

# The Commoner.

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Next issue The Commoner's educational series will deal with the initiative and referendum.

Representative Willett made the mistake of saying it in congress instead of to congress.

However, California may continue to enact a few laws without first securing presidential consent.

Of course there are those in the south who are hopeful that Mr. Taft will return pie for 'possum.

'Possum as a steady diet has its drawbacks, but with political pie for dessert a lot of people are willing to endure it.

Those convicted labor leaders are talking like men who can see no disgrace in going to jail under certain conditions.

Perhaps the house clearly saw the impossibility of meeting the president on his own ground of invective and denunciation.

The papers claiming that Mr. Taft will carry out the Roosevelt policies are careful not to pledge him to carry out the Roosevelt language.

We will not believe that the limit of equestrianism has been reached until the president rides his favorite saddlehorse up Washington monument.

Having allowed Mr. Willett to say all he wanted to say the house promptly ordered him to take his seat. Congressional dignity must be preserved at all hazards.

It has been only seventeen years since Homestead and it may be possible that there are some yet alive who were closely connected with that affair and who are sadly in need of a pension.

Wireless Operator Binns of the steamer Republic does not belong to the "has" class, although the passengers on that ill-fated steamer are to be congratulated upon the fact that they did.

The Omaha Bee is objecting to the establishment of a school of political economy at the Nebraska state university. The Omaha Bee is the republican organ that severely denounced a plank in the republican national platform under the mistaken idea that the plank denounced was a sentence taken from one of Mr. Bryan's campaign speeches.

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# CAMPAIGNING WITH BRYAN

VOLUME 9, NUMBER 4

(Robert F. Rose in "The Shorthand Writer")

Have you ever experienced the sensation of having a twenty-two story brick house tumble on you one brick at a time? Or do you know how it feels to be the recipient of the kicks, jabs and hugs of a thousand football teams, each member of which is intent on doing you the greatest bodily injury he possibly can? Didn't happen to get in the way of two or three of the automobiles competing in the Vanderbilt cup race, did you?

Never had any of these little things happen to you? Well, the effect of such trifles would be meager in comparison with what election day did to yours truly. Even the violent shaking up which Major Dickinson, the New York Herald correspondent, received when he attempted to ride the democratic trick mule was but a poor, trifling thing when you consider the jolt my poor feelings received when the election returns came in to Fairview on election night. And it wasn't all in one big lump, but the torture was a long drawn out affair, and it came all the way from Maine to California.

All of which must be a great surprise to my readers, for the tenor of my articles published during the campaign of course did not show my political leanings or the love in which I held the nominee of the democratic party. But truth will out, and I now confess that I am a democrat and that I regarded the man whom I served as private secretary with something a great deal more than esteem, and even to election day, shared with him the belief that he would be successful. Nor was I alone in my size-up of the situation, nor in the regard in which I held Mr. Bryan. The newspaper correspondents—those rough and ready fellows who have reported everything from a national legislature to friendly set-tos between Russia and Japan, and who are case-hardened and as phlegmatic as wooden Indians—also showed real grief when it was seen that the tide was flowing in the opposite direction. In fact, one of them stayed in his room in the hotel all day Wednesday after the election, refusing to meet any of his friends, and at night when we met him his eyes were swollen with constant weeping. It was a sorrowful bunch, and verily do I believe that very little provocation would have resulted in murder most foul, for when one's feelings are shattered, one can not withstand the temptation to take summary vengeance on another who twits him because of defeat, even in the smallest degree.

And how did the one most interested take his defeat? Much easier than did any of us. At 10 o'clock election night he retired and slept as peacefully as a babe. He consoled each of us and, from all appearances, we were the losers and not Mr. Bryan. True, he lost the presidency—the highest office within the gift of any people. But from his demeanor, one would have thought he was the least concerned. To those who know Mr. Bryan intimately and who have had an opportunity to study him at close range, the reason for his apparent lack of disappointment was obvious, but it would be hard to explain to one who is accustomed to meet and deal with the average politician, with his petty meannesses and his hopes centered on self, how it was possible for any man to lose such a high office with no visible sign of regret. In this age, in which the pursuit of the almighty dollar seems to be the one consideration, it is indeed hard to imagine a man who regards such an honor but an opportunity to do good to his fellow man, and who, when such opportunity is taken from him, looks about him for other opportunities to improve. But those who have been near Mr. Bryan know that the office of president was attractive to him only because it would enlarge his opportunities to be of benefit to his countrymen. When this is realized—if it can be realized—it is easy to understand why one can see the honor go to another with more composure than he would if he were only interested in it because of personal gratification. Those who have not met such men will scoff at this explanation, but we who know him are aware of its truth.

We got the returns early at Fairview. On the broad enclosed porch there were six telegraph instruments, put there by the Postal and Western Union Telegraph companies and by the Associated Press. As early as 5 o'clock the returns began to come in. At first they were favorable, and a comparison of returns from Pennsylvania with those of former years gave us all hope and confidence that Mr. Bryan

was elected. The first disquieting news came from Massachusetts, in which two precincts were reported where Mr. Taft had made material gains. Then came other telegrams which changed the air of confidence to doubt, and when reports from New York City came, doubt gave way to despair. On the porch were assembled many of the neighbors, as well as the newspaper men. I retired to the library with Mr. Bryan, the most important telegrams being sent to us. Shortly before 10 o'clock Mr. Bryan announced his intention of retiring, but the rest of us stayed, hoping against hope that later returns would show material gains and disprove the trend which the earlier ones indicated. At midnight we left, a whipped, disappointed crowd. And, with the telegram of congratulations sent by Mr. Bryan to Mr. Taft, and the reply of the successful candidate, the campaign came to a close.

Looking back over the last few weeks of active campaigning, it seems but a phantasmagoria in which I was but an automaton. It had gotten to be an old story with us, and the work of the campaign had told on us physically. While I know that the work did not compare in volume with that in the 1896 campaign, when each and every speech had to be reported in full and transcribed, there was a difference of twelve years, and work which I did then would have been a physical impossibility during the last campaign. It is said that one could become accustomed to hanging. I know that one can become accustomed to fighting crowds from early morning until after midnight, writing shorthand under difficulties and transcribing notes on trains running at a mile a minute. There was the same old local committee to contend with daily; the same big crowds that at every station, with the same demands that Mr. Bryan speak from a platform erected at some distance from the train, even though the stop was but five minutes. When the larger cities were reached, there was the usual big bunch of mail to be opened, the more important being referred to Mr. Bryan, and the rest to be answered by me as his secretary. The novelty had worn off, and today it is impossible for me to understand how Mr. Bryan could speak to so many crowds and inject into his addresses the earnestness and eloquence of which he was capable.

The work of private secretary was something more than the mere reporting of the speeches of the candidate. While we were in New Jersey, we were informed that there was a great mass of mail in New York City, and I was sent in a day ahead to attend to it. That was a Friday night, and until 2 o'clock the following Wednesday morning I was busy dictating letters. Stenographer after stenographer was exhausted, and a good week's salary was spent in postage stamps. More than 3,500 letters were received by us there, and each one demanded and received an answer. They ranged from the begging letter of some poor mendicant, to twenty pages from some patriot who had some sure method for saving the country from destruction. There were campaign songs, campaign poetry, clippings from newspapers and magazines, suggestions in regard to lines of argument to be pursued, articles on the campaign which the writers desired published—in fact, everything one could imagine, and then some. Some of them had followed us about the country and were a month old, while others were handed me in the hotel lobby with the strict injunction that it should be opened by Mr. Bryan personally, and by no one else. One man told me that there was a law against me opening letters addressed to Mr. Bryan; his was a begging letter. All these were answered and we left New York with no mail on hand.

Until the last week or so of the campaign the weather had been ideal. In some places in New York state, however, Mr. Bryan made open air speeches in pouring rains. Once or twice I found local committeemen kind enough to hold an umbrella while I reported the speeches, but at times did not have this protection. Then the ink from my pen would run all over the notebook, and the notes were indeed hard to decipher. At nearly every place there was a wordy war with some of the locals, men who wished to occupy seats in Mr. Bryan's automobile, forgetting that it was necessary for me to be with him every minute because of the frequency of non-scheduled addresses from automobiles. At nearly every place the arrangements were of the best—at least, the local com-