

To Chas W. Bryan  
with compliments  
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# The Commoner.

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**William J. Bryan.**

Editor and Proprietor.

## The Commoner.

Webster defines a commoner as "one of the common people." The name has been selected for this paper because THE COMMONER will endeavor to aid the common people in the protection of their rights, the advancement of their interests and the realization of their aspirations.

It is not necessary to apologize for the use of a term which distinguishes the great body of the population from the comparatively few, who, for one reason or another, withdraw themselves from sympathetic connection with their fellows. Among the Greeks "Hoi polloi" was used to describe the many, while among the Romans the word "plebs" was employed for the same purpose. These appellations, like "the common people," have been assumed with pride by those to whom they were applied, while they have been used as terms of reproach by those who counted themselves among the aristocratic classes. Within recent years there has been a growing tendency in some quarters to denounce as demagogic any reference to, or praise of, the common people.

One editor in a late issue of his paper takes exception to the phrase and says:

This expression is an ill-chosen one and should have no lodgment in the vocabulary of an American patriot and statesman. If we sought its origin, we would look for it in that specious demagoguery which has evolved the professional politician, arrayed country against town—the farmer and his sons and daughters against the business and professional men and their sons and daughters—capital against labor, and built up against neighbors the impregnable barriers of prejudice and hate.

This quotation is reproduced because it fairly represents the views of those who criticize the expression. It has, however, an eminently respectable origin. In the same chapter in which Christ condensed man's duty to his fellows into the commandment: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself; in the same chapter in which he denounced those who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers—in this same chapter it is said of Him: The common people heard Him gladly.

No higher compliment was ever paid to any class.

The term, the common people, is properly used to describe the large majority of the people—those who earn their living and give to society a fair return for the benefits bestowed by society—those who in their daily lives recognize the ties which bind together the mass of the people who have a common lot and a common hope. Sometimes they are called "the middle classes" because paupers and criminals are excluded on the one hand, while on the other hand some exclude themselves

because of wealth or position or pride of birth. The common people form the industrious, intelligent and patriotic element of our population; they produce the nation's wealth in time of peace and fight the nation's battles in time of war. They are self-reliant and independent; they ask of government nothing but justice and will not be satisfied with less. They are not seeking to get their hands into other people's pockets, but are content if they can keep other people's hands out of their pockets.

The common people do not constitute an exclusive society—they are not of the four hundred; any one can become a member if he is willing to contribute by brain or muscle to the nation's strength and greatness. Only those are barred—and they are barred by their own choice—who imagine themselves made of a superior kind of clay and who deny the equality of all before the law.

A rich man, who has honestly acquired his wealth and is not afraid to intrust its care to laws made by his fellows, can count himself among the common people, while a poor man is not really one of them if he fawns before a plutocrat and has no higher ambition than to be a courtier or a sycophant.

THE COMMONER will be satisfied if, by fidelity to the common people, it proves its right to the name which has been chosen.

## A Living Fountain.

Jeremiah gave to literature a beautiful and striking figure when, in charging the children of Israel with apostasy, he said:

They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

One is reminded of this forcible simile today when a large number of our people seem inclined to turn back to the once discarded doctrine of empires. To compare self-government with an arbitrary form of government is like comparing a living fountain with a broken cistern.

When the people are recognized as the source of power the government is perpetual because the people endure forever. The government then responds to their desires and conforms to their character; it can be made as good as they deserve to have and they are satisfied with it because it is their own handiwork. If it has evils those evils are endured because the people recognize that they themselves are to blame and that it is within their power to apply any needed remedy.

A government resting on force is, on the other hand, ever unstable because it excites hatred rather than affection and is continually at war with human nature; it is in constant antagonism to that universal sentiment which is defined as the love of liberty.

All history sustains the self-evident truths which form the foundation of a government

deriving its just powers from the consent of the governed. All history condemns a political structure which appeals only to fear and relies upon bayonets for its support.

## How the Tariff Aids the Trusts.

A recent number of the Hardware Dealer's Magazine contains an interesting comment on the methods of the wire nail trust. It says:

A statement which recently emanated from Pittsburg has attracted some attention and comment among hardware men. The points that were sought to be made were as follows: In 1898 there were produced in the United States 7,418,475 kegs of wire nails. These cost the consumer \$1.31 per keg. There were exported during the same year 307,194 kegs, at about \$1.55 per keg, the foreigner paying a higher price than the home customer. These same nails sold at \$1.11 per keg on an average during 1894.

During the last year there were manufactured 7,599,522 kegs, at an average price of \$2.57 to the domestic buyers. In the meantime, 752,781 kegs were exported, at about \$1.40 per keg. The American customers of the steel wire nail makers paid about \$17,506,124.37 for the balance of the manufactured nails (about 6,846,741 kegs). Had the American consumers been privileged to buy at the quotations granted the foreign buyers, the Americans would have saved about \$8,010,686.97 on their purchase.

More than eight millions of dollars! This measures the extortion practiced upon the hardware merchant, but this must be increased by the merchant's profit, if his profit is estimated upon a percentage basis, before it measures the extortion practiced upon the consumer.

And yet some are so devoted to a protective tariff as not to protest against import duties which enable trusts to sell at home at a high price while they sell abroad at a low price.

## The Vice-Presidency.

It has been intimated that Vice-President-Elect Roosevelt is desirous of receiving more consideration at the hands of the President than has, as a rule, been given to those occupying his position. Whether or not the report is true is not material, but the ambition, if he does entertain it, is an entirely worthy one.

Why has the Vice-President been so generally ignored by the Chief Executive in the past? It is said that Mr. Breckenridge was only consulted once by President Buchanan, and then only in regard to the phraseology of a Thanksgiving Proclamation. This incident was related to a later Vice-President who was noted for his skill at repartee and he replied, with a twinkle in his eye: "Well, there is one more Thanksgiving Day before my term expires."

According to the constitution the Vice-President succeeds to the office in case the President dies, resigns, is removed, or becomes unable to discharge the duties of the office. The public good requires that he should be thoroughly informed as to the details of the administration and ready to take up the work of the Executive at a moment's notice. The Vice-President ought to be ex-officio