

The Public

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EDITORIAL

Presidential Tests.

William J. Bryan has announced a test for the Democratic nomination for President in 1912. He mentions three requisites. The first is negative, that the aspirant shall not represent the Interests. The second relates to regularity, that he shall have supported the Presidential ticket of the Democratic party, not merely in 1904 but also in 1896 and 1900 and 1908. The third relates to the kind of politico-business company he keeps, the character of his chief sponsors.



Now brace yourselves, brethren, for ponderous editorial homilies in plutocratic papers on the "selfishness of Bryan." They will tell you that the first of Bryan's requisites is good. The Democratic aspirant must not represent the Interests; no indeed, and indeed! But they will also tell you to beware, lest you judge with the improper severity which the third Bryan requisite demands; and they will "tut-tut" the notion that a candidate is a representative of the Interests merely because he keeps company with "safe and sane" business men. Dollars to doughnuts, O gentle reader, that the plutocratic editorial will chide the "selfish Bryan" as to those two points, the first and the third, not for demanding that the candidate be no representative of the Interests, but for narrowness in insisting that he must not be a work-a-day chum and a Presidential protege of high priests of the Interests.

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It is for his demand for a record of regularity, however, that "Bryan's selfishness" will be made to shine like a revolving light on a dangerous reef. But Bryan is right. That second requisite is the best of all, in so far as any of three essential parts of a whole can be better than the others. The second is the practical test. An aspirant for the Democratic nomination might be all right on points one and three; but point two gives the significant reaction. The Democrat who shrinks from that test may be trustworthy, but unless his record otherwise is so markedly democratic as to be convincing, it will be prudent to let him drop by the test of Bryan's second requisite.

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What! reject a democratic Democrat because he bolted Bryan in 1896? Precisely. It is incontrovertibly true that the campaign of 1896 was the first great battle at the polls between democracy and plutocracy. Genuine democratic Democrats who failed to see the signs of the times high up in the political heavens then, may be forgiven for their error; but Presidential timber is not so scarce as to necessitate recourse to any of their number for the Democratic nominee for President. If they bolted democracy or sulked in 1896, because they liked plutocracy, they cannot be trusted now. The episode of the repentant thief? Yes, we acknowledge that as good religious doctrine; but as a precedent for Presidential politics it is too risky. So much for those who knew what they were doing when they bolted or sulked. If they didn't know, if they only failed to recognize democracy as democracy by its strange "silver" shibboleth of the passing moment, it comes in the end to the same thing as if they did know; for then they are intellectually unfit for the Presidential nomination of a democratic Democracy. The genuine Democrat who in 1896 could not see what the forces really were that fought each other, lacked political perceptive power then and he may lack it yet. He is just as likely to get muddled over misleading names and superficial appearances in the future, as he was in 1896. This is not to say that such men are intellectually deficient in a general way. They may be able enough. They may be excellent for political fellowship and secondary political places. The point is that, judged by their past, they probably do not possess the kind of ability a democratic Democrat must have as President in these days of struggle between democracy and plutocracy. Better Presidential timber of the fundamentally democratic variety is to be found in the Republican party. And mark

it well, a goodly number of Democratic voters will prefer a Republican nominee of this kind to a Democratic nominee of the other kind.

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Senator Pomerene of Ohio.

By the action of the Democratic caucus of the Ohio legislature on the 5th, Lieutenant Governor Atlee Pomerene (vol. xiii, pp. 612, 973) will have been elected United States Senator before this paragraph reaches the reader. For all the purposes of democratic Democracy this choice is ideal. Mr. Pomerene has for years been one of the leading supporters of Tom L. Johnson in Ohio politics, and was the choice for Governor of the Johnson wing of the Democratic party. Add one more name, then, to the Senatorial group which counts a La Follette and a Bourne on the Republican side, and an Owen and a Gore on the Democratic.

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For Mayor of Chicago.

The decision of Alderman Merriam to become a candidate for the Republican nomination for Mayor of Chicago is a gratifying fact. Should he be nominated by the Republicans, and ex-Mayor Dunne (vol. xiii, pp. 1133, 1138) by the Democrats, the city would have a good mayor no matter which party won at the election. Should Dunne be defeated for the Democratic nomination at the primaries by either Graham (vol. xiii, p. 1189) or Harrison (vol. xiii, p. 1153), and Merriam be nominated by the Republicans, the democratic Democrats of Chicago would have no difficulty in deciding how to vote. Alderman Merriam comes as near to answering roll call as a democratic Republican as any other well known Republican of Chicago, probably nearer. On the other hand, if Merriam were defeated and Dunne nominated at the primaries, the probabilities are that most democratic Republicans of Chicago would be glad to vote for Dunne. This is the situation: The Interests have set out to retain control of the Chicago City Hall. For Democratic candidate, their first choice is Graham, and their second Harrison; Dunne is no choice with them at all, for they learned in his first administration that they couldn't use him. For Republican candidate, the first choice of the Interests is Mayor Busse, and their second any man whom Armour can control as completely as he has controlled Busse; Merriam in the Republican party, like Dunne in the Democratic, is "persona non grata" to the Interests. In these circumstances we take it that at the primaries, democratic Republicans will vote for Mer-