

PREPAREDNESS

(T. B. HILL, Virgilina, Va.)

Editor Public Ledger:

You do me the honor to refer to my recent visit to our County Seat in your Editorial column, and also gave some of the conversation that passed between us on Preparedness, which was correct. I am more convinced than when I wrote an open letter to Mr. Stedman, that preparedness is worse than militarism, because it combines with it British navalism.

I still stand by my statement, that the fellow with a chip on his shoulder is sure to get into scrap. But dissent from the view of Mr. Wilson that big fellow is not likely to be attacked by the boys. It is as true as life that it is always the bully that get licked, and that by a fellow much under his size. There seems to be a contempt for the bully in the heart of humanity. No one likes him. I have never known a really brave man, who was not a lover of peace, and slow to resent insults. So much as an offset to Mr. Wilson's idea of the immunity of the big fellow from attack by the other fellows of the campus.

My real object in this communication is to call the attention of the tax payers to the fact that President Wilson has at last defined his preparedness program so we can understand what he means by it. He said on his recent speech-making tour that he wanted the United States to have a navy second to the navy of no nation in the world. And I most respectfully ask for what? Certainly not for defensive purposes. The navy League of New York who seem to be backing Mr. Wilson, say it is the duty of every nation to grow richer and richer by any honorable means, such as armed conquest. But some will say that's all stuff. It goes to show that there are dangerous forces at work in our nation that are to be reckoned with. It plainly shows that the advocates of preparedness are believers in militarism and navalism. They may say that they want the greatest navy in the world for purpose of peace only, but it nevertheless is militarism. Great Britain said that her navy was only for self-defense. Germany said that her great army was only for self defense. Let's admit that they were sincere in it, and were conscientious in believing that it was best for Great Britain to have the largest navy in the world. And that it was best for Germany to have the greatest army in the world. Yet the more thoughtful are now admitting that the conscious strength of both England and Germany brought on the awful conflict and set three fourths of the world on fire. Great Britain had the greatest navy in the world but it did not make any body afraid of her. Germany had the greatest army in the world, but who was afraid of her? And I for one would like to avoid the things that have brought such ruin and sufferings to Europe.

It is said that even Homer sometimes nod. And it is an admitted fact that great men make mistakes and sometimes blunder. Champ Clark would have been President today, but for the blunder in his speech on reciprocity with Canada when he jokingly remarked about annexing Canada to the United States. Bryan would have been President of the United States but for the blundering remark about the government ownership of railroads. Mr. Wilson would not be President today, had Mr. Taft vetoed the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Bill. Mr. Wilson has brought a cloud over his administration by his preparedness measure. He, himself, says, "no thoughtful man need feel any panic haste in the matter." If that be true why divide his party over a useless thing. And an echo, answer why! I was forced to feel a sense of defeat the other day when a staunch Republican said with a sound of triumph in his voice, "How does this sound? 'Minority Leader Mann defends the President's preparedness program against the democrats.'" Mr. Wilson could now allay all opposition to his preparedness program if he would show that by actual comparison that our navy ranked second to the navy of Germany. But that he cannot do. Mr. Stedman would have carved my open letter to him into shreds if he could have disproved my statements. Mr. Stedman may not consider me worthy of his steel. And I may not be. The question at issue, is not how learned are either of us; for I am fully persuaded that wisdom will not fade from the earth when both of us have passed away. But were the facts set forth by me against preparedness well founded. I feel that as a voter and as a tax payer and as a life-long Democrat, who never scratched a ticket, besides other considerations that I might mention Mr. Stedman was in duty bound to reply to my letter. If Mr. Stedman is in favor of preparedness as the papers report him to be there are many reasons why he should explain his position to his constituents. One reason in particular is, the platform of the Democratic party made at the Baltimore Convention makes no mention of such a navy and such an army as is now proposed by Mr. Wilson. Another reason is, this preparedness program is a revolutionary measure. One powerful reason is, this preparedness issue was started by the Republicans. It is Republican doctrine, and I have been convinced from early manhood that Republicanism is a dangerous thing for

this country. The Republican party has by its legislation caused the centralization of wealth, which is one of the greatest dangers that threatens our civilization. Greece and Rome survived everything except the centralization of wealth, and surely we will as a nation not make the fatal mistake that those ancient civilizations made, in placing the wealth and power of the nation in the hands of the few instead of masses.

Therefore, I hold that in as much as the platform of the Democratic party made at the Baltimore Convention made no mention of such a navy and such an army as is now advocated by Mr. Wilson, that neither Mr. Wilson, nor the Democrats of Congress have a right to pass such a revolutionary measure, before the people pass upon it at the ballot box. Mr. Wilson says that we are threatened from no quarter. That no thoughtful man need feel any panic haste in the matter. It is not long until the Democratic Convention will meet in St. Louis. That is the place to pass upon such a revolutionary measure. I believe that the people are the safest guardians of their liberty. I believe that the people yet know what sort of government that will be best for them. The Democrats will write another platform at the St. Louis Convention. The Republicans will write their platform, and the people will select the one best suited to their need. The people evidently felt that the Democrats at Baltimore wrote the measures in their platform best suited to their needs, or else Mr. Wilson and a Democratic Congress would never have been elected. Therefore I feel that Mr. Wilson and the Democrats of Congress will violate their pledge to the people if they do not live up to the letter of that Convention.

One more word. I wish to call attention to one important fact. The advocates of preparedness are not giving the facts concerning our navy as they are. But are suppressing them. Mr. Wilson says that our navy ranks third with the navies of the world. Now I have before me evidence by the navy experts of the world to show that we rank second only to the navy of Great Britain. And that battleship for battleship there is not a navy superior to ours. Mr. Wilson in none of his speeches made a detailed comparison of our navy with any other navy of the world. Does any one believe for one moment that Mr. Wilson would not have done so, if the facts of the comparison would have been favorable to his position. Mr. Wilson did not tell the people that since 1905 that we have spent upon our army and navy the sum of \$2,546,201,171.17. Is this not an enormous amount of money? And yet after all this money has been spent upon the army and navy within the past few years the advocates of preparedness say that we are yet at the mercy of any European nation. Who believes it? Certainly not the reading portion of the public.

You do me the honor, Mr. Coble, to place me with Claud Kitchin and William Jennings Bryan in this measure. It is exalted company. God bless Claud Kitchin. I believe that God called him to Congress for this very hour. It is to him that the people are now looking for deliverance from this great evil. He has defied the worshipper of mammon, and towers high above that sordid crew which are clamoring for millions and millions upon millions to carry crucible steel and Bethlehem Steel, Du Pont Powder, and all the rest of war munitions to new high levels on Wall street. Claud Kitchin is today the one tower of strength between the toilers of the republic, and those who would bind new burden upon their backs that are now already burdened. He has forever enthroned himself in the hearts of the people. They love him, and they are not afraid to trust him. No son of North Carolina has ever reflected more honor upon the grand old State than has Claud Kitchin, the friend of the poor and the oppressed. When the future historian shall write the history of the men of today whose lives were benedictions to the world, none will shine with more winning brilliancy than the life of Claud Kitchin.

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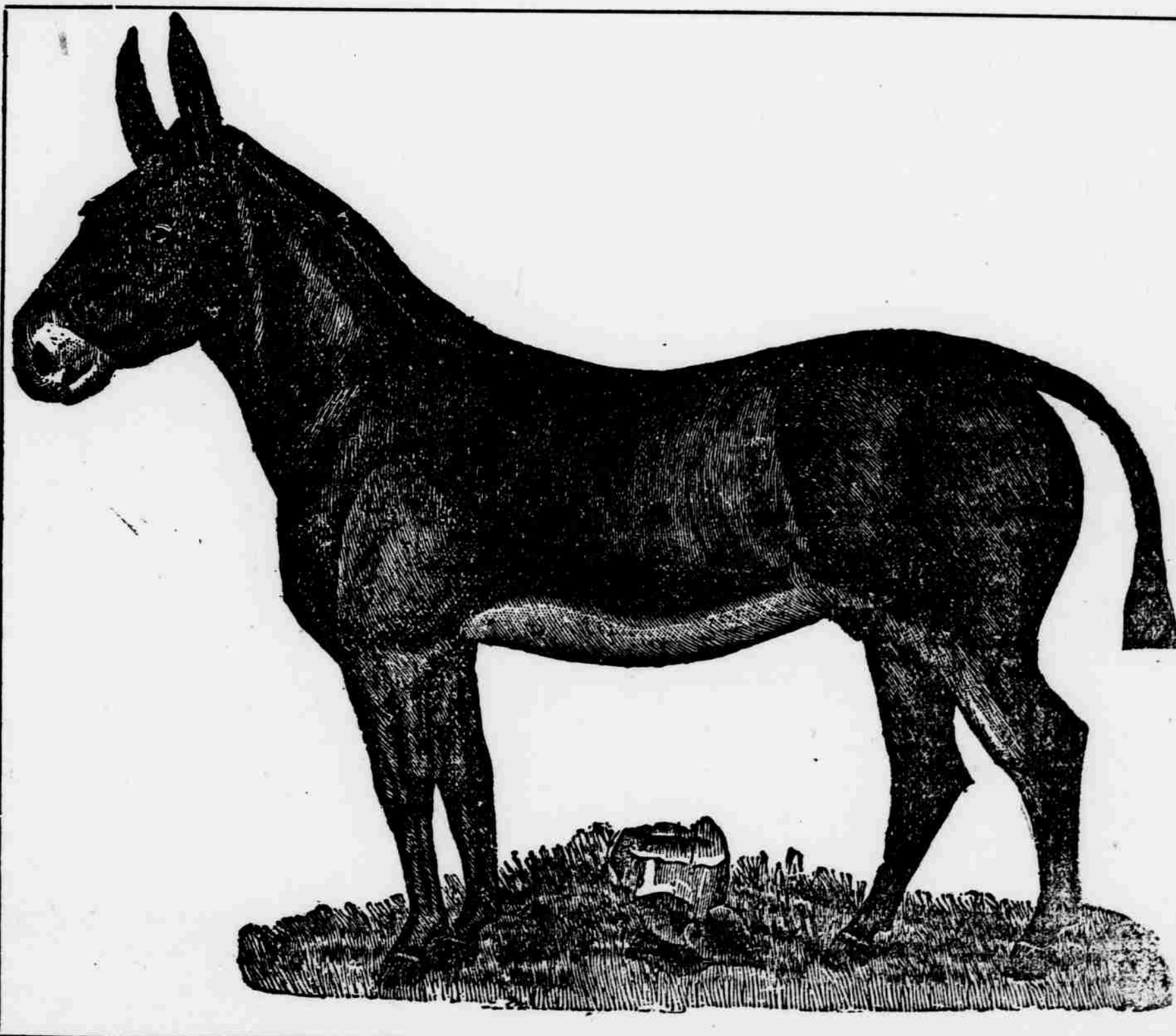
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