

## THE ISSUES OF 1888 \*

I DID not originally intend to speak to-night in reference to the report of your committee, for I have been unable lately to attend the meetings of the committee, and I have a very high regard for the gentlemen who have signed the report both personally and politically, and dislike to differ from men with whom I usually agree. But as I am a member of the committee, and as so much public attention has been attracted to the report, I feel that perhaps it is only proper that I should state to you the reasons why I cannot agree to it in its entirety.

That the internal-revenue system is in many ways an objectionable one I admit, and I heartily concur in the recommendation to take the tax off tobacco. But I emphatically disbelieve in taking it off of spirits. It is a rudimentary axiom of political economy to raise revenue when practicable by a tax on mere luxuries and superfluities; and if there is a single article that it is right to tax it is whiskey. The people who drink and sell liquor are, of all others, those who should be made to contribute in every possible way to pay the running expenses of the State, for there can be no hardship involved in paying heavily for the use of what is at best a luxury, and frequently a pernicious luxury. The very fact that the third party (the Prohibitionists) have declared in favor of removing the tax should make us set our faces against it; for experience has invariably shown

\* Address before the Committee on Political Reform of the Union League Club of New York, January 11, 1888. *Chicago Tribune*, January 16, 1888.

that these same third-party Prohibitionists are the most valuable allies the liquor-sellers possess, and are the consistent opponents of every rational scheme for dealing with the liquor question.

The Republican party, and the Republican party alone, has hitherto shown itself capable of grappling with the financial and business difficulties of the country, and I believe that the future will not belie its past. The question of the surplus must be met fairly and intelligently. The tax should be taken off tobacco and sugar. That is our first duty. In the next place the possession of the surplus deprives us of all excuse for not attending to certain pressing national needs. It is a disgrace to us as a nation that we should have no war-ships worthy of the name, and that our rich seaboard cities should lie at the mercy of any piratical descent from a hostile power. We are actually at the mercy of a tenth-rate country like Chile. Now, we have ample means wherewith to prepare a navy capable of upholding the honor of the nation and a system of coast defense adequate to our needs. He is both a poor patriot and a short-sighted economist who longer opposes our doing so.

In the next place, we should meet the tariff question. The Republican party, and the country at large as well, is definitely committed to the policy of protection; and, unquestionably, any reversal of that policy at present would do harm and produce wide-spread suffering. But for the Republican party to announce that the inequalities and anomalies in the present tariff must not be touched, and to announce that the high tariff is a fetich, something to which every other interest must yield, and to which every other issue must be subordinated, would be in my opinion a serious mistake. I

think there should be a prudent and intelligent revision of the tariff on the lines indicated by the declaration of the last National Republican Convention and the official utterances of the last Republican President. I further believe that the Republican party is alone capable of making such a revision; the last attempt of the Democracy to do so, under the guidance of Mr. Morrison, was as ludicrous in conception as it was futile and contemptible in execution.

Moreover, I do not think it wise to make our next fight purely on one issue, and that the issue of our opponent's choosing; albeit as regards that I think it not improbable that Mr. Cleveland can be beaten on the very points he has himself raised. The Republican party stands for other things in addition to protection. It stands for the National Idea, for honest money, and for an honest civil service. I do not wonder that Mr. Cleveland in his last message forbore to touch on such points as these. An allusion to the first would come with bad grace from a President who has appointed to represent us at foreign capitals such men as Keiley and Jackson, even now avowedly hostile to their government. As for the other two, Mr. Cleveland evidently thought it worth while to insure an identity in policy and utterance on the tariff between himself and Mr. Carlisle, but equally evidently he did not think it worth his while to try to prevent the committee on coinage being handed over to the apostle of the dishonest dollar, or to protest against the chairmanship of the committee on civil-service reform being given to the man who had introduced the bill to repeal the civil-service act. Nor indeed would such a protest have been taken seriously, coming from the President who wrote the Fellows letter; who appointed Higgins, Thomas, Rasin,

and a host of their kind; who has made Senator Gorman the chief of his kitchen Cabinet; who has retained Garland as his chief legal adviser; who has connived at the utter degradation and prostitution of the public service in Maryland and Indiana, and under whom the old spoils doctrine of "a clean sweep" among the faithful public servants for merely partisan reasons has been applied almost throughout the country with a thoroughness that would have done no discredit to Andrew Jackson. Doubtless, President Cleveland meant to make good his original pledges concerning the civil service; doubtless no one regrets more than himself his inability to stand up against the pressure of the spoils-men within his own party; but the fact remains that he has signally failed thus to make good his pledges; that his acts have been absolutely at variance with his words; that hardly ever has an Administration been more false to its promises on any subject than this Administration has shown itself to be on the question of civil-service reform.

When we can make a telling fight on so many issues the President fears to raise it seems wise to do so, in addition to meeting him promptly on the one point he actually has raised. Above all, do not meet him on this question in a way that will tend to give the impression that the Republican party is willing to subordinate all its other principles and all other considerations of public policy to the single end of preserving untouched the present tariff in its bad as well as in its good features. Let us make the next fight on the broad ground of Republicanism, with all and not part merely of what the name implies.