

The Commoner.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR

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REGULATION AND OWNERSHIP

A reader at Heppner, Oregon, expresses the opinion that The Commoner is wasting time in advocating railroad rate legislation. This reader says: "Why waste time scrapping over rates and such rot when everyone knows that such things can not do any good. There are only two issues, public ownership and socialism."

The Commoner believes that public ownership will be necessary in order to bring about the reforms required by public interests. But there are many people who, while favoring these reforms, object to government ownership and prefer government regulation. Regulation is one step in the right direction, and The Commoner thinks it is the duty of all who believe in government ownership to give encouragement to all honest efforts toward government regulation. If it shall be demonstrated, as we believe it ultimately will, that government regulation will not provide the necessary permanent remedies, then those who, while honestly advocating government regulation, differ with us as to government ownership will unite in the effort to place the transportation lines in the absolute control of the people.

A SPELLING REFORMER

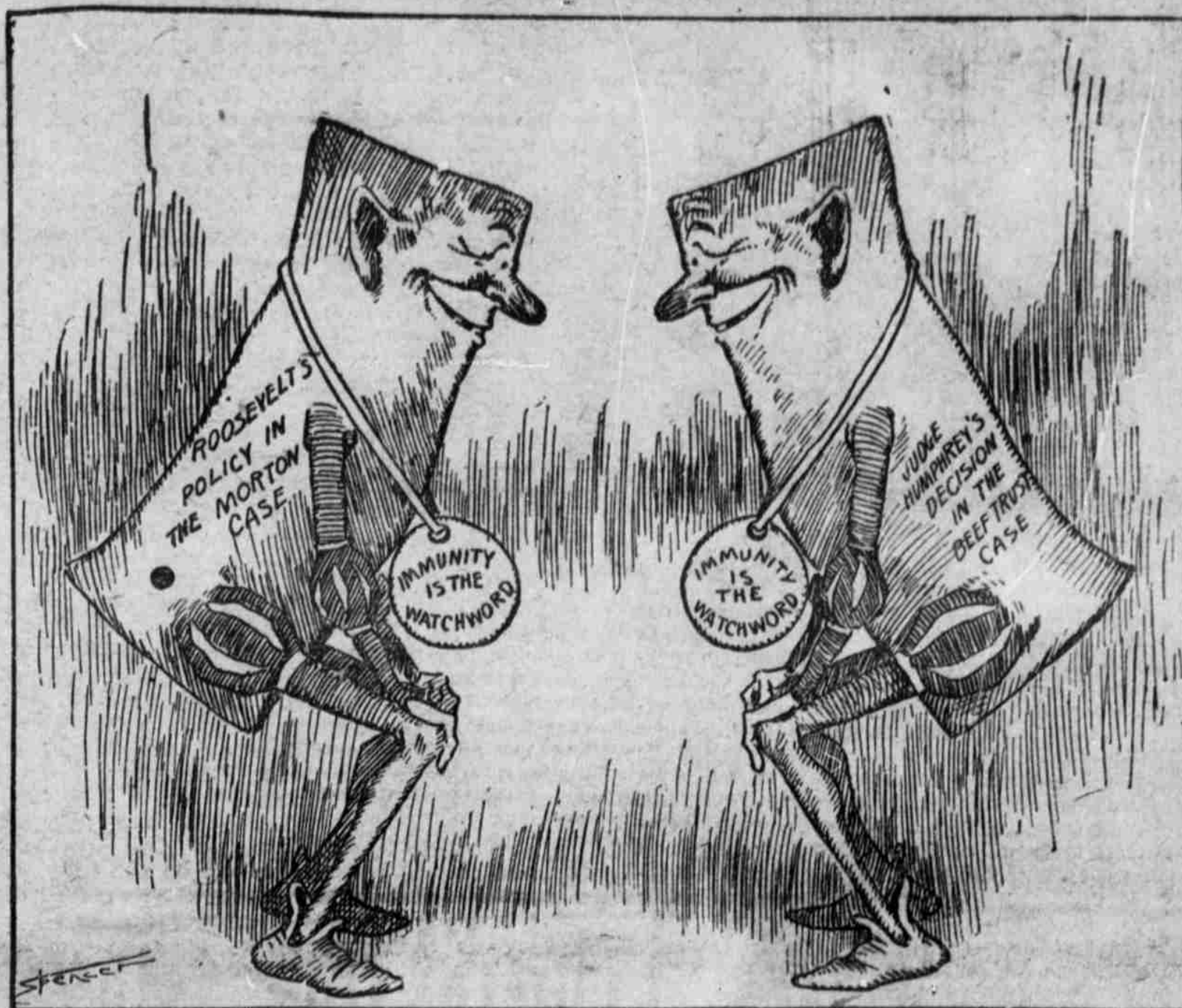
Josh Billings once remarked that he wouldn't give a cent for a man who couldn't spell a word more than one way. This remark is recalled by Mr. Carnegie's recent generous contribution of money to the cause of spelling reform, the chiefs of this reform having in view what they call the simplification of our language. It is gratifying to know that Mr. Carnegie has determined to become a reformer, even though his first efforts at reform do not comprehend anything of great value to the people. It may simply be the forerunner of other reforms that he will champion. There is tariff reform, for instance. With a little practice at spelling reform Mr. Carnegie may yet become a tariff reformer. No one will venture to submit facts and figures to deny the charge that the tariff which has made Mr. Carnegie enormously wealthy has cast a "bad spell" over this country.

"JUSTIFICATION"

Referring to Judge Humphrey's decision on the beef trust case, the New York Tribune (republican) says: "While from one point of view this is embarrassing, from another it justifies the much criticised attitude of the president respecting the prosecution of individuals who had co-operated with the government to cure rate abuses and, as an incident thereto, had revealed long standing methods which needed correction."

Yet, somehow or other, Mr. Roosevelt does not appear to be greatly elated by Judge Humphrey's "justification" of the administration's position in the Paul Morton case.

THE TWO DROMICS



"Methinks you are my glass and not my brother; I see by you I am a sweet faced youth."—Comedy of Errors.

CHINA'S AWAKENING

Mr. Bryan's Twelfth Letter

In what I have said of the Chinese government, system of education, religion and superstitions, I have referred to the nation as it has been for some twenty centuries—chained to tradition, stagnant, asleep. Society was stratified; those in power seemed to have no higher aspiration than to live upon the labor of the masses, and the masses seemed to entertain no thought of emancipation. The life of the people was occupied with ceremony, but there was no genuine fellowship or sympathetic connection between them, outside of the family tie, and even the family was likely to be a storm center because of the conflicting interests collected under one roof. Education was monopolized by a comparatively few, and there was no breadth to such instruction as was given. Superstition took the place of religion and the placating of the spirits of the deceased outweighed the nurture and development of those still on earth.

But a change is taking place in China such as has revolutionized Japan within the last half century. The sleeping giantess, whose drowsy eyes have so long shut out the rays of the morning sun, is showing unmistakable signs of an awakening. There was a vitality among her people which even two thousand years of political apathy could not exhaust—a sturdiness which centuries of poverty and superstition could not entirely destroy. Increasing contact with Europe and America is having its influence and the example of Japan is even more potent, for the people of Japan are not only neighbors, but are more like them in color and race characteristics. Let me note some of the evidences of this change.

The government, so long an absolute despotism, is about to become a constitutional mon-

archy. In 1898 the emperor under the influence of some radical reformers, prepared a program almost revolutionary in its character. Recognizing that his aunt, the Dowager Empress, would oppose him, he prepared to put her under guard while the change was being made, but the old lady, learning of his plan, promptly took him in hand and made him a prisoner in his own palace. Since that time she has been the unquestioned ruler of the empire, the nominal emperor affixing his signature to the papers which she prepares. But so rapidly has the situation developed that she is now instituting the very reforms for the suggestion of which she so recently imprisoned her nephew. A commission of prominent officials is now abroad, some in America, studying the constitutions and governmental institutions of other countries. What a concession when we remember the self-sufficiency of China, the characterization of surrounding nations as "rude tribes" and the use of the term "barbarians" to designate even those with whom she made treaties!

It is reported that the dowager-empress recently called her councilors together and asked how long it would take to establish a constitutional government. When told that it would probably require twelve or fifteen years, she replied that it must be done sooner than that as she could not hope to live much longer and wanted it in operation before she died. Whether she appreciates the full importance of the change may be doubted, but the fact that the great nations, with the exception of Russia, have constitutions has doubtless made its impression upon her and Russia's defeat at the hands of the Japanese,