

What Ruined the Gilt Edge

PHIL ROBINSON

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"It's as good a mine as any in Australia, is the Gilt Edge, and I should have been a rich man years ago," said Alec. "If it hadn't been for Bob Jones' parrot."

"Why, what on earth did the parrot do to the mine?"

"Do to the mine? Oh, nothing; nothing whatever. It only ruined it, that was all."

"Ruined the mine?"

"Yes, it did—as far as I was concerned, at any rate."

"But how was that?"

"Well, I'll tell you. Bob and I had been out prospecting, and landed on a really good thing, and Bob went home to England to get up a syndicate to work the reef. He had some friends of the right sort, men with money, and the pluck to back a good tip when they got one. Well, he came back in three months with the money to start with, and we very soon got to work, and it looked a very good thing, and at the end of a year or so we should be able to sell the Gilt Edge at a swingeing figure to a company. But we reckoned without Bob's beastly parrot. For when Bob went home he had heard a song at some music hall or other. It was all the rage then, with Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay for a chorus. An idiotic thing anyhow, but it was catchy, and Bob and I, in our good spirits, were perpetually at it. All day long it was Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay and Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay, and Bob had shown me how a woman in London, Lottie something, I remember, sang it, we were always high-kicking and trying to wipe the ground with our back hair.

"We were a couple of young fools, no doubt, but it did no harm. I dare say we should have got sick of it in time. But Bob had caught a young parrot. The bush all round was simply swarming with them, and he taught it the air of Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay, and it was funny enough, when we were in luck's way and everything looked rosy, to hear the bird whistling it, for to give the devil his due it used sometimes to chime in with it, when Bob and I were talking, in the neatest way in the world. But one day the parrot was missing. It had bitten through a bar of its cage, made by Bob out of a whisky case, and was gone. We were sorry at the time, I remember, and we put the cage outside our hut with a lot of sugar and stuff all about it, in the hope of the parrot's coming back. If we had only shot it!

"But one day as we were going across to the mine we suddenly heard the well-known refrain from the top of a gum. We stopped dead, and while I stayed to watch the parrot's movements, Bob ran back for the cage, which we put on a bit of open ground as temptingly as we could, and then stood by a good way off, to watch results. While we were waiting, we were astonished to hear Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay from another tree behind us, and immediately afterwards Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay from another direction, and then the truth flashed on us. Bob's parrot had been teaching all the others Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay! And so it was. There was not a bird in the bush that did not know it, and there were thousands of them. We laughed at first, so did the men at the mine. There were twelve of them, all very decent, well-behaved fellows. But the parrots kept on at it, all the morning. Then they slacked off about noon, when they generally have a sleep, and commenced again about four, and went on till it was dark. By bedtime we had got tired of the joke. The fun had all petered out of the thing.

"By daybreak next morning the birds were at it again, and all the time that we were getting breakfast ready and eating it the wretched brutes kept steadily on. Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay. To add to the exasperation of it not one in a hundred ever finished the line, but broke off at the 'boom.' Conversation was impossible with this monotonous obligato of Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay, and even sitting still to breakfast seemed interrupted by the time the meal was finished, and as we went out of the hut I saw Bob take up his gun. We got to work, but it was just awful, I tell you, trying to do anything with those parrots all about. If they had all talked at once it wouldn't have been so bad, or if they had kept on talking without any stoppages. But they used to do it one at a time, at irregular intervals, and from all sorts of unexpected directions. One would whistle it out loud, the next would drop its voice to a confidential whisper, the third one wheezed out the words as if it had asthma, the fourth would put it as a question in a rollicking, jocular way. It was fairly maddening trying to do anything with parrots saying Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay at intervals of a minute on all sides of you. I could see the men pausing in their work in suspense, waiting for the next Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay, and as for attempting to talk, it was out of the question.

"If you opened your mouth to speak Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay parrot overhead would scream out, and when you got your answer you had to take another Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay with it. Bob was giving some directions to one of the men.

"Look here, so and so, I expect the (Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay) up here to day, and you must have that bucket-roped in order, for if he sees it as it is he will say

(Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay) — and Bob stopped short, looked savagely up into the gum trees, and then walked to the tent. Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay, said a parrot, in a loud aside, as he disappeared within. And then Bob came out with his gun in his hand. Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay, cried a parrot in the heartiest jovial voice possible. Up went the gun, and a parrot came slipping, bumping down through the branches. It fell at my feet not quite dead. It gave itself a sort of shake, tried to roll over on to its feet, but fell back, and then it opened one eye, looked at me, and then said, in a positive emphatic kind of voice as if it was no use my trying to argue with it or contradict it—Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay, and down went the gun again, and down came another parrot.

"With the same irritating irregularity, the same exasperating changes of voice and direction, the pertinacious parrots went on, while we all set to again, silent, dogged and hot tempered. There was no conversation. Only an oath now and again, dropping on the air in a sullen, shell-fire fashion, and contrasted queerly with the idiotic gawgity of the parrots. From angry looks to words, and so to blows. Two of the men began to fight. Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay cried the nearest parrot in a voice of delight, and the men went at it savagely, while the birds, with the lucky way they have, hit in so pat sometimes, with a Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay, it sounded like a "bravo" after a well-placed blow. This made the men all the madder. How it ended I don't know, for I went away to wind up the man down the shaft, who had been forgotten all this time. He came up profane and furious, and insulted me. I dismissed him on the spot, and then there was another row, and somehow the angry spirit spread, and Bob and I at last found ourselves looking on at a general melee, Bob, with one eye only, as a phid of misdirected clay had temporarily shut up the other.

"In the middle of all this rumpus who should step out of the bush but the inspector, and just as he did so a chunk of quartz knocked his hat off. He insisted on the arrest of the offender, but the order was too big to execute, and the end of it was that he and his posse went off back to town, and reported a state of riot at the Gilt Edge. Next day, Bob and I, the captains of the shift, with half a dozen other men, were on our way to explain to a magistrate and pay the penalty for an assault on 'the authorities.' When it was all over and we had got back, leaving three of our number behind us in custody for 'contempt of court,' we found the place half deserted, and the remaining men lying about idle, playing cards and quarrelling, while the parrots overhead cried Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay in response to every oath. When they heard of the men in jail, they went off in a body to get their chums out, and Bob and I found ourselves alone in camp with the confounded parrots. After the excitement of the previous day our nerves were, perhaps, a bit shaky, but any how we thought Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay worse than ever. We stuffed our ears full of wadding, but the wretched refrain was running in our heads, so that we found ourselves humming it at every turn, and when we took out the wadding to speak to each other the parrots were still at their Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay. We got the camp into order, and, working like niggers all the time, waited for three days for the men to return, and then we went into town after them. None of them would come back and face Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay. So we had to get another shift, and by and by we started again.

"But almost the same things happened, though worse. For the men after two days of it were so infuriated by the parrots that they would not work. They loafed about the bush all day with revolvers and lumps of stone. A passionate longing for the blood of the parrots possessed them. So overwhelming was the mastery of this ferocious thirst for gore that, not content

with perpetual fistuffs, they proceeded to duelling with revolvers, and from this to 'busting-up' the machinery of the mine, setting fire to our hut, and, most astonishing of all, an old Scotchman was actually seen in his un-governable fury to throw a bottle three parts full of whisky at a parrot! It was now our turn to seek assistance from the authorities. But so exasperated was the neighborhood—for Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay had by this time spread from our camp over the whole of the district—that when it was known we were in town to prosecute our men at the mine, popular feeling ran so high against us that the police advised us to make a bolt for it. Which we did, and at once. Nor did we dare to go back. We should probably have been lynched if we had. So there was nothing for it but to sell the mine with the plant on it, as a going concern. It was put up without reserve, and amid jeers and cries of Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay, the Gilt Edge was knocked down to our own brace-man for a hundred pounds! So we were thrown on the world again, and from that day to this I have never chanced on a bit of luck again.

"Bob? Oh, Bob is in the Yarra Yarra asylum down in Melbourne. He went clean off his chum, poor chap. He was a right good fellow, was Bob, but he made an awful mistake in teaching that parrot 'Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay.'"

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"Silas was of Latin origin, meaning a countryman.

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FRUITS OF PROTECTION.

Republican Rule Responsible for Socialist Demonstrations.

The Coxe movement is chiefly significant as an expression of the socialist tendencies that have developed under republican rule and protectionist principles. In France the doctrine of protection has been accepted by the socialists in its logical consequences, and men are saying to the state: "Since protection makes prices high, give us also protection for wages. Fix a minimum scale, and let the state compel employers to observe it."

There was no principle more essentially embodied in the foundations of American liberty than the principle of individual liberty—the independence of the citizen. The state was sovereign only because he, the citizen, gave it of his own sovereignty. It was his creation; he owed nothing to the state but loyalty and obedience to necessary laws. The state owed all to him. This spirit gave the dignity and strength that characterized the men of America. In its destruction there has been no influence more potent than the doctrine of protection. In its very essence it assumes that one set of individuals is not as strong as another set of individuals, that a man isn't able to stand up before the world and win his own way through it. In practice, it has fostered the idea that one class must be made to contribute to another and far smaller class; that the government has the right to interfere in the affairs of its citizens and determine how much of one man's goods shall be given to another man. It has made the government a part of and a party to the money-getting machinery of the favored class, and has made money-getting a governmental function, leaving the minds of the citizens with no sense of their personal independence and individual responsibilities. We are no longer a nation of sovereigns, but of dependents. So paternalism drifts into socialism, and so protection comes back to the protection in the appeal of Coxe's "army" help.

In this country the masses have not yet learned to apply the logic of the situation; but they are fast learning it. It is no new idea; the inevitable consequences of protection were foreseen years ago by students of sociological tendencies. So long ago as 1831 Cavour, the Italian economist, said: "I maintain that the most powerful ally of socialism is the doctrine of protection. It sets out from absolutely the same principle. Reduced to its simplest terms, it affirms the right and duty of government to interfere in the employment and distribution of capital; it affirms that the function and mission of government are to substitute its more enlightened decisions for the free decision of the individual. If these principles should become recognized as incontrovertible, I do not see what answer could be made to the working classes and their representatives when they came to the government and said: 'You believe in the right and duty of regulating the distribution of capital, why not also take up the regulation of production and wages? Why not establish government workshops?'"

Germany and France, and now the United States, have verified these words. The proposition is so self-evident that it scarcely needs discussion. Speaking of Mr. Leen's suggestion that protection inevitably leads to "nationalism," a French authority on economical questions lays down the principle that "between protection and socialism the line of distinction is very difficult to perceive." A Frenchman defined the difference as being that the protectionist was a rich man, while the socialist was a pauper.

Undoubtedly, if the robber barons are right, Coxe is also right, and so are the populists, and with more justice on the side of the latter, for their needs are greater. The populists are but the natural outgrowth of republicanism and protection.

Let Coxe blow his trumpet long and lustily at the gates of the robber barons. It is his turn now.—Louisville Courier-Journal.

NEGRO LYNCHING.

A Chance for the Republican Moral Extractor to Get in His Work.

The reported lynching of a negro brings several reflections forcibly to the mind. One of the first reflections that thus come thronging is the reflection how easy it must have been, in exciting times, to write "editorials" for the republican press. It is true that so far as the substance or the style of the articles were concerned no great difficulty attended the composition of them in off years. Only when the party was wrought up beyond the critical point by the danger to the nation, the editorial writer used to dismiss even his usual very small fear of being laughed at and let himself go with entire recklessness. The lynching of a negro was a godsend to him, or, to speak less profanely, a windfall. He squared his elbows to extract from it the most prominent and bewildering morals. One of them was that the south was in the saddle. Another would naturally be that the lynching showed the survival of the spirit of caste, of southern race hatred, and of the democratic contempt for the toiling masses—and the desire of the democrats to bring the toiling masses into contempt by hanging representatives of the toiling masses without process of law. These morals are all more or less dislocated by the circumstances of the latest lynching. It did not take place in any southern state, but in Pennsylvania, the seat and citadel of current republicanism, which gave a majority against the democrats and the Wilson bill at the last election of something like two hundred thousand. The extraction of republican morals from the lynching thus requires great ingenuity, and we shall look with curiosity to see what use the moral extractor makes of his unpromising material.—N. Y. Times.

—Who has ever heard a protectionist give a valid reason for his belief? His reasons for believing in protection would apply equally well for belief in polygamy or plutocracy or phonography. Everything that he can see has happened under polygamy, plutocracy and phonography has happened under protection—and what has happened has had the same relationship to the one as to the other. He thinks it was protection, and not phonography, but only because he is loath to think so.—N. Y. World.

REPUBLICAN ATTACKS.

Shifting the Blame Due to the Blighting McKinley Act.

The effrontery of the republican leaders and organs in charging upon the democratic party—and especially upon the administration—the stringency through which we have passed and the resulting consequences to the business of the country is the most brazen thing of the kind the country has ever witnessed. If these leaders and organs had any sense of responsibility or of shame they would be doing penance in sackcloth and ashes for the sad effects of the conduct and reckless mismanagement of their party instead of trying to foist the responsibility upon the shoulders of their political opponents. For it is as clear as day to the intelligence of the world that, in so far as the troubles from which the country has been suffering and still suffers can be traced to the action of any political party, they are directly traceable to the action of the republican party.

Largely, of course, they are due to causes with which the country has had long experience—to extravagance and over-confidence in business and to the undue extension of credits which cannot with entire justice be charged to any party. But we challenge successful contradiction of the statement that the bulk of our business troubles are due directly to the extravagant expenditure of the republican party while in power and to the class legislation which bears the label of that party. That the result did not show itself until that party had been driven from power by an indignant and outraged people does not change the fact. It was clearly foreseen while the party was in power and in the main as clearly predicted; and it was because it was so seen and predicted that the party was driven from power.

That the Sherman silver law was in great part responsible for our financial troubles has been clearly, though grudgingly, admitted by the more intelligent leaders of the republican party. That the McKinley act is also responsible to a great degree is susceptible of the clearest proof. To it can be traced directly the falling off in our exportation of breadstuffs and other staples which has been so important a factor in the diminution of our trade. This was clearly foretold. The framers of the McKinley act were distinctly warned that the imposition which that act contemplated on our purchases of foreign goods meant retaliation in kind. It required no gift of prophecy to utter the warning. It was simply the voice of all experience and the end merely confirmed the teaching of the past. Great Britain is nothing if not commercial. She buys of those to whom she can sell. Finding that she could not sell to us she bought her wheat as well as she could of Russia and the Argentine Republic, and her cotton of India, sending in exchange what she had to sell. It was not sentiment, but business. She has bought of us what she was compelled to, but she has bought no more; and the consequence has been an enormous falling off in our trade, sufficient alone to account for half of the disaster which has befallen our business interests.

The McKinley act was responsible also, very largely, for the overproduction in manufactures which has glutted our markets and brought about stagnation. It has been the result of protective tariffs from their first inception. The first effect is to unduly stimulate manufacturing and thereby competition. Then follows, that falling in prices over which the short-sighted protectionist gloats as the fruits of his pet policy. The next step is the scramble to unload and this soon results in stagnation. There is nothing new in the process. It is as old as protective tariffs are.

The most absurd of the pretenses by which it is sought to justify the attack on the democratic party is that the foundation of the trouble has been dread of tariff change. It is undoubtedly true that the inaction and delay in congress has produced, and is producing a feeling of uncertainty which militates against the revival for which we are all waiting. But it is arrant nonsense to talk of the panic, so called, having been produced by anxious anticipation of tariff changes. Aside from the fact that the blighting effect of the McKinley act is abundantly sufficient to account for the mischief done, it is notorious that because of the evils it foresaw from that act the country voted overwhelmingly for those very tariff changes which it is now represented as looking forward to with gloom and for eboding.—Detroit Free Press.

OPINIONS AND POINTERS.

—While McKinley is fighting to keep free wool out of the country, the Chinese are being smuggled into his state by squads. The major never did favor placing duty on cheap foreign labor.—Detroit Free Press.

—The republicans of the senate obstruct the settlement of the tariff question in the hope that by keeping the country unsettled until November they will be able to control the next congress. This vicious policy ought to be well understood, and it will be.—N. Y. World.

—The tariff bill cannot become the law of the land before July 1. The debate in the senate is to begin the first week in April, and its discussion will last at least six weeks. It then goes to the conference committee, after which it will be submitted to both houses.—Albany Argus.

—There are just three things that are absolutely essential to the existence of the democratic party just now, and they are these: (1) That a tariff-reform bill be passed. (2) That a satisfactory tariff-reform bill be passed. (3) That a satisfactory tariff-reform bill be passed speedily.—Indianapolis Sentinel.

—There is no man so poor," says a protectionist contemporary, "that he will be spared paying a tax on sugar if he eats any of it." Thus proclaiming this oracle when the democrats propose to levy a tariff tax; when the republicans levy such taxes it insists that they are paid, not by the consumer, but by the foreigner.—Louisville Courier-Journal.

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

THE OUTGROWN DOLL'S LAMENT

Oh, listen well
While a tale I tell
Of a poor unfortunate dolly,
Who was born in France
And given by chance
To a sweet little girl named Polly.

A wee little girl
With hair all a-curl,
And dimpled cheeks and shoulders
When I and she
Took an airing, we
Were the joy of all beholders.

Day after day
As time passed away,
We'd nothing to do but keep jolly;
But it could not last,
For she grew so fast,
This dear little girl named Polly!

First she was seven,
Eight, nine, ten, eleven,
And then she was four times three
She outgrew her crib,
Her apron and bib,
And now—she has outgrown me!

Forgotten, forlorn,
From night till morn
I'm left in the playroom corner;
From morn till night
In the same sad plight,
Like a piece of little Jack Horner.

And Polly, she
At school must be,
Or else the piano strumming,
While I sit here
Growing old and queer,
Vainly expecting her coming.

With a frozen stare
At the walls I glare,
My mind to the question giving,
If the life of a dolly
Outgrown by Polly
Be really worth the living!

—Julia Schayer, in St. Nicholas.

TRAVELS OF A DOG.

An Albany Canine Who is a Pet of Uncle Sam's Postmasters.

Owney went to Chicago, Cincinnati and St. Louis, and they attached checks to his collar. Then he went on through Salt Lake City to California and from there to Mexico. In Mexico they hung a Mexican dollar on his neck. From there he came up through the south, finally reaching Washington. His collar was hanging full of tags and checks, and poor Owney was weary of the heavy load about his neck. Postmaster General Wanamaker saw him and took pity on him. He carried him out one day and had a harness made for him; then he took the badges from his collar and fastened

them to his harness, as you see in the picture. If you look closely you will discover the Mexican dollar, and also a King's Daughters' badge which some one presented to him.

Owney did not tarry long in Washington, but was soon off again with his new harness. The farther he went the more checks he had to carry, and the heavier grew his load. At last the attachments alone weighed over two pounds, and poor Owney was tired of carrying the dangling things about with him.

A Boston postal clerk saw him and took pity on him as Mr. Wanamaker had done; he carried him home to his house, and wrote a letter to the postmaster at Albany, telling him of the dog's difficulties. Word came back to take off the harness just as it was, and forward it to them. This was done, and the harness with its attachments can be seen at any time in the post-office building at Albany, preserved in a glass case with Owney's picture.

Once in his travels Owney reached Montreal, and happening to follow the mail-bags to the post office, he was taken possession of and locked up, while a letter was sent to Albany telling the officials there of his whereabouts. A reply came to let him go and he would take care of himself. This the Canadian postmaster refused to do till the cost of feeding and keeping him was paid, in all amounting to two dollars and fifty cents. A collection was called for among his old friends, the money forwarded and Owney released.

Everybody in the postal service in the United States knows him, and perhaps