

"What's The News?"

Congress Adjourns.

CONGRESS has adjourned, but our breathing spell will be brief, as the Sixty-first Congress is called to meet in special session March 15th. This short session did very little but plan how to spend the people's money. Time was—and not so long ago either—when "a billion dollar Congress" startled the Nations; now we have billion dollar sessions—two-billion dollar Congresses. And how the people would howl if the money came through direct taxation instead of being secretly abstracted from their pockets in the shape of a thousand noiseless tariff and revenue taxes: "pulling teeth without pain" is an old art among the men who raise our National revenues.

Congress spent most of the time fussing with Roosevelt, when it was not considering appropriation bills, and meanwhile a great many measures affecting the public welfare were neglected—the postal savings bank, the child labor bill, the parcels post, the plan for protecting the people against the exploitation of water rights, tariff revision, forest preservation, measures against gambling in cotton futures, etc. The bill providing for the admission of New Mexico and Arizona as States also failed, but we do not think this a misfortune. The long wrangle about the Brownsville negroes ended at last in the passage of a resolution authorizing their re-enlistment where they prove their innocence. This at least may comfort Senator Foraker in his enforced retirement from the Senate.

President Taft's Inaugural Address.

PRESIDENT TAFT'S inaugural address is a plain, business-like, common-sense document—not brilliant or sensational, nor yet disappointing. The new President declares unequivocally for carrying out the policies of the Roosevelt administration, for a proper regulation of trusts, a prompt and reasonable revision of the tariff, a strong navy, the policy of conserving our natural resources, for postal savings banks and an inheritance tax, free trade with the Philippines, ship subsidies (we are sorry to say), protection of aliens, and against curtailing the power of injunction in labor disputes. Concerning the tariff, President Taft declares for a law which will—

"afford to labor and to all industries in this country, whether of the farm, mine or factory, protection by tariff equal to the difference between the cost of production abroad and the cost of production here, and have a provision which shall put into force, upon executive determination of certain facts, a higher or maximum tariff against those countries whose trade policy toward us equitably requires such discrimination."

Taft and the South.

MR. TAFT gives no inconsiderable part of his Message to a very carefully-worded discussion of the negro question and the South. "My chief purpose," he says, "is not to effect a change in the electoral vote of the Southern States," but "an increase in the tolerance of political views of all kinds and their advocacy, and the existence of a respectable political opposition in every State; even more than this, to an increased feeling on the part of all the people in the South that this Government is their Government, and that its officers in their States are their officers."

Without violating the Fifteenth Amendment, he points out, it is possible to exclude the ignorant or otherwise objectionable of both races from the franchise, and because of this feeling, Southern interest in the negro has grown more kindly. Of the Fifteenth Amendment, he says further:

"If it had not been passed, it might be difficult now to adopt it; but with it in our

fundamental law, the policy of Southern legislation must and will tend to obey it, and so long as the statutes of the States meet the test of this Amendment, and are not otherwise in conflict with the Constitution and laws of the United States, it is not the disposition or within the province of the Federal Government to interfere with the regulation by Southern States of their domestic affairs."

Going further and taking up the direct question of the appointment of negroes to office, President Taft declares that men of ability among the negroes should be recognized by the Government; still (as a result of stirring up race feeling) the negro is likely to get more harm than good from appointments in communities especially hostile to negro officials. Evidently, Mr. Taft would dislike to force a Crum upon a community like Charleston—and it is interesting to speculate upon what course he would have taken had not the negro collector voluntarily resigned last week to save Taft this embarrassment.

The Tariff and the Farmer.

NO OTHER public question is likely to be so much discussed this month as the tariff. The present Dingley rates are acknowledged by all parties and all interests to be vicious and indefensible, and the burden of them has fallen most heavily on the farmer. A good example of how it has worked is afforded by this statement of Mr. H. E. Miles, President of the National Association of Implement and Vehicle Manufacturers:

"I have made money every year out of the tariff graft—not much, but still a little.

"The tariff barons raised their price \$50,000 to me. I made a charge against the jobber of \$60,000, and I know that he charged more than \$70,000 for the \$60,000 he paid me. Before reaching the consumer the \$50,000 charge became about \$100,000, to be paid by the agricultural consumer.

"The manufacturer who would prosper must make a double profit—one by the shrewd management of his business, and another by still shrewder manipulation in Washington.

"When Congress gave us 45 per cent, we

needing only 20 per cent, they gave us a Congressional permit, if not an invitation, to consolidate, form one great trust, and advance prices 25 per cent, being the difference between the 20 per cent needed and the 45 per cent given."

The Legislature Adjourns.

THE North Carolina Legislature has adjourned after a rather uneventful session.

There is little, either good or bad, to make it memorable. One of its most meritorious acts was the passage Saturday night of the bill enlarging the powers, and the appropriations, of the State Board of Health, which means that North Carolina will now start on a great campaign against the preventable diseases which have heretofore taken such heavy toll in human life. The new law for the inspection of kerosene oils will insure the people a better quality, but this inspection tax should not be made a source of revenue since it must come from the poorest class of our people. The new drainage law is a wise one, and will insure the reclamation of valuable lands in Eastern North Carolina. The failure of the Senate to pass the child labor bill, mild as it was—a compromise agreed upon by representatives of the manufacturers themselves—was a shameful truckling to money as against human rights. For the roads and the forests practically nothing was done, the Senate defeating the highway commission bill by a tie vote. Appropriations are large, but for good purposes: our A. & M. College gets increased help, the public schools \$25,000 more, pensions \$50,000 more, and the charitable institutions quite large increases. The movement to put all State and county officers on a salary basis made little progress, chiefly because the voters at home have not been aroused to its importance, but the Legislature ought to have ended the fee system for solicitors. In the matter of anti-trust legislation nothing was done—partly, no doubt, because of trust influence, but largely, too, because of the feeling that these corporations of National scope can be properly regulated only by National laws. The Prohibition law was not touched, and a bill was passed making it the duty of sheriffs, deputies and public officers to search for blockade stills, a fee of \$20 being allowed for each capture.

Cotton From Planting to Picking: A Pen Picture.

Every boy born and bred in the Southern States it is a magical word from the time he is big enough to roll in its billowy heaps in the "cotton house" or go out into the June cotton field to find the first white bloom for his father, or ride to the gin on the big two-horse wagon-bed which the hands have packed with the snowy fleece new-gathered from the autumn fields.

White or black, if his father is not of unusual wealth, he early begins to labor with his own hands in making the crop; and the entire process of cultivation is familiar to him.

Long before he leaves off knee-pants he learns to plow the cool fresh earth in early spring; helps haul out the great loads of manure from the barn; brings in the malodorous loads of fertilizer from the nearest village; helps roll the planting seed in wet ashes, so that the dry lint may not hold them together in bunches. For planting time is now at hand: the dogwoods are blossoming; the first turtle-dove has been heard; the fisherman has begun to tell of satisfactory catches in nearby streams; "Uncle Isaac" and "Black Bob" dispute wisely as to whether this phase of the moon portends warm or cool weather, wet or dry.

For the cottonseed must be ready to "come up" as soon as all danger of frost is passed; and now the rows, ridged and waiting, are opened, and fertilizer and seed distributed. Then the long green lines of two-leaved plants bursting the hard seed-covering they have pushed above ground—and the grass that will not let them be and that we have always with us. Chopping then—white and black, old and young, everybody strong enough to handle a hoe. And the plants flourish under the summer sun; now hoe-hands report that some plants have "seven leaves," then that limbs have come, and squares and finally the anxiety as to which farmer in the neighborhood shall report the

first bloom, or which one in the county shall send the first one to the editor of the county paper.

Weeks, then, of budding and blooming and growing, the thrifty branches bedecked with white blooms that opened this morning and red blooms of yesterday and becoming heavy now with green and growing bolls.

Then on the lowest stalks the bolls begin to open—and now who will gin the first bale?

The women in the towns begin to tremble for their negro cooks, and employers of colored men also begin to scent danger.

For the coronation of King Cotton is at hand; and all the sons and daughters of Ham must dance attendance.

Cotton-picking has an irresistible attraction for all negroes, especially when the picking is done in groups, and though they stay in town even through the watermelon season, cotton-picking is likely to lure them back to the farms.

"The real depth of feeling," as some one has said, "the sheer abandon and proper stage setting, does not come until September has touched the cotton fields and the great hearts of the maturing bolls burst with joy. That is the supreme moment, and the beautifully blended voices of the negro cotton-pickers of the South is a sound once heard never to be forgotten. One cannot find any adjective to express the wild untutored beauty of it. It is a chant of inexpressible rhythm, with a note of sadness and mingled hope and regret, and one cannot stop without burdening it with that indefinable qualification—and calling it weird— . . . these days and nights filled with song and laughter and the nimble plying of fingers set to music that is perhaps a lone relic of a long forgotten Congo."—From "Cotton: Its Cultivation, Marketing, Manufacture, and the Problems of the Cotton World," by Clarence H. Poe and C. W. Burkett. (Published by Doubleday, Page & Co., New York.)