

TO THE PEOPLE

OF THE

34TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

The following letter is submitted for the consideration of such as believe in the exercise of the individual power of the citizen to secure the general welfare. The writer believes in the exercise of power by the people; in the control of parties by the people and the shaping of legislation to promote the welfare of the people. He is not much of a believer in "rings" or "bosses," regarding them only as the cheat which grows up in the political wheatfield, when the spirit of self-government has died out among the people from neglect to assert and exercise their power. He believes that the selection of candidates should be regarded as the very highest and most important duty of the citizen and that in its determination the inquiry should be *not* "What the bosses desire?" *but* "What will be for the true interests of the people?"

It seems to be about time that the people asserted their own inherent power and cast aside the control of men who assume to know better than they what there ought to be done—that instead of asking a group of associated "bosses" to rule over them and speak for them, they would better determine to take the reins and drive themselves. Every honest citizen has had frequent occasion to blush at the bad pre-eminence of "The Chautauqua District" in politics. Every person knows the

general belief—one may say the unquestioned belief—in the way nominations are bought and sold, "negotiated" as if they were "commercial paper," instead of representing the sovereign power of the people. Every one knows that this condition of affairs, by which the votes of the people have practically been put up at auction for the benefit of a few manipulators of the political market, is not really due to the action or the purpose of the few, *so much as to the neglect and indifference of the many*. When the people have interest enough in the performance of their political duty to make known their will, the political manager ceases always to traffic in the power which may be vested in him, and records and follows the verdict of the people.

As a candidate, the writer desires only to appeal to the source of power through sense of political duty of the people. If he could take every voter in the District by the hand, he could not more fully and fairly inform him of the views he entertains and the course he deems to be for the general welfare, than by the following letter recently addressed to the Editor of the *Allegheny County Republican*.

Believing in a God who loves justice and imposes on every man the obligation to do whatever lies in his power to promote it, he could do no less. Be-

believing in a free people whose right and duty it is to rule, he can do no more. With them he leaves the decision. He has no controversy with any individual, no desire to promote the interests of any faction, no wish to override the claims of any part of the District, but simply an earnest desire to see the power of the people of this District in the Congress of the United States, made an effectual and potent force for liberty, justice and the secure prosperity of the people.

My Dear Sir:—I am in receipt of so many inquiries in regard to a Congressional candidacy, that it seems incumbent on me to make some public utterance in relation to the subject, both in order to return my thanks for the appreciation thus indicated, and that there may be no misunderstanding in regard to my position.

It is, no doubt largely by your advocacy of my candidature, that public attention has been directed through the press to such a contingency. As a consequence, from all parts of the district, and from nearly every State of the Union, I am in receipt of letters urging me to declare myself a candidate. In recognition of the interest you have manifested, an interest wholly unsolicited and unexpected, it seems most fitting that my decision in regard thereto, should be made public through your journal.

These correspondents insist that I owe it as a duty to the country generally, and to the Republican party in particular, to offer as such candidate at this time, because of the study I have given to the question of National citizenship, and the relation the National government should sustain to the rights, privileges and conditions of the individual

citizen.

I feel the force of these considerations all the more keenly because they are my own weapons turned against myself. Regarding only my personal feelings, I should not be inclined to undertake a task of such absorbing character as the faithful representation of the District in Congress. My idea of the responsibility of that position is so high that I could never content myself with merely holding down a seat in that body, but should feel bound to exert with the utmost diligence, whatever ability I may possess, to reflect honor on such a constituency, and make its power appreciably felt in national legislation. This duty would, in great measure, compel the relinquishment of those literary labors in which I have so long been engaged, in which I so greatly delight, and which, I flatter myself, are not wholly without profit to my party, the country and the cause of justice, liberty and humanity. I am a laborer in the utmost literalness of that term—dependent on today's labor for tomorrow's bread—and so quite unable to engage in what is termed "practical politics," as a luxury. Consulting only my own inclination, therefore, I should unquestionably decline to comply with these requests.

But I am a citizen, charged with the responsibility which citizenship imposes, to do whatever may be in my power to promote what I believe to be the welfare of my fellow-citizens. I regard politics, not as a mere game to be played for the prizes of office and the luxury of power, but as the most important field for the exercise of the divine law of human duty, and I believe it the duty of every citizen to regulate his action as part of the sovereign power of the Nation, in such a way as to secure the most

practical good for the greatest number of his fellows. Believing in this principle, and having taught it in many forms, I cannot consistently avoid making it the rule of my own conduct.

I believe, with an earnestness no words can express, that a crisis in the affairs of our country is at hand, not less difficult and portentous than any the American people have hitherto been called to confront; and if I am able to aid ever so little in the peaceful solution of the problems which existing conditions present, I have no right to refuse to do so. It is especially fitting that the intelligent voters of the Thirty-fourth District of New York, should pass upon the very questions which such candidacy must of necessity raise.

Forty years ago, in one of the Counties of this district, the Republican party was born, or at least christened with that name it has made immortal in the history of liberty by an unparalleled series of beneficent achievements. It was born with its face to the West and stepped from its cradle to meet a welcome never before accorded to a new political idea. Within a twelvemonth it had received a popular majority in fifteen out of thirty-one States which then constituted the Union, elected eleven Senators and a plurality in the House of Representatives. This was the response of a waiting people to the first call of liberty. Two years afterwards it held its first national convention and declared its object to be: "Free Soil, Free Speech, Free Men!" Volumes could not better have proclaimed its mission!

"Free soil," meant that the Nation should prevent slavery from controlling the territories of the West. By "Free speech," it meant that every American citizen should be allowed to express his

opinions upon any public question, freely and safely, in every part of the Union. By "Free men," it meant that no man or class of men should have power, in any part of the Republic, to restrict any other man or class of men, in the enjoyment of their inalienable rights.

The founders of the Republican party understood, as no other men ever did, the supreme necessity of liberty and the absolute dependence of prosperity and progress upon "free speech." They knew that any semblance of free institutions which lacked this unimpeachable seal of verity, was a fraud and delusion. Across the westward path of empire, slavery had sought to throw the barrier of caste, of dependent labor and of ignorance, on which its perpetuity depended. These profit-statesmen saw that "free soil and free speech" everywhere, constituted the only reliable guaranty of "free men" anywhere. They did not propose the instant eradication of slavery; but they did propose to restrict it, as men quarantine a foul disease to prevent its spread. The mightiest struggle which liberty had known was then nearing its climax. The real question was, whether a slave oligarchy should be allowed to overpower free thought, free speech and free labor by means of enhanced power which slavery gave to the white voters of the south.

These first Republicans realized that "Free speech and free men" were essential pre-requisites of prosperity as well as liberty in a republic, and that on them depended the protection of the rights and opportunities of free labor. They saw that free labor could never be secure even in the North, while it was menaced by the slave-power and slave-

policy in the South. Not that slave labor competed with free labor. Slave labor produced literally nothing that competed with free labor, except in those states where slavery existed; and there the free laborer was long since reduced to a level of ignorance and dependence hardly above that of the slave. But slavery had no interest in the laborer—no desire to his elevation, no regard for his rights. It existed merely because it was profitable for the master. All personal rights, knowledge, free speech, marriage, even the right to defend his own life, were denied the slave, *in order that the master might have cheap, dependent and controllable labor.*

Slavery was not a matter of race or preference merely. Men did not hold other men in bondage for the fun of the thing or from mere desire to oppress, but for the profit to be made by the denial of wages and the suppression of the natural demand of the laborer for a part of the profit derived from his toil. It was the first step in the great conflict between capital and labor which civilization inaugurated and which only a truer sense of responsibility for general conditions can solve.

The demand of slavery put in terms of the present, was simply that the laborer should have no rights and derive no benefit from his toil; that the capitalist should prescribe what food he should eat; what labor he should perform; what clothes he should wear; what house he should inhabit; what woman should be his concubine; when he should work and when he should rest, and that he should never be permitted to leave his employer's service. All the master desired was the greatest profit to himself—the results of labor at the lowest possi-

ble price. Slavery was a persistent enemy of the rights of the laborer everywhere; it demanded everything for the capitalist and took everything from the laborer. Recognizing this, the Republican party, at its second National convention added to its program of formulated principles, "protection to free-labor," by the imposition of discriminating duties on imports. So the tale of noble aims was made complete: Free soil; Free speech; Free men and Free labor protected by national law against the baneful competition of dependent and pauperized foreign labor!

It is sometimes claimed that the sole purpose of the Republican party was to secure the abolition of slavery. This is the view its opponents have always urged. Its demand was much broader; "Free speech and free men." There can be no free man without free speech; but the abolition of slavery does not necessarily secure either free speech or free men. A man may not be a slave, but if denied free speech; if deprived of the enjoyment of his inherent rights; if refused trial by jury; if not allowed to controvert his employer's account or demand a higher rate for his labor, he is *not free*. So, when the Republican party came to graft its principles upon the Constitution, it did not content itself with merely prohibiting slavery, but added two more provisions, on the force of which will yet hinge the rights of every laborer and the liberties of every citizen within the borders of the United States.

1 Every person born or naturalized in the United States shall be a citizen thereof.

2 Every person born or naturalized in the United States shall be a citizen of the state in which he may reside.

By this solemn guaranty, the nation laid the axe at the root of the pernicious doctrines of "State-sovereignty" and the "paramount allegiance of the citizens to the State,"—the two doctrines on which the Confederacy rested and by which rebellion was justified. In these, are crystalized all the results of the war. "With malice toward none and with charity for all," the Republican party asked not punishment or revenge, but only "free speech and free men"—an equal citizenship, security of life and person and liberty for all.

How has this pledge been fulfilled? Free speech is just as much an unknown thing in one-third of the states of the Union, as in the very heart of Russia. It is not restricted by law, neither was it in the days of slavery; but our revered fellow citizen, that apostle and martyr of liberty, Calvin Fairbanks, would find it just as perilous to advocate the equal rights of all men in the south to-day, as it was when he offered his body to be furrowed by the lash that he might aid men to reach that liberty which could then only be found under the flag of Great Britain. The mob rules now, as it ruled then, and the citizen whose life and liberties and rights the nation stands pledged to secure, has no protection against its violence, no redress for its barbarism. When the slave cried for help, the Republican party heard him; shall it now turn a deaf ear to the citizen? Are the rights of men it made free, who gave their blood to save the Union from disruption, of less importance to the American people than when they were slaves?

It is not a question of the rights of the colored people alone. It is also a question of your rights and mine.

Every day brings the hour nearer when the National power must evidently be invoked to secure the lives and rights of citizens of the United States in the several States of the North as well as the South. At any moment, we are likely to behold the rights of citizens trampled on by a mob under the lead, or acting with the connivance, of State authorities. In two States of the West such a condition is even now imminent; while in another, a railway corporation which felt itself aggrieved by a State law, has asked the protection of its rights as a citizen of the State under the 14th Amendment of the Constitution, and been accorded relief. Day by day, it grows more and more evident that both employer and employee throughout the North, will soon have occasion to demand the protection of their rights and redress of the wrongs they may suffer, under this greatest of all the charters of liberty—the Nation's solemn pledge that it will protect the lives, the rights and liberties of the citizens against both the harmful action of the State governments and of unlawful violence which the State may be unable or unwilling to restrain, or to punish. But the rights of property and the freedom of the laborer cannot be protected by the National government and the life and liberty of the citizen be left at the mercy of mob-law and caste-barbarity. If the Nation will not protect its colored citizens, we can now easily see that its white citizens must suffer in their liberty and prosperity.

God has linked in a wondrous way, in the history of the Republic, the interests of labor at the North with the rights of men at the South. Slavery added three-fifths of the number of slaves to the voting strength of the mas-

ters. The slave had no voice in the government but was counted in representation. With the aid of this silent army of the oppressed, the free-trade, slave-oligarchy of the South attacked the industries of the North. To-day, the power of eight millions of colored citizens, denied free speech and the exercise of the rights of citizenship, is added to the power of the Southern white Democracy and used to impair the wages and destroy the opportunity of the Northern laborer, thereby bringing him, little by little, to the same position of dependence and helplessness which characterizes labor throughout the South. Take away from the Free-trade Democracy of the South the seats it holds in Congress by means of the denial of free speech and the rights of citizenship, and Northern industry would not be paralyzed by the threat of repeal of the protective tariff on which the comfort and prosperity of millions of northern homes depend. There can be no security for the laborer until this peril is removed. It will be, as it was in the days of slavery, an eternal sea-saw of enactment and repeal of protective legislation, until the Free-trade Democracy of the South are deprived of this usurped power, by securing to the citizens, the liberties we have guaranteed. We may crop the branches of the Upas-tree which blights our prosperity, but there will be no assurance of stability until we dig up the roots.

Cheap and dependent labor was the object of slavery; cheap and dependent labor is the end sought by denial of the citizen's right. The "Wilson Bill" is the just and true exponent of the spirit which denies free speech, equality of rights and equal opportunity. We cannot protect labor at the North and leave

it forever dependent at the South.

We know what it cost to abolish slavery. In my judgment the peril to American liberty and prosperity arising from the enslavement of 3,000,000 who had never known their rights, was as nothing compared with the danger of denying to 8,000,000 of citizens the full enjoyment of the rights we have pledged the Nation's honor to secure. The mission of the Republican party will not be fulfilled until every citizen enjoys the unrestricted exercise of all his legal rights, and is assured of just redress of personal wrongs in every State in the Union,—until "free speech and free men" are safe wherever the shadow of the flag falls, at home as well as abroad.

"His life is bound up in the lad's life," said the son of the ancient patriarch, as a reason for offering himself as a hostage for his younger brother. The liberty and prosperity of the American Republic are mysteriously bound up with justice to these youngest children of liberty, the colored citizens of the United States. Wrong done to them will rebound upon our heads and the heads of our children in the future as it did upon our fathers in the past. We cannot escape this fate by neglect, nor cure the wrong of the past by fresh injustice in the present. The generation which is passing away paid a terrible price for permitting evil to suppurate until the savage surgery of war was needed to effect a cure. Will that which is now coming on emulate the unwisdom of the worst elements of the past, or the patriotism of its best?

A profound conviction that the interest of the Republican party, of the American laborer and the American people, demand that this vital question be no longer thrust aside, leads me to accede to the request so many have preferred.

It is sometimes claimed that the National power cannot be used to protect the personal rights of the citizen or provide redress for his wrongs. There are some who can remember when it was claimed that the National power could

not be used to "coerce a sovereign State;" but it was so used. Had it not been, the United States would now be a thing of the past—one of the unfulfilled promises of history. Even the youngest voter can recall that the National power has been very recently used to prevent free citizens of the States of the North from leaving the service of their employers, except at his convenience.

It was only yesterday that the employees of a railroad were enjoined from enforcing a demand for reasonable hours and fair wages, by quitting its service. It is a universal principle of constitutional law, that a power which can be used to restrict the citizens' rights, can be used also to enlarge them, if proper legislation is provided as a basis for such jurisdiction. *Such legislation will be enacted whenever the people choose representatives who are in earnest in their efforts to secure it, and have given the subject sufficient attention to know what is required.*

It is claimed that this matter must be left to cure itself. That was the professional politician's theory with regard to slavery, *and they succeeded in persuading the people to let it alone, until it came near destroying the Nation's life.*

Another foolish claim is, that the Republican party has gone forward as far as it can, and must now take the back track, ignore liberty and the rights of man, and consider only finance, economics and the distribution of offices. A party of progress can never safely stand still, much less go backward. What the soul is to the body, that the impulse of liberty and justice is to the Republican party. Without it, the party dies, as certainly as a man dies, when the breath quits his nostrils.

Many urge me, with kindly insistence to "begin to hustle for delegates." While I would esteem it the highest honor to be named as their candidate by the Republican party of the District, I have no desire to flex their verdict by self-seeking solicitation, or corrupt it by the proffer or promise of gain. I have neither means nor inclination to "fix" a voter, "doctor" a caucus or "manipulate" a convention, and would not

accept a nomination resulting from a "commercial transaction" of any sort. Politics is the science of good government—the application of conscience and intelligence to the exercise of power for the promotion of the public welfare. *It is not only the right, but the duty of the people, to rule; and the man who interferes with the performance of that duty by fraud, deception or corruption, is just as much an enemy to good government as if he stood over the ballot box with a Winchester and drove away all who desired to vote otherwise than according to his wishes.*

I have no more regard for one who buys a vote, or corrupts a delegate, either directly or through another, or who accepts the results of such methods, than I have for the man who wields a bull-whack, falsifies a count, or steals an election return. All of these acts falsify the popular will and those who perpetrate them, should be ground to powder under the heel of popular contempt. When the people arouse themselves to the duty of rulership, there will be less "hustling for delegates;" better nominations and a nearer approach to "a government of the people and for the people."

I do not need to say that I am a Republican. The history of the party and the literature of the country bear ample evidence of the fact. Some of my correspondents, however, ask whether I would be "willing to accept the nomination, *not as a Republican.*" I am not sure that I understand the scope of the inquiry. If the purpose is to inquire whether I would be any less a Republican if tendered a nomination outside the party, I must candidly admit I would not. I am not a Republican from party requirement or to secure personal advantage, but from the profoundest conviction. I regard the principles that party has formulated as essential to the general welfare of the American people, and could not be influenced in my advocacy of them by any personal considerations whatever.

I presume, however, that such inquiries were prompted by my often expressed regret that the Republican party has failed to take intelligent note of the

popular discontent arising from financial and economic conditions attending the development of new agencies, legal and material, affecting the relations of labor and capital, in the control of transportation facilities, and other lines of activity, by combined capital represented by fictitious creations deriving power from legal privilege, and exercising it without individual responsibility.

I have no sympathy with vague theories of government or wholesale specifics for the cure of political ills. The liberty and civilization which we enjoy have cost too much to be squandered in wild experiment; but I do believe that a party of progress should always take earnest cognizance of existing evils and apply such practical remedies as may prevent or ameliorate the consequences. Liberty must be perfected by extending the lines on which it has been established; and prosperity must be sought by enlarging individual opportunity not by restricting it. Denial of evil never brings a cure; and an insufficient remedy is apt to impair confidence in the party offering it. The Interstate Commerce law, which is valuable only as a demonstration of its own insufficiency, and the Anti-Trust law, of phenomenal but evident uselessness, are examples of this fact. They are generally, though no doubt, mistakenly, regarded as intentional evasions of admitted duty, and have, I think, strengthened rather than mollified the discontent they were intended to appease.

The cowardice, timidity and selfishness of party managers who assume to lead rather than to follow the will of the people, is always the rock on which a party of progress is in most danger of being wrecked. Good government consists, not in mere party domination nor in the formulation of pet theories, but in careful observation of existing conditions—the symptoms of the body politic—and the application to them of safe, sensible and practical remedies. The popular idea of the means by which an evil may be remedied is not always, perhaps rarely, correct; but the popular notion that something is wrong, is not apt to be very wide of the truth. For a

party claiming to desire the welfare of the people to neglect this demand for the amelioration of irksome conditions, is not only folly but a crime. I believe the rank and file of the Republican party recognize this fact and see that it must go forward or continue to suffer from the abrasion of discontent.

It was the Populist vote of the West and the non-voters of the East that defeated the Republican party in 1892; and brought financial disaster; not Democratic gains. But the Populist vagaries would have had little power to charm intelligent men from their allegiance and there would have been no unformulated discontent, had the Republican party stood staunchly to its professions as the party of liberty, and also attested itself a party of progress by providing a sufficient remedy for acknowledged ills. Believing that the real purpose of its rank and file is to make it a party which shall feel the needs of the people and seek effective remedies for the same, I deem it my duty to aid in making it what it ought to be, rather than abandoning it because it has not done all it might to help bring it to a true appreciation of its duty, rather than try to create a better instrument for the attainment of just purposes. Whether nominated by a convention or by petition, therefore, or not at all, I shall be to precisely the same degree, a Republican, an uncompromising believer in the principles of that party and its mission to secure every citizen in the United States the full and free enjoyment of his rights and liberties, and to every American laborer the fullest fruition of his toil.

With earnest hope that the long travail which the Nation's material progress has suffered, may result in that "new birth of freedom" which Abraham Lincoln invoked as an essential condition of that high ideal, "a government of the people, by the people and for the people," which should be the grand objective of party and individual aspiration, I remain,

Sincerely Yours,

ALBION W. TOURGEE.

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