

Presidential Campaigns Remembered By A Printer---1884

By LeROY ARMSTRONG

THERE was something Hamlet promised not to forget while memory held her sway in his distracted globe. And anyhow that long I will remember the campaign of 1884.

These Democrats are the marvels of the world. I have heard of men who didn't know when they were licked. But Democrats know when that happens to them, and they come back just as certain they are going to win next time as if they never had lost anything on earth. That was the way with them in 1884. They had been beaten every time since 1856 but once, and had been jockeyed out of that. And in 1880, just four years before, they had been not only beaten, but the steam roller had backed up after grinding them into the dust, and run over them again. They didn't seem to have had even favorable mention. But with Cleveland for their candidate they were as gallus and frisky and cocksure as a yokel who has never had any experience.

And they had a good many of our people with them, to be plain about it. After several trials, Mr. Blaine was the nominee of the Republicans, and all that fine enthusiasm his friends had been saving for him was on tap, and at his service. The Republican party seemed never to have been in quite such good fettle. And how the Democrats dared to expect victory was the biggest puzzle on top of ground. We had the candidate we had wanted for twelve years. We had the prestige of many victories. We had the record of worthy service. It was near enough the sixties for us still to remind the nation we had put down the rebellion, and had freed the slaves, and had the names of Lincoln and Grant and Logan to conjure with.

And yet those Democrats trod on our corns, and shouted with increasing vehemence for Cleveland. And Harper's Weekly was with them—shouting in colored double pages for the triumph of the sheriff of Erie county.

Nothing stopped them. I was a little doubtful of the Marie Halpin story, and for once I was right. My objection was that it savored a little of the personal. And I didn't think there was any profit in that. But when his campaign manager told Cleveland what the boys were accusing him of, and asked what he should tell the country, Cleveland replied, "Tell the truth." And I guess he won the election right there.

I was setting brevier type on a Springfield, Illinois, morning paper at the time, and jeffing mutton quads with the boys for the fat. Our foreman was a limp-legged man named Cassidy, and the wildest Blaine Irishman that ever lived. I remember he flung his cane through the door the night Blaine was nominated, as a mild expression of his entire approval.

Carter Harrison, the Elder, was the Democratic candidate for governor of Illinois, and his marching club came down from Chicago along in October,

when things were so warm I began to wonder if the impossible could happen. And that marching club went down the one paved street of the Sucker capital yelling staccato, as the left foot fell, the letters of their leader's name "H-a-r-r-i-s-o-n," and then a swift repetition as either foot touched the ground: "Harrison! Harrison! Harrison!"

They had the best campaign songs I ever heard, and the way they showed up the iniquities of the tariff—a thing the Republicans had begun to think had been fostered long enough—was enough to make our knees tremble.

And yet it was, of course, impossible that Blaine could be beaten. I wasn't betting much then. I was trying to save money, for composition at night was a sleep destroying Macbeth for me. I used to go to sleep setting up the word "the;" and waked only when I found some pirate had robbed my spacebox. Which hasn't anything to do with the campaign.

Well, election day came, at last, and to the absolute amazement of us Republicans, and the yelling triumph of the Democrats, the result was in

favor of Blaine, 214; Cleveland, 221. Republican gain of three." And then our crowd out there in front would shout, and the fish horns would blow, and the overflow of the mob back in the alley under our windows would cheer and screech and beat bad drums and generally raise Cain.

Then the bulletin reader over in front of the opposition office would read this one: "Piscataqua, Blaine, 119; Cleveland, 221. Democratic gain of 17." And then the engine room whistle of that beastly opposition paper would start, and the bally engineer would tie it down till the next bulletin with a Blaine gain. I will never get the roar of that condemned whistle out of my ears till all sounds cease. We had two Democratic compositors in the office, and both of them were sorry every time Cleveland made a gain.

But the fat man won, after all. I think he took all the heart out of us when he told the country that he would wait till the end of the count, and if he had been elected president he would be president. That made an end of all tentative speculation on repeating the Hayes-Tilden program.

"I take the stand that there were 72 delegates in that convention who were not entitled to seats. In voting to unseat them, I do not believe that I violated the pledge of the Republican convention at Provo. The delegates to the national convention were pledged to use every honorable means to nominate President Taft. If stealing is honorable, then I violated the trust and confidence of the Republican party in voting against these delegates. These delegates were Roosevelt delegates, and the leaders of the Republican party needed them to nominate Taft and they were seated."—Statement by Colonel C. E. Loose of Utah.

doubt. It all turned on New York, in which great state the revered Burchard had managed to turn thousands of good Catholic votes against us. And the Catholics of all nations were coming to the Republican candidate that year for the first real time in the country's history. That was one of the magic works of Blaine.

Our office fronted east, and ran back more than a hundred feet, and the composing room was at the rear of the second story. The opposing—and consequently the Democratic—office fronted north, and its engine room was about the thickness of four straws from the back door of our composing room. The Associated Press was sending bulletins of the count by precincts in upper New York. I don't know yet why the agony of that recount was so prolonged. But it went for days, while little towns that no one ever heard of before got on the map.

The foreman of our job room was a big man named Davenport. He worked all day, went home to what he called supper, came down and got on a box in front of our office, and read these bulletins from all the Podunks from Schorahle to Schenectady: "Car-

Somehow, that man from Buffalo didn't lend encouragement to any foolishness.

And on the Saturday night, I think, that followed the election, the Democrats made celebration all over the nation. You must have had one here. I know Illinois—which didn't elect Harrison, by the way—went Cleveland mad. I put on a sub that last night, and took the wife down town just to convince her what a lot of lunatics men could become over politics. We stood on the corner of two streets while a big brass band with fifty pieces went by. They were in the middle of the street, and we clung to a lamp post. The streets were not of Utah width, and that band was not over twenty-five feet from us. But so loud and constant was the cheering that not one note of horn or drum could reach our ears. It was the maddest, happiest multitude of bedlamites I ever saw. And one will be enough.

They marched around the old capitol square, and some of the notables—General John M. Palmer, General McClelland and Congressman Springer, with others—climbed up in a little balcony, and delivered speeches.

Springer had been in congress when Tilden was counted out. He tried to compare the nation to a ship of state from the sides of which the Democrats would now scrape the barnacles. He came up to that word "barnacles" three times, his voice split with excitement, his arms tossing, his whole being too small to hold his sense of his party's victory—and then he yelled "carbunkles" where he wanted "barnacles." He couldn't think of the word to save his life. And it went. Everything went. They stayed there around that old state house, which was the capital in Lincoln's day, until 3 o'clock in the morning, and what they did to the business part of town was a shame. Never was a Halloween night so mad. Never were pranks so extreme in their lawlessness. And nobody seemed to care a whoop. The Democrats were so glad that merchants of that faith rolled cases filled with goods that had never been opened, and let the bonfires have them. And the Republicans didn't have tuck enough left in them to say a word.

But it broke Blaine's heart. I think he could have borne it to be beaten by Bayard, or by John Palmer—but this "hangman of Buffalo"—that was one of the things we called him—was too much; and could not summon his philosophy. He acted in a pettish manner which made us apologize for him. It was his one great chance. He was, perhaps, the best equipped man in America. I believe he was as honest and as well intentioned as any one else. And he did want to be president.

But he never won to that goal. And maybe it is just as well. He lives adored in the hearts of thousands who might not have quite approved him as a nation's chief executive.

So Cleveland was elected. We got up next day fully expecting to see the sun had forgotten to rise. We really were surprised that business went on. We couldn't believe that the government would be turned over without disaster. But as the fourth of March came around, everything seemed settled, and nobody was as bad hurt as he had expected to be. And, for the matter of that, not all the Democrats were as greatly blest as they had anticipated. Whereby hangs another tale. For Cleveland was elected chiefly on the issues of the tariff and civil service reform. And he didn't turn the rascals out and put good Democrats in their places. An old Illinois printer I knew, one who had been waiting for the salvation of the Lord for forty years, looked in vain for his appointment as postmaster, and when I reminded him of Cleveland's promise of office for merit, and dismissal only for incompetence or dishonesty, the old man sighed and said: "Yes, but I thought he meant it in a Pickwickian sense."

After Lincoln, that was the most important presidential campaign I can remember.