

Now for Currency Reform

The president, in a speech which he delivered after signing the tariff bill, sounded a bugle call on the currency question.

The bill has passed the house with a majority that ought to give it immediate standing in the senate. Only three democrats voted against the bill on final passage and twenty-four regular republicans and fourteen progressive republicans voted for it. There is no reason for delay in the senate. Every senator has his mind made up; the friends of the bill are ready to act upon it and the opponents of the measure have had opportunity to register their objections.

Why should the country be denied the immediate benefit of a bill whose provisions have been so widely indorsed? Why should any friend of the measure countenance a postponement of the voting?

EVERY READER OF THE COMMONER IS URGED TO WRITE HIS SENATORS AT ONCE, MAKING KNOWN HIS VIEWS AND URGING IMMEDIATE ACTION.

The president, in congratulating the country on the passage of the tariff bill, said:

"We have set the business of this country free from those conditions which have made monopoly not only possible but in a sense easy and natural.

"The power to control and guide and direct

the credits of the country is the power to say who shall and who shall not build up the industries of the country, in which direction they shall be built, and in which direction they shall not be built. We are now about to take the second step, which will be the final step in setting the business of this country free. That is what we shall do in the currency bill, which the house has already passed and which I have the utmost confidence the senate will pass much sooner than some pessimistic individuals believe. Because the question—now that this piece of work is done—will arise all over the country, 'For what do we wait? Why should we wait to crown ourselves with consummate honor? Are we so self-denying that we do not wish to complete our success?'"

Let there be no pause; the work is well begun; it must be finished. The party has put its hand to the plow—it can not turn back.

When the currency bill is passed, there will be other important measures to consider, for the democratic program is a complete one and the president recognizes the full measure of his responsibility, but for the present—for this session—it will be enough to add currency reform to tariff reform, and then the country will be ready for further applications of democratic principles to existing conditions.

W. J. BRYAN.

Dignity

The New York World, which has recently set itself up as the custodian of official dignity, prints the following in its editorial columns:

"With the air of a just man conscious of his own perfection, Mr. Bryan says of those who do not approve of the secretary of state exhibiting himself for money:

"A part of this criticism is malicious, a part of it is partisan and a part of it is based upon misinformation. That which is malicious will answer itself; that which is partisan will be accepted as such; that which is based upon misinformation will cease when the critics are better informed."

"If this were all, the answer might be sufficient, but in judging human conduct there are considerations quite as important as partisanship, malice and misinformation. There is good taste; there is propriety; there is precedent, and there is dignity. Opinion that is based on these things can not be ignored, no matter what may be said of partisanship, malice and misinformation."

Yes, there is good taste, but who is to set the standard? Shall the newly-rich fit all to their procrustean bed? It is an old maxim that there is no use disputing about taste; each one looks at the subject from his own point of view. In dress, in manners, and in conduct there are all grades and degrees of taste and a wide latitude is necessarily allowed to the individual. Nothing would be more tyrannical than to compel acceptance of the views of any one as to what is good taste.

And so with propriety, which is but a synonym for good taste. The sense of propriety may be called the sixth sense, so important is it. Words fitly spoken, the doing of the right thing at the right time, the suiting of the act to the opportunity—all are desirable. But to whose judgment are we to bow in such matters? Who will assume to bound propriety with rigid rules? A few newspaper proprietors may introduce into their editorial rooms the canons of propriety that prevail among courtiers but they can not force them into American public life.

With precedent it is a little different. A good precedent is valuable for guidance; but the best use that can be made of a bad precedent is to break it. All reforms require the breaking of precedent. Progressiveness is its very antithesis. To say that that which HAS been done must necessarily BE done for evermore is to decree stagnation. To rest one's case upon precedent may indicate lack of argument rather than plentitude of wisdom. The man who can give a

good reason for the thing that he does is not compelled to fall back upon the excuse that someone else has done the same thing before.

But dignity! What a word to conjure with! What follies have been committed in its name and what false conceptions of dignity abound in the world! With some it is more dignified to inherit wealth than to earn it—to waste the money that someone else has accumulated than to engage in remunerative toil. Many a man has been brought to bankruptcy by his efforts to be dignified when he should have endeavored to be useful. False dignity is about the poorest investment that man can make; it yields no dividends; it earns no rewards.

If the idea of dignity is overworked in the individual it is still more abused in the official, especially in a free country. In a republic the officials are the servants; the people are the sovereigns—"the servant is not greater than his lord." In aristocratic circles, where the weak-minded toady to those of high birth, and among the plutocratic, where sycophants fawn before those who possess wealth, the common ways of the common people are regarded with contempt; but among the masses, where men are measured by what they accomplish and are weighed according to their worth, the earning of a living is not a disgrace and mingling with the multitude is not a cause of reproach. The people—those who have the power to overturn rulers, and to establish governments, are fit companions for such as exercise authority by their sufferance. The forum is not below the level of official life; it is not a stepping down to go from the desk to the platform. As Antaeus, the wrestler, received new strength from Mother Earth as often as he touched the ground, so the man in public life must keep in contact with the people if he would be strong; only when he allows himself to be separated from them can he be overcome.

ANOTHER GOOD MEASURE

There has been introduced in both the senate and house bills providing for the removal of the restrictions on deposits in postal savings banks. The existing law limits deposits to one hundred dollars for each calendar month. It is now proposed to take off the limit and allow deposits without restrictions.

This is a step in the right direction. If the banks will not insure depositors against loss, the government should provide a means by which absolute security can be obtained.

What a pity the present proprietor of the New York World does not attend the school of journalism established by Joseph Pulitzer and learn how to conduct a newspaper.

NEW TARIFF LAW FAVORS THE MASSES

A striking difference between the Underwood tariff law and its predecessor is that it does away with the gross discriminations that marked most republican tariff measures. In dozens of instances that The Commoner gave in detail in its analyses of the Payne-Aldrich law the lower grade of goods used by the average householder carried a higher rate of duty than the better grades which were manufactured for the use of the richer classes. In the new law this process has been reversed. The man best able to pay a tariff duty pays the higher rate and the one least able to do it pays the lower rate. In the Payne-Aldrich law, for instance, the commonest earthenware used on the table of the poor was taxed at the same high rate as was the most expensive and best decorated china. In the Underwood law these were placed in different classes. Crockery, earthenware, granite and semi-porcelain wares were grouped together with a duty of 40 per cent affixed instead of 60, while the china and porcelain are in another group and carry 55 per cent duty. In the matter of linoleums and oil cloths, the Payne-Aldrich law carried duties nearly twice as great as the Underwood law, but by the new system of classification the better grades will carry the higher duties, while the lower grades carry the lower duties. In the case of gloves the same principle was applied, which was a direct reversal of the republican policy, under which the many-buttoned, long-sleeved and high-priced glove of my lady was dutiable at a less rate than the common leather gloves of the masses. The same is true of the hosiery schedules. In fact, everywhere this gross inequality was found it was eliminated.

The partnership supposed by partisans to exist between the republican party and Providence seems to have been dissolved—not by mutual consent, but by the voluntary retirement of the silent member of the firm.

MAYOR GAYNOR

All who are interested in the progressive cause will share the sorrow which Mayor Gaynor's death has brought to his family and personal friends. He was a strong man—strong in his mental grasp and strong in his moral courage. He had the courage to think for himself and to act according to his thought. In 1896 he was one of the few prominent men in public life in New York who dared to espouse the democratic cause upon its merits. Many gave formal support to the ticket while dissenting from the platform; not so with Judge Gaynor; he was not afraid to adopt and defend the political creed set forth in Chicago. He knew that the money question, important as it was, was but a surface manifestation of a deeper issue, of which the country is now fully informed. He knew that the democratic party was striking the first telling blow against corporate domination of the instrumentalities of government. His heart was for the people and he became their champion. From that day until his death, he was on the firing line. Like all who fight the people's battle, he had enemies, but he never turned aside from his determination to lend assistance to the cause of reform.

His place will be hard to fill, for relatively few combine his ability, his instinct for public affairs and his deep and broad sympathy for the masses.

A new tariff law is in force and still the sun shines and the earth spins around just as it did under high protection.

PRESIDENT YUAN SHI KAI

The Chinese parliament has selected Yuan Shi Kai, the provisional president, to be its first chief executive. He was chosen on the third ballot to serve for five years. Receiving a two-thirds vote of the united house of parliament, he enters upon his office with a strong backing and his career gives great promise.

It will be remembered that the United States was the first of the nations to recognize the new republic. In fact, it was almost the only great nation to do so before the election. President Wilson is to be congratulated upon having led the way; he acted wisely and our country is near to the hearts of the people of the new republic because of its prompt sympathetic action.

Success for the United States of China, and to President Yuan. May each day add new luster to his career and each year mark an advance in his nation's forward march.