

A Message on National Politics.

As the contents of this chest are supposed to be a message from the people of Colorado Springs now to the people of Colorado Springs a hundred years hence, it might be more interesting to you if I were to write of local politics than of national politics; but the latter is the subject assigned, and I will give a brief review of those questions which seem to me to be most important.

By way of introduction, so that you may know some thing of the personality of the writer, and his point of view, let me set down the following autobiographical facts.

I was born in Zanesville, Ohio, Jan 21, 1855, my father being then pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of that city. The Civil War began when I was six years old. I remember some things that happened during the war—a visit of General Sheridan to Zanesville—he had a cousin who lived near us; a similar visit of John Sherman and John Brough, during the great campaign in which Vallandigham was the Democratic candidate; the time of John Morgan's raid, when my father brought home a musket and stood it on the landing of the front stairway; the long procession of army wagons with contrabands and mules that passed through Maine St., which was a section of the old National Road; and finally the celebration over the fall of Richmond and Lee's surrender—a rejoicing turned into mourning by the following news of Lincoln's assassination, when the flags were all floating at half mast—the first time I had ever seen them so.

A boy brought up in such a time and place grew naturally into an intense Unionist and Republican. The issues growing out of the war were dominant yet when I cast my first vote in 1876. I was then living with my parents in Bath, Steuben Co., N.Y. In the years between, I had been to school in Pennsylvania (at Sewickley Academy), in Bath, and in Trenton, New Jersey, and had just been graduated from Williams College, in Massachusetts. I felt then, as I have felt even more strongly since, that my citizenship was primarily of the United States. Since then I have traveled in most of the Southern States—much of the time as newspaper correspondent—have been to the Pacific coast, both at Puget Sound and at Santa Barbara, and have lived in Colorado nearly nine years. In the campaign of 1896 I ran the only Republican daily newspaper in Colorado—the Colorado Springs *Gazette*; and am now editor of the *Evening Mail*.

As I look back, the national questions have been mainly of three kinds: first, those growing out of the war—"free ballot and a fair count," reconstruction, Ku Klux rule, the preservation of the results of the war; second, economic questions—the tariff and currency; and third the new issues growing out of the war with Spain—what shall we do with Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, [Tistula?], Guam, the Philippines.

Mr. Ehrich is writing, he tells me, a sketch of the Silver craze in this State, so I need not touch on that, for that is a matter on which we are substantially agreed; but we differ on the question of foreign possessions, and as to this I may say a few words.

The war against Spain was begun because the blowing up of the Maine inflamed public sentiment in this country to a degree that made it impossible to keep the peace. The President put off hostilities as long as possible, but the Congress forced him into it—Democrats and Republicans alike, but Democrats especially.

After the war, what were we to do with the conquered Spanish possessions? There were three courses open:

1. To give them back to Spain, to be misgoverned and robbed as they had been for 300 years;
2. To turn them loose to shift for themselves—a course which would have led to anarchy and wholesale murder;
3. To keep possession ourselves for the present, maintaining order, cleaning up, educating, instilling by slow degrees into the native mind some conception of law and order and justice; and leaving to the future the ultimate disposition at least of Cuba and the Philippines.

The last enumerated course was pursued. What else could we have done? If a man's duty is to do the next thing, with such light as God gives him, trusting to Providence for the future, it seems to me a nation's duty is the same.

Those who oppose the present administration, like my friend Mr. Ehrich, are afraid it will destroy republican principles for us to hold "subject colonies." They hold that it is an anomaly under our constitution to hold any territory whose inhabitants are of such a character that we cannot admit them as States. They fear that until our civil service is reformed and purified, we cannot govern such possessions honestly and efficiently, and that corruption on a gigantic scale will sap the vitals of our people.

It may be that these evils will befall. The Democratic Party offers no practical remedy, however. As a theory, the view first noted has its strong points; but as Mr. Cleveland once said about another matter, "it is a condition, not a theory, that confronts us." The Republican views—the views of the great majority of Americans today—is an opportunist view: "let us do what it seems we must do—what is laid upon us to do, and do it as best we can, and trust to American capacity and American luck, and most of us would say, with reverence, to the Almighty Ruler who has thrust this task upon us, to come out of it all right."

It sounds old-fashioned, but there is, deep down in the hearts of most of our people, a belief that this nation is a "chosen people," and that God is leading us, and that it is part of our mission to educate the world. When we have been up against Oriental impassivity and Oriental moral standards, and Oriental incapacity for self-government, as long as the English have, we shall alter our view somewhat, no doubt. I have never believed that a democratic form of government is the best form for Orientals, or for Latin races. It is going to be a hard thing for us to keep a democratic government at home and an

autocratic government in our possessions; but one step at a time; nobody can see ahead very far; and the problem may find its solution as we go on.

Our national questions from this time on, to an extent unknown for many years, are going to be international questions. The consideration of such questions may broaden our view; the danger of corruption in administering our foreign possessions may help us to a better civil service at home, a sense of world-responsibility may sober our jingoism. Let me hope that such results, and not general ruin and corruption, may follow our record assumption of a new place among the Great Powers.

Before closing I must express my belief that the greatest danger of the Republic lies not in jingoism or imperialism, but in the tyranny of trade-unions. These have already reduced the American workingman to a certain kind of slavery. He may not work if the Union says no. He must strike if the Union says so, whether he is satisfied with his hours and wages or not. He must not work his best, lest he get ahead of his less capable fellow-workman, and set a standard too high to be conveniently attained by the average.

Most ominous of all, the Unions now compel all their numbers to keep out of the militia; and indirectly preach disloyalty and treason.

Before this danger is overcome, we may have to go through a period of tentative socialism; we may have to go through a period of anarchy; but I hope and believe that there is virtue enough in our people, and enough ingrained respect for law, to bring us through it safely in the end.

Whether there will be political parties a hundred years from now I cannot tell. At present, the Republican Party is the party of conservatism, of law and order, of capital and wealth; the Democratic party is the party of discontent, of socialism, of anarchistic tendencies, of wild finance and crazy economics. Its strength is in the appeal it makes to the laboring classes to upset the "rich man's government." It will come into power again, no doubt; and then the hope of the country lies in a certain inertia, and in the sobering effect of responsibility and power on the men who may be its leaders at the time. The Republican Party may go too far in upholding the rights of capital, and may need correction; my hope is that the correction may come from within, and that if it does not, the correction may not involve the ruin, or even the very serious damage of our governmental fabric.

William Alexander Platt