

# The Commoner.

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## "Personal Liberty"

The liquor dealers, recognizing that their very obvious pecuniary interest would lessen the weight of any argument which they might publicly advance, are making their fight under cover of organizations purporting to represent those who use liquor. Many well-meaning men have been misled into believing that every attempt to lessen the evils of intemperance is a "fanatical attack" on "personal liberty."

It is time the phrase "personal liberty" were defined.

What is meant by "personal liberty?"

Does it mean that a person has a right to drink in any quantity, at any time, and in any place, no matter what injury he may inflict upon others? If not, with whom rests the right to fix limitations?

A drunken man is a menace to the lives and property of those about him; have his neighbors no right to protect themselves?

A drunkard robs his wife and children, and he may finally make his family and himself a charge upon society; has society no right to protect itself?

The saloon is next-of-kin to the brothel and the gambling hall; it is a rendezvous for the criminal element and the willing tool of the corrupt politician; has not the body politic a right to protect itself from the demoralization which the saloon works?

The right to drink does not necessarily include the right to demand the establishment of a saloon. The right to drink is sufficiently protected by any arrangement that permits the reasonable use of liquor under reasonable conditions; and it must be remembered that the right to drink, like any other right, can be forfeited. Nothing is more sacred than the right to life, and yet one may forfeit his right to life if he uses it in such a way as to threaten the life of another. So, the man who drinks to excess may forfeit the right to drink; even the moderate drinker may forfeit the right to drink in moderation if, not content with reasonable regulation, he insists that liquor shall be sold under conditions that constitute a menace to the home and the state.

The man who desires to drink moderately ought to join with those who seek to reduce the evils of drink to the lowest possible point, instead of allying himself with those who ignore the evils of intemperance and resist every effort put forth for the protection of society.

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### PRINCIPLES THAT MEANDER

"No platform can ever persuade me to commit a crime against the interest of the people of Texas."—Senator Bailey at Pilot Point, August 12, 1909.

"I simply desire to say, Mr. Speaker, in response to what has been said about my votes in the Fifty-second and Fifty-third congresses—I was not here to listen to this statement, but I was informed of it—that when I cast those votes the raw material doctrine was the indorsed policy of my party, and as a loyal member of that party I subordinated my individual judgment to its platform."—Senator Bailey in the house of representatives, July 19, 1897, first session, Fifty-fifth congress.

We may be permitted to say that these remarks, of an exculpatory nature, were made during the consideration of the Dingley bill in response to Benton McMillan of Tennessee, who had called on the then Representative Bailey to explain why, when the Wilson bill was being made, Mr. Bailey had voted for free coal, free iron ore, free barbed wire, free sugar and free wool.

The last preceding national platform declaration on the subject was that of 1892, when it indorsed "the efforts made by democrats of the present congress to modify its (the McKinley bill's) most oppressive features in the direction of free raw materials. \* \* \*"

That was twelve years ago.

We hope we may be allowed to observe that perhaps Senator Bailey regards loyalty to party as one of the follies of youth. For it appears, from a casual reference to the records, that Senator Bailey was, aforesaid, loyal to the principles enunciated by his party in national convention assembled. He then declared himself so, unequivocally. What he may have served to change his views as to what the representative owes to the party can be left only to surmise.—Dallas (Texas) News.

### WITH ALDRICH OF COURSE

Some republican editors are so simple as to wonder as to which side of the Aldrich-Cummins controversy President Taft takes. Have they forgotten that in his Boston speech President Taft paid a high tribute to Senator Aldrich and announcing that the Rhode Island senator would make the trip he is now making in order to set the people right added: "Mr. Aldrich is the leader of the senate and certainly one of the ablest statesmen in financial matters in either house. I believe it to be his earnest desire to aid the people and to crown his political career by the preparation and passage of a bill which shall give us a sound and safe monetary and banking system. It would be a long step toward removing the political obstacles to a proper solution of the question."

### SACRED?

The Washington correspondent for the Chicago Record-Herald says that some of Speaker Cannon's lieutenants are claiming that it is the purpose of Roosevelt's friends to aid in the election of a democratic house in 1910 for the purpose of developing a demand for Roosevelt in 1912. Can it be possible that republican leaders are getting scared?

### APPROPRIATE

In his speech at Chicago Senator Aldrich made slighting reference to Andrew Jackson. It is just as appropriate that the Rhode Island senator entertain Nick Biddle views of "Old Hickory" as that he should advocate the Nick Biddle banking system.

## Free Speech

The affirmation of the judgment of the lower court in the case against Gompers, Mitchell and Morrison, brings forcibly to the attention of the public the consideration of the subject of the freedom of the press. It may be difficult to secure an impartial weighing of the subject, since prejudice against or partiality toward the accused will affect the minds of many. But this is a subject which ought to be considered on its merits, for it is likely to exert a far-reaching influence if the highest court in the land sustains the courts below, and punishment is finally inflicted upon the defendants. It will establish a new precedent, the influence of which can hardly be estimated. There was a time in our nation's history when encroachment upon the freedom of speech would have aroused immediate and unanimous protest, but the conflicts which were necessary to establish the right are long past, and those who took part in those contests are dead. The present generation came into these rights by inheritance, and seem to be as indifferent to the real value of the inheritance as the rich man's son is to the value of money which he received without having to put forth any labor to earn it.

In a speech at Chicago a year ago, Mr. Gompers advanced a thought which ought not to be overlooked. He said that freedom of speech was guaranteed not that the citizen might say things pleasing to those in authority, but that he might say things displeasing. The citizen always had the right to say pleasing things; in fact he had every inducement to say agreeable things. The guarantees of free speech are of no value if they go no farther than to permit the saying of the things that are pleasant.

The right of free speech includes the right to criticize every department of government and every public official, whether that official be appointed or elected, and whether he serves for a term of years or for life. The judge is no exception to the rule. He is no less a servant of the people than the legislator or the executive officer, and his official conduct is as much subject to scrutiny as the conduct of the humblest public servant.

In matters of doubt the doubt should be resolved upon the side of freedom in speech, not against it. In exercising the right to criticize the business methods of a corporation the laboring man is as much within the sphere of his rights as is the stockholder of a corporation when he is speaking to other stockholders in regard to the conduct of employees. The officials of a corporation and the stockholders of a corporation do not hesitate to co-operate against employees in any controversy between the employees and the corporation—they do not hesitate to prescribe terms upon which they will employ workmen. Why should the workmen be restrained from discussing the conditions upon which they will accept employment? The only line that rests upon reason and can be justified by argument is the line separating persuasion from violence. As long as the laboring man reasons with his co-laborer or presents an argument he is within his rights, and the one to whom the argument is addressed has a right to hear. The business methods of a corporation are proper subjects of discussion by employees as well as by customers, and a decree which deprives the laboring man of this right is a step toward industrial bondage. The dangers involved in the court's decision are so great that the laboring man ought not to be left to combat them alone. Every citizen interested in the preserving of our institutions ought to feel a personal concern in maintaining inviolate the right to think, and the right to speak. Not only free government but civilization itself depends upon free speech as much as upon any other one thing for its very existence.