

## The Menace of Bigness

While the daily papers are trying to locate the blame for the failure of H. B. Clafin & Company, the public should not overlook one cause which has not yet been sufficiently considered. There is in bigness itself a menace to both the company and the public. It is quite natural that the managers of a business, encouraged by success, should yield to the temptation to increase and increase until retribution follows the breaking of economic laws. The human being after passing through a period of infancy and youth reaches maturity; from that time on there is no more real growth and additional weight is apt to bring its penalties.

With the fictitious person called a corporation there is, unfortunately, no period of maturity when growth ceases. It is apt to continue to grow and grow unless those in control are wise enough to restrain the desire for unlimited expansion.

In the case of the Clafin company the name of a great business man was capitalized and those who used it departed from the methods which brought success to the man who made the name known throughout the nation. When the Clafin company became a member of an organization that reached out into many communities and engaged in different kinds of business, it created new conditions which no man or group of men can long control.

Clafin built up a great business because he attended to it. It was his own business; it stirred every fiber of his being and commanded all the energy he possessed. It is not strange that he achieved success; he followed the pathway which leads to success. His rise was only a repetition of what others have done, working along the same lines, but there was no such dominant brain in the new organization and Clafin himself could not have repeated his success had he attempted what the new organization undertook. No mind can comprehend the details necessary to such a business as the new Clafin company

endeavored to conduct. The head of a big concern must act through others and depend upon them. Employees could not have the deep interest in the success of the business of others that Clafin had in a business that was his own. The man who works for another cannot put into the business the enthusiasm which the owner feels, no matter how sincerely he may try. It is like the difference between the man who tills his own land and the tenant who tills the land of another. In the transmission of authority there is a leak at every joint, and when a business gets so big that the orders from above must pass through several employees before the lowest man is reached, loss of efficiency is inevitable.

But there is another menace in bigness—a menace to the business world at large and to each community in which the company is represented. The firm with branches scattered throughout the land may in the beginning use its tremendous power to break down and drive out competition, but in the long run the business that is identified with the community and managed with a view to that community's interest will have an advantage that no branch concern can have. Then, too, the firm with branches may sacrifice one branch to help another, regardless of the effect of the change on any community.

Moreover, the failure of a big concern with many branches shocks the entire country, whereas the failure of a business firm in one community does not usually affect other communities. If, instead of a large number of houses belonging to one organization, there had been the same number, each independent, the failure of one or even a number, would not have produced anything like the disturbance that comes with the fall of a great concern that has injected its activities into numerous trade centers. It is well for business men and statesmen to consider whether business expansion should be encouraged when it sacrifices the interests of the public to the ambitions of a few. W. J. BRYAN.

### A TRIBUTE TO ADLAI E. STEVENSON

By Rev. Edgar DeWitt Jones, of Bloomington, Illinois, at public funeral for Mr. Stevenson, June 15, 1914.

For more than two decades Bloomington, Illinois, has been known the nation over as the home of Hon. Adlai E. Stevenson. Because of him more than any other man the name of the city we love has gone the world around. Verily it is true that "none of us liveth to himself and none dieth to himself." In the life and death of Mr. Stevenson his fame and glory are shared with the nation he served, the state he honored, and especially the city where his home has been for half a century.

Mr. Stevenson's public career was long, varied and distinguished. Congressman, assistant postmaster general, vice-president of the United States, member of the monetary commission to England, France and Germany, nominee of his party for vice-president in 1900, and in 1908 candidate for governor of Illinois in what was perhaps the most extraordinary campaign of his entire career—such in barest outline was our first citizen's life in the nation.

Singularly strong and praiseworthy were certain qualities in Mr. Stevenson's life as a public man. First, and foremost, is the fact that throughout the period characterized by campaigns of personalities and incriminations and marred sometimes by methods now discredited Mr. Stevenson kept his hear pure. Through forty years of public service and a score of stressful campaigns he bore his escutcheon unspotted to the end.

Mr. Stevenson was a party man but not a partisan. In a day when prejudice and rancor were rife and party spirit ran riot Mr. Stevenson preserved that fine large charity which "vaunteth not itself" and "thinketh no evil." Here at home in the midst of campaigns of widespread interest and elections fraught with intense excitement he was never known to engage in controversy or arguments with his fellow-townsmen who differed from him politically. Moreover he numbered among his closest friends many men of political views other than his own. This of itself is an extraordinary tribute to a nature which was large and generous and possessing a perfect genius for friendship.

Mr. Stevenson's friends in public life included the most distinguished leaders of the last thirty

or forty years. Congressmen, senators, justices of the supreme court, cabinet officers, presidents—with them he mingled at once alike, honoring and being honored. Fortunately these rich and varied experiences are in a measure treasured up for us and for those who shall come after us, in his fascinating book "Something of Men I Have Known"—a volume that will be read with interest and profit by thousands yet to be.

Bloomington was justly proud of her first citizen and delighted to do him honor. No notable event in this city was complete without Mr. Stevenson's presence and participation. How often his voice has been heard at great gatherings, in conventions, at banquet boards, and in memorial meetings. The plain, comfortable homestead on Franklin Park Square has been our city's golden milestone, where all our main traveled streets converged. When our friends came from afar their visits were consummated when they had called upon our first citizen. How wide the doors, how generous the hospitality of that home! How unfailing the courtesy of that genial host! How courtly his manner! All in all we shall not look upon his like again.

Whether at home or abroad Mr. Stevenson was a democratic soul, plain, simple and the most approachable of men.

"Greatest, yet with least pretence,  
Foremost hearted of his time,  
Rich in saving common sense,  
And, as the greatest always are,  
In his simplicity sublime."

And now he is gone! Bloomington can never be again just what it was when Mr. Stevenson was alive. The old homestead on the park square will be eloquent in its loneliness. We shall miss the courtly figure from our streets and seek in vain the outstretched hand of greeting. But nothing, thank God! can deprive us of his memory.

Today loving friends and neighbors will lay our chief citizen to rest by the side of the wife of his youth and not far from that illustrious group of his old time friends who have gone on before—David Davis and Matthew Scott, Isaac Phillips and General McNulta, Lawrence Weldon and Robert Williams, and in the years to come what the tomb of Clay is to Lexington, what the shrine of Jefferson is to Monticello, so shall the grave of Stevenson be to Bloomington.

### DEMOCRACY IN BANKING

In another part of this issue of The Commoner will be found an extraordinary speech on "Democracy in Banking" by Honorable John Skelton Williams, comptroller of the currency. It was delivered before the annual convention of the North Carolina bankers in the house of representatives at the capitol, Raleigh, on May 13th last. It deserves reading—every word of it. It will give the readers of The Commoner an understanding of the point from which the reserve board will look at the new currency system. As comptroller, Mr. Williams will have a large part in the management of the central reserve banks which supervise and regulate the entire system. Mr. Williams' arraignment of the old system of finance, for which the new system is substituted, will be read with grateful appreciation by those who have for twenty years been engaged in fighting the money power. What a change has taken place! When the struggle began every man who dared to criticize the despotism of Wall street was denounced as a demagogue and a disturber of the peace, but today investigation and revelations have made the American people acquainted with the methods employed by the members of the little group who ruled the financial world. Mr. Williams, since making this speech, has had occasion to learn of the radical change taking place in public sentiment. One of the most prominent financiers of the west wrote to him saying that if he read Mr. Williams' speech a year or two ago he would have said: "Poor Williams, what a demagogue he is," but that he himself has become convinced of the soundness of the position taken by Mr. Williams. All of the financiers who were not in the pool will soon be thanking the president and congress for the relief the new law has brought—their voices will be added to the chorus that is already rising from the mass of the people who see in the new declaration of independence emancipation from the invisible government that has been preying upon them. The country is fortunate in having in so influential a position a man like John Skelton Williams, who knows the methods that have been employed and has the courage to represent the people instead of the special interests.

W. J. BRYAN.

A broad, decent and honorable settlement is the comment made by James T. DuBois upon the pending treaty with Columbia. Mr. DuBois held an important office under Roosevelt and was Taft's minister to Colombia. It is to be presumed that he knows better what he is talking about than those critics who have assailed this as a surrender to blackmailers and an apology for something the United States is proud of having done.

The adoption of the president's trust program, which will be completed during the next few weeks, will add one more powerful reason why the democratic party should be retained in control of the house. It will complete the trinity of great reforms promised by the democratic party, and will enable democratic campaign orators to make the most effective appeal to the people for a continuance of public trust.

The Pennsylvania primary election gave a good hint as to how far the reform of the republican party from the inside has progressed. Penrose was nominated for United States senator again. The fact that he polled over four times as many votes as the progressive candidate for the same office is another interesting political phenomenon that the wise boys have not yet been able to satisfactorily explain.

### IF I KNEW

If I knew the box where the smiles were kept  
No matter how large the key  
Or strong the bolt, I would try so hard  
"Twould open, I know, for me.  
Then, over the land and the sea, broadcast,  
I'd scatter the smiles to play,  
So that careworn people might hold them fast  
For many and many a day.

If I knew a box that was large enough  
To hold all the frowns I meet,  
I would like to gather them every one,  
From nursery, school and street;  
Then, folding and holding, I'd pack them in,  
And, turning the monster key,  
I'd hire a giant to drop the box  
To the depths of the deep, deep sea.

—Unknown.