

The Commoner.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR

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A Familiar Warning

When President Taft visited Arizona and New Mexico he took occasion to warn them not to write constitutions like Oklahoma's. Well, he gave the same warning to Oklahoma but the people there ratified the constitution by over 100,000 majority and, as the democrats carried the state by only 30,000 it was evident that a large number of republicans endorsed the constitution. And so a large number of republicans in Arizona and New Mexico are likely to insist upon the right of the people of the territories to write their own constitutions whether those constitutions please the president or not. Those on the outside are at liberty to make suggestions but the people who are to live under the constitutions are the ones to determine their provisions, subject only to the condition that they do not violate the federal constitution.

The provision in the Oklahoma constitution which seemed to arouse the ire of the president most was that embodying the initiative and referendum, but that was the most important provision in the document. It gave the people control over their government and insured them against misrepresentation. The initiative gives the voters the means of compelling the submission of any question upon which they desire to act, and the referendum enables them to veto any legislative measure to which they object. To attack the initiative and referendum is to attack the doctrine of self-government; to oppose it is to question the capacity of the people for self government.

If the people of the territories are careful to see that their constitutions contain the initiative and referendum they need not worry about other provisions because with these they can soon correct any mistakes that the constitutional conventions may make. Oklahoma is the only state to begin with these guarantees; the other states have had to add them. Missouri, Maine, Oregon, Montana and South Dakota having already acted. The others will act in time. Arizona and New Mexico have waited long; they can make up for lost time by beginning right.

"CORRUPT AND CONTENTED"

Lincoln Steffins, a magazine writer, visited Philadelphia recently and addressing a representative of the Philadelphia North American, said: "When I was here before Philadelphia was corrupt, but not contented; but today I see that it is both corrupt and contented."

It is bad enough for the people of a municipality, of a state or a nation to become so careless that their public servants become corrupt and carry on their infamies, as they often do, all the while their constituents imagine they are rendering faithful service. But when the corruption has been exposed, as is the case with Philadelphia; when it has been shown that the

WILL YOU HELP MAKE IT A MILLION?

Charles V. Dieter, Mondak, Mont.— If you run the subscription price at 60 cents per year in clubs of five for a few months we ought to be able to put The Commoner in a million homes before next November. Why not make this suggestion a war cry:

"A million subscribers for November, 1910."

If you would just put this in on the front page of The Commoner that you want a million subscribers before the election next November and make the price 60 cents, and ask all your readers to help in getting them, you would be surprised at the rate names would come in. If every doctor and lawyer that takes The Commoner and believes in its teaching would just ask their clients to subscribe for the paper when they came into their office, there would be a million subscribers in two months, or less. The four names that I send you herein, besides my own name, are men that came into my office and I just asked them if they didn't want to subscribe for The Commoner and told them that I was going to send in a list of names and asked them if they didn't want to join the list, and they all said that they did and gave me their 60 cents and three of them told me that they have been wanting to subscribe for The Commoner for some time but just neglected to do so. One of these men was a republican, but he don't like the new tariff law. I think that the prospects for a democratic house next fall never were better. When the price of everything begins to raise, the people will begin to realize the makeshift the new tariff bill really is. I will send in the names of some more subscribers soon. Best success to The Commoner and to Mr. Bryan.

people of that city have been plundered by public officials and by rings that have fattened upon public contracts; when it has been made known to the people that vice and crime has been protected systematically and persistently, then to be told that the town is thoroughly contented with its plight is deplorable indeed.

No wonder men who earnestly strive to improve conditions lose courage. Is it not, however, true that the very blackness of the cloud that presents itself to the reformer in Philadelphia, ought to give new strength to the reformer's arm and new courage to his heart?

"BRINGING PEACE"

Republican editors and politicians are busy devising "means of bringing peace in the republican party." One suggestion is that the regulars under President Taft withdraw the threat to withhold the postoffices from the insurgents. Another is that Secretary of the Interior Ballinger resign. It can not be that republican insurgents have no firmer base than would appear in the light of these suggestions. If Secretary Ballinger should retire and if every insurgent received every office for which he asked, the fact would remain that Aldrichism and Cannonism is rampant in the capitol building, in the White House and throughout the departments of the public service where the republican organization is dominant. Some politicians may be interested in the distribution of the offices but the rank and file of the American people are interested in the cause of popular government and Aldrichism and Cannonism, which is fast coming to be regarded as another name for Taftism, is an ever increasing danger to the principle upon which our government was founded.

Unspeakable Woe

The Christian Endeavor World, Boston, Mass., printed in its issue of January 20 an article written by Mr. Bryan and relating to total abstinence. The article follows:

Why should one sign a total-abstinence pledge? First, because it marks the crossing of the line into the total-abstinence brotherhood; second, because it strengthens one in the hours of temptation; and third, because it encourages others to abstain from intoxicating liquor.

A pledge is merely the written evidence of an obligation already taken. A man can hardly call himself a total abstainer who has never inwardly resolved not to drink. It is the decision that he makes which fixes his status; and, when he has made that decision, there is no reason why he should object to its being known, unless he is either ashamed of it or afraid that he can not keep it.

There is nothing humiliating about taking a pledge. Every man who becomes a member of a fraternity or secret society of any kind binds himself by a solemn obligation; every person who becomes a naturalized citizen takes the oath of allegiance; every official is sworn into office by subscribing to a pledge to support the constitution, obey the laws, and perform the duties pertaining to his office. The church member takes upon himself certain obligations as a condition precedent to membership, and marriage is solemnized by an exchange of pledges.

The husband and wife do not regard it as a sign of weakness to enter the holy estate of wedlock by promising fidelity to each other in the presence of witnesses. The man who verbally declares that he will pay a debt, but refuses to put the promise into writing, is not likely to be pointed out as an example of honesty; the official who says that he intends to perform the duties of his office, but does not want to make the promise a matter of record, excites suspicion.

Why should the man who intends to abstain from intoxicating liquor refuse to let it be known?

In hours of temptation it is a source of strength to one to feel that his word is out, and that others expect him to live up to it. The expectation of friends is in itself a factor to be considered, and then the pledge of total abstinence helps to determine the circle of acquaintances. The total abstainer makes friends among total abstainers, and his friends constitute an environment that is helpful, while one who objects to the pledge is more apt to mingle with those who are not restrained by a pledge; and this environment in turn may lead one into moderate drinking, and from moderate drinking into the excessive use of liquor.

But there is another reason for signing the pledge, which must have great weight with those who recognize that man is responsible for the influence which he exerts as well as for his conduct. This sense of responsibility can not be enforced by law, and it can not be cultivated except through an appeal to the conscience.

It is not sufficient for a man to say that he can drink in moderation and without harm to himself. This might be entirely true in his particular case, although many overestimate their capacity to drink in moderation, and they often underestimate the harm done to themselves. There is a moral question, which is much larger; namely, can a man afford to indulge the appetite for drink, even when he can do so without harm to himself, if by so doing he leads weaker men to ruin?

The great apostle declared that if eating meat made his brother to offend, he would eat no meat. Why this resolve? Because the love of his brother was stronger in him than the desire for meat; and so we may hope, even expect, that with the growth of the idea of brotherhood and of the sense of comradeship one with another the individual, especially the

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