

[NOTE: the following was transcribed from a printed version sewn into the volume of Literary Club Papers – May 30, 1891 to February 6, 1892]

Our Republican Revival

Mr. Editor

At the last Informal we had the pleasure of hearing an article on the November Elections with a hopeful prophecy as to their bearing on the contest of '92. This paper was particularly gratifying because it is a long time since one of our Republicans has been heard from in our Informals. The Democrats and their allies, the Mugwumps, have dosed us repeatedly with tirades on the tariff and civil service reform until some of us began to fear that there was no Republican spirit left in the Club, but the writer of the article referred to reassures us that the flag is still there.

I was so much struck by this paper that I feel moved to say something further on the same subject even at the risk of wearying the Club by referring again to some of the facts which were brought out by my worthy predecessor. He struck at the root of the cause of the disasters of the elections of last year when he attributed them to the statements made by the united Democratic press prior to the elections of 1890 with reference to then untried, McKinley Bill. The Democrats all over the country claimed, apparently heedless of contradiction, that the McKinley Bill had unreasonably increased the tariff duties, and some of their newspapers went so far as to assert that the old tariff was itself too high and that the rate should have been reduced rather than raised. The elections referred to were held only a short time after the McKinley Bill took effect and before any opportunity had been given for testing the effect of its operation.

Take for instance the wool schedule which is a fair example of the schedules covering those articles in most general use which are affected by the tariff. I do not referred to on manufactured wool on which, for reasons well-known, the duty was increased in a broader spirit, but taking the manufactured article, the duty specific and ad valorem under the old law unlike commoner varieties of cloth was only equal to about 60 percent ad valorem and by the McKinley Bill is made what is equivalent to about 90 percent ad valorem.

Now this may strike an unfriendly critic as too much of an increase when the figures are looked at on the statute book in cold blood, but can any man tell what this legislation means until he has seen it in operation? Hence, anyone can see how unfair was such criticism at that time and the voters who were misled in 1890 by these untimely representations will no doubt, as this article suggests, have hand before 1892 and the opportunity to see what the operation of the new tariff really is.

A coming down to the elections of 1891, the result shows that the Republicans may be hopeful about 1892. In Iowa it was the liquor question. In Massachusetts the national issues were not discussed. The tariff which Gov. Russell discussed in his speeches was local.

In Pennsylvania and old-fashioned Republican majority showed that the Keystone State had "recovered from the effect of Quayism." We would like to be positively sure that the 50,000 majority did not have any Quayism in it and some doubts about this came over us when we read of the action of the Pennsylvania Senate soon after the election in dismissing, on what might be claimed to be a technicality, the charges of irregular conduct brought against the General Auditor of the State and the State Treasurer, growing out of the Keystone Bank matter, but the writer of the article read last month is a very careful man and it gives us pleasure to rely on his assurance that Pennsylvania has been redeemed from Quayism.

It is however when we come to Ohio, that we get the most solid comfort. We all know the facts about our own State of which that article gave such a gratifying summary. Here was fought the only real campaign of education, on the great national issues.

In these days of the supremacy of the press the people are no longer dependent in politics upon the teaching which they get from the stump. The great institution of the daily newspaper has taken the place of the orator in the education of the people on political questions. This is to be regretted on some accounts.

You, Mr. Editor can I know, recall with pleasure and worthy pride, experiences of your own upon the stump in educating the people of this state in those days before the newspaper had assumed this duty so important under a Republican form of government. Such experiences are denied to the statesman of the present day. To be sure we can have mass meetings and harangues and torch light processions, but the people depend upon the newspapers for their political education.

Ohio is a great state and its people are among the most intelligent in the Union, but they know more about some things than they do about others. On the tariff they have received their education from the newspapers. In this part of the State our two great morning dailies represent the two parties and the two sides of the present tariff question. That is - should the tariff go up or down. The subject has been fully and ably discussed and presented by these two great newspapers in both of its aspects. The people have read and considered the arguments and facts pro and con, and the November election shows where the merit of the discussion lay and is an intelligent judgment on this great subject. Yes indeed! To be sure some Democrats claimed that the gallant McKinley fell behind in the Western Reserve and that his vote there was about 1400 short of Foraker in 1889.

But what does this prove? The people of that part of the state came from New England and without saying anything against their intelligence as compared with the rest of the state, they naturally would have a tendency to Mugwumpism. Moreover, it does not appear that they had any education from the press on the tariff issue.

As to the prospects for the future:

Let the people continue to study the effect of the new tariff as shown by the

statistics from Washington, putting aside mere figures of the act itself, and by the light which they receive from our daily press, there is good reason to believe that, aided by good crops, the Republicans may carry the State again in 1892.

Chal. B. Wilby

Cincinnati Literary Club
Hon Joseph Cox Editor

Dec 26th 1891