

attention of the people away from economic questions. But the plutocratic influences grew and flourished with republican success. New privileges were granted and new methods of exploitation invented, with the inevitable result,—an awakening of the public to the dangers ahead. The "stand-pat" element in the republican party was strong enough in the last convention to prevent the adoption of a platform protest, and the reactionary element in the democratic party was strong enough to eliminate, for the time being, some of the radicalism in the democratic platform. But neither convention could stay the growth of sentiment among the people, and as a result the democratic candidate,—believed to be even more conservative than his platform—fell a million and a quarter below the democratic vote of 1900, and the republican candidate,—believed to be more radical than his platform—ran some four hundred thousand votes ahead of his party's vote four years before, while the socialist party—the most radical party in the field—gained more than three hundred per cent in its vote.

As complete returns of the election came in, it became evident that a great deal of independent voting was done. While Massachusetts and Minnesota went strongly republican, they elected democratic governors. Peabodyism was overthrown in Colorado, and Folk carried Missouri in spite of the fact that the electoral vote of the state was given to Roosevelt. LaFollette, the pioneer reformer, was re-elected governor in Wisconsin, in spite of the opposition of the corporate element of his party, and in Michigan, Rhode Island, Nebraska, Kansas and Wyoming, the democratic and fusion candidates ran far ahead of their national tickets.

No sooner was the election over than signs of the coming awakening began to multiply. One of the most encouraging was the message of retiring Governor Durbin of Indiana. He pointed out the political corruption in Indiana, and called for a remedy. Governor Adams of Colorado called attention to the corruption of the franchise in his state, and asked for remedial legislation.

Governor Folk of Missouri, Governor Hanley of Indiana, and Governor Meade of Washington, in their inaugural messages called attention to the practices of the lobby and to the evil of the railroad pass.

LaFollette of Wisconsin, Folk of Missouri and Deneen of Illinois urged the passage of primary laws for the purpose of giving the voters in each party absolute control over the party organization, and Governor Folk went even farther and advised a return to home rule in cities, pointing out the evil effect of legislation which takes the control of municipal affairs out of the hands of the people of the city.

While these recommendations were being made in the states, the president signaled his election by announcing his determination not to be a candidate for another term, thus putting himself in a position to act with independence, and to prove his independence of party organizations he recommended legislation to make public the campaign contributions received, and he also urged legislation enlarging the scope of the interstate commerce law.

In addition to this, he has put himself on record in favor of a reduction of the tariff where it shelters monopoly, and has given indications of an intention to proceed more vigorously against the trusts.

While these things are going on in official circles, private individuals have been pointing out the excesses and evil practices of the Wall street financiers. Mr. Lawson, in his articles on "Frenzied Finance," in Everybody's Magazine, has shaken confidence in the honesty of some of the principal stock operators and has given the public needed information in regard to the methods employed. Mr. Beardsley, in the Era, has uttered a warning note against the manner in which the large insurance companies manipulate, for their own advantage, the assets which they hold in trust. Miss Tarbell has given us a history of the criminality of the Standard Oil trust, and Mr. Bridge has revealed the inside history of the steel trust. Court investigations have contributed to the general information upon the subject and cast suspicion upon the integrity of some of the chief promoters. All of these disclosures tend in the same direction—namely, toward the purification of politics and the bringing of the government nearer the people. "Back to the people," is an expression that is being heard with more and more frequency. It is evident that the democratic party, cured by sore experience of its inclination to conservatism and chastened by the rod of affliction, is now determined to begin an honest fight for the supremacy of the people in party

management and in public affairs. Renewing its trust in the masses, as taught by Jefferson, and acknowledging the spirit of democracy as exemplified by Jackson, it will in the next campaign be in position to do yeoman service in behalf of the common people.

The republican party, on the other hand, is entering upon the struggle through which the democratic party has passed successfully. There is a reform element in the republican party, as well as a plutocratic element, and this reform element is now marshalling behind the president. Let no one imagine that the contest is going to lack excitement. Just in proportion as the president attempts to protect the rights of the people will he be called a demagogue, a disturber of the peace, and, possibly, an anarchist. Those who support him will be accused of taking up with populist doctrines, democratic doctrines, and socialist doctrines. Let them not be dismayed. This is the path which all reformers must travel; these are the obstacles which all must meet. The democrats ought to support the president in every attempted reform. They ought to do it because it is right to do so, and they ought also to do it because party expediency requires it. The republicans may resent this support, and use it as an argument to keep republicans away from him, but they may as well recognize that the trend is now back to the people. The corporations can delay the movement. They can for a time defeat those who join the movement, but the movement will succeed. There is more virtue in the people than ever finds expression through representatives, and the time is ripe for the summoning of this virtue to the country's rescue. The primary law takes the party out of the hands of bosses and corporate representatives, and puts it in the hands of the voters of the party, and these voters, whether they be republicans or democrats, or members of some other party, want good government. The people trust themselves, and when they understand the situation they trust those who trust them. Governor Pingree once declared that the reformer must come from a long-lived race, because of the patience demanded of him and the length of the struggle through which he must pass; but happily reforms do not depend upon any one person. As in an army, so in political warfare, the death of a leader is simply a summons to the one next in line to take his place. The conflict goes on and the great fighting force is not made up of leaders, but of the rank and file. The reformer is abroad in the land, and "Back to the people" is his inspiration. The reformer must necessarily appeal to the people for he acts in their interest, and can secure help from no other source. At last the people rule.

Let democrats take courage; they have passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Let republicans as they enter the Valley remember that they, too, may ultimately emerge from it, if they will but make their party the champion of human rights and popular government, rather than the tool of corporate greed and predatory wealth.

### An Independent College

The press dispatches have called attention to the fact that Mr. Bryan has just been chosen president of the board of trustees of his alma mater, Illinois college, located at Jacksonville, Illinois. The dispatches have also announced that at the same session of the board of trustees at which he was thus honored a resolution was adopted providing for a termination of the agreement entered into a few years ago between Illinois college and the Chicago University—the institution which Mr. Rockefeller is backing. This agreement gave the Chicago institution a partial supervision over the studies taught at the college. Believing that his alma mater ought to be independent of the Rockefeller influence and free to teach economic truth without fear or favor, Mr. Bryan opposed the agreement and declined to be officially connected with Illinois college while the objectionable relations continued. It goes without saying that he is gratified to have his college freed from any suspicion of plutocratic influence and he hopes that those who are opposed to the subsidizing of our institutions of learning by the monopolists will lend encouragement to this splendid old college which has had the courage to put its trust in the plain people. It deserves well of the public. If you have a boy to educate you can send him to Illinois college with the assurance that his mind will not be biased in favor of organized wealth by teachers who receive their daily bread from the hands of the beneficiaries of the trusts. No college can do its full duty to the rising generation

so long as it tries to so shape its course of instruction as to please the unscrupulous exploiters who infest the commercial highways and plunder the passersby. In the great struggle between the people and entrenched privilege the people are entitled to the championship of college bred men, and it is a pity that more of our colleges do not take the independent position which Illinois college has assumed. On another page will be found a picture of the campus and some of the buildings of the college.

### "An Open Mind"

The editor of the Daily Soliphone of Paragould, Ark., quotes one of The Commoner's editorials on government ownership, and announces that while he is not an advocate of the public ownership of railroads he approaches the subject with an open mind, and is ready to consider arguments upon the subject. He says:

Therefore, let Mr. Bryan show us some things, among them these: How will the government come into possession of the railroads? If by purchase, how many million dollars will it take to buy them? How can we reach a proper valuation? Shall their value be estimated upon their earning capacity or upon the cost of their rolling stock, roadbeds, etc.? Would all the railroads of the United States under government ownership be consolidated into one vast system or would there be divisional systems each having its own president, traffic manager, passenger agents, etc.? Would there be increased or diminished activity in railroad construction under government ownership? Would the liability for damages for negligence be the same against the government railroads that it is now against corporation railroads? Would the government railroads be liable for punitive damages? Would a fellow-servant's law apply to government railroads the same as it does to corporation railroads?

These questions are not prompted by idle jest nor curiosity. We sincerely hope that Mr. Bryan will give the people a series of strong educational articles on the question.

There is not one man in a thousand in this country who understands it. Mr. Bryan certainly does or he would not champion the cause of government ownership of railroads.

The Soliphone is committed to municipal ownership of public utilities. Its blessings have been demonstrated all over the country; but when it comes to government ownership of the railroads some loud thinking is in order.

We'd like to hear from Mr. Bryan frequently through his Commoner, which is a part of our weekly mental diet.

The editor of the Soliphone is right in regarding the question as one of the first magnitude and one upon which education is necessary. He says that his paper is committed to "municipal ownership of public utilities" and declares that the blessings of municipal ownership have been demonstrated all over the country. The arguments which are used to defend municipal ownership are relied upon to defend the public ownership of the railroads. While the railroad is not so complete a monopoly as a street car line, or water plant, it has many of the features of a monopoly. A railroad line between two points, while it does not exclude the building of another line, makes it impossible for the second line to be built as advantageously as the first was. One line between two points can carry the traffic at a less expense than two lines, and the building of one line to a large extent hinders the builders of another line. A person living along a railroad line must necessarily use that line. The cost of carrying his goods to another line makes him patronize the nearest line. If he lives at a competing point, the railroad rate is generally the same on all the lines. He is thus at the mercy of the railroads unless there is supervision, and heretofore the attempt to supervise has been thwarted by the influence exerted by the railroads over congress and state legislatures. The readers of The Commoner need not be told how this influence is exerted; the story is too well known in all the states, and we are just now hearing something about it from Washington.

How the government is to obtain possession of the railroads is a matter of detail. It can condemn the roads, or buy them at an agreed price, or build new ones. It can buy them by piecemeal or all at once, and it can determine the proper