

**WHAT'S THE MATTER?**

The editor of The Independent is constantly being asked, by traveling men, merchants and others: "What's the matter? Trade is dull, sales are hard to make; stocks of goods are too large. Collections are slow and hard to make." The same tale is indicated in the Dun and Bradstreet reports. "Railroad earnings have fallen 7 per cent. Trade is irregular. The industrial situation has not been entirely favorable. Spring trade has been disappointing in many lines. Collections show no improvement."

The matter is just this: It is impossible to take a billion and a half of money out of the pockets of middle class people and without giving anything in return, transfer it to the coffers of a score or so of men in New York, without producing business stagnation and distress, and that is exactly what has been done during the last three years.

The watering of the stock of the steel trust took something over \$500,000,000 out of the people and it went into the hands of less than a half dozen men. That much steel common stock was sold and although it is quoted today at 10 and 11 cents it pays no dividends and every cent invested in it is a total loss. That is a sample of sixty or seventy other such transactions of large moment while there have been countless smaller ones. Money has been put in mining stock, oil well stock and every kind of stock. It came out of the little savings of the people and has been a total loss. That leaves the people poor and unable to buy. If the people generally cannot buy, business must of course be dull and collections from the merchants who have laid in stocks of goods that they cannot sell must be hard to make.

There is another thing that is impoverishing the people, especially the people of the west. That is the meat trust. Feeders are all losing money. The price of fat cattle is so low that there has been heavy losses to the banks which have made loans on cattle. Several banks in Iowa have been forced into the hands of a receiver on that account. The depositors in those banks have lost their money. The loss of these deposits has spread poverty all over the region where these banks do business. There are other banks that are holding on "by the skin of their teeth."

What's the matter? The national government has refused to enforce the criminal laws against trusts. The states have refused to prosecute men who have issued watered stocks. The common, middle class people have been raided and robbed, and the government, state and national, has refused to protect them or punish the robbers. The ministers in many cases have held up these robbers as "captains of industry" whose methods should become models for the young men of the country. The daily press has lent its powerful influence to assist the "captains of industry" to rob the people of their hard earned savings. Millions upon millions of money has been wasted in gaudy displays, in the building of useless million dollar yachts, constructing great residences along Fifth avenue, which are utterly useless for such purposes and are only pretended to be inhabited for a few weeks in the year. A very great portion of the taxes for the support of the general government has been thrown upon the poor by tariffs which increase the cost of goods consumed. That's what's the matter.

**"ABSOLUTELY IRRECONCILABLE"**

Something over a year ago, after a careful study of conditions, The Independent came to the conclusion that there was an irreconcilable conflict raging between the two wings of the democratic party—irreconcilable because based on conflicting principles. The attempt to reform the democratic party had been a failure although the reform forces within the democratic

ranks had been lead by the brilliant and honest Bryan. That being the case, The Independent declared that it was hopeless to look to the democratic party for reform, or even entertain the thought that it could succeed, for if one wing captured the national convention, and it mattered not which wing, the other would not support the platform or candidates announced.

The editor of The Independent was severely censured for taking that position, for out of it grew the Denver conference. Among those who objected was the Chicago Public. Now Mr. Post, in the issue of The Public of April 9, says:

"In considering the present situation in democratic party politics, it is folly to deny the fact of an irrepressible conflict inside the party. Without entering at this time upon any discussion of the causes and merits of this conflict, we may say, with no possibility of a reasonable contradiction, that upon the whole Grover Cleveland personifies one side of it and William J. Bryan the other, and that it is absolutely irreconcilable."

So fully convinced is Mr. Post of this position that after considering at length the whole question, he said:

"It is very doubtful if even a truce between Cleveland and Bryan themselves could hold the party together, were either nominated at this time, if such a truce were possible. But such a truce is not possible. Cleveland's friends make no concealment of their intention to bolt again if the convention goes Bryan's way; and Bryan, with all his personal popularity, could not stem the tide of defection were the convention to go Cleveland's way."

Now that is just what The Independent said more than a year ago. It therefore went to work to build up the people's party that would present a platform in which there would be no compromises with plutocracy, supported by a party in which there was no irreconcilable differences regarding principles and which would command the confidence of every man who is opposed "to that system of society in which the few get without working, and the many work without getting."

The Independent congratulates The Public upon the clear statement it makes in regard to the conditions in the party which it has so long supported and asks it now to adopt what the editor of The Independent said ten years ago, namely, "One might as well try to reform a rotten egg as to reform the democratic party while such men as Cleveland, Dave Hill and others of that stamp are admitted to its councils." If Bryan could not reform the democratic party, there is no use of any one else trying. The thing to do is to build up another party that will leave the Hill-Cleveland crowd in the same position that the Palmer-Buckner band were found in when the votes were counted after the last presidential election.

**A TEMPTATION**

There lies on the editorial table a letter from an old friend. He says: "I admire the persistency and ability with which you have fought for the more equal distribution of wealth and better conditions for the working people. I have not forgotten the time when at the first populist state convention in Nebraska you made such a gallant fight in the convention for the demands of the labor unions of Omaha which you succeeded in having made part of the platform. Neither have I forgotten that while organized labor in Omaha at that time numbered about 5,000, that these men for whom you made the fight all, with the exception of about 600, voted the republican ticket. Neither have I forgotten the speech you made to about 3,000 of them at Jefferson Square, when, without mincing words, you told them what you thought of their abandonment of their own interests. The mass of these people to whose interests you have devoted your life don't want to be helped and don't de-



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serve help. Why not let them go their way until the trusts and tariff grafters take the last shirt off their backs and then when the meal tub and pork barrel are empty, when the landlord comes with the constable and throws what few rags they have left out on the sidewalk, as is being done in New York, maybe they will do something for themselves. They have never shown any appreciation for what you have attempted to do for them. My advice to you is to quit. Go back on your farm, take it easy, enjoy life; watch the corn grow, admire the waving fields of grain, visit your neighbors. You can drop a ballot into the box as each election comes around as a protest against robbery and wrong and let that suffice."

The picture is enticing. The fight has been long and fierce with a few victories and many defeats. Those who ought to have rushed to their own defense have voted year after year to further enslave themselves. Many of the most cutting insults have come from those who we were trying to aid. The ingratitude is the same that it has been in all ages. No body of slaves ever freed themselves. But if reformers in the ages past had abandoned the fight because of ingratitude, the race would today be in primitive conditions of barbarism. Tom Hughes, in "School Days at Rugby," says:

"So it is, and must be always, my dear boys. If the Angel Gabriel were to come down from heaven and head a successful rise against the most abominable and unrighteous vested interest which this poor old world groans under, he would most certainly lose his character for many years, probably for centuries, not only with the upholders of the said vested interest, but with the respectable mass of the people whom he had delivered."

The editor of The Independent and all others who are laboring for reform expect no gratitude from those for whom they work. All that they expect is that the world will be made better and happier as the result of their toil and sacrifice.

Nevertheless, that picture of the farm, the growing corn, the waving grain and association with the old neighbors lingers in the memory. It is a temptation to abandon the long hours of study, the watch that must be kept upon the movements of parties and men, the hunt through scores of columns in the daily newspapers for the facts that will aid the cause of good government, the long hours of toil day after days. But the flag must be kept on the ramparts.

**"CARNIVAL OF CORRUPTION"**

The legislature of New York is now denounced by papers of all parties as a "carnival of corruption." The water supply of New York city has been turned over to one set of scoundrels, the gas supply to another and the sub-ways and street car lines to another. In commenting upon this legislation which will make the lot of the common people still harder up in that great city, the Wall Street Journal asks:

"Who are the most guilty parties? The bribe-giver is, as a rule, more guilty than he who takes a bribe. Who are the bribe-

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givers? Who supplied the inducements to legislators to vote for them? It is hardly to be supposed that these inducements were supplied philanthropically, by people who had no interest in the legislation. The street railway companies and the Consolidated gas company are the corporations that are, in the main, responsible for the corruption at Albany, and the managers and directors of those organizations are the people upon whom responsibility finally rests."

Why don't the Wall Street Journal, instead of covering the traitors to their city under the words "managers and directors," name the men? Why does it not denounce Rockefeller, Rogers and Belmont by name? Why does it not tell the people that these men are morally the vilest creatures that live in the city—that a street-walker of the tenderloin district or a burglar or a highway robber is not half so vile a criminal as Rockefeller, Rogers, and Belmont are. If one of the petty criminals of New York should come into the office of the Wall Street Journal, a policeman would be called. But if one of these far more desperate criminals should enter that sanctum, the editor would take off his hat and bow low. That places the Wall street editor on the same plane as the great criminals of the age. Such treatment of men who rob and steal to the value of millions is the main cause of the "carnival of corruption." The Wall street editor is just as vile in the eyes of God and honest men as are the men who have done the bribing and stealing.