

The Public

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A Weekly Narrative of History in the Making

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EDITORIAL

Mr. Bryan's Acceptance Speech.

Mr. Bryan's speech of acceptance was in all respects admirable. It strikes a high note on which to pitch the discussions of the coming campaign.

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Its fundamental idea is that the common people should retake to themselves political power which it was and is the theory of our government they should possess, but which in the wonderful material evolution and development of our complex society has fallen into the hands of great combinations of wealth, which unscrupulously use it so far as they are able for their own further aggrandizement and the necessarily consequent impoverishment and depression of the masses of the people. To show that this condition of things exists in this country, and that it cries out for immediate correction, Mr. Bryan was able to point to the vehement utterances of Mr. Roosevelt and the suave admissions of Mr. Taft. With an argumentative force that cannot be gainsaid, he quotes Mr. Taft as saying that the evils to be remedied "have crept in during the last ten years"—during all which time the Republican party has been in control of the executive, legislative and judicial departments of the government,—and asks why the Republicans should be continued in power, as Mr. Taft demands that they should be, in order to reform them. If the Republican party can reform them why has it not already done so? And

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there Mr. Bryan touches the very gist of a forceful argument for Democratic success, by pointing out that while doubtless the great majority of the Republican voters would like to see the evils complained of removed, they have from the nature of things but little influence on the party leaders or on the administration of the government, because for a generation the Republican party has drawn its campaign funds from the beneficiaries of special legislation. Privileges have been granted in return, and "it cannot attack wrong doing in high places without disgracing many of its prominent members." This would be a reasonable and sufficient ground for demanding a change of administrators and legislators, even though there were no vital questions of policy formally at issue between the parties.

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But there are. We commented two weeks ago on Mr. Taft's timid and compromising attitude towards tariff revision. Mr. Bryan also comments on the same thing. The reduction promised, he truly says, "is so hedged about with qualifying phrases" as to be worthless, even could a Republican Congress be trusted to fulfill it.

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As to the publicity of campaign contributions, Mr. Bryan has well shown that a difference as wide as the poles exists between a pledge to require such publicity before election, and one to ensure it afterwards. The one is an attempt at a real reform; the other an unwilling makeshift to avert party revolt.

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The election of Senators by the people, and the change of the House rules so as to restore representative government, are other things that Mr. Bryan shows that the Democratic party and its nominee stand for. And he pledges himself, if elected, to convene the Congress, the Lower House of which will be elected with him, in extraordinary session, and urge upon them the execution of the people's mandate. This is of the highest importance. Had Mr. Cleveland in 1892 thus pledged himself and fulfilled the promise, we should not have had the unpleasant record of these last years to regret.

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Mr. Bryan's declaration that he considers that a platform is binding as to what it omits as well as to what it contains, and that one nominated and elected on it is not at liberty to use the authority vested in him to urge personal views—coupled

as it is with the statement that the platform adopted at Denver specifically outlines all the remedial legislation which can be hoped for within the next four years,—ought in all reason to quiet the constantly renewed fears of those cautious, old time Democrats, who insist on seeing in the success of Mr. Bryan an abandonment of the gold standard and the renewal of the "free silver" agitation. Mr. Bryan's reputation for sincerity and veracity is too well established for his pledge to be doubted, and if they believe not now, they would not, although one rose from the dead.

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As a whole, the speech is temperate, conservative and optimistic. No clearer statement of Mr. Bryan's belief in true democratic individualism, as distinguished from any dangerous or revolutionary socialism, could be desired than its concluding sentence, in which he promises, if elected, "to consecrate whatever ability he has to making this a government in which the people rule—a government which will do justice to all, and offer to every one the highest possible stimulus to great and persistent effort, by assuring to each the enjoyment of his just share of the proceeds of his toil, no matter in what part of the vineyard he labors, or to what occupation, profession, or calling he devotes himself."

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Ignore Their Crimes, and They Will Fill Your Dinner Pails.

The Baltimore Sun, an undemocratic Democratic newspaper, which in 1896 supported McKinley against Bryan, and in 1900 Bryan against McKinley, has this year declared for Taft on the ground that "the methods employed by Mr. Taft in bringing law breakers to account, would not curtail the workingman's opportunities for employment by the disturbing of the business of law-abiding men and corporations as has been witnessed in the last few years." For pure, unadulterated, actually enjoyable Pecksniffianism, commend us to this utterance!

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Another Case of Coercion.

A subscriber to The Public in one of the important cities of the Middle West—a man who has been brought this summer to the point of being "almost penniless" through being "unemployed for three or four months"—has just got a job, and he has written to us even before he has received his first wages, the following terse and graphic account of the coercion being exercised