equally so, the nation must be convinced, not merely informed by an interested locality, that a current of foreign immigration is a menace to natural rights or national institutions before it is justified in closing its ports under the principle which we have laid down and the Star adopts. This nation is not so convinced with reference to the Chinese and no evidence has yet been presented which justifies such a conviction. So far, with all respect for the sincerity of opponents of Chinese immigration, we fail to find evidence in the case they present of anything but an unwarranted and unworthy race intolerance.

It has been noticed that in popular speech the name of this nation is used in the singular instead of the plural, as formerly; and the congressional committee on revision of the federal statutes has departed from

authoritative precedent by adopting the newer form. A recent editorial in the Chicago Tribune, in calling attention to the change, observes:

The plural form, which was universal once, has given place to the singular form, and grammatical revolutions no more go backward than do other revolutions.

But this revolution is not grammatical alone. Essentially it is not grammatical at all. The revolution in grammatical form is strictly in obedience to a revolution in political sentiment. It marks a reversal of the old idea that this nation is one of strictly limited powers, being only a federation of sovereign states which have invested it with authority to act for them in certain specified particulars. When that idea obtained, grammatical usage conformed to the political principle. We said of the United States that "they are a nation." But now, with the advance of world-power imperial aspirations, that idea is passing into oblivion, and grammatical usage takes cognizance of the fact. We no longer say of the United States that "they are a nation," but that "it is a nation."

It is interesting in this connection to recall a political prophecy made in 1893 by the great publicist, David Dudley Field. His prophecy is rapidly approaching fulfillment. It was made to Prof. Adam S. Hill, of Harvard college, in a letter in which Field discussed the use of the word "is" instead of "are," as applied to the United States. To Field "the United States is," was not only ungrammatical but dangerous to democracy. In his letter occurs the pregnant passage:

In our own history we see unmistakable proofs of a strong flood tide setting in towards federal authority. To go no further than the Chinese deportation act of the last session, enacted and upheld upon the plea of federal sovereignty, it needs no prophet to foretell that, if the foundation of that enactment be not dashed in pieces, the incoming century will see this nation either broken into fragments or converted into a consolidated republic—another name for despotism, which would be

but a prelude to anarchy, and that but another name for an emperor and military dominion.

We are not always in accord with the Chicago Chronicle on questions of democracy. But one of its recent pronouncements we most heartily indorse. It rebukes the Democratic leaders in congress for trying to make reciprocity a Democratic issue. What the Chronicle says on this question is so timely, so true, and so compact in statement that we quote it. Defining reciprocity, it says:

In the first place, it is an attempt in violation of the constitution to take the power of originating revenue bills from the house of representatives, and to place it in the hands of the president and the senate, the treaty-making power. In the second place, it is a scheme of the big protectees to remove their selfish interests from the omnibus tariff bills of the future and to intrench themselves in such a way in treaties negotiated by a few men who can be trusted to look after their welfare that the amount and the character of protection which they are to enjoy hereafter will depend more upon their own ideas and bargainings and less upon the uncertainties of action by the representatives of the people. In the third place, it is indubitable evidence that the whole rotten tariff system is breaking down of its own weight of lies and corruption. Democrats as such have no more reason to interest themselves in these measures than missionaries of the cross have to espouse the cause of a Chinese joss as against the claims of Buddha.

There is a whole battery of democratic principle and argument in that brief quotation. The Democrat in the lower house, if any such there be, who has within him the ability of a statesman and the spirit of true leadership, could make it the text for an epoch-making speech and the dynamic of a great public career. Reciprocity is indeed only the rotten fortification to which special privilege is retreating before the silent but resistless advances of free trade.

Says one of the publications of Dun's commercial agency,—

Prices are now at the highest point in many years, and, in fact, surpass