

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers* 2, 1886 – 1887 June 5, '86 to May 21, '87)

Our Political Probabilities

Our attention was very gracefully drawn the other evening to the fact that Cincinnati cannot raise as high a wind as Chicago, or drink as much beer as St. Louis, nor produce natural gas like Pittsburgh, nor convict our alderman like New York, it nevertheless surpasses them all in the possession of an Editor who, is a vast reservoir of National Politics. And for five cents you can have a bucket-full more than you will drink in a day, or digest in a month. It has long been known that Cincinnati was the geographical center of the country, but how few of us realized the gigantic truth, that there was an immense watershed of national politics, and that this shed turned upon a pivot, and this spirit rested upon the head of a man, whose base was on the corner of 4th & Race! Yet it is a fact and here is an instantaneous view of it!

The first thing which drew my attention to this mighty pen holder, was his miraculous treatment of silver, and the way he proved it was more precious than gold. Those wonderful frisky paragraphs – ten a day – which danced around like eels in a frying pan, and which didn't tire you, but only make you thirsty for more beer. How I did wrestle with that subject! The difficulty with me was this. A bushel of corn that was only worth 50 cents in Dakota, was worth a dollar and a half when it got to London; and the farmer that raised it, the fellow that shipped, and the other fellow that carried it made money; – – but here was a silver dollar stamped a dollar, with a motto of "In God we trust" upon it, which made it worth to the heathen a quarter more, was only worth 85 cents in London and when it got to China, the mandarins with their silk walls, (Mandarine, by the by is Chinese for pawn broker) wouldn't take it for more than fifty cents. But how beautifully this was all explained by our Editor! And if I could only remember it too! Sometimes when I get up of a morning, I don't see the thing quite clearly, but then I take hold of the paper, and it steals up on me like a boil in the back of my neck – and there it is and what is more it is come to stay. This will give you an idea of his ability to take national politics by the nose! But perhaps there are some gentlemen here, who as the Germans say – think "Würst" or Sausage of national politics: This is a mistake. Every Cincinnati should tone up his system with National politics: – it is intoxication with the snakes left out. There was a time when I said "Give us low taxes, a clean city, a mayor with brains, and judges who know the law." But I am past that now. What do I care for the city or the city for me. Let Parsons the Anarchist be Mayor – he knows how to manage the police, take the tenant in No. 1. Rat Row for Police Judge, and let the streets be "rank and smell to Heaven" – but, give us plenty of National Politics and lots of froth on top! People who don't understand real National progress complained that the smoke commissioner never really examines but two chimneys viz. – the smoke consumer of the

Lincoln and that of the Young Men's Blaine Club: – and that the clerk of the board of elections is so overworked planning planks for the next Convention that he don't remember whether it is the 8th or the 10th that is a bloody ward: – and finally that the Board of Education are selected according to the size of their bellies! Well, what of it? Never mind the rumors of cholera, or yellow fever, or malaria or insolvency – your duty is plain – vote a straight ticket; and if you are going to die, after registration and before election, for heaven's sake, (or your party's which is the same thing) pair off with a fellow on the other side. Remember that national politics rest upon national conventions and presidential elections; – that political Editors are the Caryatides – with a political slate. Take my advice – Lift up your minds from desiring low car fares and rapid transit; don't turn up your noses at smelling gutters and private theatricals by the Judge of the Police Court, nor feel alarmed when the brick pavements undulate beneath your feet like Lake Erie when the winter breaks up! Study the sublime utterances of Jim Blaine of Maine and warm yourself in the clear cold bracing atmosphere of "our John." Our John who is certainly the next president, or any way the next but two! But you will ask, "how does our dear Probability get all this precious information on state affairs; – has he got a pipe?" Oh dear no. As it is a secret I will tell you. At midnight when his business partner is studying the national game of progressive poker, and his wicked partner is examining the Bible through a microscope, he, accompanied by the smoke commissioner ascends to the roof of the building, and there with a theodolite and a slate, the political horoscope is cast. He pulls out of his pocket a long-range mind-reader, and looking in the direction of Maine, has a one legged dialogue with "Jim." "So! The first question is not panning out? You must cut another inch off the British lion's tale, and let an Irishman make a whistle out of it!" Then the South is examined and he points out to the smoke Commissioner the large hole "our John." made in the solid South; – and then day stretch a little more and hang a red shirt on the edge of it. But the great point of attraction is Washington, and in this direction the smoke commissioner unfolds his larboard ear and the chief gets a focus with his mind reader. "He is in bed again!" mutters the chief.

"That is infamous," replies the smoke commissioner. "Hold on, while I telephone that to the president of the Lincoln Club!

"No, no," grunts the chief, "that is my meat! But tell me – where to these clouds of dust come from – is a blizzard loose?"

"Oh dear no – that is the new street cleaning machine. You see how beautifully it shuts out the whole city from us. If they only persevere you will be able to plant trees on the tops of your houses. But tell me, how would it do, if we were to take the tariff off wool, and put it on pigs feet!" But old Political Probabilities does not reply. He is filling himself with National Politics, and descends to his office with a National Convention, four new political clubs, and a newspaper boone roaring in his mind. Of course I don't know how the members of this club feel about

national politics, and whether they enjoy it, for breakfast, lunch, dinner and supper. To me, it is as the water gruel was to Oliver Twist. But if that is the only food I am to have, as it is very thin and windy, give me lots of it – and it will supply the place of Boston Beans, anyway. I am no poet Mer. edition as you will perceive, but whenever I read our Political Probabilities on "the pivotal state" on the immaculate conception of the Mugwumps, and the irrepressible conflict between pig iron and Roscoe Conkling, I get lightheaded and burst into song – I send you the enclosed stanza as a sample. "With a bit of an ear, half an eye, for the Arts, and no soul at all, for city or state: The whole force of his intellectual parts is bent on a national – political slate.

Don't shoot, I am done!

Henry Hooper

Budget
Wald Editor
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