

Some Very Distinguished "Calamity Howlers"

Only a few years ago men who complained of the tendency in this country toward corporation domination and injustice generally to the masses, were denounced as "calamity howlers." But all the complaints made by democrats, populists or independents in 1896 would not compare with the complaints now registered by men of all political parties against the grave conditions with which the people are confronted, conditions everywhere recognized as a menace to popular government.

From every source where the American system is respected, comes words of warning to the American people that they must arouse themselves if they would not lose all that is worth having in a republic. It is noticeable, too, that some of the strongest notes of warning are sounded in this day by men who only a few years ago were denouncing as "calamity howlers" those men who foresaw conditions with which America is now face to face.

Of course newspaper readers have observed that these protests from thinking men are coming thick and fast, but one is better able to understand the widespread feeling of fear for the safety of our institutions when looking over a single copy of a daily newspaper he compiles these notes of warning from different sources.

As a hint along this line, the following extracts concerning recent instances will be interesting:

Jacob Gould Schurmann, speaking at Cornell University said: "The idle rich are an execrable in any properly organized community. And in a democratic republic, in which every man has a vote, be assured that the rights which convention grants to property would be swept away if the propertied classes become idle, luxurious, selfish, hard-hearted and indifferent to the struggles and toils of less fortunate citizens. The vice of the age is that men want wealth without undergoing that toil by which alone wealth is created. The love of money and the reckless pursuit of it is undermining the national character. But the nation, thank God, is beginning to perceive the fatal danger. The reaction caused by recent revelations testifies to a moral awakening. At heart the nation is still sound, though its moral sense has been to long hypnotized by material prosperity. We must restrain the brutal and predatory pursuit of wealth by laws for the protection of the weak and for the equalizing of opportunity.

"Among the rich and well-to-do business and professional classes 'grafting' has been so common that the very idea of commercialism has become a byword and a reproach. Financiers, capitalists, corporations may be the most conspicuous sinners; but equally guilty is the merchant who cheats his customers, or the lawyer who shows his client how to circumvent the laws, or the scholar who glorifies his patron's success in business irrespective of the methods by which that success was achieved, or the preachers who transfigure the ruthless oppressor and robber of six days into the exemplary Christian of the seventh.

"We are dealing with the virus of a universal infection. The whole nation needs a new baptism of the old virtue of honesty. The love of money and the reckless pursuits of it are undermining the national character."

Stewart L. Woodford was the orator at the Northwestern University commencement. Mr. Woodford was the American minister to Spain, prior to the Spanish-American war. In his address he said: "It is not in the slum, the tenement-house, the fetid atmosphere of the places where the poor half live that anarchy and socialism are bred. It is the way that you and I treat the poor, the way we spend our money, make use of our money, the disregard of law on the part of great corporations, the business principle that might make right that fosters these creeds and endangers the state.

"The rich man who uses the influence of his wealth to evade the law is above all others in the community a traitor to the best interests of our land. Upon the rich falls the heaviest responsibility for upholding the law. Their wealth has been earned under the law, and is secured to them by law.

"Corporations exist as creatures of the law; they have no natural, no inevitable personal existence. They exist for the good of the community. Upon every stockholder, director and officer of a corporation rests an obligation to obey the law that is far greater than that of the average individual. It is incumbent upon you students, who

are gathered here tonight, to use your influence, in this great problem, not to destroy the corporation, but to compel it to be law abiding.

"Were not our forefathers more scrupulous in the matter of their social duties than we? Is there not in this generation a growing disposition to construe the law for one's self, to obey it when it suits our purpose, to disregard it when it inconveniences our ambitions? Reverence for the law is the corner stone upon which all our commerce is founded. If it falls into decay, the nation is in peril."

Mr. Timlin recently elected to the Wisconsin supreme court bench is quoted by the Chicago Record-Herald as saying "A millionaire should not be eligible to a seat in the United States senate." Mr. Timlin said: "See to what pitch the vulgar rich have brought this body, which promised in its inception to be the grandest legislative body," etc.

Bishop Charles Tyler Olmstead, speaking at Syracuse before the annual convention of the Central New York Episcopal diocese, declared, "the Church of Jesus Christ should not be in alliance either with individuals or corporations whose principles and methods are known to be illegal and corrupt. The church can never gain by getting wealth which paralyzes her proper functions.

"The moral earthquakes that have occurred in the commercial and financial world have doubtless caused much suffering to those who stood on the line of their action," said the bishop, "but the effect of them will unquestionably be wholesome in the end. Nothing but such a 'rough shaking' could bring to the surface the faults that lie beneath, and nothing but publicity will prevent their continuance in the future.

"And is it not time for the church to speak plainly about these things? It is not wise to be fash or hysterical in our utterances concerning this or any other matter. There is a good deal of excuse, undoubtedly, for a feeling of pessimism, as one thing after another is disclosed, showing that men can be just as cruel, just as relentless, just as ready to despoil their fellow men as they ever were. The robber-barons of the past lived in their castle-fortresses and openly ravaged their neighbor's goods with fire and sword. The 'barons' of the present day live in their peaceful villas and quietly ravage whole communities by methods known to the trade which the law finds it difficult to prevent.

"And it is hard to keep from being discouraged sometimes, when we see the strong tendency to corruption still existing in our Christian civilization. The outcry and the indignation of the past year show that hope still lives. But we do need some plain words on the subject. All the talk about 'tainted money' seems to me to be beside the mark. Money itself, I suppose, can not be tainted; but it may at times represent a tainted partnership; and it is not well for the church to have her tongue tied by any such coalition, because it is her duty to be ready to denounce wickedness in high places as well as in low places."

At the commencement exercises of the Columbia University, President Butler declared that the protests now being made are not confined to the visionaries, but that many of the most cautious classes have begun to distrust the capacity of society as now organized to protect itself against freebooters and to prevent law and justice being made powerless before the greed for gain.

Secretary of the Interior Ethan Allen Hitchcock delivered an address at the Harvard University commencement dinner. He said: "While it is historically true that this is the home of the physically brave, it is a question in my mind whether it is not too much the land of the free and too little the land of the morally brave. In other words, whether or not in various directions license has taken the place of liberty and corruption has run riot at the expense of patriotism.

"It is the smooth and machine-ridden legislator whose conscience has been cauterized by the appeals and demands of his supporters, upon whom responsibility for wrongdoing must rest. It is the vote of such legislators which in a large measure governs the passage, amendment or repeal of legislation that encourages or prohibits iniquitous enactments and offer opportunity and inducement to the pension shark and the horde of unconscionable grafters whose business it has been and still is to rob the government of the public domain."

The secretary then told of the confession of

a confederate who was not getting his share of the spoils which led to the disclosures of the conspiracy under which hundreds of thousands of acres of public domain had been stolen in the northwestern and Pacific coast states, and which resulted in the enforced retirement of a commissioner of the general land office and the conviction of over 600 individuals. In conclusion, the secretary paid tribute to the invaluable aid of the department of justice, and to the inspiration and support "of that famous son of Harvard, the president of the United States."

THE PRIMARY PLEDGE

As this copy of The Commoner may be read by some one not familiar with the details of the primary pledge plan, it is necessary to say that according to the terms of this plan every democrat is asked to pledge himself to attend all of the primaries of his party to be held between now and the next democratic national convention, unless unavoidably prevented, and to secure a clear, honest and straight-forward declaration of the party's position on every question upon which the voters of the party desire to speak. Those desiring to be enrolled can either write to The Commoner approving the object of the organization and asking to have their names entered on the roll, or they can fill out and mail the blank pledge, which is printed on page 14.

Extracts from letters to The Commoner follow:

James Summers, Rippey, Iowa—Enclosed find twenty-six signatures to the primary pledge.

J. N. Baxter, New Martinsville, W. Va.—Please find enclosed primary pledge for the protection of principles best suited for poor and middle classes of the American citizen. Without that view in mind it would not be very particular whether we attend the primaries or elections. You can rest assured that every subscriber from this state to The Commoner and all other true democrats mourn the loss of that pure, honest and gentlemanly governor of Ohio, John M. Pattison.

C. E. Bushong, Charles Town, W. Va.—Please find enclosed the primary pledge, which I shall earnestly endeavor to most heartily support, as a regular democrat. Best wishes for the success of The Commoner.

Matt Ream, Grayford, Md.—Enclosed please find primary pledge with eighteen signatures.

E. M. Bushong, Woodstock, Va.—You will please find enclosed the primary pledges of my sons, H. L. Bushong and J. L. Bushong, and myself, which I desire to have added to your list, as I am a warm supporter of the democratic party and have been for the last forty years. I shall endeavor to do all in my power in its support. Best wishes to The Commoner for its wonderful work.

W. J. Halley, Everton, Mo.—The accompanying list of sixty-seven signers of the pledge has been delayed in transmitting on account of sickness. Several of these are already subscribers and many of them read their neighbor's paper. I believe in the honesty and love of fair play of the masses and think they will yet vote to right the wrongs of 1896 and 1900.

S. M. Butts, Jasper, Kan.—I send thirty-five signatures to the primary pledge.

A. Hammrich, Waynesville, W. Va.—Enclosed find four pledges. I hope we will all go to the primaries with clean hands and clear hearts, and nominate the men who stand for principle and not for money.

A. A. Nabers, Eastman, Miss.—Please find enclosed list of fifteen signatures to the primary pledge. Send me a few blanks and I will try and send you other lists. I hope we will have a democratic victory in the next campaign.

Henry A. Parsons, Kansas City, Kansas—"Herewith are the names of Henry A. Parsons and twenty-four others to the primary pledge. Long live The Commoner! It is doing a great work. I have not missed a democratic primary in twenty-five years.

W. R. Norton, Red Star, Miss.—Enclosed find primary pledge taken from your paper. Also see an old copy of an address published in 1899, which defines my position in regard to the platform of 1896. I would like to send you a copy of the minutes of the county convention just prior to the state convention which instructed for Parker, but I have only one or two and I wish to keep them. I got a good democratic resolution through the county convention, but the convention indorsed Parker above my protest. Then I was for Hearst as opposed to Parker.