

greenbackism. Such a course was unpopular in Wisconsin then and long after.

Coming west I advocated free trade for some twenty years. This doctrine was unpopular—it seems to me because it was so simple and plain. An exclusively agricultural country, like these western plains, palpably has everything to gain and nothing to lose by unlimited and unrestricted markets for its vast surplus of food staples. By the time a resolute band of doctrinaires, as they were contemptuously called, had changed a small minority of tariff reformers into a large majority, but who in the meantime had barred themselves out of congress and all other elective offices, the money question came along. Of course those of us who had impaled ourselves on the principle of free trade repeated the self-immolation, with the gold standard as a weapon—and here we are. A "gold democrat" has just the same chance of being elected to anything in Nebraska now as a tariff reformer had thirty years ago.

Our self-sacrifice, however, has not been without compensation. We have the leisure of private life in which to enjoy the present contention of republicans that expanded trade is good and necessary, and their writhing in the toils of the trusts which we long ago warned them would be a result of the protective system. As we are nothing if not unselfish, we have also enjoyed the restoration of business which was facilitated by the sudden abandonment of their silver principles by the republicans, and usurpation of our gold platform, "the way of holiness" to which we pointed them by our precept and example. Our humorous faculty was entertained by the spectacle of republican delegates journeying to the St. Louis convention of 1896 intent on "doing something for silver," and raising hosannas to bimetalism, and returning denouncing it as "crazy populism," while they held aloft our gold standard as an eternal principle of economics, "Rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun."

So far as political honors and emoluments are concerned, however, we have held the bag for our more "practical" and shifty opponents most of the time for a generation. Commonly, men of shifty principles, of meager equipment, of common-place mental, and not high-grade moral ability, get into congress. Indeed a part of these qualities are requisite for getting there. Whether I might enjoy going to congress or not, at home I enjoy the company of those who are superior men, and better fitted, not to get in, but to be in congress, than most of those who are there.

This bad condition results largely from our bi-party system, in which all men are expected to conform to all the grotesquely discordant or contradictory tenets of one or the other of the two

great parties. Presently, I think we shall develop a new and logical system, in which many groups of men may advocate and push to an issue, one or more important and consistent principle which they believe in, without professing allegiance to a mixture of heterogeneous principles, many of which they may not believe in. Our present bi-party system stultifies men and demoralizes politics. We adhere to it because we have been taught that it is a fixed and necessary institution. An institution so bad and inefficient as this has proved to be is not necessary, and ought not to be fixed.

To recur to myself: My republican friend, the editor of The State Journal of this place, sang my congressional requiem as long ago as 1894, in this conclusive, but withal very gracious fashion:

"Albert Watkins has been frequently mentioned as a man who would run for congress to advantage in this district, since Bryan has pulled out of the way. Mr. Watkins is a clear-eyed, clear-brained man, with twice the intellectual ability of the present congressman. He has been a student all his days, and has come as near living the intellectual life as any working editor or lawyer in Lincoln. For that reason he wouldn't do for a democratic nominee for congress. A man must be an out and out demagogue to succeed as a democratic candidate in anything in Nebraska; and Watkins is too much addicted to the habit of having ideas and expressing them to be a demagogue under any circumstances."

Strike out the qualifying words, "democratic" and "Nebraska," making the application universal, and you have the truth, to which the exceptions in practice are, I think, so few as to prove the rule.

Yours very serenely,

ALBERT WATKINS.

—The Mineral Point (Wis.) Democrat.

A BYGONE LUMINARY.

The writings of the late Hon. Jefferson Davis, of Mississippi, are not commonly quoted from to any extent, neither for political speeches, in public-school text-books nor for any other purposes. And yet he was an American, who in his day and among his neighbors was held to have ability of the first order.

Here are his observations concerning the chief magistracy of the nation:

"I had been so near the office for four years, while in the cabinet of Mr. Pierce, that I saw it from behind the scenes, and it was to me an office in no wise desirable. The responsibilities were great; the labor, the vexations, the disappointments, were greater. Those who have intimately known the official and personal life of our presidents cannot fail to remember how few have left the office as happy men as when they entered it, how darkly the shadows

gathered around the setting sun, and how eagerly the multitude would turn to gaze upon another orb just rising to take its place in the political firmament.

"Worn by incessant fatigue, broken in fortune, debarred by public opinion, prejudice or tradition, from future employment, the wisest and best who have filled that office have retired to private life, to remember rather the failure of their hopes than the success of their efforts. He must, indeed, be a self-confident man who could hope to fill the chair of Washington with satisfaction to himself, with the assurance of receiving on his retirement the meed awarded by the people to that great man, that he had 'done enough for life and for glory,' or even of feeling that the sacrifice of self had been compensated by the service rendered to his country."

It is curious to find in Mr. Davis' inaugural address of 1861 a sentiment usually attributed to a statesman of a later age; that "all offices are but trusts held for the people."—COM.

REPUBLICAN OPINIONS.

The Republican Club of Harvard University, on Wednesday, May 16, 1900, adopted a platform approving various measures, among them the following:

"Publicity of the affairs of trusts and removal of all duty on commodities controlled by trusts."

Rockford, (Ill.) Republic, January 29, 1900:

"At a meeting a few days ago at Denver the Colorado Editorial Association adopted resolutions demanding the repeal of the tariff on wood pulp and all other materials entering into the manufacture of print paper. * * * There are many other trusts entrenched securely behind tariff duties which shut out foreign competition and enable American monopolists to rob consumers. * * * There should be a sweeping repeal of protection which is made the opportunity for such merciless exactions as the print paper trust has laid on the newspapers of the United States."

Hartford Courant, December, 1899:

This paper declared that the president should have closed his trust discussion in his message, "with a straight-from-the-shoulder recommendation for the immediate repeal of any and every protective customs duty behind which a price-raising monopoly is squatted."

Dubuque, (Iowa) Times, January 20, 1900:

"The paper trust is making hay while the sun shines. * * * The simple remedy lies in the repeal of the tariff used to suppress competition and to rob the publishers and through them the public. Congress should lose no time in wiping it off the statute books and should not stop until every other duty which operates to suppress competition or enhance the value of the bounties of nature in private hands is repealed."