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FIRST EDITORIAL

A DOMESTICATED 16-TO-1ER.

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There is a fish known as the “tench,” which is peculiar in that it changes its color when caught and kept for any length of time in a tank. Originally of a silver shade, it becomes golden under domestication. Some fine specimens can be seen in the aquarium in New York, but it is not necessary to go there to study this interesting phenomenon. Its parallel exists in the political world and can easily be seen.

Four years ago the now bald-headed boy orator of the Platte, [William Jennings Bryan](#), was making the welkin ring with eloquent denunciations of the gold standard. Nothing was too harsh for him to say against it. No day was too long for him to toil from sunrise to sunset and longer—rescuing his beloved country from the clutches of the yellow money devil. He larruped the octopus from the ozone-swept plains of North Dakota to the dismal shades of Wall Street. He declared that all other issues must “sit in solemn silence” until the blighting breath of the gold standard was changed to the silvery sweetness of 16 to 1, “without the aid, etc.”

But Bryan has “tenched.” He has become golden under domestication. Not only has free silver become a minor issue with him, but also he has arrived at the stage of apology. Coyly flirting with the most pronounced monometallic advocates in the land, the Gold Democrats, he tells them that the paramount issue is not bimetallism; that, if elected, he could do nothing against that dearest love of their hearts, which drove them to fight him tooth and nail in 1896; that imperialism, anti-trust, Porto-Rican tariff, Anglo-American alliance, any old issue, has more paramountcy in its little finger than Steen to Wun¹ has in its whole body and its sixteen limbs.

Bryan is a political tench. Piscicultureists do not tell us just how much time is required to work this transformation in the captured fish, but it is known of observers in the political world that Bryan was less than four years in changing his

¹ [Steen to Wun, i.e., 16-to-1]

silvery hue to the once hated and reviled golden. His strongest supporters have also tenched. The newspapers that, with him, were free silver in 1896, are vigorously crying down and denying 16 to 1. They have become yellow in more ways than one. They go so far as to denounce that man as a traitor who lifts his voice to chant the battle song of the free silver battalions of four years ago.

The study of fishes, political and otherwise, is interesting. And it is both instructive and entertaining to watch the moves and mutations of the tench: “which becomes golden upon domestication.”

**Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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