

The Public

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A Weekly Narrative of History in the Making

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Bryan's Nomination.

The nomination of William J. Bryan was a foregone conclusion. Not because the political cards had been stacked for him by political gamblers, not because the power of a Federal administration had been exerted in his behalf, not because the great Interests wanted him. He had none of this support. On the contrary, all those influences were against him. His nomination was a foregone conclusion because the rank and file of his party had demanded it, and the politicians dared not disobey.

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To superficial political observers, especially if they had idols of their own or fostered resentments against Bryan, this has seemed like hero worship. Even if it were so, it would be preferable to the kind of popularity for candidates that privileged corporations purchase of venal newspapers. But Bryan's popularity does not spring from hero worship. Neither does it depend upon his knowledge of what ought to be done to perfect the social order. It springs from the common recognition in him of a man who, while gifted with ability to lead, is honestly leading away from aristocracy and in the direction of democracy. It springs from the fact that he, better than any other public man, expresses just about what the masses of our awakening people feel.

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Whether Bryan possesses in a radical sense—in

the sense, that is, of going to the roots—clear knowledge of what must be done to perfect the social order, may be doubted. But there can be no doubt that if he did possess such knowledge, and were to thrust it to the fore in current politics now, he would not be a popular leader. We might have in him then an entertaining and instructive lecturer, but not a leader in current political controversy. While he might lead, he would lead alone. Since the people themselves are as a mass without definite knowledge of what must be done to perfect the social order, no one who has that knowledge and exploits it can command their confidence sufficiently to be their political general. They are not now in the stage of knowledge; they are in the stage of desire. They take their leaders, therefore, not from the men who may know best how to perfect society, but from those who seem to them sincerely to desire it as they desire it. It was confidence, for instance, in Henry George's desire for a better state of society, that made the people follow him in masses on two political occasions. It was not their knowledge of or confidence in his economic philosophy. As masses, they had not reached that stage. They have not reached it yet. But what they feel, they are confident that Bryan feels; what they desire, they are confident that he desires; and this confidence is vitalized by their confidence in his genuineness and by his powers of expressing what they feel. It is this relation between the people and Bryan that has forced the politicians to nominate him against their own wishes; and this is what makes him our best political leader, at the present stage of our social development.

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With Bryan representing our aspirations for democracy, and Taft representing our tendencies to aristocracy, we have in the coming Presidential campaign the best possible presentation of the issue of popular desire as to social relationships. Of course this issue will not be settled for good and all in November. Aristocracy always dies hard, and democracy never dies. But this is the issue that confronts us. A vote for William H. Taft will be in effect a vote expressive of desire for an aristocratic order of society; a vote for William J. Bryan will be in effect a vote expressive of desire for a democratic order of society. Nor could anyone wish for better candidates for the purpose. Whether as individuals of high personal character, or as representatives of our respective tendencies of the present time—the one toward aristocracy, the other toward democracy—they are ideal candidates.

The Vice-Presidential Candidate.

The Bryan campaign has fortunately not been hamstrung with a conservative nomination for Vice President. John W. Kern is a democratic Democrat, and the efforts from sources hostile to Bryan to make it appear that he is a spoilsman are not made in good faith. Those who listened to his speech at the Bryan banquet in Chicago last fall, heard the genuine democratic note. Since he has always been a party Democrat, there were in what he said allusions to traditional Democracy over which those of us who were Republicans in the '50's and '60's because we were democratic, and are Democrats now because we are still democratic, may not have been especially enthusiastic. We recognized nevertheless that Mr. Kern's democracy is what Bryan's is. His speech rang true to Bryan's which followed, and that was one of the most inspiring of democratic speeches that Bryan has made. Mr. Kern is evidently a Democrat of a kind worthy to stand by the side of Bryan during the campaign, and to participate in cabinet meetings as well as to preside over the Senate after Bryan's inauguration.

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The Democratic Platform.

While a thoroughgoing democratic Democrat would not adjust national affairs in strict accordance in every respect with the Denver platform, were he dictator of the United States, he must be set in his ways if he does not recognize it as the most democratic platform the Democratic party has adopted in half a century. Whatever may be its defects, it draws the same line that the nominations draw—the line between aristocracy and democracy. Not with square and compasses does it draw that line, to be sure. If it did it would be useless as a political platform, however admirable as a scheme of government. But it does draw the line. It draws it with the free hand of the artist rather than the mechanical accuracy of the architect. We are too apt to be captious in considering party platforms. They are not technical schemes of government. The true test of a good platform is first its spirit and trend, and second its candor on dominant issues. Subjected to this test, the Denver platform is more pronounced in its democracy than any of its predecessors.

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The Vote of American Negroes.

"Gentlemen, it has struck twelve; it is high noon for the Negro voter of the United States." With these words W. E. B. Du Bois in The