

Mr. Bryan to the New York American

The New York American prints, under date of Lincoln, Neb., the following dispatch:

"In the long run a party's strength must depend on the popularity of its policies, and, measured by this rule, there is no doubt that the democratic party is much stronger than it was either in 1896 or 1900."

Such was the confident assertion made to the representative of the Examiner by Mr. Bryan in the library of his home in the outskirts of Lincoln. It was, perhaps, partly in answer to felicitations on the pleasant augury of a meeting on March 4, with a delicate intimation that a year hence the democratic leader may occupy the White House. Mr. Bryan has returned from a trip through a portion of the south.

He laughed when it was suggested that he had hurried home on account of illness, and declared that the newspapers were responsible wholly for the statement. "In fact," said he, "I never felt better in my life," and his appearance bore out the boast. He explained further that he had come home because his engagements were all cleared up and there was no better place to come to.

The beauty and comfort of Mr. Bryan's residence would justify this remark, if an exception may be taken to the zones of mud, in the way of streets, which encompass the estate and accompany the traveler three miles or more back to Lincoln. If there is a ringing plank favoring good roads in the next democratic national platform it may be presumed that it will enjoy Mr. Bryan's fullest indorsement.

When it became perfectly clear that there was nothing to apprehend in the matter of illness so far as Mr. Bryan is concerned, and that he is not impairing his constitution by worrying over what may be accomplished in Denver next summer, it was further suggested to him that, with his approbation, the Hearst papers would be glad to print a complete statement of his views of the campaign, the paramount issue, and his idea of the way to win. Mr. Bryan is a fluent talker, he has ideas, and he does not hesitate to express them. So he at once accepted the suggestion.

"So far as the issues are concerned," he said, "the platform adopted in Nebraska last fall covered these issues, I think, in a very satisfactory manner as they were presented then. Not to specify everything, it declared for a vigorous enforcement of the criminal law against trusts, insisted on further prohibitive legislation to restrain corporations from contributing to campaign funds and favored the election of senators by direct popular vote. It argued for an immediate revision of the tariff by a reduction of import duty, spoke for an income tax as a part of the revenue system and protested against government by injunction.

"These and other issues found in that platform were, I repeat, presented satisfactorily, with the exception of the subject of interior waterways. I am very much in favor of appropriations for the improvement of the Mississippi, the Missouri, the Ohio and such other streams as can be made useful for commerce. The saving would be very great, and a plank covering this subject should be added to the Nebraska platform. Since that platform was adopted the panic has come on, and it has brought forward two questions which are now being discussed much more than they have been in recent years, namely, emergency currency and the protection to depositors.

"I think these questions will enter into the coming campaign, and I am fully in sympathy with the position taken by the democrats in the senate and house in favor of United States notes instead of bank notes for emergency currency. Whatever emergency currency is issued ought to be issued by the government and controlled by the government in the interest of the whole people. It should not be issued and controlled by banks in their own interest. If the principle of government issue of these notes is conceded, then the question of security will not be difficult to settle. The Aldrich bill is bad in that it provides for the issue of bank notes as emergency notes, and it is also bad in that it permits the use of railroad bonds as a basis of security. I believe that only state, county, township and municipal bonds should be used.

"It is possible that loans might be made to clearing houses without security, if the clearing houses are authorized by a sufficient number of banks to make the government absolutely secure, but the question of security may be easily deter-

mined if the right of the government to issue the currency is admitted. The protection of depositors has become an important issue and should be dealt with. We should have both state and federal legislation on this subject—state legislation for the protection of depositors in state banks and federal legislation for the protection of depositors in national banks; but in order that no discrimination should be made against either kind of banks, I believe that the state guarantee should permit national banks to take advantage of them until a federal system is adopted and a federal law ought to permit state banks to take advantage of it in states where there is no state system of guarantee. The Oklahoma law is the best that I have seen. Without putting any responsibility upon the government it authorizes the banking board to collect assessments from all the banks for the protection of the depositors of each bank and thus give to each bank the strength of all the banks. I would like to see this subject dealt with by the national convention.

"There is one other question," Mr. Bryan continued, "which has grown in importance since the Nebraska platform was written and that is the question affecting the relative spheres of the state and the nation. I believe that the Denver convention should take strong ground in favor of preserving to the states all the rights they now have in the legislative control of corporations and that federal remedy should be added to state remedies and not substituted for them."

"What, then, do you consider the paramount or most absorbing issue of 1908?"

"The only issue," Mr. Bryan replied quickly, "which manifests itself in all the other issues is this: Shall the government be administered for the protection of the rights and the advancement of the interests of the general public, or shall it be controlled by the representatives of corporate wealth and administered in the interest of the few? The trust question, the tariff question, the labor question and all other questions involve this issue. All the abuses of which the people complain rest upon the privileges and the favoritism secured by favor seeking corporations, and these privileges or favors are always at the expense of the masses."

"You have been quoted as saying that the silver issue will not enter into the coming campaign."

"Yes, I have said that, and repeat it. The silver issue grew out of the scarcity of money, because this scarcity of money lowered the level of prices and increased the purchasing power of the dollar. Silver was the only relief in sight, and those who favored the restoration of bimetalism favored it for the purpose of restoring prices. The increased production of gold has not only stopped the fall of prices, but it has actually raised the level of prices something like thirty per cent, and the silver question has disappeared from politics because the end sought by bimetalists—namely more money—has been secured in another way and from another source."

"Bringing the conversation down to a personal basis, Mr. Bryan, are you willing to say that you believe you will be nominated at Denver?"

Mr. Bryan smiled. "I would not care to make any prediction in regard to my position in the campaign," he said. "While all the delegates so far selected have been instructed for me, only a few states and some scattering districts have acted."

"What special reason have you for believing that the party has a better chance of victory this year than in 1896 and 1900?"

"In 1896 our party was divided, almost all of our prominent democrats going off with what was called the conservative element. We had to rely upon new men in the organization and new speakers, and we were almost without large dailies, Mr. Hearst's New York Journal being one of the very few metropolitan papers that supported the ticket. We polled that year a million more votes than the party polled four years before, but the increase in the republican vote was so enormous that we were defeated in spite of the increase in the democratic vote, and in that campaign we had to meet the largest campaign fund that was ever raised.

"We had the opposition of nearly all the leading newspapers and we also had against us the coercion practiced by the banks and the insurance companies and the large corporate employers of labor. In spite of all these things,

the change of 20,000 votes in the close states would have changed the result. In 1900 we were handicapped by the fact that our opponents claimed credit for a prosperity that had come with an increase in the volume of money and with better crops, and we were also handicapped by the fact that the administration had just finished a successful war against Spain.

"We were further embarrassed by an insurrection in the Philippine Islands, and in spite of these disadvantages we polled within about 150,000 votes of the vote polled in 1896. I have made these statements in order that I may better explain the present prospect of success. Twelve years have elapsed since 1896, and we have had time to see the fruits of republican victory. The government was sold to the highest bidder in 1896, and those who bought it have administered it without regard to the welfare of the public, for the republican leaders have, with few exceptions, been the obedient servants of the great predatory interests.

"They sowed the wind, and they are now reaping the whirlwind. The people have had time to study the situation and as a result democratic policies have grown in popularity and republican policies have diminished in popularity. Plank after plank has been borrowed from the democratic platform, and the president's popularity has been won by the indorsement of the remedies which the democrats have advocated. In the long run a party's strength must depend upon the popularity of its policies, and, measured by this rule, there is no doubt that the democratic party is much stronger than it was either in 1896 or 1900.

"A second cause for hope is to be found in the fact that the democratic party is more united than it has been before in years, while the republican party is more divided than it has ever been during its history. The division in the republican party has been caused by the very same influence which has united the democratic party; namely, the growth in public sentiment favorable to democratic ideas. Men who violently opposed the democratic platform in 1896 recognize it as presenting the solution of the questions with which we are dealing and this also, without doubt, has separated the republican reformer from the republican stand-patter, while it has been bringing the rear guard of the democratic party up to the firing line. The third cause for hope is to be found in the moral awakening apparent throughout the land which has quickened the conscience and therefore made it more susceptible to the democratic principle, which is essentially an appeal for justice. These three reasons may be the most important ones, and I think they justify the party in hoping for a victory."

"Assuming that you are nominated at Denver, have you reason to believe that you will have the hearty support of the leaders of the party?"

Mr. Bryan received the question placidly. "If I am nominated at Denver," he answered. "I have no doubt that I shall receive the support of practically all of the democrats who stand in a position of leadership. I do not know of any considerable number," he added, with a smile half serious, half jocose, "who have indicated an intention to bolt in case of my nomination. Not a senator, nor a member of congress, nor a public official anywhere in the party, so far as I know. While some have expressed a preference for other candidates, I know of no prominent democrat who has announced his intention to act with the republicans in case I am nominated."

"Is it not true that there are certain influences, journalistic and otherwise, that have been hostile to you and your nomination?"

Mr. Bryan declined to go specifically into this question, or to express any positive opinion concerning such influences, whether journalistic or personal. But in a general way he replied with considerable spirit.

"Yes, it is true that a number of newspapers—and some have opposed my nomination—and some prominent democrats have expressed a desire for the nomination of some one else, but there is quite a difference between preferring the nomination of another democrat and the election of a republican. I do not know, of course, what newspapers may oppose my election if I am nominated, but I take it for granted that public sentiment can be better gauged by the votes of the democrats who send delegates to the convention than it can by the editorials of newspapers, especially when those newspapers