

S P E A K I N G O F M A R P L O T S

The Boston Herald in a recent issue complains that Mr. Bryan is acting the part of "a marplot." This is so serious a charge that the editor will be pardoned if he devotes a little time to it. The Standard Dictionary defines a marplot as "one who, by meddling interference, mars or frustrates a design or plan." It is evident to all that one must understand something of the plan or design to be frustrated before he can pass judgment upon the merits of the attempt to frustrate it. If, for instance, a group of persons should plan to do injury to an innocent person, to a city or to a country, it would hardly be fair to denounce as a marplot one who frustrated such a design or plan. The term "marplot" can be properly applied only to one who not only meddles with affairs which do not concern him, but interferes in the carrying out of some good plan or thwarts some laudable effort. What is Mr. Bryan doing to earn the name of marplot?

The Herald attempts a sketch of Mr. Bryan's career. The following is an extract:

"Now, how did this come to be? It is one of the most curious manifestations of modern politics. About a dozen years ago William J. Bryan was a clever young democratic representative in congress from a newer western state, a state that no one expected to see furnish a candidate to the presidency from any party in this generation. He did not stay long in that body, being defeated by a republican competitor. Then he transferred his allegiance—or, at least, a good part of it—to another, the populist party. The populist party, having in effect taken possession of the democratic party in his locality, sent him to a democratic national convention, in which he made a speech so electrifying in its eloquence that it drew the presidential lightning upon him and made him the party candidate for the presidency."

It will be noticed that Mr. Bryan's first crime was to come from one of the newer western states—"a state that no one expected to see furnish a candidate to the presidency from any party in this generation." It was perfectly proper that Maine, with less population than Nebraska, should furnish a candidate for the presidency, although Maine was in one corner of the country, but Nebraska, almost in the geographical center of the country and much nearer to the center of population than Maine, was not expected to take a prominent part for a generation yet.

The editor of the Herald next informs the public that Mr. Bryan did not stay in congress because he was "defeated by a republican competitor." Mr. Bryan served in congress for two terms, and was not a candidate for re-election, but instead became a candidate for the United States senate, being the unanimous choice of the democratic state convention. The editor of the Herald then asserts that the populist party sent Mr. Bryan to a democratic national convention. He either knows better, or convicts himself of an ignorance that would be surprising if manifested by the editor of any other paper than the Herald. Mr. Bryan was never a member of the populist party, was never a delegate to a populist convention, and was never nominated for office by the populist party until he was nominated by the populist party two weeks after he had received the democratic presidential nomination. In Nebraska the democrats and populists have co-operated in the selection of state officers, congressmen and senators, but before they had ever united on a state ticket they united in the election of William V. Allen to the United States senate, and this action was recommended by the democratic steering committee of the United States senate. It may be added that Mr. Cleveland's secretary of agriculture advocated co-operation between democrats and populists in 1890, two years before Senator Allen was elected. Most of the democrats of Nebraska, by the direct and specific instructions of Mr. Cleveland's national committee, voted for the populist electors in 1892 for the purpose of taking the state out of the hands of the republicans. It was confessedly impossible to elect the democratic electors, and as the house of representatives was democratic, the national committee very wisely planned to throw the election into the house in case it was impossible to secure a majority in the

electoral college. So much for the Herald's attempt at history.

The Herald proceeds to commend Mr. Bryan for the manner in which he conducted himself in the two campaigns, and then laments the change which it thinks it discerns in his conduct. It says:

"We hardly recognize the amiable, and aside from his capital error in participating in the free silver delusion, this discreet Mr. Bryan in the man that he has since become, and who is now addressing the public. His modesty has departed, and his discretion has vanished with it. His amiability has given place to resentment and something resembling rancor toward those who he thinks have thwarted his purposes. We cannot believe he fully realizes it himself, but in his present attitude he is like a man who, having failed to continue to rule the party that he lately represented, has now set himself to ruin it. His later position toward the democrats is that of a marplot—a marplot who is determined that as far as he has influence it shall be exerted to prevent union upon any policy that does not render party defeat inevitable."

Mr. Bryan was nominated for the presidency by a convention more truly democratic than any other convention in recent years. The platform emanated from the voters. While the phraseology of the platform, so far as the money question was concerned, was practically the same as the phraseology of the Nebraska platform two years before, the fact that this phraseology was indorsed by a large majority of the voters of the party made it their platform rather than the platform of any state or individual. Certainly no one will charge that the delegates to the national convention were influenced in making the nomination by anything other than their own judgment. They may have erred in judgment, but they were under no coercion whatever either in writing the platform or in the nomination of the ticket.

During the campaign Mr. Bryan spoke in defense of the principles enunciated in the platform, and whatever strength he acquired was not a personal strength, but a strength due entirely to the principles for which he stood. As soon as the election was over he announced his purpose to continue the fight for those principles, and between that day and the date of the next national convention he visited all parts of the country, everywhere discussing and defending the Chicago platform.

When the action of the republican party brought the question of imperialism before the country, he immediately took a position upon it, making a speech against a colonial policy on June 14, 1898, before any party or association had spoken on the subject. This question he treated as an additional one rather than as a substitute for any of the other questions before the country. When the time came for the holding of the state conventions it was found that with two exceptions every state and territory instructed for his renomination. As this nomination came to him in spite of the misrepresentations, criticisms and protests of the papers which, like the Boston Herald, opposed the ticket in 1896, he was constrained to believe that the people still adhered to the principles that he advocated, and still repudiated the sordid and mercenary arguments of commercialism advanced by the plutocratic press which, although claiming to be independent or democratic, defended the republican position on most questions.

It is often asserted by the metropolitan papers that Mr. Bryan prevented a repudiation of the Chicago platform at Kansas City. The fact is, that the delegates at Kansas City were nearly all of them selected by conventions that reaffirmed the Chicago platform, and the only question that excited debate at Kansas City was whether the silver plank should be reiterated or simply reaffirmed. As an honest reaffirmation meant the same as reiteration, no one could strenuously oppose the latter if he sincerely favored the former, and all that Mr. Bryan did at Kansas City was to say that a reaffirmation intended not to reaffirm but to abandon the question was not a fair treatment of the subject, and that if the convention desired to ignore the money question it should select candidates who were willing to carry out such a program. He did not attempt to control the convention, but he did insist upon his right to control his own conduct and upon his right to refuse a nomination if he could not conscientiously indorse the platform.

The convention made imperialism the paramount issue, and while the party's position on the money question was not abandoned Mr. Bryan and all the other speakers spent the greater part of the time in discussing imperialism. It is a common practice for the plutocratic press to charge the defeat of the party to the money plank. This is neither true nor is it honest. In 1900 the republican party had the advantage of having carried on a successful war, and it had the further advantage of being in power during a period of good crops and increasing currency. The result of the election showed that the democratic leaders gave too little rather than too much time to the discussion of the money question, for the improved industrial conditions which followed the increase in the currency vindicated the party's position on the money question and showed how much greater the advantage would have been could silver have been added to the gold supply.

We are now preparing for the campaign of 1904, and the reorganizers, not satisfied with Mr. Bryan's announcement that he will not be a candidate, insist that he must either indorse the views of those who are responsible for the party's defeat in recent campaigns or, at least, keep silent while they plan the emasculation of the platform and the demoralization of the party. Is it meddling for Mr. Bryan to take part in politics? Does the fact that he has been a candidate for the presidency impose silence upon him? He is only forty-three; if he lives forty years longer he will witness ten more presidential campaigns. Must he be a mute observer of what transpires from now on, merely because he cannot agree with the men who in a great crisis voted the republican ticket, and the newspapers which for business reasons supported the republican ticket? This would be a high price to pay for a nomination to any office.

The responsibilities of citizenship rest upon Mr. Bryan as much as upon the bolting democrats in general or upon the bolting editors in particular. It would not be presumptuous to say that Mr. Bryan's responsibility is even greater than the responsibility of those who question his right to discuss present issues. Responsibility is measured by opportunity, and if Mr. Bryan has had an opportunity to know the purposes as well as the plans of those who, failing to destroy the democratic party from without are now trying to destroy it from within, could he excuse himself if he hid himself under the cover of two nominations rather than subject himself to the venom and detraction of those editors who bend the suppliant knee to organized wealth? Who is under greater obligation to the rank and file of the democratic party than Mr. Bryan? And who has more reason than he to co-operate with them in the gigantic task of defending the wealth-producers against the attacks of exploiters and monopolists?

The Herald belongs to that class of papers which pretends great solicitude for the welfare of the party. Has not Mr. Bryan shown as much solicitude for the welfare of the party as those who have aided and contributed to the enemy?

The reorganizers assume that the men who supported the Chicago and Kansas City platforms are ready to go back and apologize for their party's position. This is a groundless assumption, and is known to be so by those who make the assumption. There has been no change among the voters; those who were opposed to a financial system made by the financiers for the financiers, are still opposed to such a system; those who were opposed to a high tariff, even when the reorganizers were supporting a high-protectionist for the presidency, are still against a high tariff. Those who were opposed to the trusts, even when the leading reorganizers were helping to elect an administration pledged to the trusts, are still against the trusts; those who opposed government by injunction, even when the leading reorganizers were helping the corporations that rely upon government by injunction, are still opposed to this tyrannical process of the court; those who opposed imperialism, even when the leading reorganizers were willing to surrender the Declaration of Independence at the demand of Wall street, are still opposing the separation of our people into citizens and subjects.

If Mr. Bryan were to remain silent in order to escape hostile criticism, his silence would not change the convictions of those who voted for him; if he were openly to join the reorganizers and proclaim a conversion to the opinions of

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