

oil on many troubled waters. In the Philippines, between native and foreigner, between soldier and civilian, between ecclesiastic and layman, and even between intolerant Catholics and intolerant Protestants, he was exceedingly successful under trying circumstances in negotiation and accommodation. In Cuba, a marked and unexpected success attended similar exertions to secure mutual concession and accommodation between hostile and contending factions. But in his attempt to bring about reconciliation between the differing and rapidly dissevering wings of his own political party which unitedly placed him in the position of its leader and elected him President, he has entirely failed. What is the reason?

It seems to us that the reason is not far to seek, and that it is full of hope for the future of democracy and true progress in the politics of the United States. Had the conflict now openly in progress between the warring divisions of the Republican party been superficial; had it been over patronage, or sprung from personal devotion to different leaders; had it even been only sectional, Mr. Taft would have scored another triumph as a peacemaker and compromiser. But the differences were and are on other and more fundamental lines. They are differences going to the very bottom of our social and political life. On one side are the sturdy defenders of privilege and monopoly which have been in these later years turning the Republican party of Lincoln's times into a far different kind of an organization. On the other are men democratic at heart who have never broken away from the nominal political affiliations which had become to them almost sacrosanct, and those of a younger generation who have joined, as they supposed, the party of the political faith of their fathers, and are discovering that it is leading them to an entirely different social, economic and ethical creed. They, too, at heart are lovers of liberty, equal opportunity and true democracy. Between these wings of the party, differing on fundamental and basic principles, no final peace is to be secured by a negotiator, however tactful, however non-committal, and in whatever position of power and leadership he may be.

This is the cause of Mr. Taft's failure. It points directly to a new alignment of parties, and to that cleavage on vital issues which will bring the true democrats in both parties into a political struggle, not between themselves, but against a common foe. Whether in such a contest, present

party names, full as they are of historical association and sentimental connotations, will give way to others; or whether there will be an "exchange of prisoners," and each party, honeycombed as it is with persons dissenting from its present dominant and more or less clearly indicated tendencies, will purge itself of those dissidents, cannot yet be foreseen, nor is it in any wide sense material. The fact remains that the portents are all of a restatement of political issues and a new birth of democratic feeling. It is needless to say with what joy such a consummation should be welcomed. Here, as in England under such conditions, it would be good to be alive that one might take part in the fight!

And in the situation is revealed, as it seems to us, the deficiency in Mr. Taft's character or training which will prevent him from being, or ever becoming, the forceful leader his too enthusiastic friends believed him to be. It is not the tactful negotiator or the successful diplomatist, the sunny-tempered and good-humored friend, or even the cautious and deliberative politician, that the times demand for the Republican party leader, if that party is to hope to retain the ascendancy it has enjoyed so long. It is rather the bold and quick thinking, quick acting fighter, who will place himself distinctly at the head of one or other of its wings, and avow the faith that is in him. Were Mr. Taft to ally himself with the "insurgents" and "progressives," he would rally to his support myriads of Democrats who are attracted to him personally; and might well hope to succeed himself in his present office. Were he as rigorously to head the defenders of "vested" privilege and reaction, that hope might also still exist; for those forces are still, sad to say, immensely strong in the United States. Attempting the impossible, trying to be with both parties simultaneously or alternately, in shunning Scylla he will fall into Charybdis; or, in more homely language, between the two stools he will fall to the ground, unless the fates are kinder to him than we look for them to be.

The President's Conservation Message.

The long expected message of the President to Congress on "Conservation of National Resources" followed very quickly on the removal of its chief champion and representative from his office. It is a very mild and rather colorless document, of which the most definite proposals are in favor of the issuance of ten-year bonds to the amount of thirty millions of dollars, to complete irrigation

projects already under way by the Interior Department under the authority of the Reclamation Act, and in favor of completing at an expense of sixty-three millions a series of dams on the Ohio river in order to maintain therein at all times from Pittsburg to Cairo a depth of nine feet. On the treatment of forests, water sites and mineral lands, the message is vague and indefinite. It is something that by formal communication from the Executive, the legislative department has been told that the administration expects action on these matters as a part of the governmental program. But it would be much to be regretted if the probable action depended on the degree of vigor with which the President was recommending reform. The following passage concerning the proposed treatment of government mineral land, well illustrates the temper and atmosphere of the whole message: "It is exceedingly difficult to frame a statute to retain government control over a property to be developed by private capital in such manner as to secure the governmental purpose and at the same time not frighten away the investment of the necessary capital."

+

We should have been glad if Mr. Taft had explained to some of us who may be obtuse on that point, in what the exceeding difficulty consists. Take the Gogebic Range iron lands, for example. The government once owned them. It sold them for a trifling price to lumber barons. They cut off the timber and with the assistance of a high protective tariff made great fortunes therefrom. Then they foresaw other fortunes beneath the surface, and either sold the lands for a high price or held on to them for this prospective income. But neither the original or new owners engaged in mining. They knew an easier way to reap the profit without risk or possibility of loss. They simply sold short-time options to prospectors to go on the land to search for mineral; and in case it was found, to take leases of the land, with drastic conditions as to how the mines should be worked, and reservations of heavy rents in the shape of high royalties on every ton of ore taken out. This is the way the whole Gogebic iron mining country was developed. It did not seem "to frighten away the investment of the necessary capital." On the contrary great aggregations of capital are working mines over the whole range, and paying heavy royalties to a score only of fee owners, who have invested no capital, and run no risks whatever in the mining ventures. Mr. Taft's statement immediately before the quotation which we have made, is tentative: "The surface might be

disposed of as agricultural land, under the general agricultural statutes; while the coal or other mineral could be disposed of by lease on a royalty basis." Then follows the remark about the "exceeding difficulty." Why would it be any more likely to "frighten capital from investment" for the government to assume the position of the fee owner who is to receive the royalties, than for the patentee of the government who has been getting the land for a nominal sum to do so? We fear the President's "judicial mind" conceives imaginary dangers.

+ +

Timber Growing and Taxation.

A comparatively recent address by Mr. Pinchot, the late Chief Forester (pp. 25, 26, 32), frequently quoted from, draws attention to the injustice and bad public policy of taxing growing timber. In commenting upon Mr. Pinchot's address the Pittsburgh Dispatch of December 19 made some very sensible observations regarding what it justly calls, "the greatest obstacle to the increase of privately owned forests—that is, the taxation which most States impose on the forests while under the process of growth." It says:

A crop of corn or fruit is taxed but once. But a crop of lumber is taxed each year according to the value that it has attained, not only the value added in that year, but the accumulation of growth that has been taxed previously. Under such a system the man who starts a forest is reasonably sure to have paid in taxation by the time the trees mature all that the lumber is worth. There is some modification of this in the tax laws of Pennsylvania, but not sufficient to make it an inducement for owners to devote the poorest parts of their land to the growing of timber. Mr. Pinchot proposed what has been set forth in these columns, that annual taxation shall be solely on the value of the bare land, while the product of lumber shall be taxed only when it is cut and sold.

Except as a compromise, the concession that the product of lumber shall be taxed when it is cut and sold is unwarranted. If it is a just and wise thing to exempt growing timber from taxation, it is manifestly somewhat more just and wise to exempt the lumber after it is cut. The kind of tax that burdens timber growers and obstructs timber growing will have a similar effect if imposed upon lumber cutters and lumber cutting. Why not exempt lumber making as well as timber growing? Lumber is indeed the timber harvest, and taxation of lumber when it is cut is analogous to taxation of grain when it has been harvested. But why tax either lumber or grain? We all want them both, and we could all have more of both if neither were taxed. But Mr. Pinchot and the Pittsburgh Dispatch are at any rate right as far as they go.