

## DEMOCRATS GO TO WORK IN EARNEST

only and the balance of the democratic ticket ran 50,000 short of them. Only for this thinly disguised "trading" the independents would have carried all the "minority representation" offices. But for this the traders would not be in power for a day. Though there is little chance for doing any good at the primaries, where the "crowd" will use republicans and thugs to carry them, if necessary I gladly sign the pledge to help it along. With best wishes for the success of the primary pledge plan and three cheers for The Commoner.

C. H. Carmichael, Madisonville, Tenn.—Enclosed I am forwarding eight signatures to the primary pledge, also one subscription to The Commoner. I am convinced that your plan is a good one, and should receive the hearty support of all true democrats. Success to The Commoner and the cause for which it labors.

J. M. Bird, Pittsburg, Tex.—Enclosed find primary pledge properly signed.

Levi Clemmens, Ayr, Mich.—Find enclosed primary pledge and wishing you success in your great work.

Frank Matthews, Mount Pleasant, Iowa—Although 76 years of age and 67 years a resident of Iowa, I sign the primary pledge with pleasure.

William Blain, Mason, Ill.—I am now nearly 72 years old and have been a democrat all of my life and have done all I could in the cause and expect to continue the same.

P. V. Tutwiler, Rockingham, Va.—Find primary pledge filled out and signed. I heartily endorse The Commoner.

John T. Washington, St. Louis, Mo.—You will please find within six (6) primary pledges. I will send you more later. I am with you in your great effort. I sincerely hope you will make a strong fight to get control of the "next congress." That is all we can hope for in the near future.

Joshua Craper, Oxford, Ala.—May God bless The Commoner and the entire management and

give the fullest success in bringing the government back to the safe mooring of the common and patriotic people. Please send me the pledges and I will try and get signers.

E. Richardson, Firth, Nebr.—Find enclosed pledge. Organization now means success in 1908. The stirring times of '96 and 1900 were but the skirmishes before the great battle of money against principle. Money will flow like water and we may be prepared to see men heretofore high in the councils of the party and in the confidence of their friends barter their honor for slush funds or corporation opportunities with salary attachments. One great drawback has been that the old ship has carried a cargo of Jonahs for the last twenty years, that would have sunk a weaker craft. A few have had the grace to jump overboard and others should follow. There is room reserved in the republican whale's interior for Grover. There he is safe and there his policy will be appreciated.

## PRACTICAL STUDY OF POVERTY

Mr. N. O. Nelson, a St. Louis philanthropist has recently made a remarkable personal, sociological study and has described for the St. Louis Post Dispatch, the results of his observations. Mr. Nelson is a millionaire, who instead of introducing a new kind of handshake at Newport, like Mr. James Hazen Hyde or inventing a new kind of salary grab like Senator Depew, is studying social conditions, with the view of improving them. Mr. Nelson's investigations are interesting and instructive. They show just how little one-half of the people know about the lives of the other half. In his contribution to the Post Dispatch, Mr. Nelson says:

"West of Grand avenue, St. Louis is building houses for small families costing from \$50,000 to \$250,000. East of Eighteenth street we have built practically no living houses for 50 years, and not many east of Jefferson avenue. In the district between Wash street and Cass avenue and Collins street and Fifteenth street, most of the houses now standing were built 50 to 60 years ago. There was a heavy rush of immigration, and these houses were built to shelter the multitude. They are what are called "double-enders," one tenement fronting on the alley, another on the street, with room enough between the two for clotheslines. There were no building regulations and practically no sanitary appliances.

"No improvements and very little repairs have been put into the houses in all this time. They are in all degrees of age and decrepitude. The streets and alleys are neglected by the city, the houses neglected by the landlords. It is an abandoned district, publicly and socially. The residents are working-class families, mostly unskilled labor. They are mainly foreigners, many of them of recent arrival, unfamiliar with our laws and ways. They have no 'friends at court.'

"Not long since an association of leading citizens and church members for promoting purity in the city explained that their activities would be west of Jefferson avenue, 'where nearly all the people live.' They thought only of the West-Enders. There are more people east of Jefferson avenue than west of it. They are lost sight of and ignored in the rush for mansions and modern improvements on the boulevards and in the new sections.

"No one means to be unjust or heartless to the hard-working poor. The residents of the West End are as kindly disposed as any other. They are simply ignorant and indifferent. They do not know or think. Some know or think a little, but feel that the problem is beyond repair. Some say that people get the conditions they are fit for. Others say it is a retribution or the will of the Lord. 'The poor ye have always with you' is made to mean a divine injunction that so it must be and ought to be.

"Very few West-Enders have ever been in the congested districts where the poor people live. They avoid the car lines that pass through any corner of these forlorn districts. Between Chouteau avenue and Cass avenue, and between the

river and Eighteenth street, 115,000 people live. In this district more than two-thirds of the relief work is done. On my 'poverty map' the solid spots are most prominent between Broadway and Twelfth street, between Wash and O'Fallon. In this region there is scarcely a bathroom, scarcely any plumbing, very few alleys that are moderately clean, very few houses that are in good repair, a large portion are occupied by a full-sized family to one room or two rooms.

"Existing city ordinances could, if enforced, secure sanitary improvements and cleanliness. In many cases reconstruction would be required, and in some cases destruction. The expenditure of a much smaller sum than was recently proposed for making a boulevard of King's highway would make parks and playgrounds in every locality. A small part of the money expended in 10 years on mansions in the West End would replace thousands of these dilapidated houses with good ones. A small part of the capital invested in speculative undertakings away from the city would be a safer investment if put into good, new tenement houses.

"A majority of the children of these localities have never been to a park. Many of them have never been on a street car. They know nothing of singing birds or fragrant flowers or waving trees. Their playground is the muddy street. Their spots of light are the kindergarten, the recently established playgrounds, occasional excursions to the suburbs or the country. All of these are recent innovations and they are indexes of what can be done.

"Most of the livers in this district are industrious independent, and some of them quite comfortable, but there are also many on the ragged edge of poverty. These are the casual laborers, the lowest paid factory workers, scrubwomen, washerwomen, peddlers, widows with children. The small income of these people is wasted by the high prices they pay for everything. They buy their coal by the basketful, they buy supplies in the smallest quantities and at the highest prices; they go often to the pawnshop. Whoever be the occupants of the houses in these sections, the physical condition indoors and out is, as a rule, entirely unfit.

"It is this and similar sections of the city that should enlist the interest and energy of public-spirited citizens. The Civic Improvement league, the churches, and, we might add, the Business Men's league, should not complacently allow such conditions to exist in our midst. It is much more important that these forlorn districts, occupied by more than one hundred thousand of our people, should be put into reasonable condition, than that we attain a population of a million or show an abnormal increase in investments and business.

"The rents in the poor quarters are abnormally high, compared with the asking price for the property. In the West End rents are usually 8 or 9 per cent gross on the cost price or the full market price of the property. In the congested districts the real estate lists all show a rental rate of from 11 to 16 per cent on the asking

price of the property. Take out 4 per cent for taxes, insurance, repairs, vacancies and collection of charges and there still remains the abnormal interest rate of 7 to 11 per cent. If men with some means and a disposition to help out will buy some of this property, put it in good repair and make some substantial improvements, and then be satisfied with 5 per cent net returns, they can give these greatly improved accommodations and still reduce the rent 25 per cent.

"In some cities in the Old World, notably Naples, Birmingham and Glasgow, whole districts of this character have been condemned and replaced either by the cities or building companies, with modern sanitary tenements. In New York many of the worst tenements have been reconstructed or torn down and replaced by legal process. The tenement house regulations and rigid inspection are much further advanced in most other large cities than in St. Louis.

"A Tenement House commission has recently been formed in St. Louis, having in view the enforcement of the existing ordinances and the enactment of such new ones as are found necessary. This commission should have the cordial support of every official and every well-meaning citizen. The Health department has powers, and should exercise them. There is no more crying evil than the neglected residence districts, and nothing that is so destructive to life and health.

"The best way for anyone to study a subject is by experiment. Merely investigating or reading or studying reports gives a very inadequate understanding. We should do with the social problem just what we do with problems in chemistry or in physics—go to the laboratory, know it and feel it by being in it, doing it.

"I have lived in the section of which I speak. This is very different from going slumming or seeing the sights or hunting remarkable specimens. It is not a dangerous proceeding. The rooms and kitchens are not scrupulously clean, but don't strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. Take a microscope and examine your Axminsters and your upholstery. Turn it on the dust that floats in the air in your room. Get a history of the invalid occupants of your Pullman berth. Go into a bakery or a dairy or a canning and preserve factory. Analyze the adulterated foods.

"By living among the people on equal terms you learn how they live, learn that they are sound at heart, that they have as much sense, as much good will, as much affection as any other class. You learn that mankind is very much alike, that, after all, the political declaration of 'equality,' or the church declaration of 'brotherhood,' are not necessarily Pickwickian. Having lived in the squalid quarters, you will know what is needed, how it can be supplied, and you may get awakened to the grewsome realities.

"My Leclaire experience convinces me that practically all people respond promptly to improved facilities. Clean up a block, put the houses in order, inspect, advise and in some things and some cases enforce, and the people will do their part."