

The Commoner

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THE COMMONER, LINCOLN, NEB.

The address Mr. Bryan delivered before the Nebraska constitutional convention, January 12, will be published in a later issue.

The farm papers make note of the fact that pure-bred hogs are selling at a higher price than ever. Well, there are some ill-bred ones down in the business districts, called profiteers, that are doing exactly the same thing.

Not being by nature cruel and vindictive, we are glad that we were not present when Senator Lodge read in the newspapers the other day that the allies had invited President Wilson to call the first meeting of the league of nations.

With Mexico, the yellow peril, the reds and the Russian bolshevists to use as scarecrows to make the American people believe that their salvation lies in adopting universal military training for their young men, the militarists of the country ought to be happy while the happiness is good.

A little while ago the republican newspapers were demanding to know what President Wilson meant by an industrial democracy, but if we are to judge from recent editorials therein they seem to feel that they misread it and that now that the political campaign is opening it must have been an industrious democracy.

Forward-looking democrats with a good record for progressiveness in the past are the kind of men the party must put to the front this year in the state and nation. The sudden discovery on the part of some eminent and some not so eminent gentlemen how popular suffrage and prohibition is with them would have done them more good, politically speaking, if it had been made before it got so popular with the people.

RENEWALS

The subscriptions of those who became subscribers with the first issue of The Commoner, and have renewed at the close of each year, expire with the January (1920) issue. In order to facilitate the work of changing and re-entering the addresses upon our subscription books and mailing lists and obviate the expense of sending out personal statements announcing that renewals are due, subscribers are urgently requested to renew with as little delay as possible. The work of correcting the stencils entails an enormous amount of labor and the publisher asks subscribers to assist as much as possible by making their renewals promptly.

A Word to the Rich

May I speak a word to those of the rich who regard the Bible as authority? In the 12th chapter of Luke, beginning with the 16th verse, the Master presents a thought that deserves consideration at this time.

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully.

And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

And he said, This will I do; I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

There are many whose ground has brought forth plentifully during the past generation. Most of the crop has been gathered without any violations of the divine law of rewards. When God gave us the world with its fertile soil, the sun with its warmth, the rains with its moisture, His voice proclaimed as clearly as if it had issued from the clouds; Go Work, and in proportion to your industry and intelligence, so shall be your reward. There is no other measure of rewards that can be defended before the bar of judgment, and this law prevails except where force suspends it, or cunning evades it. The legitimate wealth of the country is accumulated in accordance with this law and those who accumulate legitimately are not afraid to trust their property to the protection of laws made by the people, because they know that the people desire to do justice and will not intentionally wrong any man, no matter how much he has, if his accumulation represents equivalent service rendered to society in return.

But, unfortunately, every fortune does not measure equivalent service rendered to society. Some fortunes represent methods which can not be defended in morals and some are due to methods which can not be defended in our courts of law. We are continually devising laws for the protection of the people from fraud and injustice. During the last few years nearly all the state legislatures have enacted what are known as "Blue-sky laws" to protect the unwary from the frauds that promoters attempt and the post-office authorities are kept busy trying to keep the mails from being employed for the promotion of swindling schemes. But these deal with the frauds that are attempted on a small scale; the larger acts of injustice are perpetrated through law or in spite of law. Unjust taxation is robbery under the forms of law. Great combinations of capital have been able to prevent the passage of laws needed, and have prevented the enforcement of laws passed. We have an Anti-Trust law; it was put upon the statute books more than a quarter of a century ago and additional provisions have from time to time been added, and yet we not only have trusts but we have open defenders of the principle of private monopoly.

We have just emerged from a war that called for incalculable sacrifices. More than seven millions of human life were offered upon the altar of Mars; hundreds of billions of property were burned up and debts, grievous to be borne, were piled high upon backs already bowed under heavy burdens. Financial systems broke down under the strain and each nation engaged in the war put forth supreme effort. But while this was the common lot and while the masses met uncomplainingly the unprecedented demands, giving of their blood and of their means, a few reaped a rich harvest from the nations misfortunes. If we may judge from the income tax returns, the nation never knew such a riot of excess profits. Millionaires sprang up in rapidity and numbers never equaled in the nation's most prosperous days, and now when the war is over and people are trying to re-adjust themselves to new conditions, we find plutocracy more insolent and more arrogant than it has ever been before. It seizes upon every pretext to gain a firmer hold upon government; it resorts to every form of misrepresentation to further its ends; and it seeks to condemn as un-

patriotic, every protest against its most excessive demands.

The number of plutocrats in the country is relatively insignificant—as small as the number of anarchists, but in influence they are powerful because their interests are interwoven with the interests of great financiers, and these control many of the great newspapers of the land. Altho public ownership has age and responsibility on its side, these beneficiaries of private monopoly seek to disgrace public ownership by describing it as socialistic. One of the railroad presidents impudently answered the demand for government ownership of railroads by asking whether our nation was to be Russianized. This intolerance is breeding discontent and furnishes material to the few who preach revolution as a remedy for plutocracy.

It was the plutocrat who led the fight against popular election of senators; it was the plutocrat who fought to the last against currency reform; it was the plutocrat who tried to prevent the collection of an income tax. The plutocrat has led in profiteering. It is the plutocrat who is today seeking to turn the government over to predatory wealth and whose scheme embraces a consolidation of capitalistic interest among the railroads and private monopolies, wherever it can be established.

It is time that the PATRIOTIC rich should come out from among those who plunder the public and join in the making of laws which will re-establish competition where competition is possible and put the government in charge of all monopolies wherever monopoly is necessary. More than 90 per cent of the people have no pecuniary interests in favoritism, private monopoly or special privilege in government. If they will only join with the masses, they can right every wrong, they can remove every abuse and restore equality before the law. They can put the people in control of the government and the people, in power, will destroy the breeding places of plutocracy.

There is no real danger of revolution, because the American people are too intelligent to permit abuses to develop to the point where revolution will be accepted as the only remedy. But the sooner remedies are applied, the milder will those remedies be. The flow of justice can no more be damned than a running stream, and, as in the case of a stream, the higher the dam, the greater the danger below when the obstruction is swept away.

Let the patriotism that enabled us to mobilize our resources for war now mobilize the resources of the nation for peace. Treason was not permitted when our nation was meeting an enemy upon the battlefields; no more should the nation tolerate the attacks that are now being made upon its strength in time of peace. Our government is the best government in the world; our people are the best people in the world; let the people use the government to protect the rights of each and to advance the welfare of all. The legitimately rich—those who earned what they have—should ally themselves at once with the masses and take counsel with them. Our government should be made so good that every citizen will be willing to die if necessary to preserve it for his children and his children's children.

W. J. BRYAN.

DRINKING "IN THE AIR"

Lieutenant Maynard (speaking generally and not with any particular reference to recent fights) thus condemns the use of intoxicants by those who travel in the air.

"I said and I still say that many accidents in aviation are caused by overuse of intoxicants. Aviation is a game where a false move means disaster and in any such vocation the participant needs the full use of an active brain—not deadened and weakened by the effect of liquor.

"Such an affected brain and the corresponding reaction on the nervous system add an unnecessary fatal hazard to the already natural and necessary hazard of flying itself."

It would seem like a self-evident truth, but even self-evident truths have no weight with some of the wets.

Some mathematically-inclined gent has it figured out that since the automobile has come into general use four thousand persons are yearly killed in an effort to ascertain whether they can beat the fast passenger trains over the crossings. Yet some people complain because the public takes no interest in important railroad questions.