

# The Commoner.

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## The Elections of 1903.

The elections of 1903 do not indicate any decided trend of opinion toward or away from either of the old parties. Kentucky, Virginia and Mississippi went democratic—as they have done before—while Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Ohio and Iowa went republican—as they have been in the habit of doing. In Rhode Island the democrats re-elected their governor, but when the entire vote is examined it will be seen that Governor Garvin's victory was largely a personal one. In Maryland the democrats had a popular candidate and they also had a smaller colored vote to contend against than they formerly had.

The victory in New York city can hardly be regarded as a national one, not only because of the local issues involved, but also because the democratic candidate for mayor this year received a less majority than the democratic candidate for governor received in New York city last fall. If both candidates ran on national issues then it necessarily follows that the democratic vote has fallen off in New York since last year. But the true explanation is that municipal questions entered so largely into the controversy that it cannot be regarded as a "straw" showing the direction of the wind. Besides a democratic presidential candidate would have to have considerably more than 67,000 (Mr. McClellan's majority) to overcome the republican majority in the country districts of the state.

The gold papers point to the defeat of Johnson as a fatal blow to the Kansas City platform democracy, but they seem to overlook the fact that Mr. Clarke, who was so overwhelmingly defeated by Senator Hanna, was a gold democrat whose opposition to free silver was constantly proclaimed by all the republican papers. If, as the gold papers claim, Johnson was defeated by gold democrats, they must be given credit for less party loyalty than the silver men have shown where the reorganizers have obtained control. If a gold man was justified in voting against Johnson and Clarke because their convention indorsed the Kansas City platform, with what consistency can those who believe in that platform be appealed to when a convention ignores or turns down that platform?

But before the reorganizers claim a victory in Ohio, let them explain the defeat in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Iowa where the Kansas City platform was not indorsed. An examination of the files of the corporation papers will reveal the fact that they rejoiced greatly over the "conservative victory" in Iowa. They predicted great things for the party, but in spite of the very able and energetic campaign made by the democratic candidate, Mr. Sullivan, and in spite of the wobbling of Governor Cummins on the tariff question, the republicans carried the state by a large majority—and the reorganizers can now see nothing but Ohio.

Insofar as a lesson can be drawn from the election returns, it is this: The party can make no progress while it spends more time trying to reconcile irreconcilable elements than it does in trying to make converts. The party cannot succeed while it is wasting its strength in internal wars. If it is going to be a positive force in the country it must stand for democratic principles and fight for democratic principles—not for one campaign, but all the time—not just before election, but all through the year.

If it is going to be a national party it must stand for the same things in all the states. As long as it indorses in one state what it denounces in another its various platforms will be used to answer each other.

The election shows the necessity for a homo-

geneous democratic party nation-wide and true to its principles everywhere.

## Statute of Limitation.

A reader of The Commoner asks why so many public officials are protected from prosecution by the statute of limitations. The statute of limitations is based upon the theory that it is better to ignore a crime after several years have elapsed rather than to put the state to the expense of a prosecution when witnesses have died or moved away and evidence is hard to secure. Another reason might be found in the desire to make the people watchful of their officials. If a crime against the public must be prosecuted within a certain time the people will be more careful to scrutinize the acts of their public servants than they would be if it were possible to prosecute at any time for offenses, however remote the time of their commission.

It is possible that the prosecution is sometimes limited to too brief a time, but as the statutes in the various states differ each must be examined upon its own merits.

## That Alleged Interview.

The papers are circulating an interview which purported to come from an Iowa man who gave what he claimed to be the gist of a conversation which he had on the train with the editor of The Commoner. When Mr. Bryan desires to give out an interview he does not give it to a casual acquaintance on the train, and a sense of propriety ought to restrain a casual acquaintance from attempting to state another person's opinions on public questions. Whether it was the fault of the reporter or of the casual acquaintance the deponent knoweth not, but the purported interview was incorrect in several particulars. Mr. Bryan did not say that in his own opinion he could have been elected in 1896 had he been willing to drop silver. He has never said or believed that the advocacy of bimetalism caused his defeat in either campaign. On the contrary, he has believed that he polled more votes on the platforms upon which he ran in 1896 and 1900 than he could have polled had he abandoned the party's position on the money question.

Mr. Bryan did not say that the silver question would never be heard of again, but he has often said and now asserts that bimetalism was not supported merely as a remedy for a panic, but that it is a permanent system of finance, and he has further insisted that no one is prepared to say how soon the free coinage question may become acute. The attempt to secure an asset currency is one evidence that we have not money enough in this country, and there is no country in the world that has any to spare. With a scarcity of gold manifesting itself everywhere, the financiers are seeking to extend the area of the gold standard and thus hasten the coming of another era of falling prices.

Mr. Bryan did not say that he intended to retire from politics, but, on the contrary, has frequently asserted and now asserts that he expects to continue to study and discuss public questions as long as he lives.

Mr. Bryan did not use the language attributed to him in praise of the statesmanship and popularity of the president. He has said that the president would in all probability be renominated, but in his speeches and in The Commoner he has frequently pointed out that the president is not enforcing the criminal law against the trust magnates, and is not proposing new laws for the protection of the people against the encroachments of organized wealth. There are many republicans who believe that the president will take up reform legislation in case he is re-elected, but it is a reflection upon the president to say that he would propose legislation after an election which he would not be willing to propose during a campaign.

## A Conscience Campaign.

The elections of 1903 are past and the campaign of 1904 is upon us. What shall the democratic party do? Experience has shown that compromises and evasions are as useless from the standpoint of expediency as they are vicious from the standpoint of principle. And, moreover, a defeat which follows evasion and compromise leaves the party weaker for future conflicts, while a fight for principles scatters seed which will bring a harvest later. In 1896 the democratic element in the democratic party, after a fair and honest contest at the primaries, won a decisive victory and obtained control of the party organization. The plutocratic element of the party deserted and ever since that time has been plotting against the party. It threatens defeat if its dictation is resisted and is powerless to give victory when the party yields to its demands. It is planning now to give the democratic nomination to a representative of corporate wealth whose campaign would be made on money furnished by the trusts and whose administration, if he won, would be controlled by Wall street, as Mr. Cleveland's last administration was. To defeat this scheme and keep the party true to the interests of the people will require another contest, but this effort is worth making. In the campaigns of 1896 and 1900 the party had to bear the sins of the Cleveland administration and another surrender would increase the odium and postpone the day of reform. The party must be saved from humiliation and disgrace. Six millions of voters, if fearless and aggressive, will soon win a victory for good government and they can only be made fearless and aggressive by the resolution that comes from deep convictions and high purpose. The democratic party cannot win a democratic victory by the use of money, even if it were base enough to try it, for such a victory would not be democratic if by any possibility it was achieved. If the people are to secure needed reforms they must conduct a conscience campaign; they must use honest methods and appeal to honest men who desire honest government. There is far more hope of success if the time is spent explaining democratic principles to conscientious republicans than there is if the time is frittered away in quarrelling with men who call themselves democrats, but whose sympathies are with organized greed. Votes that are for sale go to the highest bidder, and democracy's puny purse cannot measure itself against the overflowing chest of the republican party. But in an appeal to the higher and better elements of the human heart the democratic party would have little competition from the republican leaders.

The time is ripe for the conscience campaign. Will you enlist? Can you be counted on, not for a year, but until our nation is redeemed from plutocracy and made "a government of the people, by the people, for the people?"

## The Bennett Will Case.

Mr. Bryan gave out the following interview on Judge Cleveland's decision in the Bennett will case. (Decision will be found in next week's issue.)

The decision of Judge Cleveland in the Bennett will case is in my favor on all the moral questions raised by the heirs, and against me on the technical law points only.

The judge finds that no undue influence was exerted on Mr. Bennett and that no injustice was done to the relatives. He holds, however, that the letter to Mrs. Bennett cannot be probated with the will, but he expressly disclaims any intention