

The Commoner.

The Hill Coinage Bill.

A BILL

To maintain the legal tender silver dollar at parity with gold.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Secretary of the Treasury is hereby authorized to coin the silver bullion in the Treasury, purchased under the act of July fourteenth, eighteen hundred and ninety, into such denominations of subsidiary silver coin as he may deem necessary to meet public requirements, and thereafter, as public necessities may demand, to recoin silver dollars into subsidiary coin, and as much of any Act as fixes a limit to the aggregate of subsidiary silver coin outstanding, and so much of any Act as directs the coinage of any portion of the bullion purchased under the Act of July fourteenth, eighteen hundred and ninety, into standard silver dollars, is hereby repealed.

The Secretary of the Treasury is hereby directed to maintain at all times at parity with gold the legal tender silver dollars remaining outstanding; and to that end he is hereby directed to exchange gold for legal tender silver dollars when presented to the Treasury in the sum of five dollars or any multiple thereof, and all provisions of law for the use or maintenance of the reserve fund in the Treasury relating to United States notes are, in the discretion of the Secretary of the Treasury, hereby made applicable to the exchange of legal tender silver dollars.

The following correspondence explains itself:

Hon. J. H. Southard, Chairman House Committee on Coinage, Weights and Measures, Washington, D. C., Dear Sir:—In response to your telegraphic invitation to appear before the committee during the hearings, I wired you that it would be inconvenient for me to visit Washington, but that I would be pleased to submit my views in writing if you would send me a copy of the bill under consideration. I am now in receipt of your favor enclosing a copy of the Hill bill, as amended by your committee, and saying that by unanimous consent it was ordered that such views as I might present in reference to the proposed legislation be printed as a part of the hearing.

Thanking your committee for the courtesy which it has shown me, I beg to submit the following:

The bill has a double purpose; first, to convert standard silver dollars into subsidiary coin, and, second, to make silver dollars redeemable in gold on demand. In discussing the subject, however, it will be more logical to consider the latter proposition first, as redemption is only a step toward retirement.

There is no necessity for redemption. The legal tender law will maintain the parity between gold coin and silver dollars so long as both can be used to an unlimited extent in the payment of public revenues and private debts. I should, perhaps, say that the parity will be substantially maintained, for local and temporary conditions may under any law put a small premium upon any kind of money. For instance, in the summer of 1893 a local demand for small change made a premium on silver dollars in New York during the debate on the bill to repeal the purchasing clause of the Sherman Law. In support of the statement above made in regard to the effect of legal tender in maintaining the parity, I cite the testimony given by Senator Sherman before a senate committee in 1878. The following is taken from the published hearings:

Senator Bayard. By the first of July next or the first of January next you have eighteen or twenty millions of dollars which are in circulation and payable for duties, and how long do you suppose this short supply of silver and your control of it by your coinage will keep it equivalent to gold—when one is worth ten cents less than the other.

Secretary Sherman. Just so long as it can be used for anything that gold is used for. It will be worth in this country the par of gold until it becomes so abundant and bulky that people will become tired of carrying it about; but in our country that can be avoided by depositing it for coin certificates.

As soon as the silver dollar is made redeemable in gold, another endless chain will be created and the arguments used against the greenbacks and treasury notes will then be turned against silver.

Before the attempt to burden the gold reserve

with this new obligation is consummated, it may be worth while to consider the opinion expressed by Secretary Carlisle in 1895. In the published hearings before the House Appropriation Committee the following question and answer will be found:

Mr. Sibley. I would like to ask you (perhaps not entirely connected with the matter under discussion) what objection there could be to having the option of redeeming either in silver or gold lie with the treasury instead of the note holder?

Secretary Carlisle. If that policy had been adopted at the beginning of resumption—and I am not saying this for the purpose of criticising the action of any of my predecessors, or anybody else—but if the policy of reserving to the government, at the beginning of resumption, the option of redeeming in gold or silver all its paper presented, I believe it would have worked beneficially, and there would have been no trouble growing out of it, but the Secretaries of the Treasury from the beginning of resumption have pursued a policy of redeeming in gold or silver, at the option of the holder of the paper, and if any secretary had afterward attempted to change that policy and force silver upon a man who wanted gold, or gold upon a man who wanted silver, and especially if he had made that attempt at such a critical period as we have had in the last two years, my judgment is, it would have been very disastrous. There is a vast difference between establishing a policy at the beginning, and reversing a policy after it has been long established, and especially after the situation has been changed.

It will be seen that Mr. Carlisle thought it a mistake to commence paying in gold but considered it dangerous to interfere with the custom after it was once established. By the same logic it can be argued that we should not establish the custom of redeeming the silver dollars in gold.

The measure recommended by the committee gives to the financiers absolute control over the national debt. They can increase it at any time by presenting silver dollars for redemption and compelling an issue of bonds to replenish the gold reserve. They can in the same way contract the volume of money in circulation, since money drawn into the treasury by an issue of bonds cannot go out again unless it is used to meet current expenses (and that is only possible when the expenditures exceed the receipts) or loaned out to favorite banks.

Second, The conversion of standard silver dollars into subsidiary coin is equivalent to the retirement of silver as standard money, and this is the last act in the program instituted some twenty-seven years ago and persistently pursued ever since. If this plan is completed, gold will be the only legal tender money and bank paper the only credit money. Bank notes not being a general legal tender and gold not being in circulation among the people, the masses will then be doing business with money which will not legally discharge their debts.

To convert a standard money into a credit money is to narrow the foundation of our financial system and at the same time enlarge the superstructure. Such a course weakens the system and both hastens catastrophe and intensifies it when it comes.

It is estimated that ninety-five per cent of the business of the country is done with substitutes for money, but as all these substitutes are convertible into money on demand there must be a proportion between the substitutes and the money beyond which it is not safe to go. If, as at present, a large part of the money in circulation is not a legal tender, the proportion between the volume of legal tender money and substitutes for money is even greater. The proposed measure, by decreasing the money of ultimate redemption and increasing the volume of promises to pay money, still further enlarges the proportion between money and its substitutes; this necessarily adds to the risk of the business man and lessens the security of the general public.

If, at any time, foreign complications or panics compel a considerable exportation of gold, the proportion between money and its substitutes will be still further increased or an immense reduction will be necessary in the volume of business.

Respectfully yours,

W. J. BRYAN.

If Roosevelt really wants to get strenuous, he should hike back to Lincoln and get into the senatorial game. Reports from the state house indicate that hunting mountain lions is a girls' game compared with running for senator in Nebraska.—Omaha World-Herald.

O, Why Should the Spirit of Mortal Be Proud?

By William Knox.

[LINCOLN'S FAVORITE POEM.]

O, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift-fleeting meteor, a fast-flying cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
Man passes from life to his rest in the grave.

The leaves of the oak and the willow shall fade,
Be scattered around and together be laid;
And the young and the old, and the low and the high
Shall moulder to dust and together shall die.

The infant a mother attended and loved,
The mother that infant's affection who proved,
The husband that mother and infant who blessed,
Each, all are away to their dwellings of rest.

The maid on whose cheek, on whose brow, in whose eye,
Shone beauty and pleasure,—her triumphs are by;
And the memory of those who have loved her and praised,
Are alike from the minds of the living erased.

The hand of the king that the sceptre hath borne,
The brow of the priest that the mitre hath worn,
The eye of the sage, and the heart of the brave,
Are hidden and lost in the grave.

The peasant whose lot was to sow and to reap,
The herdsman who climbed with his goats up the steep,
The beggar who wandered in search of his bread,
Have faded away like the grass that we tread.

The saint who enjoyed the communion of heaven,
The sinner who dared to remain unforgiven,
The wise and the foolish, the guilty and just,
Have quietly mingled their bones in the dust.

So the multitude goes, like the flower or the weed
That withers away to let others succeed;
So the multitude comes, even those we behold,
To repeat every tale that has often been told.

For we are the same that our fathers have been;
We see the same sights that our fathers have seen,—
We drink the same stream, and we view the same sun,
And run the same course that our fathers have run.

The thoughts we are thinking our fathers would think;
From the death that we shrink from our fathers would shrink;
To the life that we cling to they also would cling;
But it speeds for us all, like a bird on the wing.

They loved, but the story we cannot unfold;
They scorned, but the heart of the haughty is cold;
They grieved but no wail from their slumbers will come;
They joyed, but the tongue of their gladness is dumb.

They died, ay! they died: and we things that are now,
Who walk on the turf that lies over their brow,
Who make in their dwelling a transient abode,
Meet the things that they met on their pilgrimage road.

Yea! hope and despondency, pleasure and pain,
We mingle together in sunshine and rain;
And the smiles and the tears, the song and the dirge,
Still follow each other, like surge upon surge.

'Tis the wink of an eye, 'tis the draught of a breath,
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud,—
O, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?

Fortunately ex-President Harrison didn't go to Manila to do any of his talking against the constitutionality of the administration's methods. If he had MacArthur would have deported him to Guam.—Kansas City Times.