

The San Francisco Call

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THE PRESIDENT AND THE EDITORS

An editorial symposium on Roosevelt's recent speech at Provincetown supplies some fine confused reading. In the face of this portentous conflict of testimony, gathered from widely separated sources and propounded in all cases with equal assurance, he would be a rash man who would venture to make up his mind.

Thus we find that the more or less esteemed New York Sun accuses the president of making a desperate and unscrupulous statement when he said that "rich malefactors have combined to bring about financial stress for the purpose of discrediting the government." The Sun, strangely enough, finds that this is the single statement in the whole speech "with which the public is likely to be much concerned." And it adds, "A more unscrupulous or desperate statement it would be impossible to make." In the face of these obstreperous and alarming noises it seems rash to say that a majority of American citizens are persuaded that Roosevelt told the truth.

Now, on the other hand, the Provincetown, R. I., Journal finds that Roosevelt's "policy is truly conservative. He would save the nation by curing the disease that afflicts it." Then the Journal, with fine independence, flouts the "wrath of Wall street." We can at least agree that Wall street has no friends.

The New York World devotes three columns of criticism to the speech. It finds, among other things, that "the grave defect of Mr. Roosevelt's corporation policy is that he has no policy." So we are given nearly three yards of editorial about a negative quantity. So much ingenuity devoted to the people's cause is gratifying, but, unhappily, it leaves us more than ever muddled. It is hard to please everybody.

We sail in calmer waters with the New York Tribune, which is not only able to discover a well defined Roosevelt policy, but is certain that it "aims at greater security for the investor and greater good to the public. It is idealistic, not cynical or revengeful." That's it. Roosevelt's policy is idealistic. You see, we are getting all sorts of information.

The New York Evening Post feared the worst. It usually does. The editor knew in advance just what Roosevelt would say. "If he were to say anything at all," remarks the editor, "this was what he was sure to say." We have always suspected this person of the dolorous and vexatious gift of prophecy. Which of us has found the prophet of good? So this melancholy soothsayer knew from the start that Roosevelt's "way of calming a patient is to give another shock." The writer proceeds to demonstrate learnedly that Roosevelt is destroying "the commerce of imperceptibles," which is the college professors' name for credit.

The Springfield Republican insists that the president is right when he announces that "corporations and individuals pursuing lawful courses and attending to business, rather than the swindling games of high finance, have nothing to fear, and property rights will be made more and not less secure by the suppression of predatory practices pursued by a few aggregations of property."

The New York Times dismisses Roosevelt easily as an "impromptu statesman," and declares that "in his devastating career he brings greater calamities upon the honest man than upon the transgressor."

There are others, many others, every one of them as cocksure as these—but we forbear. There is here bewilderment enough for one day. It was the illustrious Chancellor Oxeenstern who remarked: "You see, my son, with how little wisdom the world is governed." You can apply that remark either to the president or the editors. Suit yourself.

WATCH US GROW

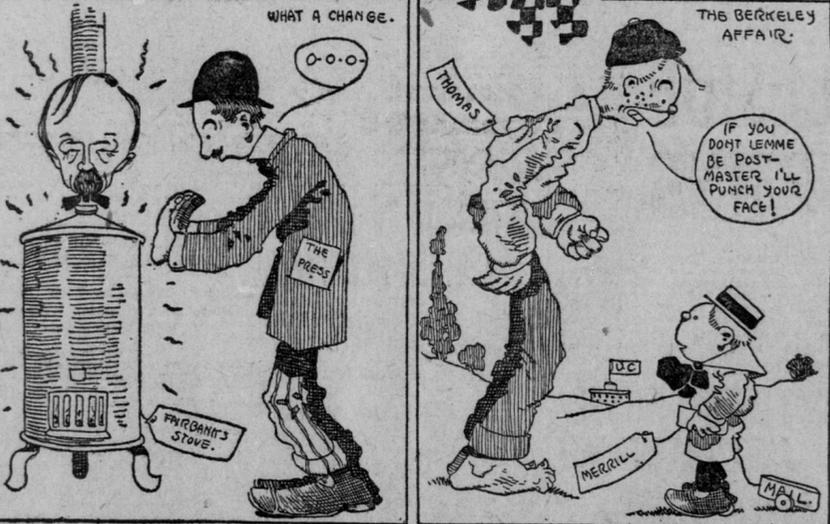
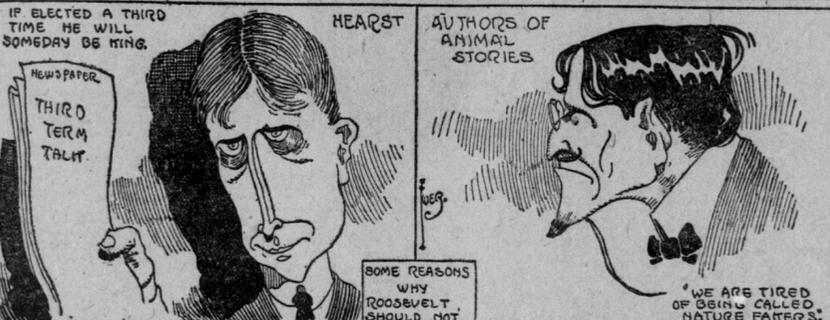
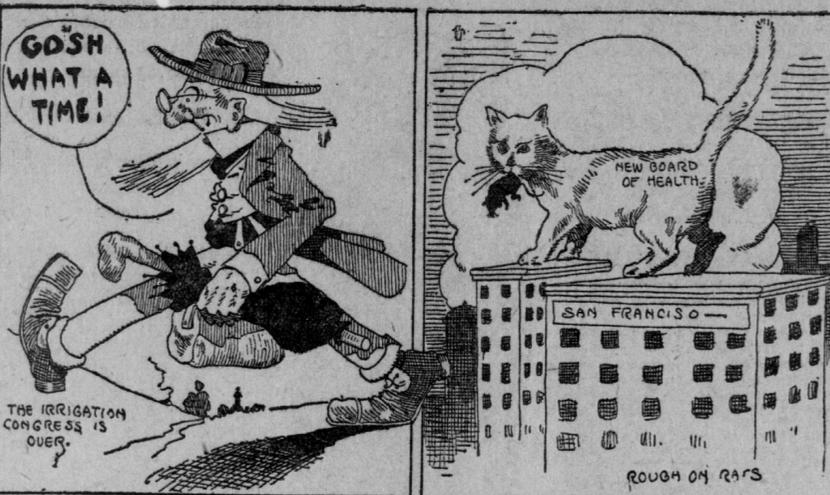
THE activity of railroad building in northern and central California is becoming matter of outside comment. The Riverside Press of recent date makes some comparisons with conditions in this regard south of Tehachapi, from which we quote:

To be candid we have to admit that both in steam and electric railroad building the central and northern part of the state is at present doing much more than is southern California. The San Diego and Arizona road is the only really important piece of railroad building now under way in this section of the state. Trolley extensions are proceeding very slowly, and while encouraging reports about a line from Riverside to Colton, Riverside to Redlands, and from Riverside to Los Angeles are from time to time given out, nothing very tangible seems to materialize. We can only hope that capitalists in southern California may be stimulated by the activity in the north to push improvement a little more rapidly. We have been going ahead so much faster in southern California than has any other portion of the state that we have grown accustomed to speaking in a somewhat contemptuous manner of the slow development in the Sacramento valley and other parts of northern California. At the rate things are moving up there at present, however, we shall have to begin to look to our laurels.

Among the railroad enterprises in this region under construction at the present moment the Western Pacific is, of course, of first importance, but there are a great many others that mean much to the growth of California. Not many people realize how extensive is the scope of the electric railway systems now in process of installation, with Sacramento as the central point. A great network connecting the state capital with the important towns north and south is already in large part complete. All this means much for Sacramento and Stockton as important distributing points. It will not be long before the whole length of the great interior valley, from Bakersfield in the south to Redding in the north, will be gridironed by trolley roads.

This competition pushes the Southern Pacific to renewed

Cartoonist Ewer's Review of the Week's News



activity, and Harriman finds that he must build a road along the banks of the Sacramento river that will tap the fertile delta region, which hitherto has had no rail communication. In this immediate neighborhood the competition of the Key Route compels the Southern Pacific to electrify its Oakland and Alameda lines. The Bay Shore cutoff on the peninsula is almost complete. The narrow gauge road is being converted to broad gauge for its whole length. Preparations are in hand to bridge the bay at Dumbarton point, and the Ocean Shore road from San Francisco to Santa Cruz is going right ahead to open an important part of the peninsula never before touched by modern traffic agencies. Electric railways are building or planned for Marin, Sonoma and Lake counties. The California Northwestern is in process of extension to the redwood forests of Humboldt. During the past summer a railroad has been opened to a point within a few miles of the Yosemite valley.

Watch us grow.

SPRING VALLEY MOONSHINE

ONE wonders what President A. F. Payson of the Spring Valley water company thinks he is doing. Apparently, he imagines that by alternately threatening and making a poor mouth he will persuade the city of San Francisco to buy the water plant at a price somewhere between \$5,000,000 and \$10,000,000 in excess of its value.

Mr. Payson knows that the process of valuation by which the sum of \$31,000,000 is arrived at will not bear analysis. In fact, he does not dare attempt analysis or justification. One day the estimate is based on an average of all the figures supplied by experts, most of whom were hired by his corporation to inflate the value. When that argument or estimate is exposed as plain cheating he takes refuge in some vague talk about the value of the stock and bonds. Does he mean the market value of these securities? Not at all. As far as The Call can gather his intent he asks for the par value of the bonds and half the face value of the stock. The bonds sell for less than par in the market. The stock sells around 20. Mr. Payson wants 50.

Either way it is figured, Mr. Payson asks for a bonus of many millions. San Francisco will not do business in that way. The thing is absurd. Let Mr. Payson get down to facts and then, perhaps, the city will be prepared to talk business. Mr. Payson has been talking moonshine. He seems to think he is engaged in a horse trade.

Personal Mention

- O. R. Keady of Yuba City is at the Dale.
Paul Kretsch is at the Savoy from Seattle.
J. B. Howard of Menlo Park is at the Dale.
P. J. McKinney of Phoenix is at the Jefferson.
A. K. Boyd is New York is at the Baltimore.
C. J. Sterling of Los Angeles is at the Grand Central.
F. T. Meschner of Tonopah is a guest at the St. James.
F. Garlick of Seattle and Mrs. Garlick are at the Hamlin.
A. W. and Henry Armstrong of Pasadena are at the Majestic.
J. C. Barrett of Seattle registered at the St. James yesterday.
J. C. Haft and Mrs. Haft are at the St. James from Cincinnati.
Charles Lamb and Mrs. Lamb of Stockton are at the Savoy.
F. Alba de Costa, a Nevada mining operator, is at the Fairmont.
C. W. Noyes and Mrs. Noyes of Chicago are at the Imperial.
O. Sprig of Chicago, accompanied by Mrs. Sprig, is at the Imperial.
K. W. Hays registered at the Majestic yesterday from Honolulu.
G. H. Maxwell and Mrs. Maxwell of Los Angeles are at the Imperial.
J. R. Loftus registered at the Fairmont yesterday from Los Angeles.
John M. Lewis and Mrs. Lewis are at the Hamlin from Nashville, Tenn.
Mrs. M. M. Gragg, Miss Gragg and Mrs. Sargeant of Monterey are at the Jefferson.
J. H. Tucker and Henry Hewitt, lumber merchants of Tacoma, are at the St. Francis.
Captain W. R. Riley with 16 members of the Hawaiian gun club is at the Jefferson.
F. J. Honig, accompanied by Mrs. Honig, is at the Grand Central from Los Angeles.
W. C. Patterson, vice president of the First National Bank of Los Angeles, is at the St. Francis.
Captain William M. Crulckshank of the army is at the Fairmont. He is accompanied by Mrs. Crulckshank.
Mrs. David Starr Jordan, wife of

A Measure for Liars

Being some account of a new form of mind reading and a measuring stick for accuracy

By Edward F. Cahill

PROFESSOR HUGO MUENSTERBERG of Harvard is for the present the great protagonist of the fascinating but futile pseudo science of psychology. Likewise the Herr Professor is an admirer of militarism with polite and academic limitations. During the trial of Haywood he made on his own account a special journey to Boise so that he might estimate by laboratory method the capacity of Harry Orchard for telling the truth.

Professor Muensterberg does not explain the nature of his measuring stick but in the current McClure's he masses a considerable volume of facts showing how common is inaccuracy of perception, and his conclusion is that witnesses before going into court should be subjected to examination by an expert psychologist, who would assay or assess, presumably in terms of arithmetic, the value of his testimony. A witness might be—let us say—50 per cent fine, and the jury, loyally accepting the conclusions of the expert, would believe half his testimony if it could tell which half.

The examples of inaccuracy of observation given by Professor Muensterberg are chiefly the results of experiments conducted by himself on members of his classes. They were concerned mostly with the lapse of time, the estimation of units in a huddled mass and perception of color. It is quite clear that Professor Muensterberg knew where to look for proof of his conclusion, for observation of phenomena in all these classes is peculiarly liable to error.

It is an old courtroom gag that where a lawyer sets out to trap a witness he takes out his watch and bids his victim estimate a given time. The witness has seen this trick played twenty times, and it always works. The witness invariably makes a wrong guess, often ridiculously wrong. The only time I ever saw the game beaten was when the lawyer facing the witness did not know that there was a clock on the wall behind him. If this test were insisted on no man could be believed but a human chronometer.

Professor Muensterberg gives this example of conflicting testimony that comes in another class:

"I had occasion recently to make an address on peace in New York before a large gathering, to which there was an unexpected and somewhat spirited reply. The reporters sat immediately in front of the platform. One man wrote that the audience was so surprised by my speech that it received it in complete silence; another wrote that I was constantly interrupted by loud applause and that at the end of my address the applause continued for minutes. The one wrote that during my opponent's speech I was constantly smiling; the other noticed that my face remained grave and without a smile. The one said that I grew purple red from excitement, and the other found that I grew white like chalk. The one told us that my critic, while speaking, walked up and down the large stage, and the other that he stood all the while at my side and patted me in a fatherly way on the shoulder. And Mr. Dooley finally heard that before I made my speech on peace I was introduced as the professor from the Harvard war school—but it may be that Mr. Dooley was not himself present."

Is not Professor Muensterberg guilty here of some rhetorical heightening of the conflict of testimony? Of course I did not see the several publications of which he complains, but I think there is internal evidence that the professor was carried slightly off his base by a pardonable enthusiasm for a striking climax. I miss my guess if he is not guilty of his own sin—the sin that he has invented and classified.

Apart from possible inaccuracies in the professor's amusing description, many of these apparent contradictions are reconcilable. The professor may have turned pale at one moment and blushed celestial rosy red at another. The other man may easily have walked the platform during part of his address and may have stood by Muensterberg patting him on the shoulder by way of accompaniment to a different vein of thought. There are many aspects of a fight in a peace conference.

But Professor Muensterberg forgives the reporters in view of prevailing inaccuracy of the ordinary observer. By way of specifications these:

"The jurymen and the judge do not discriminate whether the witness tells that he saw in late twilight a woman in a red gown or one in a blue gown. They are not expected to know that such a faint light would still allow the blue color sensation to come in, while the red color sensation would have disappeared. They are not obliged to know what directions of sound are mixed up by all of us and what are discriminated; they do not know perhaps that we can never be in doubt whether we heard on the country road a cry from the right or from the left, but that we may be utterly unable to say whether we heard it from in front or from behind. They have no reason to know that the victim of a crime may have been utterly unable to perceive that he was stabbed with a pointed dagger; he may have felt it like a dull blow. We hear the witnesses talking about the taste of poisoned liquids, and there is probably no one in the jury box who knows enough of physiological psychology to be aware that the same subject may taste quite differently on different parts of the tongue. We may hear quarrelling parties in a civil suit testify as to the size and length and form of a field as it appeared to them, and yet there is no one to remind the court that the same distance must appear quite differently under a hundred different conditions. The judge listens perhaps to a description of things which the witness has secretly seen through the keyhole of the door; he does not understand why all the judgments as to the size of objects and their place are probably erroneous under such circumstances. The witness may be sure of having felt something wet, and yet he may have felt only some smooth, cold metal. In short, every chapter and subchapter of sense psychology may help to clear up the chaos and the confusion which prevail in the observation of witnesses."

If disinterested witnesses are incapable of accuracy to the degree that Professor Muensterberg contends and interested witnesses color or falsify their testimony, the hypothesis almost reduces the proceedings of courts to absurdity. If there are so many who can't tell the truth and so many others who won't tell the truth, then we are reduced to circumstantial evidence as the only safe reliance.

Having discovered a new disease or a more alarming form of an old one, Professor Muensterberg ought to produce his remedies, but the truth is he does not appear very sure of himself. He makes a faint suggestion about the employment of a psychological expert for court use on the witnesses. The conjunction of the psychologist and the handwriting expert is suggestive. It is like trying to make one honest man out of two fakers. The testimony of a mind reader on the evidence of a handwriting expert should at least relieve the tedium of a day in court.

Why do I call the psychologists fakers? Well, for this reason—that they have been disputing about this very basis and foundation of the so called science for more than 2,000 years and they are just as much at outs today as in the time of Plato and Aristotle. Maybe you don't think there is any fighting talk in psychology, but if you don't believe it you might read John Stuart Mill's hot roast of Sir William Hamilton and his philosophy. Such wrath inflames celestial minds.

But all that would be nothing to the battle between a brace of psychological experts hired by opposing sides in a lawsuit to riddle the witnesses. It would add a new terror to litigation that a man might be scientifically branded as incapable of telling more than 50 per cent of the truth.

President Jordan of Stanford university is a guest at the Hamlin. She is accompanied by Miss Tracy of Stanford.
"That handwriting expert said there was 'no character' in my hand. What did he mean by that?"
"His simply means that you're considerate and sensible enough to write such character legibly."—Philadelphia Press.

Conditions in California

The California Promotion committee wired the following to its eastern bureau in New York on Saturday:
California temperatures for the last 24 hours:
Eureka Minimum.....58 Maximum.....66
San Francisco.....Minimum.....60 Maximum.....73
San Diego.....Minimum.....54 Maximum.....78
San Francisco building permits for the week ending noon September 7:
Permanent.....76 Value.....\$669,000
Alterations.....35 Value.....17,000
The Fresno fig crop of the present year will exceed that of a year ago. It will run over 3,000 tons and may reach 3,500. All conditions have been right and the fruit is of very good quality.
The foundations are ready and the steel is on the way for the Grant building, at Geary and Powell streets, San Francisco. This will be an eight story class A structure, 55,924. The terra cotta for the facing is being shipped at the same time as the steel. The building will cost \$350,000.