

Mr. Kestler Again.

[*The Progressive Farmer*, March 24, 1896]

He Replies [sic] to Mr. Green and Quotes Other Authorities.

Correspondence of the *Progressive Farmer*.

I thank you for the opportunity you gave me in your issue of the 3rd inst. to present to the Populists of North Carolina my views on the political situation, and as you were so kind as to give my good friend, Mr. Green, space to reply to me, I will again ask you for space to more fully establish my position and to controvert my friend's arguments. My aim in this matter is to carry our banner to victory in November, and no one has yet denied but what my proposed plan would do it, and every one has admitted that Mr. Butler's and Mr. Green's plan would cause us defeat. My impression was that we wanted to win; that there was a goal ahead for us to reach, and I was working towards that end. My opponent doesn't seem to care whether we win or lose; and "All's well that ends well."

Now, as to that article. My friend sees a seeming contradiction between the statements that I said the people were with me, and that "I felt like one who treads alone," etc. Such is not the case. In the latter statement I was telling the effect Mr. Butler's plan would have upon our party, and I called upon all not to heed his advice, but to stick to their party and to their principles. To disconnect any article is hardly fair; you destroy the meaning. Taken all together, I think I won my case by *prima facie* evidence and am willing to abide the result. He says:

"Let no half breeds sit in our convention from now on, and listen not to the voice of the non-partisan charmers, for their music is the music of sirens."

"What better 'half breeds' do you want than men who desire to cast half their votes for the common people and the other half for the bondholders and monopolists?"

Mr. Green and myself both want free silver. I claim that it is better to vote for partial Republican tickets and elect one half of them than to vote for complete Populist tickets and be defeated *in toto*. There is such a thing in political science as voting for what you do not want and electing what you do want. If we can vote for a goldbug and elect a silverite, is it not better than voting for silverites and electing goldbugs? The situation in this State comes down to just that. By voting for 11 silver Populist electors, we are bound to elect 11 goldbug Democratic electors; and by voting for 5 or 6 Republican electors and 5 or 6 Populist electors on one ticket we elect the silver ticket. And if these silver mean are honest, they cannot but want to defeat the goldbug Democratic ticket. If you could vote for the devil and elect a Populist, or vote for a Populist and elect the devil, which one would you vote for? Surely you'd vote for the one you wanted defeated. I claim that this argument can't be rebutted [sic]; and, besides, this plan will elect nine silver Congressmen, one silver Senator, the legislature, counties, etc., and surely all these are better than nothing. But he will say, we ought to win; we have a

right to win in single combat. I will quote Burke in reply to this in reply to this: "Oh, inestimable right! Ah, wonderful, transcendent right! Infatuated man! Miserable and undone country! Not to know that the claim of right without the power of enforcing it is nugatory and idle. This is the profound logic which comprises the whole chain of his reasoning.

Not inferior to this was the wisdom of him who resolved to shear the wolf. What! shear a wolf? Have you considered the resistance, the difficulty, the danger of the attempt?" "No," says the madman; "I have considered nothing, but the right." So my friend has the right to shear the wolf of Democracy, but it will take the help of complete co-operation of Populists and Republicans to do it. My friend said in his paper November 28, 1895:

"If we ever get the law providing for the free and unlimited coinage of silver 16 to 1, it will not be through any effort of the so called free silver Democrats who will vote for a gold bug if nominated by their party."

"We cannot too frequently call attention to the insincerity and attempted deception of many of the so called free silver Democrats. The pretended fight for free silver by the Democratic politicians does not amount to a row of pins."

Has he so soon forgotten this? Surely after writing this he cannot believe that the Democrats would vote for a non-partisan ticket. The following from my friend sounds ridiculous in the light of every day facts:

"Then, why should we, Mr. Populist, throw our party away when its hopes are so bright, and when it is the only true exponent of the people's interests?"

"Who is trying to throw it away? Certainly not our State Chairman, who is asking that co-operation be made on *principle* alone. Throw away the principle of our party and the party itself will die. When a woman loses her virtue she loses all. When the Populist party loses its principles it loses all. Mr. Butler is truly away of this fact when he refuses to surrender any part of our ticket to the enemy."

Mr. Butler said in the Senate some ago that he was willing to throw our party organization away in order to do certain things. And does not his silver letter of recent date prove conclusively that he favors abandoning every demand except free silver, and is this not "to surrender any part of our ticket to the enemy?" My whole fight was and is to preserve our party identity and to win the men to our party. And everything proves conclusively that Mr. Butler is endeavoring to throw it away for a single idea. And if not, the people are mightily fooled. Every mail brings me scores of complimentary letter from all over the State, saying that I was right and to stick to it.

My good friend said, in his paper of April 4, 1895, in an article headed, "Populist, Beware!":

"We warn Populists not to be fooled by the one plank silver party. This new party will amount to but little. Parties originate among the people and the little parties that are 'formed' by a few self-constituted leaders who hold a

meeting in Washington and issues a sort of address, never get above the waves. We believe that this new 'Bimetallic [sic] party' is a deep laid scheme to influence voters away from the Populist party, notwithstanding Gen. Weaver and some other Populist leaders have gone off after the one plank 'critter.' This scheme will fail of its purpose, for there is no sense nor reason in leaving the Populist party—a party whose marvelous growth for the past three years has attracted the attention of the entire civilized world.

The Omaha platform embodies the essential principles of popular government [sic] and it has more champions and supporters today than ever before. Then why leave this party to join a 'silver' party? Let self made leaders form as many parties as they choose, but it is the duty of all Populists who favor better prices and better times to keep squarely in the middle of the road and keep moving.

The above are our views of the new party at present."

Why has this sudden change come over him? Only a few months since he was singing the same old song of truth that I am singing—"singing in tones of deep emotion."

Again, in his paper of May 9, '95, he said:

"The Populist party is the only party that is united on the money question; consequently the agitation of this question will greatly strengthen our ranks. The outlook for Populism grows brighter each day and all developments point to ultimate victory. Keep in the middle of the road and let the watchword be 'Onward.'"

"We don't know whether the National Watchman means to try to lead the Populists into the silver party or not, but it is clearly evident that the Populists are not being led nowadays by anybody. They are holding fast to the Omaha platform and standing firmly on the solid rock of Populism. They know that the silver question is only one branch of the money question, and they are truly aware that free coinage would only be a very short step in the right direction and therefore would not of itself bring new life to the industrial and commercial interests of the country."

"Both the old parties will probably incorporate a free coinage 16 to 1 plank in their platforms next year. Then where will the one plank silver platform be?"

And yet he is now for Mr. Butler's non-partisan farce.

"Backward—turn backward—
O time in thy flight."
* * * * *

and see what inconsistencies—what ingratitude—are committed in they name! Oh, non-partisanship!

He says:

"Let a Democratic and a fusion ticket be up and the latter will get the earth and the fullness thereof. And when you find a Populists trying to prevent this fusion, you find a Democrat in sheep clothing."

“Apply this principle in States where Republicans are in the majority and a Populist who refuses to fuse with the Democrats would be a Republican in sheep’s clothing. If it is true in one case, it is necessarily true in the other.”

Not so. The Populists, in Republican States, ought to fuse with the Democrats in order to beat the dominant party. It is useless for this reform movement to ever win where the enemy has so many strongholds unless they use a little policy. This whole fusion business is only a matter of concessions on the part of both parties. To co-operate with the Republicans we do not give up a single principle, neither do the Republicans. We only agree to certain things for our own good and for the lesser of two evils. Mr. Butler fully understood this when he arose in the United States Senate only a few months since and fully upheld my position.

I quote from the Congressional Record, of January 12, 1896:

“I can co-operate with my colleague in principles” [not in policies, mark you] “easier than I could with the Senator from New York.” [A Democrat] “The Senator from North Carolina” [Mr. Pritchard] “stands for the free and unlimited coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1, for honest elections, for a graduated income tax, and is opposed to the further issue of interest bearing bonds in time of peace. The Senator from North Carolina” [Mr. Pritchard] “does not want to further increase the taxes of the people without at the same time increasing their ability to pay. * * * * The people” [Populists] “have begun to recognize the difference between party principle and party name. They’re fuse to desert their principles to follow a name. * * * * On the other hand, the Senator from New York” [a Democrat] “stands on the opposite side of every one of these great questions.”

The words in brackets are mine. Now I have Mr. Butler’s statement in coroboration [sic] of mine, that this cooperation is wise even from principle, so far as our State is concerned. This is the very fight I make. If Mr. Pritchard stands for all these principles, and Mr. Butler says he does (and he is an honorable man), and the Democrats stand for the reverse of these principles, and Mr. Butler says they do (and he is an honorable man), then, in the name of common sense, would we not be fools to aid by any means the Democrats? Please answer, if you can, Mr. Non Partisan. And yet we find Mr. Butler only three months after making this statement willing to aid the Democrats and desert Mr. Pritchard. And in the same speech, Mr. Butler truly says:

“The cooperation in North Carolina of the Populists and Republicans came because the voice of the people could not be heard at the ballot box on those questions. It came on account of dishonest election methods resorted to by the Democratic party to stay in power in spite of the condemnation of the people and it was necessary for everybody who was in favor of fair elections to drive that party from power in order that we might have a free ballot and a fair count and get an honest expression of the will of the people.”

If this was true in January, why is it not true in March? If the Democratic party favors “dishonest election methods,” and Mr. Butler says it

does (and he is an honorable man), why will any one wish to aid it, and why will all not unite in the hope of defeating it?

Again Senator Butler said:

“But I will answer the gentleman by saying, that if, at any time, I am confronted with two propositions and am bound to favor one or the other, I shall use my judgment at the time when the question arises and cast my vote for the lesser of the two evils.”

But does he do it now when confronted with this proposition: By vote for a partial Republican ticket, we can elect 5 or 6 Populist electors, Congressmen, etc., we elect 11 goldbug Democratic electors, Congressmen, etc. And yet Mr. Butler takes the greater of the evils.

If these men would stand to the arguments and principles they stood upon before election; if they will take the lesser of two evils, then I have no fight to make on them.

Thomas A. Kempis says, “Of two evils the lesser is always to chosen.”

So as it is impossible for us Populists to carry North Carolina this year, I am for the best and most honorable means to win. And Mr. Pritchard ought not to be deserted now, and especially by Mr. Butler, for he “who purposely cheats his friend, would cheat his God!” I have reliable information that Mr. Butler agreed to support Mr. Pritchard this year for Senator in return for the Republican support given him, and if Mr. Butler will not carry out the compact, then there are enough Populists left that will do it.

My friend does not touch on my pleas for the people to run their party. The tenor of my whole article was for the people in their sovereign capacity to agree on certain policies and principles and to go to battle for them. I admitted my willingness to be guided by any policy they agreed to, and I still hold that no man or committee can pledge us to anything. I believe Lord Chatham, in his reply to Lord Mansfield, spoke truthfully when he said:

“The people, when they choose their representatives, never meant to convey to them a power of invading their rights or trampling upon the liberties of those whom they represent. We all know what the Constitution is; we all know that the first principle of it is, that the subject shall not be governed by the arbitrium of any one man, or body of men, but by certain laws, to which he has virtually given his consent, which are open for him to examine, and not beyond his ability to understand.”

And upon such a principle I called for the people to look to their interests, and I hope I have not called in vain; but “this siren song of ambition has charmed ears that one would have thought were never organized to that sort of music.”

I am not in favor of giving up a certainty for uncertainty—“grasping at shadows and letting the substance slip.” And I bid my comrades of the People’s party to “screw your courage to the sticking place and we’ll not fail.” The Democrats have all to win and nothing to lose, and it is no wonder they desire to monkey with us; but we are not such fools as to monkey with them.

The good old Alliance doctrines are good enough for me, and I think we ought to uphold them. They were good enough for Weaver and Watson and Allen and Donnelly and the 75,000 honest Populist in North Carolina, and surely they ought to be good enough for “Butler, Green & Co.” without going to a non partisan basis. Suppose a fellow jumps and runs for anything on a non partisan platform, who would vote for him? Parties are instituted to put certain things into the law except by making them the tenets of some one party. You have got to do this and put the party in power and then expect results; and our business should be to try to put the populist party in power everywhere we can. I hope the people will soon call primaries in each county and settle this discussion one way or the other, and we will abide by the voice of the people. What county will claim the honor of being the first to lead in this patriotic movement? I regret that we are compelled to resort to this to save our party, but we have humbly waited for months and months and our people will drop away like leaves of autumn and there is no leader to stand up and say, “God bless the Populist party—the old party of the people—the only medium by which the people can get relief.”

In support of my position, I quote Mr. J.B. Lloyd’s letter to the Caucasian:

“Danger Ahead.”

“Tarboro, April 30, 1895.

“From the reform papers I notice that there is considerable agitation over the formation of a new party, with silver as the only issue, for the contest in ’96.

“In my judgment it is, at this time, unwise and inexpedient to engage in the agitation for a new party, for the People’s party has, for three years, fearlessly and ably championed the cause of silver and *financial reform*. Then why not wait until the members of the People’s party in their conventions, throughout the Union, give expression to their views on the issue or issues upon which the next battle is to be fought?

“There is some diversity of opinion as to the measures that are to be in the platform. For the present, until the National convention meets, we should stand by our colors.

“The writer endorses and advocates every plank in the platform, but is willing to subordinate his views to the will of the majority.

“We cannot afford to do anything that will bring defeat in the next struggle. Our liberties may be gone forever if the people lose the next battle.

“Therefore, while there are differences as to issues upon which the next campaign is to be fought, let us pursue the ‘even tenor of our way’ and await the calm and candid judgment of the people of the country, as expressed by their conventions.

“Let us, therefore, be steadfast in the advocacy of our cause.

“A house divided against itself will fall.

“James B. Lloyd.”

Also, the Morganton Populist:

“Senator Pritchard and Electoral Fusion.”

“Since Senator Butler’s covert [sic] attack on Senator Pritchard we have talked with a number of our Populist friends and each one says ‘fusion must be adhered to.’ Hon. A. F. Hileman, of Concord, says: ‘We must fuse on State, county and electoral tickets. Nothing else would be honorable or even wise.’ Mr. C. A. Thornburg, of Bessemer City says: ‘Yes, we will have fusion, regardless of what Butler, Pritchard, or any one else says; in fact, the Gaston county ticket will not be changed.’ These are leading Populists quoted, and we could fill a column with such quotations, but it is sufficient to say that Senator Pritchard’s plan for fusion is practically unanimously endorsed; at least eight ninths so, with the two tenths in doubt (Settle and Holton’s piece of property). The Republicans interviewed say: ‘We are for fusion, because it was agreed on,’ and we say the same thing, but if we were only personally interested, we would say not fuse on anything, because the Republicans can carry the State any way you fix it. But to do the honorable and square thing as we always try to do, we say fuse and if not on Electoral ticket, then let no Republican cast a vote for a Populist Congressman, for what is the difference between a Congressman and a Senator in a vote in Congress. While Senator Butler was making his sly dig at Senator Pritchard, why did he not say Congressman as well as United States Senator and President.’ Butler has made the mistake that Mahone made in Virginia, and that is in assuming that the masses of people are all fools and can be led to swallow everything he says. Mahone, with every Federal appointment in Virginia and many other States bestowed upon him, went down in political disgrace, unwept, unhonored and unsung for believing such rot. Mr. Butler rode in on a little wave of dissatisfaction caused by Democratic incompetence and not on his free trade doctrine or on the silver issue alone. We have stood by him when no other paper in the State had a good word to say for him. But we think he is wrong now.”

Also:

“Donnelly on the New Party.”

“A St. Paul dispatch is published, saying that Ignatius Donnelly and Sidney M. Owen, Populist candidate for Governor at the late election, make official announcement that the People’s party of Minnesota will not join the free silver coinage party. Mr. Donnelly said: “The idea of deserting the principles laid down in the Omaha platform and consenting to be the tail to an exclusive free silver party is almost too silly to be discussed. The silver proposition, while well enough in its way, is an essentially selfish one, since the men who are most prominent in urging it are mine owners

and are seeking for a market for their product. The People's party has other and fully as important plans on hand for the amelioration of the condition of mankind. If the silver men are in earnest in their move, let them join our party. We have always favored the free coinage of silver, but we have other plans in view which we cannot abandon. Had the silver men stood by our party in the last election, we would have carried Colorado, Montana, Washington, Idaho, Wyoming and perhaps other States. Instead of doing this, they said that the Republican party in those states was in favor of the free coinage of silver, and that, therefore, it was good enough for them. If this is so, I do not see why the same party is not good enough for them still."

Also, the Caucasian editorially said, May 9, '95:

"The Democratic party made a platform for the last campaign. It was a free silver platform too. They *got in* on it. That's all the use they made of it. They didn't try to *stand on* it a minute. They are coming out now with new professions. They may declare for a free silver platform, but there's no good reason for thinking they will *stand on* it if they *get in*. They deceived the people terribly in the last election. The people cannot really be blamed for they thought the Democratic party was honest. But if the people allow themselves to be fooled again, they will deserve the condition of serfdom and slavery to which they will be reduced."

Also, it said in May '95:

"Democracy Doomed"

"If there was any kind of open frankness and truth in Democracy; if there was a single live issue it would advocate with sincerity; if there was one single honorable thing in its records it could, perhaps, command the respect of some honest man who might be largely possessed of the attributes of pity and mercy. But whatever hold it may have had on the confidence of the people has been broken by its own selfishness, duplicity, hypocrisy, and rascality.

"It seems to be utterly devoid of the slightest semblance of decency and integrity. The Caucasian is waiting to go on record as saying that it believed it to be impossible for anything but an ignoramus or a scoundrel to approve of present day Democracy in any sense. If a man is ignorant there is some excuse for him, even if he refuses to learn. If he knows Democracy as it is, and knows right from wrong, and then approves it, he cannot be otherwise than a scoundrel."

And now, Mr. Caucasian says that a silver Democrat is a good thing, and even intimates that it would like to vote for such a “critter.” I repeat that my position just now is to down the Democrats and save the country; for they wouldn’t save it when they had a chance. And this is the all important subject to consider just now. And while we Populists are squabbling over an electoral infinitesimal matter, the Democrats are putting in their hard work to win North Carolina and trying to keep us fighting their sham battles so as to give them an opportunity to get in their work. If I had the voice of a mountain avalanche, I would shout over every hill and in every dale throughout our loved State: “Beware! Beware! lest the Democratic leaders and demagogues again get the ropes in this State. Oh Populists and Republicans, stand by your guns!”

‘Stand until the last armed foe expires;
Stand for our
God and our native land!’

G Ed Kestler.