

The Commoner.

Vol. I. No. 36.

Lincoln, Nebraska, September 27, 1901.

\$1.00 a Year

Freedom of Speech.

Some of the republican papers are suggesting limitations upon the freedom of speech as a cure for anarchy. The editor of THE COMMONER has as much reason as any living man to know of the abuse sometimes heaped upon candidates for office. He has been the victim of as much malice and vituperation as have ever been employed against an American, and yet he is opposed to placing any additional restriction upon the freedom of speech or the freedom of the press.

First, because the evils of restriction are greater than the evils of freedom, and, second, because abuse does not hurt the man or the party made the subject of attack. The death of President McKinley can not be traced to anything ever spoken or written against him. The assassin spoke affectionately of his victim and said that he killed him not because of his dislike for the man but because of his opposition to government of any kind. Some who are engaged in schemes which will not bear the light will shield themselves behind the murderous deed of the assassin and denounce freedom of speech because they do not want the public to be informed of their doings. Others, stirred by a righteous indignation, strike at free speech because some have abused the latitude allowed. It is time for liberty-loving citizens to protest against the attempt to suppress free speech. The warfare must be against anarchy, not against freedom of speech. Anarchy is an European product and thrives most where there is least freedom of speech and least freedom of the press. Let us not make the mistake of undermining our institutions under the delusion that we are thus protecting those institutions.

Free speech and a free press are essential to free government. No man in public life can object to the publication of the truth and no man in public life is permanently injured by the publication of a lie. That much is published that should not be is only too evident, but let public opinion correct the evil; that will be more effective than law and will bring no danger with it. If a paper abuses a political opponent stop your subscription and teach the editor to conduct his paper on respectable lines. There is a sense of justice in the human heart and he who violates it violates it at his own peril. This sense of justice ultimately turns abuse to the benefit of the man abused. The present laws against slander and libel are sufficient; leave the rest to a healthy public sentiment—and then help to create the sentiment.

High Tariff Doomed.

In his speech at Buffalo, the last speech that he made, President McKinley sounded the

death-knell of a high tariff. He said:

"We have a vast and intricate business, built up through years of toil and struggle, in which every part of the country has its stake, which will not permit of either neglect or of undue selfishness. No narrow, sordid policy will subserve it. The greatest skill and wisdom on the part of the manufacturers and producers will be required to hold and increase it. Our industrial enterprises, which have grown to such great proportions, affect the homes and occupations of the people and the welfare of the country. Our capacity to produce has developed so enormously and our products have so multiplied that the problem of more markets requires our urgent and immediate attention. Only a broad and enlightened policy will keep what we have. No other policy will get more. In these times of marvelous business energy and gain we ought to be looking to the future, strengthening the weak places in our industrial and commercial systems, that we may be ready for any storm or strain.

"By sensible trade arrangements which will not interrupt our home production we shall extend the outlets for our increasing surplus. A system which provides a mutual exchange of commodities is manifestly essential to the continued, healthful growth of our export trade. We must not repose in fancied security that we can forever sell everything and buy little or nothing. If such a thing were possible it would not be best for us or for those with whom we deal. We should take from our customers such of their products as we can use without harm to our industries and labor. Reciprocity is the natural outgrowth of our wonderful industrial development under the domestic policy now firmly established. What we produce beyond our domestic consumption must have a vent abroad. The excess must be relieved through a foreign outlet, and we should sell everywhere we can and buy wherever the buying will enlarge our sales and productions, and thereby make a greater demand for home labor.

"The period of exclusiveness is past. The expansion of our trade and commerce is the pressing problem. Commercial wars are unprofitable. A policy of good will and friendly trade relations will prevent reprisals. Reciprocity treaties are in harmony with the spirit of the times; measures of retaliation are not."

"The period of exclusiveness is past." That means that our country must enter the markets of the world, and when it does so it will be absurd to talk about needing protection from foreigners. When we sell abroad, the freight must be added to the price—we must sell at the foreign price, less the freight. In other words, we have the advantage of double freight when we sell at home. When it is admitted that we can pay the freight and compete with foreigners, no one will have the audacity to ask for a high tariff to protect domestic manufacturers against foreign competition.

Mr. McKinley's statement that we cannot sell everything and buy nothing is an axiom, but it will shock the high tariff advocates who have gone on the theory that we ought to sell to everybody and buy of nobody. But the President's speech suggests one melancholy thought. Tariff reform is about the only thing

the reorganizers favor that is Democratic and it would be really cruel if the republicans should abandon protection and leave the reorganizers no issue at all.

Another Problem.

By way of London, the information comes to the United States that the Danish Ministry "has decided to accept the United States' offer of 16,000,000 kroner for the Danish West Indies." This sum represents, in our money, about \$3,500,000. If this offer has been made, it has been made by the executive, because it is not recalled that congress has given authority for any such proposition to be made. Is this another case where Providence will have dropped the Danish West Indies into our possession? It will be interesting to observe the position to which the administration politicians will relegate these new possessions after we have paid our \$3,500,000 and have obtained the transfer of title. Will they become by a mere purchase a part of the great American Empire? Will they be domestic or foreign territory? Will they become an integral part of the Union with their inhabitants entitled to all the rights, privileges and immunities that old-fashioned people thought our constitution guaranteed to all men under our flag, or will they be mere colonists, subject to the whims and caprices of American politicians? It is presumed that if the President concludes to make this purchase, he assumes to act under the clause providing that the President by and with the consent of the senate may make treaties. We may soon be confronted with the problem as to what position the Danish West Indies will occupy with relation to the United States.

The Turning Point.

Theodore Roosevelt has reached the turning point in his political career. For several years he has cherished the ambition to be President; when he was offered the nomination for Vice President last year he hesitated to accept it for fear that it might interfere with his desire to reach the first place. Ever since his inauguration he has looked forward to 1904 as the time for the realization of his hopes. He expected to secure the nomination of his party, but he knew that it would be secured, if secured at all, at the end of a spirited contest. All at once, as the result of an assassin's shot, he was ushered into the Presidency. His fondest aspirations have been realized; the highest honor within the gift of the people in any land is now his. With what spirit will he enter upon the discharge of his duties? The answer to this question is of tremendous importance to him and to his country. He has three years