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*For Secretary of Something*

If the distinguished statesman who deprecated the pernicious activity of “them dam literary fellers” were now in the midst of political life, he would doubtless signify afresh, and with added emphasis, his unaltered mind.

In the Administration of a President who is himself of their objectionable class the “kings of thought” in the “republic of letters” are promised a new and wide authority. Two of them have recently been pitchforked into the seats of the mighty—one as First Assistant Postmaster-General, another as Commissioner of Pensions.

Of the “woes unnumbered” that may flow from this exaltation of “them of low degree” the discreet Muse declines to sing; she is indisposed to dismal prophecy concerning those who are her peculiar care. She can, and hereby does, testify to the high intelligence and immaculate moral character of Messers. Wayne and Ware, she is able, and happy to affirm their acceptable service in the humble “spheres of influence” to which it has hitherto pleased Providence to restrict them; she points with pride to their modest eminence in the lowlands of “prose and worse.” But the future is beyond her ken. What dire disasters to the fair fabric of civil and religious liberty their elevation may portend must be left for exposition to the coming Prophet of the Past, with his instructed inspiration and assisted light. The facts that 25 per cent of those now enjoying high political preferment have been working journalists, and all the others have secretly written odes to spring, would probably not be generally accepted as a favorable augury.

Within the memory of men no living on their neighbors, the Secretary of State as a “dam literary feller.” He is said to have been the author of that famous poem whose title is a household word, “Small Pantaloons,” but is understood to hold that he is its author no more. (The rule recognized in high political life.) He is thought to be the only man of letters in the Cabinet, though the Secretary of Agriculture rather prides himself on his authorship of a certain monograph, now out of print, on the incubation of the eggplant.

On the whole, it can hardly be admitted that literature is adequately represented in the present Cabinet, and there are those who affect the belief that what they call the vacancy of Mr. Hitchcock might advantageously be filled by appointment of an able-bodied public writer. I do not myself entertain the view that Mr. Hitchcock’s peculiar relation to the Cabinet constitutes a vacancy, within the meaning of the law, and venture to think that the appointment of another person to his place in the political hierarchy might fitly be prefaced, so to speak, by his translation to another and better world as Ambassador to the court of St. James.

And now—if an oasis of sense be not altogether unwelcome in a desert of words—it may be permissible to utter a serious suggestion. Assuming that the President is truly credited with an intention to make further changes in his Cabinet, why should he not consider the expediency of honoring literature, serving the best interests of the country, and at the same time strengthening himself in the good opinion of all his most intelligent fellow-citizens by appointing

Mr. Samuel L. Clemens? Mr. Clemens is easily the foremost name in our contemporary Pantheon of letters. He is honored the world over for the strength, nobility, grace and vivacity of his work, for the scope and versatility of his gift, for the excellence of his personal character. It is not too much to say that no man commands more of the love of his countrymen than he. Withal, his acquaintance with practical affairs is wide and accurate, his life successful in the truest and highest sense.

Who ever knew Samuel Clemens to do or say a foolish thing?

In nothing did that astutest of statesmen. The late Benjamin Disraeli, attest his sagacity better than in his preference for men of letters in high political place. If Mr. Roosevelt, who seems to share the preference, shares also the conviction of which it was the practical and approved expression, he will receive this suggestion in kindly good faith and

“Deem it not all a too presumptuous folly.”

In case of approval, he might undertake to ascertain, as a matter of official routing, how it happens to strike Mr. Clemens.