

CHAMP CLARK

Annexionist and Autocrat of the Gavel

BY FRED. W. FIELD

For sixteen years in the United States House of Representatives, the democrats have sat and watched the republicans do the bossing. To-day, the position is reversed. Speaker Joe Cannon, breezy and dictatorial, has yielded to Speaker Champ Clark, domineering and brusque. And it is interesting to study the amused countenance of the dethroned Illinoisan while the reigning Missourian swings his gavel twice, thrice, even six times to get order in the House. Champ Clark has had varied experiences in his sixty-one years. For twenty-two years he held the record of being the youngest college president in the United States. He has worked as a hired farm hand, clerked in a country store, edited a newspaper and practised law. This vocational mixture has left him with the means to attain power, to retain power, and to talk with poet and peasant, pinprick and politician, press and people, with assurance and determination. He graduated from the Kentucky University with the highest honors. The day of his graduation he was offered the presidency of Marshall College, West Virginia, and being asked to make a formal application, giving his qualifications, he wrote: "To the Trustees: I have just been awarded my diploma at Bethany with highest honors, I am 23 years old, 6 feet 2 inches tall, weigh 170 pounds, am unmarried, a Kentuckian by birth, a Campbellite by religion, a democrat in politics, and master mason." His character runs down his arm into his gavel. His gavel beats two hundred voices in the legislative chamber when Clark and mallet fight for silence. Admirers decorated his room with flowers the other day when he took office, but the little American flag stuck in the stationery case looked better than flowers to him.

His facial expression is always on the defensive. It is a smart man who can beat him at repartee. A man without nerves could not face his interview. He looks like a walled fort. He talks big guns fired rapidly. Get him on a displeasing subject and the man behind the guns is in action. His eyes penetrate. Having said what his mental general commands him, his lips close sharply, firmly. Nothing more on that topic is to be said. Only those who make a hobby of storming high walls would dare open the question again. As a schoolmaster, he would be the terror of the dullard and the loafer. As a man, he is one of that strong type we seldom see in these days of high civilization. There is some of the hired farm hand's experiences back of him, some of the warmth he must have put into his editing, some of the logic that law gave him, some of the routine of the country store. His bluntness was his birth gift. As a politician, he is counted two men by his opponents. As the future president, many see him, others shrug shoulders, and some laugh. This then is the manner of man whose annexation utterances have caused a furore in Canada.

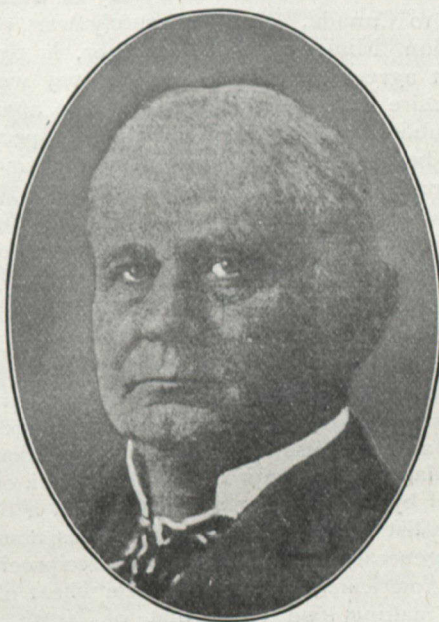
That the people of Canada were interested and were talking of his annexation theories, was mentioned to him. "They may talk to the day of judgment," he replied. And had the gavel been at hand, a dent in the table would have formed the period to the sentence. One could see that a reminder of his past words rankled, just then. "I do not want to hear anything more about annexation until the Canadian reciprocity agreement has been put through," he added. And that was the final word for the time being. The face hardened, the eyes darted defiance to comment, the lips snapped, and the human fort was ready for stray or directed verbal shots.

That the reciprocity bill will pass the House is the opinion of its Speaker. He recalled, too, the fact that only five democrats voted against it in the Senate last time. His desire is that the agreement should be passed as soon as possible. "But mind," he says, "I do not say what order it will take in our business." In other words there are a few political flowers to gather in the garden of republicanism be-

fore the democrats can rest comfortably in an arboreal bower of success. Then perhaps they may pluck the presidential bloom.

"I have been preaching reciprocity for twenty-five years," he exclaimed suddenly. His head turned White House way. "President Taft is a new convert to the principle," he added. The fort was closed again. No one could doubt that Champ Clark had any doubts as to whose measure was or is this Canadian bill. When he made his first speech as Speaker of the House, reciprocity was not mentioned. His remarks were confined to democratic pledges. President Taft's message had nothing else but reciprocity. Champ Clark's omission meant that reciprocity reference was unnecessary because according to Champclarkism, it was born, nursed, and raised in the democratic cradle. "For the last fourteen years," he said, "the republicans have been appropriating democratic ideas for their own uses. A man grows weary of that sort of thing."

What may we expect from this big man from Missouri? He will have the reciprocity bill passed in the House. It will be nailed to the democratic counter as a piece of their good work. Champ Clark's gavel will help keep it there.



Champ Clark.

After making a few yards of political waterproof for rainy days prior to the presidential elections of 1912, the bill will march forward. The democratic party are practically a unit on that. But is there anything to follow? They swallowed Canadian reciprocity at one gulp, and if it came from the republican doctor they thought he was disguised as a democratic physician anyway. Champ Clark boldly proclaimed the policy of annexing Canada, mountains and markets, politics and people, nation and needs, wheat and the West, Empire and the East, bag and baggage. His followers may have been a little surprised but their strong approval was voiced. A unit for reciprocity, are the democrats a unit for annexation? "They can talk to the day of judgment," said Champ Clark. "I do not want to hear anything more about annexation until reciprocity has been put through." And when it has, what then?

The party is progressive. There is no backing out of a position which supports reciprocity, which approves annexation. Champ Clark does not speak without thinking. He may have spoken a little too soon on annexation, but the fault was prematureness rather than verbosity. Congressional documents show that his opinion has been that our tariff negotiations point always to ultimate annexation. What then has Champ Clark in store for us? We must wait and see. But if the distant and nearing signs do not fail, we shall hear the guns of the Missourian walled fort thundering forth with greater emphasis than before that Canada should, must and will become part of the United States. So is Champ Clark, annexationist and autocrat of the gavel, the slumbering stronghold of surprises. May Fate withhold the presidency from his grasp!