

Silence as a Fine Art

Judge Alton B. Parker is reported to have made the following remarks concerning the pernicious curiosity of newspaper men: "I cannot for the life of me understand why all these newspapers keep sending their reporters after me continually, when they know that I will have nothing to say to them upon any of these public questions. Personally, I want to treat them all courteously and in a friendly way, but they want something more, which I cannot give."

For our own part, we own that we are astonished by Judge Parker's astonishment. This is the case of a man who "stands by consenting," while his candidature for the highest office in the land is urged by politicians of high and low degree. New York will send a delegation instructed in his behalf, but the so-called platform built by David Bennett Hill is a patchwork of platitudes which mean all things to all men. The trimmers of every state are playing the same game. What could be more natural, then, than that the newspapers should seek to wring the secret from this Sphinx?

The whole episode serves to mark the depths to which American politics have fallen. Is it to be imagined that millions of voters will blindly support a man of whose views they know absolutely nothing? Perhaps so; but we should rather assume that the masses will demand the knowledge which is now refused in so high and mighty a fashion. The ermine cannot be used to conceal what everybody has a right to know.

The simple truth is that this practice of silence as a fine art stands for nothing more respectable than a desire to win at any cost. It is impossible that Judge Parker has no opinions about the great problems of the hour. He must be for the trusts, or against them; he must favor, or oppose, the dangerous tendencies which go by the name of imperialism; he must believe, or disbelieve, in the principles of white supremacy; he must desire that either the government or the banks control the paper currency of the nation. Nobody but a deaf mute could be neutral in such a crisis as this.

We have no objection to Judge Parker per se. On the contrary, we are entirely willing to accept any candidate who can reunite the hostile factions, and thus avert the calamity which another four years of Roosevelt would imply. But such ironies have their well defined bounds. The democracy could survive a decade of banishment to the cold shades of opposition, but would be undone by a success synonymous with dishonor. And, after all, such methods are the poorest kind of strategy. To nominate a man in an iron mask is one thing, to elect him is quite another. It is incredible that the south will fall in with this program of legerdemain, for this section of our common country has always been renowned for its frankness and courage. The doughface has always been held in contempt among us. Shall the glorious record be marred for the sake of a jurist who cannot understand the legitimate curiosity of his fellow-citizens. The question would have answered itself in other years, and should do so

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today. Let there be an end of jugglery. We are entitled to know something definite as to the personality and political doctrine of the man we are asked to support. Parliamentary government is possible only on the hypothesis that there shall be two great parties in the state, and that their creeds shall be clear as the noon-day sun. The lust of office is a strong motive, but is by no means the strongest. The average man is an altruist in his heart of hearts, and will never follow a trimmer into the Serbonian bog where self-seeking politicians have floundered in all ages. Judge Parker should speak quickly and clearly, or forever hold his peace.—New Orleans Times-Democrat.

Anent Parker's Silence.

Justice Alton B. Parker has taken what some people regard as "high ground," with relation to the presidential office. Personally he makes no statement for publication, but spokesmen for him say he considers it improper for a member of the judiciary to take any active part in politics, be interviewed, or write for publication opinions on political questions.

There was a time, before the day of party politics in this country, when such an attitude as this was proper and reasonable. That was the time, when, as the constitution-makers intended, a number of eminently wise and patriotic persons in each state, known as presidential electors, exercised the privilege of personal choice in voting for a president. But there has been a great revolution in American politics since that early period. The president is no longer chosen for personal qualities merely, but chiefly as the representative of party views and tendencies, or as the individual exponent of certain opinions or policies which he is expected to further if elected.

For this reason a candidate for the presidency may no longer strike a judicial pose and refuse to say what he thinks about public questions. The public has the right to know his views and what policies he will advance or follow if placed at the head of the government. Any party would be exceedingly weak should it nominate a man without knowing how he stood on issues of the day. The man is more important than the platform, for to a large extent the man is the platform. A political chameleon, who will take his color from any platform party managers may happen to think will catch the most votes, is not the sort of man people want for president.

If it be inconsistent with judicial dignity for Parker to make his views on public questions known at this time, he can escape all embarrassment by resigning from the bench. He seems to find, by the way, no inconsistency in running for a political nomination while wearing the ermine. And it is said he revised and scrutinized the platform of the New York democracy before it was formally adopted at Albany.

The secret of this Sphinx of Esopus is probably nothing more profound than a desire to catch votes and profit by party and public ignorance of his views. But what Parker thinks, or is willing to stand for, may be readily enough guessed, in view of the men and the interests that are working to secure him the democratic nomination.—Sacramento Bee.

Retribution.

In 1896 the democrats and populists in Wisconsin entered into a "fusion" agreement, making the tickets of both parties identical. At the following session of the legislature the republican leaders thought it would be "smart politics" to enact a law that the name of no candidate should appear more than once upon the official ballot. This law was designed to prevent the democrats and populists "fusing" in sub-

sequent elections. It sought to accomplish by indirection that which could not be accomplished directly, as an act forbidding a fusion of two or more political organizations would be invalid.

The republicans of Wisconsin are now in a position where the law enacted to prevent the democrats and populists from "fusing" has returned to plague its authors. Two republican tickets have been nominated, including identical electors, both claiming to be the regularly nominated ticket of the republican party. The courts will be called upon to determine which ticket is "regular" and which ticket must be placed on the official ballot under the head of "individual nominations." As both republican conventions nominated the same candidates for electors to avoid a division of the republican vote between two opposing sets of republican electoral candidates the electoral ticket can appear but once upon the official ballot. It will make no difference which ticket shall be recognized as "regular," the other ticket will be unable to place the names of its candidates for electors upon the official ballot.

In the very nature of things, the republican candidates for electors will not poll the full number of votes given to both republican tickets. The supporters of both tickets will vote a straight ticket. So tense is the feeling between the factions that there will be little "scratching." In the confusion of voting, large numbers of voters, especially the venal voters that in presidential campaigns respond to the "argument" of the republican fat-fryer, will hardly vote the "individual nominations" "straight" and then vote for the electors on the "regular" ticket. There are thousands of voters that lose their wits when they undertake to vote other than a "straight" ticket.

The mills of the gods grind slow, but they grind exceeding small.—Milwaukee Daily News.

A Deserved Compliment.

Hon. Edgar Howard in his paper, the Columbus (Neb.) Telegram, pays a deserved compliment to Mr. Richard L. Metcalfe, editor of the Omaha World-Herald:

The world has had many uncrowned kings—men who were larger and better by reason of their labors in behalf of principles than any monarch on the throne. Parnell needed no crown to make him dearer to the hearts of the Irish people. A crown would have detracted from the glory of Kossuth or Garibaldi. All these were indeed more than monarchs among their fellows, because they were rich in that thing which neither money nor power can buy—the voluntary love of the people whom they served so well. There is an uncrowned democratic king in Nebraska. Richard L. Metcalfe is dearer to the democratic masses in this state than any other, save Bryan alone. He has never held a public office, although for years his party has stood ready to send him to congress or to any other pleasant port to which he might desire to journey. And yet he holds higher and nobler place among democrats than could be attained by the giving of votes. He has been elevated to that place by his party fellows who behold in him one who has been brave to hide his own magnificent personality in order that he might better advance his principles. All hail to Met., Nebraska's uncrowned democratic king! Long live the king!

The Other Lawlessness.

It certainly seems that Adjutant General Bell of Colorado requires a little good advice, either as to what he is doing or as to what he is saying about it. There has been cause for looking with grave doubt on various things that are reported thence, as done under the pretext of enforcing order. But the adjutant general's reported words state an action about which

there can be no doubt. If he is correctly reported he is lawless and tyrannical.

The forcing of civil officials to write their resignations with nooses dangling before them and the deportation of union men on the simple edict of military officials that they are "agitators" are bad enough. But when the adjutant general himself declares that he has ordered shut down "the only mine in the district employing union labor" the purpose of the military rule does not seem to be within dispute. Martial law is not keeping order and furnishing the force to arrest lawbreakers for trial by the courts. It is employing its power to drive out the unions, even carrying it the length of denying the right of employers to hire union men if they wish.

This is lawlessness as clearly as the crimes of the strikers or their sympathizers. It is not as murderous, but in one sense it is worse. The public official who breaks down the law and substitutes for it a rule of arbitrary tyranny is a more dangerous offender than the lurking and obscure criminal.—Pittsburg Dispatch.

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