



## A REPUBLICAN PAPER ....ON THE MESSAGE.

Republicans who condemn democratic papers because of their criticism of Roosevelt's message may be interested in an editorial that appeared in the Chicago Record-Herald of Wednesday, December 3. The Record-Herald is a republican paper and yet during the past year it has shown a disposition to be thoroughly independent in the discussion of public questions. The Record-Herald says:

"President Roosevelt's second annual message to congress has one and only one advantage over his first—it is about half as long. In every other respect it is singularly lacking in recognition of the truism incorporated in its reference to marksmanship in the navy, 'In battle the only shots that count are the shots that hit.' So in a president's message the only passages that count are those that hit, and upon the real questions before the country—trusts, tariff and the disposition of the Philippines—Mr. Roosevelt appears to have used a literary blunderbuss where the people expected he would go gunning with a repeating rifle.

"And yet this is precisely the sort of a message that will arouse the greatest enthusiasm in the columns of republican organs. Its self-congratulatory tone and assurance that we are the greatest nation on earth and that all's well enough as it is sets the organ-grinder at rest and enables him to pronounce the message the true measure of the president's statesmanship. The same old platitudes will serve to commend a state paper

that has not a single passage to make the pulse beat faster or a new recommendation that requires a second thought.

"But the opposition press will find little that it has not thrashed over before to condemn in this document. Its very inconsequence will save it from the hard knocks that would have been visited on a message taking an advanced stand on live political subjects.

"The general impression to be gained from Mr. Roosevelt's utterances as to trusts and the tariff is that nothing we can do will be effective to cure any ills we may suffer from them; that we are so prosperous under them that the benefits outweigh the evils, and that he is not sure that there are any evils resulting from them anyhow.

"After saying that tariff reduction as a means of reaching the evils of trusts 'would be wholly ineffective,' he admits that 'if in any case it be found that a given rate of duty does promote a monopoly which works ill no protectionist would object to such reduction of the duty as would equalize competition.'

"This sort of balancing by the aid of an ever-consistent 'if' pervades the message wherever it approaches the discussion of questions about which there is a difference of popular opinion. This is all the more disappointing because it is unlooked for in the utterances of Theodore Roosevelt. The American people are not accustomed to seeing him strike out without nerve and aimlessly in a sea of difficulties."

### Truth Better Than Error.

A reader of The Commoner sends in an editorial which appeared in a recent issue of a middle-of-the-road populist paper and asks for an opinion upon it. The editorial declares that "the money power disorganized the people's party in 1896," and adds: "The action of the democratic convention that year was acquiesced in, if not directed, by the money power." It then goes on to say that the silver question was agreed upon as the issue eighteen months before the Chicago convention; that it was settled long before the Chicago convention that Bryan was to be the nominee; that the plan was carried out and that it was all done to disrupt the populist party. The editor of the paper claims to have detected this at the time, and insists that he opposed the indorsement of Mr. Bryan for that reason. He is willing to admit that some of the populists who favored the indorsement were "as good reformers as ever breathed," but he thinks that all populists ought to see now that it was a scheme.

No honest cause has anything to gain by misrepresentation, and it is difficult to conceive of a lack of information so complete as to justify or excuse the editorial above referred to.

The democratic position on the money question was taken before there was any populist party, and a majority of the democrats in the house and senate had for years been voting for the restoration of bimetalism at the existing legal ratio. The populist platform of 1892 indorsed that ratio, but in so doing it simply indorsed what the democrats in congress had been working for. But even if the democratic party had indorsed something new it could not be accused of doing so merely to destroy the populist party, even though it had copied its platform from the populist platform. The theory that you can conspire to injure a party by adopting its principles is a new, as well as an interesting, one. The fact is, that the populist party took a position in favor of sev-

eral propositions which were democratic and which the party stood for before Mr. Cleveland led it into by and forbidden paths. The democratic party when it rid itself of the demoralizing influence of Wall street naturally returned to the advocacy of democratic principles.

It is equally absurd to say that Mr. Bryan's nomination was agreed upon by any one—let alone the money power—"long before" the convention. Every one at all familiar with the situation knows that no nomination was more free from previous planning or arrangement.

When the democratic party took its position upon the Chicago platform the populists had to choose between an indorsement of the democratic ticket and a division of the reform forces. A vast majority of the populists were more interested in the reforms for which they contended than they were in the name of the party through which the reforms were to be accomplished; therefore they favored indorsement. Had they refused to indorse they would have raised a suspicion as to the earnestness of their advocacy of those reforms about which they and the democrats agreed. If the populist party shows any signs of weakness it is not due to the fact that it cooperated with the democrats; it would have been far weaker had it placed a party name above the securing of remedial legislation.

The increased production of gold and the consequent enlargement of the volume of money have, to some extent, relieved the strain upon the dollar and thus lessened the relative importance of the money question. These unexpected circumstances have helped the republican party as against both the democratic and the populist parties, and yet the help is only temporary. It is only a question of time when the money question will again become acute, and it is much better for the democrats and populists to be friends than to fight each other merely for the delectation of the republicans.

And now, when the republicans are seeking

to destroy government money and substitute therefor a bank currency controlled by a few financiers it would be absurd for the democrats and populists to weaken each other by unfriendly attacks. No populist who wants the government to issue all the paper money can justify a denunciation of the democratic party so long as that party is advocating the same thing.

If the democrats and populists who favored fusion in 1896 failed to win the victory they contemplated they cannot be criticised unless it can be shown that some other plan would have brought victory or at least left the reform forces in better position to win a victory. They did the best that they could with the means at hand, and they ought to continue to make a united attack upon the strong-holds of plutocracy until the masses revolt against republican policies and methods.

### Those Danish Islands.

A few months ago we heard a great deal of talk about the extension of our boundaries and the incorporation of the Danish Islands. Why is it that the republican papers have become entirely silent on this subject? If the anxious reader will examine he will find that it is because the government of Denmark had more consideration for the rights and wishes of the inhabitants of the islands than the republican leaders did. When the treaty was before the senate The Commoner and other papers that still defend the doctrine of the Declaration of Independence, insisted that the treaty should be so amended as to allow the people of the islands to decide for themselves whether they would become citizens of the United States or retain their allegiance to the Danish throne. The republicans, however, refused to consider such an amendment because it would be inconsistent with their policy in the Philippines, and would admit the injustice of making subjects of the Filipinos. But when the treaty went back to Denmark for ratification the opposition was strong enough to defeat it. Since that time we have heard nothing about the desirability of taking the islands, and in the late campaign the subject was studiously avoided by republican orators.

We ought to have the islands, provided the people want to come into the union, and they doubtless would if we promised them all the rights of citizenship.

### Venezuela.

The differences between Venezuela and Great Britain and Germany should be submitted to arbitration. Upon that plan the United States could well afford to insist. If an appeal to force is persisted in the result must be an abandonment of the Monroe doctrine, in the event that the British-German alliance is resisted and destroys the present Venezuelan government. Whatever may be the merits of the British-German claims they may well be submitted to arbitration, and these two great powers would have nothing to lose by cheerfully consenting to that civilized plan of settling difficulties. During the last Venezuelan incident Mr. Olney, then secretary of state, took the position that because of the disparity in the strength of Great Britain and that of Venezuela, arbitration was the proper course. Now that the strength of Germany is added to that of Great Britain the disparity is the more marked and the necessity for arbitration therefore more pressing.

While it is contended that the Monroe doctrine is not involved in the situation just now, it is evident that the policy of the British-German alliance will, if pursued, make it necessary that that doctrine be ignored. It will be difficult, after once consenting to an appeal to a policy of force, to say just where a halt shall be called in the proceedings. It is to be hoped that in the interests of all concerned the several powers will yield to the arbitration method.