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Beauty (Summer Rain)

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Mississippi Auction Block – New Style

An Absentee Patronage Referee and the Barter of Federal Office

By Samuel Taylor Moore

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VENERABLE Dr. Butler of Columbia University brought the third-term rabbit out of the top hat of obscurity with a few rhetorical passes. This feat, following closely upon Mr. McAdoo’s Toledo storm, proved that the politician, like the scriptural war horse, scents the battle from afar. Butler’s broadside destroyed the illusion that President Coolidge would slide through for another term on his prosperity sled. Though Leslie M. Shaw, Secretary of the Treasury ever so long ago, argues cleverly that a Vice President filling an unexpired term is not President but simply acting President, the ashes are on the hillside just the same. The argument from the Constitution may be legally convincing on that point, but what’s a Constitution among traditions? The tradition is almost as old as the Constitution and shares the reverence and authority attaching to that document, as Jefferson declared. Eight years of the Presidency, he thought, ought to be enough for any man.

The number of terms is less important than the number of years in office. Although many Presidents have approved a Constitutional Amendment to lengthen the Presidential term to six or seven years, with no reelection, the present system is safe enough providing the tradition holds strong against more than eight years. Washington initiated this salutary custom; Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe observed it; Grant gave way before it; Roosevelt respected it in 1908, and his failure to respect it in 1912 contributed to his defeat. President Coolidge may fancy that he can overturn the dogma, but let him wait until militant editors — there are a few left — begin to ring the tocsin on autocracy, nepotism, unfit appointments, the slithering decay of American institutions, and all the other ills visioned in the State papers of his predecessors while discussing unduly extended Presidencies. Beyond all doubt the third-term issue — or, as we prefer to call it, the eight-year issue — is an obstacle to the President’s ambition to succeed himself in 1929.

That Mr. Coolidge nurses such an ambition is self-evident. On no other basis can his handling of Southern patronage be explained. We are quite sure the President would not play ball with Taylor
charter a taxi to the Senate Office Building where almost any one of the Old Guard will put aside more important matters to absorb such sure signs of revolt. Lack of attention from the great statesmen that have guided the course of the Republican party for the last four years seems to be the high note in this dismal chorus.

The national committeemen, according to the current gossip, have had to draw in their belts, never a pleasant experience for any practical gentleman. As a result, the Republican machine in many States has been let "go hang," as they express it, and the local committeeman cuts about as much ice as a cucumber in a pumpkin field.

I do not regard this discordant harmony as serious, however. It is raised at one time or another by almost everyone who ultimately appreciates the frugality of mind and spirit of the present heads of the Administration. My scouts inform me that the committeemen who have been most severely pinched are from those States where the organization has been subservient to some old standpat Republican Senator, never recorded in Mr. Stearns' book as particularly devout to his Calvin. To my mind, it proves a plain case of starving recalcitrant to Coolidge - Republicans into submission.

One stalwart of the party, into whose ears these yelps of discomfort were chokingly poured, remarked: "What would you expect? Last June when I had many speaking engagements in my primary campaign I received word from headquarters to come back to Washington and stand by the Administration in an important vote. At considerable personal sacrifice, and at the cost of upsetting all my campaign plans, 'I did as ordered. Do you think I received a word of thanks from the White House or from Butler or from anybody else? Not much. I tell you many of us are pretty sore."

Of course, the feeling so eloquently expressed by this Old Guard Senator represents the sentiment of nearly ninety per cent of the others.

In an article early in the session I was foolish enough to predict that no farm legislation would be taken up at this session. By the time this piece appears in print a farm bill of some sort will most probably have been passed and be lying on Mr. Coolidge's desk yawning for his signature or veto.

In forecasting that no earnest move to take up the agricultural bills would be made I had underestimated the disfavor in which Mr. Coolidge is held by all but a few of the Republican Senators. While it was originally their intention to let the matter go over until the next Congress, thereby thrusting the disagreeable episode on him in the tumultuous days just prior to a national convention, while, indeed, he was actively rounding up the negro delegations of the South, they could not restrain their impetuosity and somewhat unwisely, it will appear, they made the drive at this early date.

Whatever the outcome of this delicate matter I do not look to see Mr. Coolidge damaged beyond repair. Damaged somewhat he assuredly will be, but not so much as the Senatorial clique hopes.

WHEN the Senate formed an alliance between the farm bloc and the banking bloc to make farm relief the unfinished business, the joy that spread over many a Republican countenance was unmistakable. The meeting was held in Mr. Dawes' office off the Senate chamber. The customary bickering between the farm and banking leaders prevailed until Dawes thumped his desk and announced: "I'm chairman of this meeting and this is what you're going to do..." There and then he outlined a unanimous-consent agreement which was presented to the Senate the next day.

Predicating his glee on the assumption that the farm bill would be sent to the President, one ecstatic Republican rejoiced: "He's caught either way. If he vetoes it, Lowden will be made as a Republican candidate. If he signs it the Western crowd will believe they have him on the run, and Wall Street will say in disgust, 'Why, here's another painted lath.'"

And this spirit of gleeful, open revolt is galloping all over Capitol Hill.

Beauty

I stayed in the field though the rain was beginning to fall
While the whips of lightning were cracking above my head
And watched the rain fingers lift my sun beaten corn
Like Christ in a miracle bringing life to the dead.

It was none of my doing and yet I felt like a god
Bestowing his pity and strength in the way he designed.
Then the feeling passed and I stood there drenched to the skin
Trying to see the picture deep in my mind.

JAMES HEARST.