

# The Commoner.

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### COMMONER DAY—SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24

Complying with a suggestion made by General James B. Weaver, of Iowa, Saturday, February 24, has been designated as "Commoner Day."

On that day any one may obtain one year's subscription to The Commoner for 60 cents.

Commoner readers everywhere are asked to devote at least a portion of the day to an effort to increase The Commoner's circulation.

Further reference to this plan is made on page 5 of this issue.

The congressional campaign is coming on, and those who believe that The Commoner is doing a good work will find ample reason for participating in this effort to give The Commoner an increased circulation in every congressional district.

### WAS IT A RETREAT?

Several months ago Secretary of War Taft publicly declared that American manufacturers were trying to hold up the government in the price charged for canal supplies. Mr. Taft said that if necessary supplies for the canal would be purchased abroad. This conclusion was given to the public in an Associated Press dispatch printed last May. That dispatch said that the executive committee of the Isthmian canal commission had decided to purchase in the markets of the world the material necessary for the building of the canal, and added:

"This important decision was reached with some reluctance because it was appreciated by Secretary Taft and the executive committee that there would surely be a great outcry from two great interests in this country, the producers of material and the ship owners, if the purchases were not limited to the American products. But it was decided that the money consideration was so great that it could not be ignored, for it was held that in many cases fully fifty per cent more would be charged for the material needed in the canal construction than the same goods could be procured for in Europe."

The Washington correspondent for the Chicago Record-Herald likened Mr. Taft's order to "a Chimose bomb shell." That order was very widely discussed and very generally approved, but for some reason or other we have not heard anything recently concerning it. Have the trusts reduced their prices on canal supplies, or was the administration prompted by the protests from the tariff barons to reverse its policy as announced by Mr. Taft, and submit to impositions?



THE SQUARE DEAL

"The theory of the government is that there was an understanding that the matter should not be published until the packers were satisfied with the report. We will show that Mr. Garfield came back with a typewritten copy of his report which had not yet been printed and that the packers were ready and anxious to have this report go to the publishers."—District Attorney Morrison.

## Japan--Her Industries, Arts and Commerce

### MR. BRYAN'S FIFTH LETTER

The basis of Japanese industry is agriculture, although each year shows a decreasing proportion engaged in the tilling of the soil. Rice is the principal product, but owing to the large amount consumed at home it is not the chief export. As this crop needs an abundance of water, the rice fields occupy the low lands of the mountain gorges. Sometimes the narrow valleys that pierce the ranges are so terraced as to look like steps, and at this time of the year when the crop is being harvested, they resemble golden stairs. The men and women work together in the field, and in many places we saw them standing almost knee deep in mud, cutting the grain with an old fashioned hand-sickle. The rice is tied in bundles somewhat smaller than our wheat sheaves and hung over poles or laid along the edge of a terrace to cure. If the threshing is delayed the grain is stacked, not as we stack wheat and oats in the United States, but in little columns with the heads of the sheaves tied to a pole in the center. Sometimes the stacks are built around a living tree. The grain is separated from the straw by means of a long toothed comb, and at this season innumerable groups of persons are busily engaged at this work. The yellow heaps of rice in the hull, looking from a distance like wheat, can be seen from the train and from the country roads. Straw mats are used to keep the grain off the ground and, I may add, that the mat is in evidence everywhere in Japan and is used for all sorts of purposes.

The cultivation of the tea plant is an industry of no small magnitude, although not so universal as the cultivation of rice. The tea fields

occupy the higher levels and add an interesting variety to the landscapes. At one point on the railroad between Yokohama and Nagoya the hillsides are covered with tea plantations, if such tiny farms can be called plantations. The tea plant is something like our gooseberry and currant bushes in size, but the foliage is much thicker. The leaves vary widely in value from the cheaper grades, which are exported, to the Uji which costs what is equivalent to five or more dollars per pound.

Some cotton is grown here, but the cotton plant as we saw it is small compared with our plant and the tillable area is too limited to admit of the growing of cotton on a large scale.

Tobacco is cultivated to some extent, but the sale of manufactured tobacco is a government prerogative.

Raw silk is by far the most valuable export, thirty-five million dollars worth having been sent abroad last year. Three-fifths of the entire export goes to the United States, the remainder to Europe, with France as the largest European purchaser. As fifteen million dollars worth of silk fabrics went abroad also as against five million dollars worth of tea and four million dollars worth of rice, it will be seen that the cultivation of the silk worm and the mulberry tree is extensively carried on. The silk worms are kept in doors and the leaves brought in to them. When put outdoors the silk worms are devoured by birds.

Fruits grow here in great variety. We have found everywhere apples of excellent quality, raised in the northern part of the islands while the southern islands produce oranges, bananas