



"GOOD-BY, JIM, TAKE KEER OF YOURSELF."

JIM was going off to war—the neighborhood didn't think much of him—but his father knew. And his father guessed the story to come. Yet these were all the words that came. Do you remember James Whitcomb Riley's story-poem? That was in the Civil War. And today, again, all over the land, fathers are saying to their sons, "Good-by, Jim, take keer yourself."

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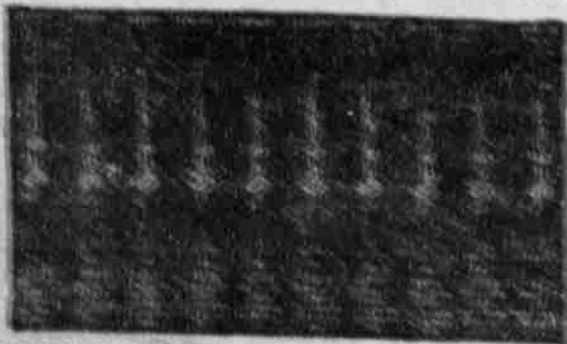
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Commoner, Oct. 1918.

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Has the Primary Been Gainful?

The time was when Mr. Taft was the rising hope of the republican party and there was a time when he was sadly in the discard. In the period following his retirement from the White House to date Mr. Taft has taken a unique place in public estimation. He has become the plain people's advocate, representing upon the whole the average citizen's view of things. The judicial mind that hampered him as an executive has been of value to him as national arbiter as well as advocate. He stands neither with the extremist reformer nor the reactionary; he speaks for the American family that owns a serviceable car without a plaster on it.

Since the returns of the primary elections of this year have been reported Mr. Taft has raised his voice for a return to the convention system, amended to meet modern demands.

"The general primary has lowered the character of men put up as party candidates for office."

This is first complaint. It is true? What has the reader to state from his experience?

"It has destroyed party organization and the responsibility of parties to the electorate for the fitness of candidates."

There will be few to challenge his findings on this second count. Indeed that was what the primary election was intended for—to reduce the power of the machine, to do away with the boss!

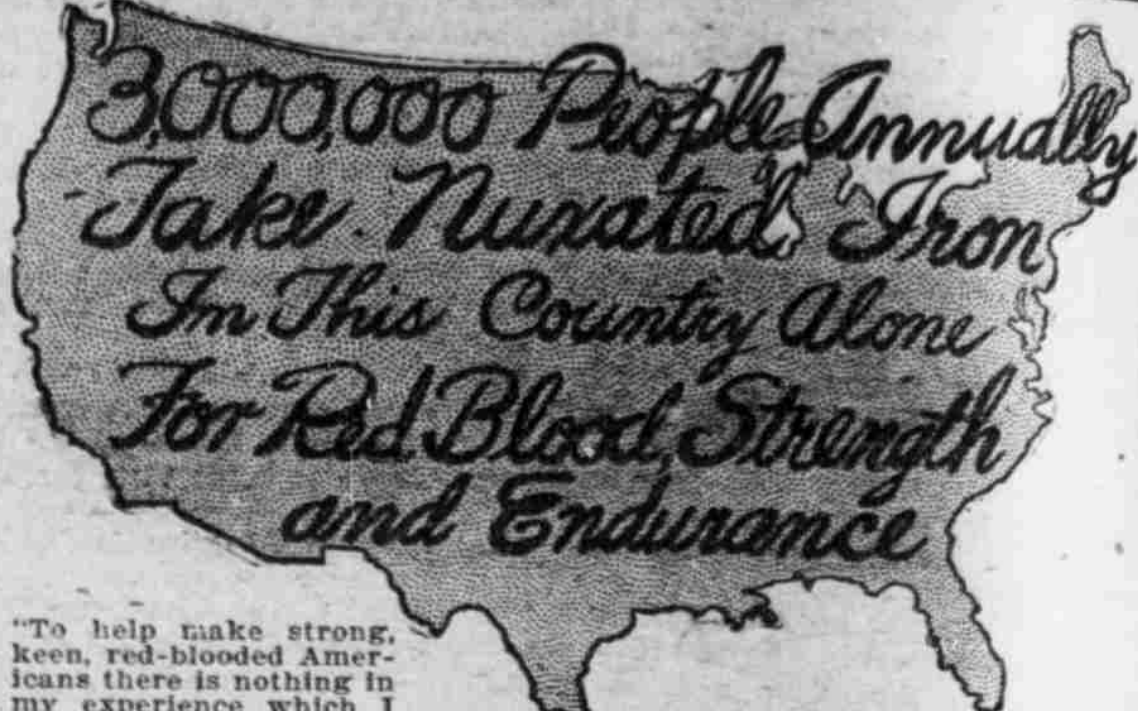
Has it abolished the boss? We think it has; but at the same time, it has introduced a new boss. The former boss was silent in his operations, worked behind the curtain; his ways were devious. The primary boss is somewhat of a demagogue; he is on the housetops shouting warnings that Carthage must fall.

It is a question of which is the evils is the lesser one.

"The general primary is anti-democratic, in that it usually entails outrageous expense upon any one offering himself successfully for office," continues Mr. Taft in his arraignment. "It drives good men from candidacies. It excludes the possibility of the office seeking the man. The very legal formalities necessary put a candidate in the attitude of chasing an office, not for merely allowing his fellow citizens to call him. This is demoralizing to politics and deprives the public of the possibility of securing many men who would be admirable public servants."

Our local election laws require, first, that the candidate shall announce himself a candidate before his party requests him. After he enters the arena he has to make a campaign for an assembly designation. Following the assembly he begins his real primary campaign against his "friendly competitor" from within his party lines and if he is successful, with a brief rest, he has to take up real contest for the office. All this requires time and funds and energy. Does the "fittest" survive? Advocate Taft is doubtful.

The California primary jumble is offered as an example of the "reductio ad absurdum" of primary election laws. In California, as Mr. Taft insists, they have not only abolished conventions, they have gone as far as possible to the abolition of parties and the recent election is an illustration of how the system works. Mayor Rolph of San Francisco tried to make it a case of "heads I win, tails you lose" and ran on both tickets. He



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was supposed to be a republican; but the republicans defeated him and the democrats elected him over Reformer Heney, the party candidate. Under the law Mr. Rolph cannot run in the election because being a republican he was beaten by his party, and Heney, having been defeated by the republican candidate in the democratic primaries cannot run at all. Mr. Taft asks if in "Alice in Wonderland" anything more topsy-turvy can be found.

What effect has "direct legislation" had upon congress? Has it improved that body, made it more responsive? Has it sent to senate and house the elect of the nation? Or has it tended to make the national executive the grand dictator? Does the American temperament tend toward a tribune—a popular dictator.

—Rocky Mountain News, Denver.

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