

The Scranton Tribune

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SCRANTON, AUGUST 6, 1897.

We assume that the citizens of Scranton will greet the returning heroes of the Scranton base ball club today with floral wreaths and a brass band.

Where Judges Disagree.

The fact that Judges Hanna and Penrose of the Philadelphia courts have decided the direct inheritance tax enacted May 12 to be unconstitutional gives interest to the ruling on Wednesday, of Judge Ashman, also of the Philadelphia judiciary, affirming the constitutionality of this act. In this opinion Judge Ashman confesses that discrepancies appear in the act but holds that since these do not obscure the clear intent of the act to impose a tax on personality alone, they are insufficient to invalidate it.

On the first point Judge Ashman holds that while uniformity in the taxation of estates requires that all estates of the same character shall be taxed in the same ratio; yet it is permissible to tax or exempt any fraction of such estates. Furthermore the act under review is in fact not a tax upon property at all, but upon the right of succession to property, and as such belongs to a province wherein it is difficult to assign any limit to the law-making power.

Governor Hastings won't run for senator. Senator Quay won't support Attorney General McCormick for governor next year; Israel W. Durham has not been dumped and David Martin is in status quo. This represents one day's news harvest in state politics. Now that these important points are understood, let the procession proceed.

Have Our Statesmen Deteriorated?

The feature of the Forum for August which immediately attracts attention is Senator Hoar's comparison of the statesmanship of England with that of the United States. So much complaining is heard nowadays at what is called the decadence of our public men, and so frequently is this alleged decadence emphasized by magnified contrasts of our senators, representatives, cabinet officers and chief diplomats with the corresponding public functionaries of Great Britain, quite invariably to the former's disparagement, that the opinion concerning this subject of a veteran and distinguished American senator, himself generally excepted from the contemporary depreciation, becomes really a matter of keen interest. Senator Hoar's paper is in the nature of expert testimony, and that, to laymen, is always fascinating.

The senator's contribution is not easily abridged and therefore should be read by itself; but the salient note in it is not a denial that English public life does offer better opportunities to the man ambitious for a public career than is afforded by public life in this country. On the contrary he points out many things in respect of which the English statesman has the advantage—as, for instance, in the fact that residence in a certain congressional district, state or section is not a requisite to perform, and also in the further fact that the aristocratic spirit in England tends to restrict the available competition for public honors, creating in effect a governing class which may prepare its young for the public service secure in the knowledge that such preparation will not be wasted. But he also contends that the peculiar needs of the United States are calling into play the kind of statesmanship best suited to supply them.

"Were Webster, or Clay or Calhoun alive today," Senator Hoar says, "his career as a senator must be, from necessity, of a different character from what it was. His leadership and guidance of the public thought would be exercised by writing or speech elsewhere than in the senate chamber. If Benton were living now he would be known only as an insufferable bore. The public business cannot bear the interruption of the great debates of former days. The public is impatient even of discussions which are absolutely necessary."

In expecting one kind of service from our public men which we don't get we stand in danger of failing to appreciate the kind of service which we are receiving. "It is," says the gentleman from Massachusetts, "nearly impossible now for a statesman who is in power in this country to be the leader of its advanced thought. His whole time and strength must be taken up in dealing with the routine duties of his office. This is true of the president; it is true of the heads of departments; it is true of the leaders of the dominant party in both houses of congress; certainly of the members of the finance committee of the senate and of the ways and means of the house; of the committees on appropriations in either branch; of the members of the great law committees. The American statesman of today, who is to provide supplies to carry on the routine of our vast administration, and so regulate economies that the supply may be equal to the demand; to determine the burden and the benefit in every detail of a tariff or a tax as it affects thousands of industries; to understand every part of the complicated mechanism of our government; and who goes to bed every night wearied and worn out with labors and anxieties to which the manager of the largest and most complicated private concern is a stranger, has little room in his life for new

joy or reasonable degree of security so long as his services continue to be meritorious. On the other hand, it is a mistake to suppose that the discretion of the department head is to be unduly limited or that there will be the slightest difficulty in getting rid of an objectionable subordinate. The new rule provides for no form of trial. Nor is the action of the department officer subject to review by any other executive authority. All that is required is that the reasons for his action shall be a matter of record, and that if the person removed wishes to be heard before his case is finally adjudicated he may have a fair opportunity. Unless the reasons are sufficient the department officer will hesitate to file them, and if the person removed knows that they are good he will hesitate to dispute them."

Mr. McAneny adds: "The suggestion that Mr. McKinley settled on this policy only after he had noticed the popular disapproval with which reports of his intention to do otherwise had been received is quite unfair to him. I have had several interviews with the president on this subject during the past few months. On the 23 day of July, a week before these reports were published, he assured me positively that no changes of serious character would be made, and that the exceptions other than those recommended by the civil service commission would be confined to isolated cases in which, owing to peculiar circumstances, an exception might seem necessary. When I again saw him on the 24th he spoke in the same encouraging way, adding that he would seek to improve and extend the system rather than to restrict it. I do not believe that at any time since the 4th of March the president has intended to do anything but what he now has done. I believe, moreover, that with the order of July 27 as an earnest of Mr. McKinley's disposition and purposes it is to be expected that this administration will carry the reform of the civil service very near to completion, and that for that accomplishment it will be remembered historically."

This is testimony which carries weight. It is to be hoped that hereafter civil service reform will be what it long has not been—the real thing.

Reminiscences of Thomas C. Platt

Walter Wellman, in Times-Herald. One of the last things I heard before leaving New York that President McKinley and Tom Platt are getting on so well together that the New York politicians are simply amazed. They had been expecting trouble, and some of them are disappointed that it has not come.

Mr. Platt loves peace, too. He is much more of a peace man than he is generally credited with being. A fellow passenger, Chief Justice Goodrich, of New York, tells me a most interesting and I think hitherto unpublished story of the Garfield-Conkling-Platt episode. It was on a Monday that Garfield went to the senate nomination of Robertson to be collector. The next day Mr. Platt went to New York, and Wednesday morning told Mr. Goodrich the story which he now tells me.

When the nomination of Robertson reached the senate chamber Conkling and Platt were talking together. Arthur was in the chair, and when the message was handed him by the veteran Bassett he opened the envelope in a nonchalant manner, and, after a single glance, remarked that it contained the bit of political dynamite which was to kill Garfield, ruin the career of Conkling and shorten his days, and make himself president and lead indirectly to his early death.

When Arthur opened the envelope and his eye alighted upon the fatal words he turned as pale as a sheet. He clenched the gavel convulsively, as if he would use it as a weapon. Then he beckoned to Conkling and Platt, and they both walked up to the vice president's desk. Arthur handed them the sheet of paper bearing Garfield's signature. Conkling looked at it, and an indescribable fierce expression came over his face. Arthur was simply speechless and now livid with rage. Platt alone met the most unexpected situation with something like a calm and practical view.

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"Platt," said Conkling, "it will be fatal to my plans if you resign now. Promise me you will withhold your resignation for a few weeks, and I will resign of the same mind I will resign with you."

Platt agreed to this and the bargain was made. Some weeks later Platt insisted upon resigning, and Conkling's resignation, he being the senior senator, was offered first. Platt told his friend and counsel, Judge Goodrich, of this agreement made at the vice president's desk in that dramatic moment before the nomination was laid before the senate. "I have never been able to tell this story," Platt himself narrated it, "and it effectually disposes of the 'Me-too' sneer under which Platt rested in silence for many years."

There has never been anything more remarkable in the history of our politics than Platt's return to power in New York and in the country. He is now more nearly absolutely master of his party's affairs in his state than any other Republican leader of the north. If he can fall his place will be fixed in history as the greatest political captain of his time. He survived the fatal gas which killed Garfield, and Conkling, kept Blaine from the presidency, sent Cleveland to the White House, and caused such a great upheaval in the politics of the country. He has risen above personal, political and legislative scandals at Albany which would have ruined almost any other man. He has more than once been near bankruptcy as a man of business, and as a politician he has often risked everything upon the turn of a card.

Much of his time he has been fighting for his life. He has often been so near death's door that his family and friends thought all was over. Four or five times he was picked up from the floor of his private room, where he had fallen in a faint from sheer exhaustion caused by passage of blood. For more than a year he lived on peptonized milk, nothing else passing his lips. For several years this fight for life and health continued, with varying success. All this time he was directing the affairs of a great corporation and resuming his political leadership. I am told that Mr. Platt has been to more than one state or national convention from which Mr. Platt feared he would not return alive. He owed not only his life but much of his success to the faithful care and unflinching good advice of his wife.

Under these circumstances, having won his battle for political leadership and for health, is it any wonder that Mr. Platt

seeks peace rather than war with McKinley? He cannot afford to take any other risks than those which are thrust upon him by the enemy. If there is to be any chance of his having a plenty in the immediate future, there are indications that another great political captain, William C. Whitney, is planning a rehabilitation of the New York Democracy, with a view to winning the great prize of control of Greater New York, and Mr. Platt is thus to have a foe as worthy his steel. Platt is personally responsible for the Greater New York scheme. He went into it convinced he could win, and thus he might have the empire state from Far Rockaway to Niagara, the greatest political Colossus of the last quarter century. Platt still thinks he can win it, but his closest friends advise him that there is trouble ahead.

THE MINING OF COAL.

From the Philadelphia Record.

In the progressive development of productive processes the mining of coal has come to be the industry of the country which almost every other form of human activity depends for its ways and means. Neither manufacturing nor transportation, nor even agriculture, can be carried on without a regular and sufficient supply of mechanical power; and with the machinery at hand which can be obtained either power or the artificial heat which is necessary in nearly all the operations in which the business is placed on an equitable adjustment of the utmost importance that the business of coal production should be relieved as far as possible of the artificiality which has long been subjected, and that the relations between the capital and the labor employed in its production should be as permanent and as placed on a stable and permanent basis.

It is not easy, however, to conceive of any plan by which this may be accomplished. The miners' strike, which is at present disturbing the peace of a number of states, and which is the business of the whole country, will, no doubt, be settled in some way or other. The differences may be arbitrated, or the strike may be brought to an end by the surrender of either the miners or their employers; but no matter what may be the outcome of this contention, it is useless to hope that the terms of agreement can be other than temporary in their nature. The conditions which prevail in the coal regions are such as to render a permanent settlement of the relations between the miner and his employer almost impossible. According to the testimony taken by the legislative committee which recently inquired into this matter, backed up by the observations of almost every person who has knowledge of the coal regions, the situation appears to be this: First, the possible production of the mines opened and ready for operation is greatly in excess of the needs of the coal market; and, secondly, the number of laborers of all classes in the coal regions is enormously out of proportion to the amount of work to be done. The result is excessive competition between the operators, which is further intensified by the fact that some mines can be worked more easily and with less expense than others, and the possibility of giving either the miners or the outside laborers full employment even when the demand for coal is greatest.

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