

# The Commoner

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR

VOL. 14, NO. 12

Lincoln, Nebraska, December, 1914

Whole Number 668

## Prohibition and Woman's Suffrage

Some of the democratic editors profess to misunderstand the import of the two editorials in the last issue of *The Commoner*, one entitled "The Alcoholic Millstone" and the other an editorial in support of woman's suffrage.

These editors seem to consider the above-mentioned editorials as an endorsement of national amendments favorable to prohibition and woman's suffrage, but a careful reading of them will reveal the fact that while the former plainly protests against the domination of the democratic party by the liquor interests, and the latter as plainly supports woman's suffrage, they relate to these issues as they present themselves in the various states.

A two-thirds vote of the two houses of congress is required for the submission of an amendment to the national constitution, and then the amendment must be ratified by three-fourths of the states. There is no reason to believe that a prohibition amendment or a suffrage amendment would, at this time, be ratified by three-fourths of the states, even if it secured a vote of two-thirds of the two houses. Believing in both woman's suffrage and the abolition of the liquor traffic I would vote for either amendment if submitted, but the time does not seem opportune for the submission of either of these amendments. A national contest for either amendment would simply divert attention from other issues upon which the people are ready to act, without advancing the cause of woman's suffrage or the prohibition movement.

These questions are, however, at issue in the states, and as a democrat I am interested in seeing the party take the moral side of both questions—the side that appeals to young men who are coming out of our schools and colleges and who assume the obligations of citizenship with a vision of better things. Every new issue causes a new alignment; in proportion as it is an important issue it brings about changes in party affiliations. If the democratic party takes the side of the brewer, the distiller, and the saloon keeper, it will lose many of its best members and it will draw to itself the worst element of the republican party—and the democratic party can not afford to invite an element that puts desire for drink before principles of government and the nation's welfare. The more we have of that element, the more difficult it will be to draw to us those whose presence gives strength to a party and whose voice and example increase its numbers.

The democratic party can not be killed, even by association with so contaminating an influence as the liquor interests, but why should the party allow itself to be debauched and disgraced? It would take a decade or more to remove the odium that the representatives of the triple curse—the saloon, the gambling-hall and the



brothel—will bring upon the party if they are allowed to dictate its policy. The result of the liquor fight in the late campaign is full of warning—if the democratic party fails to heed this warning to it, it does so at its own peril.

W. J. BRYAN.

### ASK FOR AN INVENTORY

The reports from several states indicate that the democrats have learned a lesson from the recent campaign. Efforts are now under way to prevent representatives of the various special interests from fastening themselves in the future upon the democratic party organization or attaching themselves to democratic campaign committees and thus compelling the party to bear the odium and carry the load incurred by trying to make the party of the people serve as the means of protecting certain groups of financial interests. The democratic party can not serve two masters. If it is to be the instrument of the people it can not afford to permit itself to be used by the reactionary element for private gain. The stockholders of the democratic party should call for an inventory of the stock on hand, and wherever goods are shown to be tainted, they should be eliminated so as to prevent their entire stock from falling under the ban of the public censor—the people.

## CONTENTS

PROHIBITION AND WOMAN'S SUFFRAGE  
THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE  
ASK FOR AN INVENTORY  
PROGRESSIVE DEFEAT EXPLAINED  
ECONOMY AND EFFICIENCY  
ELECTION OF POSTMASTERS  
NO INCREASE IN THE NAVY  
TOTAL ABSTINENCE PLEDGE  
BURDENS BORNE BY NEUTRAL NATIONS  
PRESIDENT WILSON SEES BRIGHT BUSINESS FUTURE  
THANKSGIVING IN WASHINGTON  
THE PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL MESSAGE  
THE NEW WAR TAXES  
AMBASSADOR NAOM'S SPEECH  
WORK OF THE PRESIDENT'S CABINET

## The President's Message

The message of the president, read to the sixty-third congress at the opening of its last session, will stand out as one of his greatest state papers. He deals with the question of conservation and also with the merchant marine. He urges the passage of the Philippine bill and then takes up the subject of national defense. His message is evidently an answer to the recent propaganda in favor of a bigger army and a bigger navy. Putting the discussion upon a high plane he appeals to the sober sense of the American people, and his appeal will not be in vain. He is right in saying that the adoption of a large military and naval program would be a reversal of the whole history and character of our country, and at this time "would mean merely that we had lost our self-possession, that we had been thrown off our balance by a war with which we have nothing to do, whose causes can not touch us, whose very existence affords us opportunity of friendship and disinterested service which should make us ashamed of any thought of hostility or fearful preparation for trouble." The mission of this country is splendidly stated when he says—"This is assuredly the opportunity for which a people and a government like ours were raised up, the opportunity not only to speak but actually to embody and exemplify the counsels of peace and amity and the lasting concord which is based on justice and fair and generous dealing." W. J. BRYAN.

A government report shows that from August 1st to November 1st there were collected \$735,000 as tolls from the owners of vessels that used the Panama canal. Ninety per cent of this sum came from coast-wise traders who would have been exempt from any payment whatever if the president's opponents in congress had had their way. Instead of being in the United States treasury it would have been in the coffers of the ship owners?

### A DESERVED COMPLIMENT

The election of Samuel Gompers, FOR THE THIRTIETH TIME, to the position of president of the American Federation of Labor is a high compliment to a deserving man. The thirty years covered by his official career embrace a long and eventful period in this rapidly moving age, and to meet the exacting requirements of that important position has been no easy matter. Faithful to his associates at all times, Mr. Gompers has striven to secure the reforms needed by the wage-earners without unnecessarily antagonizing other elements of society. He has faithfully stood for labor's rights and yet been courageous enough to include all producers in his sympathies. Congratulations and good wishes to him.

W. J. BRYAN.