

CURRENT TOPICS

NEWSPAPER comment concerning the late Thomas Collier Platt may be summed up in this editorial statement by the New York Times: "With a serviceable Latin proverb in mind, we may say of him that he was a man of commanding ability as an organizer, who attracted and controlled with consummate skill a veritable army of adherents. If he had many enemies, he had in his time also a host of admiring friends."

MR. PLATT WAS three times elected to the United States senate by the New York legislature. Twice he was elected to the house of representatives. He was succeeded in the senate by Elihu Root. Mr. Platt began life as a druggist, then he became an editorial writer, serving in that capacity on the New York Tribune and other papers. Later he engaged in the lumber business, then became a bank president and finally president of the United States Express company, which position he held at the time of his death. Mr. Platt made his first appearance in politics in the support of John C. Fremont for president in 1856. He was a member of a Fremont Glee club. Three years later he was elected to a small local office. In 1870 he was made a delegate to a congressional convention. In 1872 and in 1874 he was elected to the house of representatives. He allied himself with Roscoe Conkling. In 1880 he joined Conkling in the support of General Grant for a third nomination. In 1881 he was elected to the United States senate.

IT WAS WHILE serving with Conkling in the senate that Mr. Platt won the nickname "me too Platt." Mr. Garfield was then president. The republican party was split with factional strife, Garfield and Blaine leading one faction while Roscoe Conkling led the other. Mr. Garfield had made certain New York appointments without consulting Conkling and, so Conkling claimed, had violated an explicit pledge on that point. It was claimed that James G. Blaine, Garfield's secretary of state, had persuaded Garfield to violate his promise to Conkling. However that may be, Conkling and Platt sent their resignations as senators to the governor of New York. Later they announced their purpose of submitting their claims for re-election to the New York legislature. Newspapers, however, made fun of them and they were cartooned all over the country. A spirited campaign was commenced. In the meantime, however, Garfield was assassinated by Guiteau and the assassin proclaimed himself to be "a stalwart of the stalwarts," that being the term by which the Conkling forces were known. Conkling and Platt were defeated through practically unknown men being elected in their places. Conkling retired from politics and again took up the practice of law. He was a very vain, although a very able man and it was no secret among his friends that his heart was broken by his political failure.

BUT PLATT'S heart was not broken. He never liked the title "Me too Platt" because he felt that it was a reflection upon his own force of character. He turned again to politics and became the most powerful state leader in the history of New York politics. In 1884 he went to the Chicago convention and helped nominate Blaine, although three years before he had opposed him with such zeal that he gave up the senatorship by way of showing his antagonism to the Blaine-Garfield element. Recently in giving his estimate of public men, Platt referred to Blaine as "an ideal American." In the campaign of 1884 Platt won the friendship of the Blaine forces and his power as New York leader continued to grow. In 1888 he helped to nominate Benjamin Harrison. William E. Curtis, correspondent for the Chicago Record-Herald, prints a statement which he says was given to him by Platt a few years ago with the understanding that it was not to be printed until after Platt's death. In this statement Platt charged that Benjamin Harrison sent Stephen B. Elkins to Platt with the assurance that Elkins had authority to make promises for Har-

rison. Platt says that Elkins promised that Platt would be made secretary of the treasury and would be given control of New York patronage. After Harrison's election, according to Platt, he violated this pledge and refused to "deliver the goods." In 1892 Platt fought Harrison's renomination and in the following campaign he sulked. In 1896 Platt was opposed to McKinley's nomination, but together with other representatives of special interests, he worked for the republican candidate in the ensuing election. In 1897 he was re-elected to the United States senate and he was re-elected in 1903, retiring last year. In 1900 Platt, being dissatisfied with Theodore Roosevelt as governor of New York, forced his nomination for the vice presidency with the idea that he was shelving him. But a few months later Mr. McKinley was assassinated and Mr. Roosevelt became president.

THE TERM "the easy boss" originated with Platt. Once when he was bitterly denounced as a boss he retorted: "Well, after all, I am an easy boss." A writer in the New York Times says: "The 'easy boss' was famed for his epigrams. He it was who described the Harrison administration as 'the ice wagon,' a characterization of the president's cold and repelling demeanor so felicitous that the democrats instantly seized on it and used it throughout the campaign of 1892. In the same year, when his old enemy, Whitelaw Reid, was proposed for vice president, Platt said: 'He (Reid as minister to France) gave such a character to the American hog as to enable it to force its way not only into the French market, but into every other.' When the Brookfield republicans raised a revolt against him in 1894, denouncing him as a boss, Platt commented: 'It is not difficult to understand plain folks like them. By a 'boss' and an 'intermeddler' they mean one who differs with them. By a 'leader' and a 'statesman' they mean one who agrees with them. That's all there is to it.' Early in the campaign of 1904, when the Parker movement gained headway, the senator observed: 'The democratic party seems to be becoming sane and dangerous.' This epigram was caught up all over the country, and, though it was afterward misquoted into 'safe and sane,' became the universal characterization of the reorganizing movement."

THE DOMESTIC tribulations of the New York boss were many. His first wife, the mother of his children with whom evidently he lived happily, died in 1901. Two years later he married a government clerk in Washington. Then another government clerk brought suit against him, charging that she had already been married to him. Finally he separated from his second wife and the other government clerk brought several different proceedings against him, making life very miserable for him. This latter woman made public many of Platt's private letters. One of these related to a dinner engagement of Platt with President Roosevelt and contained the statement: "I suppose I shall have to sit and endure that bulldog grin for an hour." Since Mr. Platt's death the second government clerk, Mae C. Wood by name, has announced that she will claim the widow's share of the Platt estate. Plainly, there was in this man extraordinary power. It might have been a power for good, but without violating the admonition to "say nothing against the dead" it may be said for the benefit of the living that, by reason of his ability and opportunity Mr. Platt's life was an ignominious failure.

MEMBERS OF the house of representatives are, according to Washington dispatches, analyzing the amendments offered in the senate to the postal savings bank bill. An Associated Press dispatch says: "The amendment that is causing the most comment is that which will prevent postal funds from being invested in two per cent government bonds, while making all higher interest bearing securities available for such investment in time of war or other exigency. Practically no-contest was made against

this amendment when it was offered by Senator Borah. It was accepted by Senator Carter, who had charge of the bill, and the votes against it were few. In the light of President Taft's New York speech calling attention to the obligation of the government that the holders of the two per cent consols should not suffer loss, and that the government could give relief by using postal funds to buy these low class bonds, some members of congress profess to see in the senate action a direct slap at the president. In only one other way is the adoption of the amendment explained and that is by the fact that those who were in charge of the bill believed it could be passed only by making concessions to insurgent senators. It was charged on the democratic side of the senate, chiefly by Senator Bacon, that the adoption of the Borah amendment was not in good faith and that it would be dropped in the house and finally eliminated in conference. This charge, however, obviously can not be based upon certainty and is nothing more than speculation."

WASHINGTON correspondents appear to be practically at agreement concerning the probability that the next congress will be democratic. Arthur Wallace Dunn, Washington correspondent for the Woman's National Daily, says: "If Champ Clark becomes speaker of the Sixty-second congress by the will of a democratic majority, sixteen years will have elapsed since the democrats went out of power in the house of representatives. Great changes have taken place in the democratic party within that period. In the house, supposing they are re-elected this fall, there will be but four democrats who were members of the Fifty-third congress, the last in which the democrats had a majority. Two of these, Jones of Virginia, and Livingston of Georgia, have served continuously. Champ Clark saw his first service in the Fifty-third congress, but missed the succeeding congress. Talbot of Maryland was in the Fifty-third congress, but was out for eight years before he was returned. Congressman Charles H. Morgan of Missouri was a democratic member of the Fifty-third congress. He is a member of the Sixty-first congress, but he is now a republican. He will continue to be a republican if he is a member of the next congress, so he can not count as one of the democratic survivors from the last congress in which that party had a majority. In the senate there are five democrats who were members of the house of representatives at that time. They are Bailey of Texas, Bankhead of Alabama, Money of Mississippi, Rayner of Maryland and Newlands of Nevada."

AN INTERESTING story is vouched for by the Galveston, Texas, correspondent for the Chicago Record-Herald. The story follows: "The filing of documents for record transferring a half interest in the big Valvedere ranch, in Jeff Davis county, from Sam Jennings, the cattle king, to Francis R. Strome brings to light an interesting incident in which Strome, who is a stranger in this section, was the hero and little May Jennings, the six-year-old daughter of Colonel Jennings, was the heroine. She was saved from death beneath an engine, and Strome is the man who rescued the child from the railroad tracks, and as a reward for his bravery he is given a half interest in a property said to be worth anywhere from \$700,000 to \$1,000,000. Strome is about fifty years old, a machinist by trade, and for many years a resident of a small town in Illinois. He met with reverses, and, after the death of his wife, took to drink and had been leading a shiftless life for several years. He was beating his way westward trying to make California and was hanging around Alpine trying to catch a train when the incident happened that brought him fortune. The girl was crossing the railroad track just as a train approached. The child became bewildered and would have been killed had Strome not jumped on the track and snatched her clear of the rail just in time. He disappeared shortly after, but the father of the girl had him located about fifty miles away and brought him back to the ranch and kept him at the place for several days,