

The Commoner.

publican form of government, and an improvement in some respects over our own Constitution, it certainly must be admitted that "pacification" has taken place.

The Cuban people alone have the authority to adopt or modify their constitution. When a government in compliance with that constitution is organized it will be the duty of the president to withdraw the military forces of the United States from that island, and leave its people to work out their own destiny, overcoming obstacles in their own way exactly as other peoples have been required to do.

The withdrawal of the United States from Cuba and delivery of power there to the constituted authorities of that island, is purely an executive act. The question of pacification involves a very simple fact. The executive knows, as the world knows, that Cuba has been pacified. But if Congress should assume the authority to approve, reject or modify the Cuban constitution, the United States would be assuming sovereignty, jurisdiction and control over the island of Cuba, things which the United States expressly disclaimed.

It is contended by some friends of the administration that it is essential that the United States shall be given suzerain powers in that constitution—that the Cuban people shall obligate themselves not to enter into treaties with foreign countries without the United States' consent.

It is further claimed that it is necessary, that the constitution shall declare that there shall be no interference with "vested rights" in the island of Cuba.

In the first place, the claim to suzerain rights is a distinct violation of our disclaimer that the United States would not seek to exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction or control over said island, except for the pacification thereof. It is a distinct violation of our pledge that after pacification is accomplished it is our intention to leave the government of that island to the Cuban people.

In the next place there are no such things morally or legally as "vested rights" in the island of Cuba accruing during our military occupation of that island.

It is true that since our military forces took possession there, syndicates having the favor of the administration have rushed in and have obtained valuable franchises, but these franchises are the property of the people of Cuba. Our military forces were there for the purpose of aiding in pacification, and were not given authority to vest any rights in administration favored syndicates.

The anxiety of these syndicates to maintain possession of valuable franchises is perhaps the explanation of the disposition manifested by the administration politicians to violate the solemn pledge of this nation with respect to the island of Cuba.

It may be that congress will insist upon passing upon the Cuban constitution, but this will be mere assumption. It may be that Congress will seek to modify that constitution according to the whims of administration politicians and for the benefit of administration syndicates, but Congress will be treading on dangerous ground. In law and in morals it will be acting without authority. In fact, it will be trifling with a people

whose history repudiates the presumption that they will submit to imposition at the hands of American syndicates and American politicians any more willingly than they would submit to imposition at the hands of Spanish tyrants.

The President has been very quick to encroach upon congressional prerogative in the selection of a Philippine Commission empowered by him with authority to make laws and to collect and disburse revenues in the Philippine Islands. He now seems to be equally ready to surrender a plain and exclusive executive prerogative in carrying out the war resolutions with respect to Cuba.



Senatorial Wit.

Mr. Towne's speech on the Philippine question brought out a passage at arms between him and Senator Depew, which has been widely circulated.

The New York Senator said: "I congratulate you, Mr. Towne. Your delivery was fine, your diction elegant and your peroration superb, but your argument was damnable." "I am delighted to know," instantly replied the Senator from Minnesota, "that you approve of the only features of it you could comprehend."

This recalls an exchange of compliments which is reported to have occurred between Senator Beck, of Kentucky, and Senator Hoar, of Massachusetts.

The former likened the Senator from Massachusetts to a tract of land in Virginia described by Randolph as "barren by nature and impoverished by cultivation." The gentleman from the Bay State awaited his opportunity and when a fellow senator, commenting on Mr. Beck's continuous speaking in the discussion of a tariff bill, asked: "When does his mind rest?" replied, "When he talks." Evidently the Senate is not always prosy.



The Influence of the Press.

LINCOLN, Neb., Feb. 8th, 1901.

Mr. G. P. Brown, President Correspondent's Club, New York, Dear Sir:—I am in receipt of your favor announcing that the annual reunion of your club is to be held on the fourteenth of February, and asking for some suggestions upon the theme, "How can the influence of the Press be increased?"

I thank you for the honor you do me and take pleasure in submitting an opinion. Taking it for granted that the members of your club will deal exhaustively with the news features of the press, I shall confine my observations to the editorial department.

The influence of the press must, in the long run, depend upon the character of the press and, as the character of the press is determined by the character established by individual newspapers, it follows that improvement must begin with the units which make up the whole.

Improvements are always possible, but three occur to me as of especial and immediate importance.

First. A newspaper will exert a greater influence, other things being equal, if it is known to represent on public questions the deliberate convictions of some person—a person of flesh and blood, not a corporation. The New York Tribune, under Greeley, was a good illustration of such a paper.

Second. The influence of a newspaper, other things being equal, will be greater if it is known who owns the paper and controls its policy, and that that person has no interests adverse to the interests of the readers. So many newspapers are owned by, or mortgaged to, speculators, capitalists and monopolists, and are used for advocating or excusing legislation having for its object the conferring of special privileges upon a few of the people at the expense of the rest of the people, that the Press has been robbed of much of its legitimate influence.

Third. The influence of the Press will be increased by greater unity in the support of any good cause and in the condemnation of any bad practice. The character of a paper is affected less by priority in the discovery of a felony than by persistence in the prosecution of the felon. In other words, a principle is more important than a "scoop." Very truly yours,

W. J. BRYAN.



The Cost of Militarism.

"Peace is the imperious necessity of advanced democratic civilization" says the New York World, "and only the despotically governed nations can afford to maintain huge military establishments."

The World points out that free countries whose fighting forces must be raised by voluntary enlistment instead of by universal conscription must pay for them in open competition with the labor market. Pointing out that we pay, for an army and navy of 120,000 men, \$253,696,870, exclusive of pensions, The World says that this is \$14,000,000 a year more than England pays, including pensions, for an army and navy that number 364,000 men.

Including pensions, our military budget aggregates \$398,942,103, which The World says is more than twice as large as the military budget of France with her army and navy of 622,000 men; almost twice as large as Russia with nearly a million soldiers and sailors; nearly double Germany's with her half million enlisted men and almost five times as large as Austria's with 278,000 men.

Aside from pensions, the cost of the American army and navy, according to The World, averages \$2,100 per year for our enlisted men. To Great Britain the cost is something less than \$700 a year for every man. The cheapest of all is the Russian soldier and sailor who costs \$200 per year.

The World's contention that only the despotically governed nations can afford to maintain huge military establishments was not particularly in need of confirmation, but if confirmation was required, accepting these figures as correct, the point has been fully sustained.



Then and Now.

The administration leaders are now pushing a bill to make silver dollars redeemable in gold. Yet it was only nine years ago that the republican party emphatically declared that it was in favor of the use of "both gold and silver as standard money," and five years ago it bitterly denied that it was an advocate of gold monometalism. Republican declarations and denials are subject to a much heavier discount than silver has ever suffered.