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AMERICAN AFFAIRS.

A rigid conservatism of form is one of the contradictions, if it is not the principal contradiction, of American democracy. A people loving individual freedom would be inclined, on purely theoretical grounds, to live under a constitution at least sufficiently elastic to adapt itself to the play of the aggregate of individual wishes, that is, the national will; in practice, however, the national will is expressed only periodically in the election of a President. Having chosen their President, the American people become for a term the subjects of a single ruler whose exercise of power may be despotic, or whose particular political views, at all events, may easily be put into effect. How far the President's power is autocratic depends upon the forces of opposition much more than on the strength of the original sanction. In the case of President Roosevelt the sanction is still, as we believe, powerful; he still appears to have with him the sympathy and good-will of the American people. He has opposed to him, however, the most powerful elements in the State in the persons of individuals or narrow corporations of more influence than uprightness, and he has the labour of attacking them at every vulnerable point. Financial abuses, even when they do not touch the fabric of the State, are an evil which is the fair object of every weapon, whether it be legal, political, religious, literary, or social; but when financial abuses are complicated in the political life of the nation there is no word hard enough and no method bold enough for accomplishing their destruction.

The resolution of President Roosevelt in the carrying out of this duty has never been more marked than during the past year, and now that his term of office is beginning to draw to a close he has ventured on what is perhaps the most courageous, and what may be the most effective, step of all. He has summoned an informal gathering of Governors of the various States to a "Conference on National Resources," in order to deal with questions which neither the Federal Government nor the separate States can touch without causing friction and bitterness. Hitherto, as Mr. Bryan suggests, there has been "a twilight zone between the nation and the State," and in that dim light things have been done which in the light of common day would scarcely have borne inspection. The vast resources of the States have been allowed to become concentrated in the hands of self-interested politicians and have been exploited as though they were inexhaustible. President Roosevelt has overstepped the barrier of constitutional bickering with which the exploiters have hedged themselves in; and, by showing a proper disregard for constitutional claims employed to cloak personal designs, has again won the approval of the best elements of the nation. The Conference has been an unqualified success; its meetings have been held without a hitch; and, it is stated, other conferences of the same kind are to be convened.

Mr. Roosevelt has never made it a secret that his energies are directed against the arch evildoers in the State, and that he has constantly before him the two-fold aim of removing an abuse and making an example of the miscreants. He is thus never reluctant to preach a sound sermon or indisposed to be at all sparing in his methods. The address he delivered at the general meeting of the Methodist Episcopal Church is characterized by the usual directness of assault and the large and generous views it exhibits of President Roosevelt's statesmanship. Eager as he is in the extermination of patent wrong-doing, he has nevertheless a great faith in the health of the

nation at large. "No nation in the world has more right than ours to look with proud confidence towards the future. Nowhere else has the experiment of democratic government . . . based on the principle of treating each man on the basis of his innate worth as a man, been tried on so vast a scale as with us; and on the whole the experiment has been more successful than anywhere else." He emphasized one thing, and hammered it home again and again as surely as any advocate—that the greatness, the existence of the State must depend on individual character and on a healthy family life. The point is one that President Roosevelt does well to take up, for it is not only essential to his constructive scheme of government, but it is also a source of much uneasiness to many Americans who think they can already see the ill effects of a lowered standard of life. The President takes a tolerant view of traits which may only be local, traits which, however true of the great cities of the East, may be quite inappropriate when applied to the vast mass of the American nation. But the fact that these traits have actually become accentuated, and have been noticed with disfavour in America and out of it, make it right that they should be dwelt upon while there is a chance of arresting them. The President's warning against "the undue exaltation of the merely material side of the national character" will not be thrown away on an America whose spiritual duties, in the widest sense, are daily becoming her gravest responsibility. That the vast contingents of alien races who are settling in the great cities should be educated up to the level of American aspirations, that freedom should not degenerate into licence, that democracy should be "the government of the people, for the people, by the people", that the fruits of freedom should be the example given by America to the old world—these are aims which must be introduced into the political life as well as into the individual faith of Americans. During the years of his Presidency, Mr. Roosevelt has not ceased to strive after this end, and it cannot be denied that he has succeeded in infusing into the political catchwords of his day a new moral force. His opponents may sneer at the virulence of his rhetoric, but it is rhetoric expended in a good cause and with a growing measure of success.

THE "SOULS."

As Margot Tennant Mrs. Asquith was undoubtedly the most-talked-of girl in Victorian society. Gladstone petted her and gave her free access to his library at Hawarden, and Mr. Arthur Balfour and Mr. George Wyndham, who differed with the Grand Old Man on all other questions, admired her as greatly as he. Professor Jowett—yes, even Professor Jowett himself!—made pretty speeches to her. In the days of her early girlhood Mrs. Asquith did the honours of her father's (the late Sir Charles Tennant) house, and played a part in forming the society known as the "Souls," to which the Duchess of Rutland, Lord Curzon, Lord and Lady Elcho, Mr. Arthur Balfour, and other well-known people belonged.

NEW YORK'S MEAT BILL.

The New York people, if we can trust a French contemporary, do not believe in what Sir James Crichton Browne terms health by starvation, for we learn that they are the greatest meat-eaters in the world. Here is the butcher's bill for a week—10,000 bullocks, 90,000 sheep and lambs, 40,000 pigs, and 6,000 calves, giving a total of 146,000 head of cattle. The average of the consumption of meat in winter exceeds these totals by about one-tenth.

GENERAL NEWS.

NEWS FROM ENGLAND.

KING EDWARD'S VISIT TO THE CZAR.

Reuter learns that the meeting of King Edward with the Czar of Russia will take place at Reval, where the King expects to arrive in the Royal yacht "Victoria and Albert" on the 9th of June. In official circles it is pointed out that this is the first visit since his coronation which King Edward has been able to pay to the Czar, with whom he is connected by bonds of friendship and near relationship. It is further stated from a diplomatic source that the meeting of the two rulers has long been in contemplation, but was postponed from time to time in consequence of the Russo-Japanese war and the internal troubles of Russia. Although the visit has no special political significance, it is regarded as a further proof of the intimate relations between the two countries which have been brought about by the Anglo-Russian convention.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

In the House of Commons on Wednesday the Prime Minister received a deputation of members of Parliament who wished the Government to assist in passing the Bill for the enfranchisement of women, which has already reached the second reading stage. Mr. Asquith replied that he recognised the growth of the movement for giving votes to women but that he could not promise facilities for debating the Bill as pressure must not be brought to bear on the business of the Government. The Government intended, he said, to bring in a Bill before the end of the session that would remove the inequalities in the present franchise. If a motion should then be made to give political freedom to women, the Government would not oppose it.

The Prime Minister had made a similar statement to a deputation of advocates of female suffrage whom he had previously received.

The motion that the Education Bill be read a second time was passed on Wednesday by 370 votes to 205. The Unionists and Nationalists voted in the minority. In the course of the debate the Prime Minister alluded to various points in which the Government would consider modifications.

MINISTERIAL UTTERANCES.

A banquet was given to Mr. Asquith by the Reform Club on Wednesday evening in honour of his appointment as Prime Minister. In acknowledging the toast of his health Mr. Asquith said the Government, under the wise and statesmanlike guidance of Sir Edward Grey, had done everything that was possible, not only to protect the surface of the international ocean from sudden storms, but also to lay the deep foundations of lasting friendship and good-will. He hoped that the agreement with Russia, built as it was on a sound basis, would not prejudice either the interest or the honour of the two great countries. The Anglo-Russian convention with regard to the East and the entente with France were lasting elements of peace of which England might be proud.

Sir Edward Grey, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, speaking at a dinner given by the Japanese Society, said he did not hesitate to assert that the alliance with Japan served for the furtherance of peace and ensured the attainment of its objects. The alliance was stronger, and therefore the prospects of peace were better, than ever.

(Continued on page 2.)