



**"BIG BILL TAFT"** will have a chance to show us whether fat men make good runners. There is hardly a doubt that Taft would be taken more seriously if he weighed a hundred pounds lighter. There is a prejudice against fat men as too easy-going for responsible public positions. They are excellent in second place, but not in the camp of the commanding officer. Taft would make an ideal candidate for the Vice-Presidency, with Hughes running for the Presidency. But it was not to be. Fate—which bears the brand of "T. R." in this case—willed it otherwise. Taft will have to look serious and important and dignified, when all the world would think him more natural if he were jolly and good-natured and careless whether school kept or not. As an understudy for the strenuous Teddy, he will be a good deal of a joke; though he will gain strength from Wall Street's feeling that so weighty a man will not take the trouble to keep the "trusts" on the jump, and chase the "bulls" and "bears" out of the pasture.

**H**AS Canada ever had a fat statesman whom we took seriously? I cannot recall one. Sir John Macdonald was tall and thin and wiry. Sir Wilfrid Laurier is tall and thin and dignified. Sir Oliver Mowat was none of these things; but he was not fat. Whitney and Gouin are "comfortable"; but they are not in the "saft" Taft class. Alexander Mackenzie, Sir Charles Tupper, Edward Blake, Sir George Cartier, George Brown—none of these men were fat. Alonzo Wright—"The King of the Gatineau"—was fat; but he had a fat man's reputation. He was not strenuous; but jolly, the soul of good nature and the prince of hospitality. "Mine Host" should always be fat; but then Taft is not going to keep hotel at the White House. When aldermen were thought of chiefly as the eaters of big official dinners, it was deemed proper that they should be fat; but since the Frank Spence-Hocken style of alderman came in, they are not usually encumbered with an aldermanic girth. Taft will certainly find that he is "carrying weight" in the coming race.

**T**HIS would be a good time to say something about the stupid American system of turning their political leaders out of doors just as the people are getting to know and like them, if it were any use to repeat the familiar complaint. Our neighbours may recover from this folly some day; but they show no signs of it now. In this case, it is not the people but the politicians who have been faithful to the hoary precedent. The people would elect Roosevelt if they had the chance. They want Roosevelt. He is just the sort of President that the great majority of them feel that the nation needs under existing conditions; and they would like him to keep his job. But Roosevelt says "No." This probably does not mean that he is unwilling to serve his country, or that he does not believe that he could give it the sort of service it requires; but is rather an indication that he knows the political world about him, and feels that a "third term" Roosevelt would be rendered nearly powerless by Senate cabals and a rebellious House of Representatives. His second term has been more noted for "messages" than for measures; and there would be danger that in his third term he would come to look like an ineffective "scold."

**T**HEN there are the "predatory interests." They do not want any more Roosevelt. And they cast a big vote at the polls, and a far bigger one in the councils of the party. If Roosevelt had been anything but a most positively pledged "outsider" in this Presidential business, these interests and their organs and their "hounds" would have been yelling at his heels for a year back. We say now that he could have been nominated by simply raising his hand. But is it certain that he could have been named if he had been a candidate for the position all along, and had been subject to this subsidised "fire"? The people are a great power, and they fondly imagine that they rule the universe; but when "predatory wealth" starts out to fight a man it has a way of making him look undesirable to the very people whose battles he has been fighting. If we could look down deep into Roosevelt's heart, we would probably find there that he has had his doubts

about the permanent fidelity of his beloved "people." He did not know how they would stand such a campaign of ridicule and slander as the "kings of finance" could turn against him.

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**W**E see what "predatory wealth" has done to Bryan. Now you are a clear-headed, disinterested citizen—an outsider as far as American politics go. By "you," I mean You—as Sam Jones used to say. You know that the good Deacon Bryan is an honest, sincere, single-minded champion of popular rights. Yet—honest now—have not the attacks upon him, and the sarcasm poured out on his head, and the knife-thrusts in his side by his professed party "friends," and the constant rain of ridicule, belittlement and insinuation drizzled upon him from the paid spouts of "predatory wealth," affected your judgment of him? Do you not think less of him by reason of these deluges of depreciation? You know, of course, whence they spring. You are not deceived on that point—as are many of the plain people. Yet they influence you. Think, then, how they must influence people who are in no position to know why he has so many enemies. I tell you the man who can stand up against organised "predatory wealth" in such a community as that of the United States, must be a very Napoleon for invincibility. Possibly, in spite of San Juan Hill, Teddy did not feel sure that he was a Napoleon.

N'IMPORTE

## The Fire at Three Rivers

**J**ANUARY, which is usually the month of disastrous fires, seems to have changed places with June this year. Burk's Falls, Ontario, suffered early in the week from an extensive conflagration, which was eclipsed Monday by a two-million-dollar fire at Three Rivers, Quebec. Even in Montreal or Toronto such a disaster would be noteworthy; to a small city like Three Rivers the loss is almost overwhelming. The greater part of the lower town, containing the business section of the city, was swept by the flames which started in a carter's stable at noon and were aided in their work of destruction by a tempestuous wind. Six hundred buildings were destroyed, and one thousand people were homeless by Monday night. The fire departments of Montreal, Quebec, Three Rivers, Sherbrooke and Grand Mere were all engaged in the fight with the flames. Outside the town is the camp of the Sixth Military District and soon after the fire started a thousand men were sent in to help the local brigade which was pitifully unequal to extinguishing an extensive blaze. The post office, customs house, city hall, churches, eleven hotels, telegraph offices and telephone exchange were destroyed before evening.

Three Rivers, which is 96 miles east of Montreal, is one of the oldest cities in Quebec province, having been founded in 1634 by Lavolette, under orders from Champlain. The historic old parish church which was destroyed was originally built in 1664. The estimated population of Three Rivers this year is 12,300. The lumber trade forms the principal industry. The Radnor Forges are only three miles distant and the famous Falls of Shawinigan are three hours' drive from the town. That there was no loss of life is largely due to the exertions of the men of the 85th Regiment and the 11th Argenteuil Rangers. It is estimated that it will be fifty years before the city will recover its former commercial standing but there will be many hands to help in the re-building.



Moose Mountain Iron Mine, thirty miles from Sudbury, to be opened up by the Canadian Northern Ontario Railway. The extension of the line from Parry Sound to Sudbury will be opened for passenger traffic July 1st.