

THE CANDID FRIEND

An Independent Review of Men and Things That Figure in the Contemporary Life of California

By Edward F. Cahill



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CONGRESSMAN JAMES McLACHLAN of Los Angeles professes to be deeply alarmed about the defenseless condition of the Pacific coast. He has visions of the proud invader trampling on our rights, liberties and corns and making of this fair and spacious California an Asiatic satrapy. In an elaborate address purporting to have been delivered recently on the floor of the house he sounded the alarm with plentiful tropes and figures and wide flung imagery. This broad expanse of silver sea that might be supposed to guard our inviolate shores was:

Item—"The ocean zone of world struggle."
 Item—"The pivot of the world's commercial and political activities."

AN OCEAN OF PARTS

So the Pacific ocean in its time plays many parts. Besides being a pivot and a zone it is likewise on occasion a highway and an arena, a many sided ocean, God wot.

Mr. McLachlan makes the politically unfortunate admission that our elaborate and costly system of coast fortification is of little practical value. Quoting from his speech:

Standing at the sea front of our great cities these defenses invite attack that otherwise could not occur. Undefended from the rear, their fall is inevitable, even if small parties of the enemy can land elsewhere and reach their rear unopposed. The great guns installed can fire only toward the sea.

Within their range landing operations of importance are admittedly impossible. But they are fixed in place. They have no part in any plan of defense beyond their range. The capture of any one of the guns installed to defend a seacoast city might make the city, its harbor and its other defenses untenable.

For complete protection in this way guns would have to be installed along every foot of the coast where landing is possible.

With our length of coast line this is impossible. Nothing has been conceived beyond the protection of the more important harbors. But there are innumerable smaller harbors, even long stretches of open beach, along the length of our coasts where landing by an aggressive and practiced enemy is not only possible, but attended by few difficulties.

For an invading army to pass the Golden Gate and land in San Francisco is doubtless impossible, but for it to land at Monterey or in Bodega Bay or Bolinas Bay and to take San Francisco from the rear is not only feasible for any power possessing the ships and the men, but presents no difficulties.

PORK AND POLITICS

All this is elementary knowledge about which there is no dispute, but we shall doubtless find Mr. McLachlan clamoring for appropriations to buy land and build fortifications at San Pedro and by and by, in due course of politics, Wilmington, Santa Monica, Ballona slough, Newport Bay, Santa Barbara and the whole water front of southern California will be asking in turn for similar favors. Indeed, I think myself that Bolinas and Halfmoon bays have been wickedly overlooked. There are no thirteen inch rifles keeping watch and ward over the pebble beach at Pescadero.

FUTILE FORTIFICATIONS

Having demonstrated the vulnerable condition of the coast Mr. McLachlan piles up figures of the armed force which he declares Japan—the hated foe—might land on our shores with none to oppose but a handful of raw militia.

Let it be admitted, then, that coast fortifications are of slight value as defenses. It is, as Mr. McLachlan points out, contrary to the laws and practice of modern warfare to bombard an undefended city. The fortifications, therefore, are chiefly an invitation to attack, which on a foggy coast might be a serious matter were a hostile fleet in possession of the seas. So the congressman already sees Japan in easy possession of Los Angeles, like this:

The capture of Los Angeles would mean possession of all southern California.
 This great community, built by the best of brain and brawn that the nation possesses, has with magnificent civic courage completed the unfinished work of a beneficent nature.
 The arid reaches of a decade ago now flash

emerald and gold from countless orchards and vineyards. At a cost of \$25,000,000 the deserts have been traversed and the Sierras penetrated 220 miles distant to draw from the mother range an inexhaustible supply of life giving water.

AN OCEAN WITH MODERN IMPROVEMENTS

Mr. McLachlan swings a gay staccato style in the manner of Victor Hugo. The gold and the emeralds and the beach lots worth so many dollars a front foot would surely present a sore temptation to the greedy Japanese with nothing in the way of conquest but an ocean which is also a pivot as well as a zone, in fact an ocean with all the modern improvements.

But let us consider for a moment Mr. McLachlan's plan of campaign which he has donated to the Japanese. He transports 150,000 Japanese soldiers to this coast and lands them somewhere or anywhere between San Francisco and San Diego. To bring 150,000 soldiers across the Pacific ocean, a voyage that could not be made in much less than 30 days, would require at least 150 troopships. Imagine the fortunes of such an armada with an American fleet in being. So long as a single American battleship of the Dreadnought type held the seas such a flotilla would be fatally vulnerable. But, says Mr. McLachlan, the troopships would be convoyed by the Japanese fleet.

WEAKNESS OF THE JAPANESE FLEET

What is this Japanese fleet? It consists of perhaps half a score of effective ships and most of these are rapidly becoming obsolete. The life of a battleship is about fifteen years. The ships with which we fought the Spanish war are all admitted to be obsolete already, and Japan, under pressure of the staggering debt contracted in the Russian war, is falling behind in the exacting competition of big ships.

According to the correspondent of the London Times at Tokyo, the Japanese navy is really itself threatened with an alarming decline. Starting out with the assumption that the life of a battleship is only fifteen years it takes but a little figuring to prove that by 1916 Japan will have only fourteen first class battleships, as against forty for Germany and thirty-eight for the United States, while by 1920 she will have but eight to thirty-seven and twenty-six, respectively.

WANTS A BIG STANDING ARMY

Modern wars are fought with money even more than with men, and Japan is falling behind in the race, nor will she be in the least likely to attack a nation with twice as many men and forty times as much money. She must be aware that a conflict of that sort would mean for her national extinction as a considerable military power with the further certainty that Russia would seize the opportunity to take back all she lost in the late war.

Mr. McLachlan's remedy for the fearsome condition disclosed by his vision is a great standing army. He is talking nonsense.

WHY THE BATTLESHIPS ARE NOT HERE

The condition of the Japanese navy is perfectly well understood in Washington. If it were regarded as a really dangerous, aggressive force we should long ago have seen a big fleet of battleships stationed on this coast. No administration would dare take chances on a surprise such as Mr. McLachlan contemplates in his vision of armies dropping out of a clear sky. Japan's navy is effective for home defense and nothing more.

THE OLD FLAG AND AN APPROPRIATION

While this is well understood in Washington the men who earn a momentary fame by breeding war scares are encouraged because they smooth the way for appropriations. Some of these scare mongers are sincere, others are merely hunting the limelight. But there is a business end to these visions of blood and fury.

INTERESTING COINCIDENCE

I find in the report of the army general staff issued the other day the statement that "the army of the United States is too small and totally unprepared for war, and the nation's elaborate system of coast forts is practically useless, owing to lack of adequate provision for defense of the rear of the fortifications."

Mr. McLachlan's speech in congress preceded

the issue of this report by a few days. From the staff we learn that the coast forts would fall like ripe plums into the hands of a hostile army of occupation. The remedy for this condition of national helplessness, according to the staff, is to double the size of the regular army and increase the national guard to 250,000 men.

A PORK FENCE

By way of alternative I suggest that it might suit Mr. McLachlan better if the government would buy land and build fortifications at quarter mile intervals along the water front of the seventh congressional district. These are such "plums" as the general staff speaks of, plums that make glad the heart of the congressman. The only obstacle in the way of this far reaching plan of national defense is that Firebaugh's Ferry and Knights Landing would get no plums unless it were decided by the military experts of congress that the Sacramento and the San Joaquin rivers were suffering for want of fortifications.

I would not be understood to impugn Mr. McLachlan's good faith or honest intentions.

Probably no relation of cause and effect exists between his speech and the military bugles blowing a call for a big army. It was merely a short arm coincidence or left hook, and of course Mr. McLachlan is not blind to the advantages of advertising, but if he is in search of a battle cry that would gratify his desire to save the country from the Japanese bogie man and would at the same time make him the favorite son of Los Angeles it would be: "Here's to the seventh congressional district with a pork fence around it."

STORIES OF WILLIAM THE SILENT

Hugh Hume, who formerly ran a daily paper in San Francisco and is now editing a weekly in Portland, tells a couple of stories apropos of William the Silent's taciturnity. This is how it was:

It is related of Mr. Herrin that he was one of a party of prominent men who in the early morning boarded a private car for a long trip; the first words he spoke were "Thank you," when the porter turned on the lights at night. He has complete control over his vocal organs. The number of things he knows may be only guessed at; as he graduated from Corvallis college many years ago, it may be supposed he knows something about agriculture; as he has a diploma in law, he likely knows something about that; and as he is credited with conducting the politics of the Golden State, we may say that he has some knowledge of politics. He gets \$50,000 a year as chief counsel for the Southern Pacific company; without doubt, he knows something about counseling. It is related of him that when Mr. Harriman, after making a long talk about putting added burdens on his shoulders, and telling him how much time would have to be given to the work, and if he thought that \$50,000 a year would be an inducement to undertake it, Mr. Herrin nodded. Merely nodded.

WHERE HE RESEMBLES HOMER

Hume claims Sam Shortridge as an original Oregonian as well as Herrin. There must be some mistake about this. I have always understood that the scene of Mr. Shortridge's famous apostrophe to that ivy covered cottage was laid in Iowa. Two states contend for the honor of his birthplace and California calls him favorite son.

Hume was the man whose break with Arthur McEwen caused the latter to start his brilliant but unsuccessful weekly letter. McEwen was the original muck raker and he lived before his time.

NOT BLOOD BUT RASPBERRY JAM

The Chicago Tribune draws a pathetic picture of the divine rage that afflicted Jim Jeffries when he heard the news that the governor had stopped the fight and he broke loose in excesses that drove his trainers to despair. It was thus:

Jeffries was so angry that he ordered the baking of a loganberry pie. In the transports of wrath he said he would eat all of it. The pie was baked. James J. Corbett wrung his hands in silent misery as he watched the preparations. Joseph Choyinski went out behind the woodshed and dropped the silent tear. Robert Armstrong pleaded, from a convenient treetop, with the Hope, now Berserker in his fury. The masseurs, the spongers, the bottle holders, and all the little brothers of the prize ring ran shrieking from the premises. Loganberries, twice the size of blackberries, were encased in a massive pie, and the Hope, now seemingly a Lost Hope, sat down to it. Ogrelke, he waded in, but by the time he had consumed half of it his better judgment returned, his throbbing pulses quieted down, a smile, stained with loganberry juice, spread pleasantly over his features, and he signed to poor Jim Corbett, distracted Joe Choyinski and the tree climbing Bob Armstrong to gather about him again. They car-

ried away the remains of the orgy, fearful of a recurrence of the rage.

ASSAULT ON THE BULL FIDDLE

The pastimes and recreations of the great are always matter of interest to common mortals, and so one learns with some sense of exhilaration that Mr. Jack Johnson relieved the tedium of a Reno Sabbath by recourse to his bull fiddle. The effect produced is thus described by one of his suffering audience:

Honest to goodness, I may have my prejudices against Mr. Jack Johnson and I may criticize him as a fighter and baste him once in a while for his eccentric escapades, but I have no hesitation in saying that he is the worst bull fiddler I ever heard scrape a bow. He has a barbaric sense of melody, but is absolutely devoid of rhythm. It is amusing to see him seize his enormous fiddle, carefully tune it up and start his piano and his phonograph working. When he begins his accompaniment his guests take to the window. Jack is oblivious to the fact that he is four laps ahead of the phonograph or five miles behind the piano. He just saws and saws with an ecstatic smile, while his eyes roll upward, his face beams in rapture, and he is a picture of an incipient black cherub. The police were busy elsewhere.

DOING HEARST POLITICS

Andrew M. Lawrence, who was formerly managing editor of the Examiner, appears to be Hearst's political plenipotentiary in Chicago as well as editor of his morning paper in that city. The Chicago Tribune reports the results of a conference between the independence league and the democracy, the latter represented by Roger C. Sullivan, the state boss, and the former by Lawrence. The Tribune gives this as the first article of the protocol drawn up by the conference:

Assurance from the county and state democratic organization that the Illinois delegation to the democratic national convention of 1912 will be solid for William Randolph Hearst for president.

Now the question arises, who are the high contracting parties conducting the corresponding negotiations in California?

Concerning the results of the Sullivan-Lawrence protocol when submitted to the democratic state central committee I gather from a local paper, to wit:

The dramatis personae are agents of Hearst and members of the democratic state central committee. The lines are bright, almost witty.

The central committee says: "On what terms will Hearst come back into the party?" Hearst's agents reply: "On condition that Hearst is assured the solid delegation from Illinois in the next national convention."

The curtain fell on the stage hands fanning the members of the state committee, while the suppers scurried for ice and doctors.

La Follette's weekly charges Congressman Duncan McKinlay with being a spy in the ranks of the insurgents in congress, attending their conferences and reporting the proceedings to the house machine. If this is true I should call it a case of contributory negligence. The insurgents should have known Dunk as a standpatter.

THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE

McCutcheon runs a cartoon entitled "His Present to the Bride." The picture shows a grinning lion displaying a formidable set of teeth and the beast is in the process of delivery from an express van in front of a house whose doorplate bears the legend "T. R. Jr." presumably a San Francisco residence. Through the windows is seen a visibly alarmed family, with policemen, camera fiends and the populace in front. The tribulations of a young married couple and the strange devices and aliases by which a comfortable obscurity was sought to be compassed may be gathered from the following conversation surprised by a Chicago reporter:

"We're going to move again, Eleanor," announced Teddy Jr.

"I won't, Ted!"

"We gotta. Haven't we outwitted them all so far? How in the world did anybody way out here recognize us?"

"But look, Teddy, everything's unpacked and I simply will not pack them all up again. I've done it twice now."

"You won't have to pack. We're going across to D12."

They moved, but the ardor of the chase did not slacken and the blockade of D12 was at once made effective. Then:

"We're going to move once more, Eleanor, and we'll stick there until the finish."

"Ted!"—With a strong accent on the "Ted."

"Got to."

"Which way, Ted?" in a sort of a hist tone.

"Follow me," whispered the son of the Redoubtable One. Then he pulled his straw hat down over his eyes, but it slipped back where it belonged.

"Mr. Roosevelt, are you going to interest yourself in politics on the coast?"

"Now, I can't say a thing about that."

"Will you say what you think of Taft?"

"No!"

"Will you talk about conservation?"

"No!"

Here the door of C22 slammed shut.

The lion was stuffed, but the reporters were not. If the colonel had sent the persecuted pair a real lion he might have been useful if he had no objection to eating a Chicago reporter.