

The Public

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EDITORIAL

Presidential Nominations.

The nomination of Mr. Taft at Chicago makes the nomination of Mr. Bryan at Baltimore a party necessity. Whether Mr. Bryan wishes it (as his enemies cynically say) or does not wish it (as he says himself and as we believe), Mr. Bryan must be nominated at Baltimore or the Democratic party will in all probability be defeated. This was manifest at the close of the Republican convention. It became a demonstration with the election of Parker as temporary chairman of the Democratic convention. The Democratic party cannot win under the Ryan-Sullivan-Taggart-Murphy trade-mark, and Bryan is probably now the only man whose nomination can save it from irretrievable disaster.



As an alternative, consider Speaker Clark first. We are not in sympathy with much that has been urged against Mr. Clark. He would make a better President, we are well inclined to believe, than most Progressives of either party seem to think. But he would not make a strong candidate; and from the point of view of party necessity, strength of candidacy is as important as competency for the office.



The only special strength that Mr. Clark could bring into the campaign is Mr. Hearst's support; and the price in public professions of gratitude which he has already had to pay for this,

has even now hardened against him vastly more strength than Mr. Hearst's influence can possibly attract. As the campaign goes on, the Hearst affiliation would be a growing burden to Mr. Clark. Democratic voters of the progressive variety would not find it easy to face the obtrusive fact that Clark's most conspicuous lieutenant in 1912 is a man who boasts that he defeated Bryan and elected Taft in 1908.



The best that may be said for Mr. Clark's availability as the Democratic candidate is that he, more surely than any one but Mr. Bryan—even more so than Bryan, in some quarters—can carry the party vote of the Democratic party. But he can draw no strength at all from the progressives of the Republican party—not if they have anywhere else to go; and if the Democrats nominate Clark against Taft, the Republican progressives will have somewhere else to go.



As another alternative to Bryan, consider Governor Wilson. Next to Bryan, Governor Wilson is apparently the strongest candidate the Democrats could name. He could not indeed carry as large a proportion as Clark could of the strict Democratic party vote. For this there are plain reasons. His conversion to Progressive policies is so manifestly genuine that the reactionary elements which first brought him into politics are against him to the last man and unalterably; his conversion is so recent that old-time Democratic progressives look upon it with suspicion; his unmasked contempt for the palaver and the venom of the Hearst papers arouses characteristic antagonisms from that source. But no candidate will be elected this year by the strict Democratic party vote. Neither will any candidate be elected by Hearst's support, although Hearst's methods of opposition may be conceded to be dangerous. Nor yet will any candidate be elected by old time Democratic progressives. If a Democratic candidate is elected President this year it will be chiefly, if not altogether, by the vote of those Progressives of both parties who, like Governor Wilson, are recent converts. It is this kind of support that makes Governor Wilson a stronger candidate than Speaker Clark.



But William J. Bryan would be stronger than either Wilson or Clark. He would be stronger than Clark, because he could carry not only the Democratic party vote in bulk, but also the Progressive vote of both parties. He would be stronger

than Wilson, because he could carry not only the Progressive vote of both parties, but also the bulk of the Democratic party vote.



Thus far our suggestions regarding the nomination of Bryan by the Democratic convention as a party necessity would apply regardless of the action of the Republican convention in choosing Taft instead of Roosevelt. They would apply with possibly greater force if Roosevelt were the Republican nominee. The only Democrat who could have defeated Roosevelt would have been Bryan; and we do not say this because we like to, but because the facts force it. But a moment's reflection will make it clear, we think, that Bryan's nomination is necessitated by Taft's. Not merely because Taft is the nominee, as would have been the case with Roosevelt the nominee, but because the circumstances of Taft's nomination make a third party inevitable *unless the Democrats take away its reason for being*. The inevitableness of the third party under those circumstances must be clear to every political observer. It may not be so clear that with a third party springing spontaneously out of the Republican convention at this crisis, any Democratic candidate except Bryan would be defeated, but to us this seems highly probable.



Consider it a moment without partisan or factional or personal bias. Mr. Taft personifies reaction to every Progressive of either party. The Progressive sentiment in the Republican party is so overwhelming that Mr. Taft's supporters were driven to devices shamelessly fraudulent in order to secure him a bare majority in the national convention. Of the minority, 344 sat in the convention on nomination roll call, but refused to vote. Immediately after the convention a conference of a clear majority of the uncontested delegates met and offered a third party nomination to ex-President Roosevelt. He responded with the advice that they meet at a later day in formal convention, promising to accept the nomination of that convention if tendered, but upon condition that the convention act with freedom and with the understanding that if it chooses another instead of himself he will support the other in the campaign as vigorously as if he were himself the nominee. What does all this signify? It does *not* signify—and this is the crucial point for consideration at Baltimore—it does not signify that the Democratic party can nominate a weak candidate and elect him.

What it probably does signify is that if the Democrats nominate a candidate whom the Republican progressives could not accept, the two principal parties will be split into three. And would the Democratic candidate consequently slip in between the fighting Republicans? This is what Mr. Clark's supporters may expect, but it is an expectation in which they are likely to be sadly disappointed if they get to the experiment. Nearly all progressive Republicans regard Mr. Clark as a life-long Democratic-party war-horse, and this makes him repugnant to Republican voters. His Progressivism is not apparent to them. The same feeling prevails largely among Democratic progressives, both of the old-time and of the recent-convert variety. With a large progressive Republican party in the field, therefore, the whole progressive Republican vote and most of the progressive Democratic vote would go to the third party. In those circumstances the chances are great that with Speaker Clark as the Democratic candidate, the election campaign would be a Taft-Roosevelt primary campaign over again before the summer was fairly gone; and that when the votes were counted, there wouldn't be any Democratic party left—at any rate nothing more than a remnant like that of the Whigs in the early fifties. If Governor Wilson were nominated, the situation might be different. In that event the contest would more likely be dual instead of triangular. It is inconceivable that the progressive Republicans would nominate any one against Wilson; for the progressive Republican vote would be almost united for Wilson, if he were the Democratic nominee. He would probably get all of this vote that either Roosevelt or La Follette could, and he would get a large proportion of the Democratic vote besides. But Governor Wilson might be deserted by Democrats, both progressives and those of the neutral or facing-both-ways variety, in sufficient numbers to turn the scale in favor of Taft. If, however, the Democrats nominate Bryan, not only can there be no formidable third party, but there would be no formidable Democratic defection. Political lines would then be sharply drawn between the reactionary Republican party on one side and the progressive Democratic party on the other, and every voter would go to his own place at the election—Reactionaries of both parties to Taft, Progressives of both parties to Bryan. The Democratic party, thus redeemed from the thralldom of the Interests, would thereupon become the party of progress.



Whoever has had opportunity to consider recent

tendencies of public opinion in both parties regarding Presidential candidates, must have been impressed with the current that has set in toward Bryan since the primary campaigning of Roosevelt and Taft. Not only has it become increasingly evident that none of the other Democratic candidates is in all respects equipped as he for titular as well as actual leadership at the present political crisis, but there are overwhelming manifestations on all hands among the rank and file, of a disposition to rally to his unsought, uncoveted and unattempted candidacy.



Charities and Taxation.

One of the proposals of the Charities and Correction Conference on "standards of living and labor," is somewhat wonderfully, not to say fearfully, made. Recognizing, though apparently in a dim and narrow way, that private monopoly of land values is injurious to the poor, this proposal is for the transfer of a greater share of taxes "from dwellings to land held for speculative purposes." The minority proposal, submitted by Benjamin C. Marsh and Dr. Alice Hamilton, which was defeated, went to the vital point more directly and clearly. It recommended "the gradual untaxing of building and the laying of the tax burden upon the land values." Since the latter form of assault upon the same fundamental wrong was rejected in favor of the other, the proponents of the other ought to explain their *modus operandi* of distinguishing land "held for speculative purposes." If there is any effective way except the taxation of all land *ad valorem*, regardless of the purposes for which it is held, we should like to know it. The only other one we can think of is the confession of the party in interest as to his intentions! But the statement of the majority report is good enough for an abstraction; and for practical purposes with reference to the supporters of charities it may be better than if it were more specific. When you are dealing with the type of privileged person that Tolstoy alluded to in his remark that "the rich are willing to do anything for the poor except get off their backs," to be over-specific is to be under-prudent.



Tax Reform in Missouri.

A report by the committee on municipal finance and taxation of the Civic League of St. Louis, is of general interest and no little value, as indicative of an awakening tendency in professional and business circles with reference to public revenues.