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Mr. Taft skated deftly all around the tariff question while in Boston.

With this number The Commoner begins its eighth year, feeling very well, thank you.

The "million army" is being recruited at a rapid rate. Join and assist in the work of organization.

Perhaps a doctor was put in command of a naval ship so as to be handy in case it was suddenly afflicted with that sinking feeling.

The Roosevelt-Brownson affair does not boost the Hobson \$200,000,000 naval appropriation plan.

Next time the "round robin" system will be used in disagreeing with the president, precedent pointing the way.

Another five to four decision of the supreme court, the five being against the best interests of the common people—as usual.

A remarkable thing happened recently at Muncie, Ind. A mob was subjugated there without General Frederick Funston being called upon to parade.

Political battles are won by thorough organization and well defined plans. Now is the time to organize and perfect plans for the triumph of democratic principles.

The New York World's "map" is not nearly so black as the face of the New York World when it contemplates the possibility of a triumph of genuinely democratic principles.

With the postoffice department making laws to suit itself, and the supreme court declaring unconstitutional the laws that the people enact, things seem to be in a somewhat mixed condition.

And of course some time in the future our military and naval maneuvers will have to be postponed while the surgical head of the army holds a consultation with the surgical head of the navy.

Buffalo, N. Y., has a "Smile club." The man who is not eligible to membership in a "Smile Club" during the prevalence of the kind of winter weather we have been enjoying is entitled to life membership in a "Grouch Club."

Washington Letter

Washington, D. C., January 13.—The bitter fight being made in Ohio upon Secretary Taft as a republican nominee and the fact that both Indiana and Illinois have their own favorite sons with quite a possibility of New York presenting the name of its governor forward, puts the Taft candidacy in a very serious position. Undoubtedly today he is the strongest man whose candidacy has been presented. That means it is the field against Taft. He has back of him the strength of the administration, of course, but he has the weakness as well. Most recent successful candidates for presidency on the republican ticket have come in without any record of their own or any record which they had to father. Benjamin Harrison was elected as a result of a revolt against Cleveland; Cleveland was re-elected as a result of a revolt against Harrison. McKinley was swept into office because of the unpopularity which Cleveland had built up, and for divers other reasons which everybody knows. President Roosevelt with his famous luck was elected by the greatest popular majority known to American politics, and the greatest electoral majority, though he polled scarcely four hundred thousand more votes than his predecessor, and ran behind the vote given to Mr. Bryan in 1900. Thus it appears that you can not always be sure that the nominee who represents the policies of an administration is going to be strengthened thereby. Politicians in Washington think that Mr. Taft will suffer if he appears openly as the residuary legatee of the Roosevelt administration.

But it is worth while considering three men, two of whom are national characters, one a state figure. One of the most prominent financiers of Washington said to me today: "Watch out for a ticket made up of Cannon and Hughes. Cannon is a national character. All his life has been spent in public service. He has been speaker for three terms. He represents the revolt against the Roosevelt radicalism. He has the best machine in the United States, for he has every republican member of congress with him. Hughes is strong in his own state, and with the well-informed people of other states. But he is not known widely throughout the country. Furthermore he knows little of national affairs. If he should come here for a term as vice president he would learn much about national matters of which today he is ignorant. Of course it is always possible that the president may die, either by disease, accident or the act of the assassin. We have had five such cases. In that event what better man could there be to succeed to the office than Governor Hughes of New York?"

The request made by attorneys for the Seaboard Air Line railroad for a receivership is a matter of national importance. Of course the railroad controls a limited territory, running south from Washington to Tampa, Florida, with branches that enable it to touch Savannah and Charleston. It has 2,382 miles of road and a funded debt of \$63,000,000. It is one of the roads controlled by Thomas F. Ryan, the head of the tobacco trust and the man who now holds the interest in the Equitable Life Assurance company which was formerly possessed by the unlucky James Hazen Hyde. It is reported that Mr. Ryan is going to turn his interest in this railroad over to Edward H. Harriman—a statement which recalls the phrase that the last state of this corporation was worse than the first. The territory through which this railroad runs is rich and prosperous. The business the road has been doing has been so great that it was hardly able to discharge it. But about a year ago Mr. Ryan and some men of his type sought to oust from any position of power or control Mr. John Skelton Williams. Mr. Williams

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fought. He showed the methods of which the Ryan faction had been guilty. He proved to the satisfaction at least of the investing public that the Seaboard Air Line was being run for the personal profit of Ryan. His fight has now resulted in throwing the road in the hands of a receiver.

Of course nobody thinks this is going to hurt Ryan, financially. Having milked this road and ruined it, he will milk others. But politically it should hurt him. The exposition of his railroad methods in Virginia is likely to reflect somewhat upon the various distinguished statesmen from the Old Dominion who are his close friends and earnest supporters. The record of Ryan as the wrecker of this railroad, and as the head of the tobacco trust and as the new controlling spirit in the Equitable Life Assurance society, is hardly one that will add to the popularity of Virginians in the house or in the senate who are known to be his close friends and intimates.

Ohio is lost to the republican party. The Ohio republican state committee has repudiated Senators Foraker and Dick, and the Ohio senators have in turn repudiated the republican state committee. The factional fight in Ohio has ceased to be a state quarrel. It is now a national contest within the republican party. Senator Foraker absolutely refuses to accept the primary plan adopted by Taft's friends on the state committee. He threatens a snap convention and a contesting delegation if this plan is adhered to. In any event the Ohio fight is sure to be carried into the republican national convention, and it will disrupt things there much as it has disrupted things in the Buckeye state.

Of course a democrat cares little which republican dog eats the other in their Ohio quarrel. The struggle is interesting to watch and the longer it continues, the more certain it is that the democrats will appropriate the real bone of contention. The trouble is already past mending, and those who can not even now appreciate that Ohio is lost to the republican column will have a rude awakening the day after the next election. Ohio men in Washington—and the departments are full of them—throw up their hands in signs of distress and confess that whoever may be nominated, their state is going to be in the doubtful column for the first time in twenty years. In the meantime the Foraker and Taft factions are hard at it, like the allegorical Kilkenny cats—who when their battle was over, found that only the tails of each were left.

President Roosevelt, who is influenced by men close to him, yielded to the surgeon-general and appointed a doctor to command a warship. Admiral Brownson resigned. The admiral has been rebuked with very much the same vigorous language that was applied to the retiring engineer of the Panama canal or to any other man who has dared to affront the Roosevelt imperialism.

Looking back upon the record of Mr. Roosevelt prior to the time he was president and while he was assistant secretary of the navy, one finds that he was always a sturdy supporter of the line officers. His writings on naval subjects were as voluminous at that time as they are today upon the joys of shooting bears, fawn, rabbits and other large game. In all his writings on the navy he laid emphasis upon the part to be played by the officers of the line and ignored altogether this new idea that has come to him that surgeons should be given command of ships.

The controversy is an unfortunate one for the navy. The Sixtieth congress was prepared to increase the salaries of navy officers. Such an increase is justified by the needs of the officers and is demanded for the good of the service. But, as a member of the navy committee of the house remarked today: "If the president and the navy department, the chief of the bureau of construction and the chief of the bureau of navigation are all at swords points, each with a faction of the navy lined up in his support, the best thing to do is to let it all go over until another year."

Of course if the president is going to scold every officer in the navy who disagrees with him, and if such officers are going to resign rather than listen to the rebukes which he imposes, we are not likely to have a very effective navy, and it is not altogether certain that the fault will be with the men who were educated at Annapolis and who have been bred on the sea. Some day the story of what the navy thinks of Roosevelt may be told. It can not be told now while he is commander-in-chief and criticism of him by an officer is equivalent to insubordination and rebellion.

WILLIS J. ABBOT.