

# The Commoner.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR

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## An Epoch-Making Speech

Address of President Taft at the opening session of convention of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, at Continental Memorial hall, Washington, D. C., November 12, 1912:

Ladies of the United Daughters of the Confederacy—I beg to welcome you to Washington. You have captured this city beautiful and made it more lovely by your presence. As its temporary head, I give you the freedom of the city, and recognize that in what you have done, you have founded a shrine and an altar here which will be visited in the future by many a faithful pilgrim.

If the occasion which brings you here were the mourning at the bier of a lost cause, I know that the nice sense of propriety of a fine old social school would have prevented you from inviting me, as the president of the United States, to be present. You are not here to mourn or support a cause. You are here to celebrate, and justly to celebrate, the heroism, the courage and the sacrifices to the uttermost of your fathers and your brothers and your mothers and your sisters, and of all your kin, in a cause which they believed in their hearts to be right, and for which they were willing to lay down their lives. That cause ceased to be, except in history, now more than half a century ago. It was one which could elicit from half a nation, and a brave and warlike race, a four years' struggle in which lives, property, and everything save honor were willingly parted with for its sake. So great was the genius for military leadership of many of your generals, so adaptable was the individual of your race to effective warlike training, so full of patriotic sacrifice were your people that now when all the bitterness of the struggle on our part of the north has passed away, we are able to share with you of the south your just pride in your men and women who carried on the unexampled contest to an exhaustion that few countries ever suffered. The calm observer and historian, whatever his origin, may now rejoice in his heart that the Lord ordained it as it is. But no son of the south and no son of the north, with any spark in him of pride of race, can fail to rejoice in that common heritage of courage and glorious sacrifice that we have in the story of the civil war and of both sides in the civil war.

It has naturally taken a long time for the spirit of hostility that such an internecine struggle develops completely to die away. Of course it lasted a less time with those who were the victors and into whose homes and domestic laves the horrors of war were not directly thrust. The physical evidences of war were traceable in the south for decades after they had utterly disappeared in the north in the few places in which they existed. Then there are conditions in the south which are a constant

reminder of the history of the past. Until within recent decades, prosperity has not shed her boon of comfort upon the south with as generous a hand as upon the north. Hence those of us at the north who have been sometimes impatient at a little flash now and then of the old sectional antagonism are unreasonable in our failure to allow for these marked differences.

For years after the war, the republican party, which had carried the nation through the war to its successful conclusion, was in control of the administration of the government, and it was impossible for the southerner to escape the feeling that he was linked in his allegiance to an alien nation and one with whose destiny he found it difficult to identify himself. Time, however, cures much, and after a while there came a democratic administration of four years, and then another one of four years. Southerners were called to federal office, they came to have more influence in the halls of congress and in the senate, and the responsibility of the government brought with it a sense of closer relationship to it and to all the people for whom the government was carried on.

I speak for my immediate republican predecessors in office when I say that they all labored to bring the sections more closely together. I am sure I can say that, so far as in me has lain, I have left nothing undone to reduce the sectional feeling and to make the divisions of this our country geographical only. But I am free to admit that circumstances have rendered it more difficult for a republican administration than for a democratic administration to give to our southern brothers and sisters the feeling of close relationship and ownership in the government of the United States. Therefore, in solving the mystery of that providential dispensation which now brings on a democratic administration to succeed this, we must admit the good that will come to the whole country in a more confirmed sense of partnership in this government which our brothers and sisters of the southland will enjoy in an administration, in which southern opinion will naturally have greater influence, and the south greater proportionate representation in the cabinet, in congress, and in other high official station. While I rejoice in the steps that I have been able to take to heal the wounds of sectionalism and to convey to the southern people, as far as I could, my earnest desire to make this country one. I can not deny that my worthy and distinguished successor has a greater opportunity, and I doubt not he will use it for the benefit of the nation at large.

It fell to my official lot, with universal popular approval, to issue the order which made it possible to erect, in the national cemetery of Arlington, the beautiful monument of the heroic dead of the south that you founded today. The event in itself speaks volumes as to the oblivion of sectionalism. It gives me not only great pleasure and great honor, but it gives me the greatest satisfaction as a lover of my country, to be present, as president of the United States, and pronounce upon this occasion the benediction of all true Americans.

### THE SPECIAL SESSION

Governor Wilson has announced that immediately after his inauguration as president of the United States he will call an extraordinary session of congress to convene not later than April 15th, for the purpose of revising the tariff. Governor Wilson has acted well in this matter and while he has the approval of democrats generally, men of all parties express the opinion that he has taken a wise course. Governor Wilson has gone to Bermuda for a vacation and he will return about December 16. Every one will hope that he may enjoy his rest and return with new strength for the patriotic task that is before him.

Nicholas Longworth, who married former Alice Roosevelt, was defeated for congress in the first Ohio district. It is too bad, but Mr. Longworth has the consolation of knowing that he has distinguished company.

## What of the Future?

The election is over and we turn from the discussion of principles, policies and candidates to a consideration of the results. The past is gone, never to return; what of the future?

The three men who occupied the center of the stage have changed positions. The president retires from the office with a few electoral votes—so few that they only emphasize his defeat. The only consolation that Mr. Taft can draw from the result is that, by sacrificing himself, he saved the country from a third term—at least he made certain the defeat of Colonel Roosevelt.

History will deal with him more kindly than the orators of the third party have. Even the criticism of the democrats will be softened by an appreciation of his personal qualities and of the great service that he has rendered the country by dividing the republican party. It was not his intention, of course, to divide his party, but it was the natural result of his administration, and the nation is the beneficiary.

He did some good things, but they were overshadowed by his sins of commission and omission. Circumstances were against him and he was out of joint with the times. He was recommended four years ago as an impossible character—a progressive in the west, and a "standpatter" in the east.

He could not have fulfilled all the expectations that were excited, and by attempting for a while to follow a middle course, he alienated both sides so that when he finally cast in his lot with the "standpatters" he aroused no enthusiasm even among his followers.

Then, too, his popular vote, and hence his electoral vote, was lessened by the fact that many who would have voted for him had he had any chance, voted for Wilson in order to insure the defeat of Roosevelt. Mr. Dooley hit off the situation early in the campaign by saying that Mr. Taft had a great many friends who would vote for him if they did not have to vote for the democratic candidate.

The republican party is so weakened by its overwhelming defeat that it will find it difficult to recover. The chances are that the progressives will return and take charge of the party, and adopt in the next campaign a platform which will be a compromise between the two extremes, but so far as can be seen now Mr. Taft has rounded out his political career. As an ex-president, and as a man of character, he will carry to his retirement the esteem and good will of the people, and will be useful in international politics—a growing field of honor and dignity.

Colonel Roosevelt has suffered a rebuke that will be keenly felt by him and his friends. The difference between his vote eight years ago and his vote now will be noted in history, and, unless the situation is changed by future events, the descent from his great popularity to his present position will remain a melancholy one.

The careful student, however, will be compelled to credit him with having performed an extraordinary feat in organizing so large a force in so short a time. There is an inertia in every party that tends to hold the members in line, no matter what the party may do. To have taken more than half of the voting strength away from the old organization is an unparalleled achievement in the formation of a new party, and it is the more remarkable when it is remembered that the third party candidate was handicapped by the objections to a third term, and still further embarrassed by some of his leading supporters.

The \$561,000 subscribed by Hanna, Perkins, Munsey and Flinn to secure his nomination may have been necessary to enable him to make the showing he did at the Chicago convention, but the contribution of so large a sum by such men was a great burden for him to carry during the campaign, and the prominence given to Mr. Perkins alienated a great many progressives who might otherwise have been drawn to the colonel's side.

After the showing made by the new party its members ought to have no difficulty in capturing the organization of the old party, if they

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