

(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*, May 30, 1891 to February 6, 1892)

The November Elections

Mr. Editor:

It is a wise man who refrains from expressing an opinion on future events; and he is correspondingly foolish who ventures to make a prediction in American politics. However, as you have invited an expression as to bearing of the recent November elections upon the Presidential election of 1892, I cheerfully enter the lists of a prophet, leaning, however, for my text, upon the maxim of Lord Byron, that:

“the best of prophets of the future is the past.”

The Republican party was swept out of power in the National House of Representatives the November elections a year ago, by an avalanche of votes, from the shock of which the country has yet scarcely recovered. Infamous gerrymandering of Congressional districts, would, on the most liberal allowance, account only for a very small part of the revolution. It must be admitted at once that this tremendous wave of political defeat resulted primarily from the passage of the McKinley Bill. Let me not be charged with being too much a partisan when I expressed the opinion, that while attributing the defeat chiefly to the McKinley Bill, the defeat was in large measure due to the to lying and misrepresentation about the Bill and its affect, and not to the law itself. People were told, and many believed, that the country would be ruined at once under the “robber tariff.” And many Republicans of intelligence were almost persuaded that the measure was too extreme for the most ardent advocates of protection.

It is not difficult to foretell that the two great questions to be debated in the next Presidential campaign will be the tariff, and free coinage of silver. It is equally clear that the Republican platform will not rest on the doctrine of protection as defined by the McKinley law, and will oppose unlimited free coinage. While on the other hand the Democratic platform will demand the repeal of the McKinley law, and propose something that will mean either free trade or a “revision of the tariff;” and with a plank spliced in demanding free and unlimited silver coinage.

Such being the promise for platforms in 1892 have we had any indications in the recent elections of the trend of public opinion on these great questions?

For the purpose of this article we may lay aside the majority of those states which have held elections during the present month, and glance hurriedly at a few of

the more prominent ones. The results in Iowa and Kansas, tend to show that the Farmers Alliance has rapidly lost ground, and with the liquor question still prominent there, the deduction may be fairly made that the Republicans have not lost ground in either state.

In Michigan, with no general discussion of the two great questions, the Republicans made material gains. In Pennsylvania, from electing a Democratic Governor at the election a year ago by a round majority, the Republican Party now wheels into line with an old-fashioned majority of fifty thousand or thereabouts, demonstrating quite clearly that this Republican state has quite recovered from the effects of Quayism.

In Massachusetts we have the spectacle of the re-election by a round majority of the very young and popular Democratic Governor, while the remainder of the Republican ticket was elected by good majorities. In this state there was no general discussion of the two national issues. In New York it appears that the great mass of voters of the Republican faith did not feel wrought up to a high state of interest or patriotism over the question as to whether Tammany or anti-Tammany should govern New York City. And in a light vote in the city and state, the Tammany tiger won. In none of the states was there any general discussion of the two great issues.

Coming to Ohio, we find this the only state where the campaign was fought on the national questions. I venture to assert that there is not a state in the union which can lay claim to a mass of voters so intelligent and so capable of grasping great issues as are the citizens of this grand and great state.

Here the issues were fairly and squarely presented; and the campaign conducted as it was on a clean and wholesome basis, was distinctively and purely national, and has been so recognized and treated throughout the country. It was a campaign of education from the beginning to the end. And what was the result? The Republicans, on their platform of the McKinley tariff and restricted silver coinage carried the election by an increased and decisive majority, on the largest vote ever cast at a state election.

If the result in Ohio was based upon intelligence and education, is it not fair to presume that the other decisive states will on a similar test in 1892, pronounce the same verdict? In my opinion Mr. Editor, such an inference is justifiable. This sketch does not of course take into account political blunders and accidents, or Presidential candidates, all of which play a most important part, and either one of which might determine the result.

If the conventions of the two parties were to be held the coming week, it would be safe to predict the nomination of the two prospective candidates, Harrison and

Cleveland. And with these two candidates, the conditions remaining substantially as they exist today, it is a fair presumption that the recent elections indicate that the people are at least in favor of giving a fair and thorough trial to the doctrine of protection as laid down in the McKinley law or that they will be slow to adopt free silver; and therefore point to the reelection of Pres. Harrison, and another term of Republican administration, including the McKinley tariff and restricted coinage of silver.

Aaron A. Ferris

Nov 28th 1891

Cin Literary Club

Theo Kemper Editor