

Waking the Sleepers Again

(From The Literary Digest, Jan. 31.)

The weary diners were thinking wistfully of the downy couch at the late hour when Bryan arose to utter the thoughts that were in him at the recent Jackson-day banquet in Washington. The program had dragged terribly, making Bryan several hours late, and it was only with an effort that those assembled "awoke from their state of more or less bored semicomatose enough to give the old leader a more than perfunctory greeting," we are told. But when he had finished his remarks, at 2:30 a. m., a greatly surprised and highly excited bunch of select Democrats drew a long breath, and, after having recovered some measure of their equanimity, decided not to go to bed, but to devote the rest of the night to a discussion of the "Peerless One's" sensational speech and its significance. They had been worked up to a pitch where sleep was impossible. It was "some speech," that Jackson-day address, and it has made "some stir" in the land. Among other things it demonstrated the amazing ability of the irrepressible Mr. Bryan to "come back," whenever a reasonably psychological moment arrives. It showed that the Democratic leader has lost none of that marvelous spellbinding power which first brought him into the limelight with his "cross-of-gold and crown-of-thorns" speech in 1896. It is even said that his recent effort surpassed that one nearly a quarter of a century ago, which up to now has generally been conceded to be the "farthest north" in political speech-making pyrotechnics. The Washington correspondent of the New York Post gives a vivid account of Mr. Bryan's entrance to the banquet-hall, where the celebrants were then all ready to "call it a day," having sat through several hours of a somewhat dull function; of the subtle manner in which the speaker aroused their lagging interest; and of the uproar that arose when they finally gained the full import of what they were listening to. We read:

Mr. Bryan felt his way with unexampled adroitness and subtlety. He began the business of gradual ingratiating with the audience with the art of which he is consummate master, at the same time injecting the note of belligerence like the motif of a musical composition, almost imperceptibly at first, and growing gradually louder and bolder. He was humble, obsequious, apologetic. He apologized for the lateness of the hour and slyly compared himself to a superannuated preacher who is called on merely to pronounce the benediction on a performance of which the real business is already concluded.

With a great guile and in much self-deprecation he referred to himself as a "dead politician" and allowed the audience to imagine him to contrast him with the living politicians present, and especially the living politician in the White House.

Considering the part he was going to play, and that he knew he was going to play, it was a superb example of the emphasis of understatement. By a flattering reference to Champ Clark he made a bid for reconciliation and support from the large number of Mr. Clark's followers who he knew were present and who had been embittered eight years ago by what Mr. Bryan then did to Mr. Clark in order to exalt the Mr. Wilson whom he was now in a few minutes about to turn upon. He went on from one art of oratorical persuasions to another and another. At one point he said:

"I have passed the age when I seek to win your favor for myself," and left the audience to interpret that as cryptically as they might. At exactly a quarter of two in the morning he said: "If you will pardon me for holding you here a moment," and received cries of "Go on," which he well knew would come. At five minutes past two he repeated the same words and got the same response, and at quarter past two he did it again.

Finally, he had the audience waked up. Alert and in suspense he swept into his full stride, raised his voice to strongest pitch, threw the whole strength of his vitality into his manner.

Having paid his respects to all the old and several new octopuses, including the well-known profiteer, the speaker went on to name the three new propositions for which he asked his party's consideration, and concluded his speech by de-

claring that faith in the people must be the Democratic party's policy "now and always." The sensation produced by the speech among the participants at the banquet was a sample of the interest aroused by Mr. Bryan's utterances throughout the country. There is hardly a newspaper in this broad land that has not used up several columns of valuable space in a discussion of the Bryan speech and in speculation upon what part the Commoner will play in politics during the current year. A number of them in connection with prognostications as to what he may do have given reviews of what he already has done in politics, one of the more elaborate of those that have come to our attention being one written by Edwin C. Hill and appearing in the New York Sun. This writer finds that Bryan's popularity has advanced and receded in four-year periods, thus: Up to 1900, down in 1904, up in 1908 and 1912, down from 1912 to 1916. It's the question as to what it will be in 1920 that is now worrying the Democrats.

CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION

Feb. 6, 1920.

Mr. Ben M. Neale,
Chairman Democratic Congressional Com.,
Excelsior Springs, Mo.

My dear Mr. Neale:

I regret exceedingly that I can not accept your kind invitation to speak in the 3rd District. Regarding Mr. Milligan's election as a matter of very great importance to our party and the country, I beg to submit a brief statement to the voters of the district:

Mr. Milligan's fitness and qualifications are such as to shield him from personal blame in case of defeat; the blow would, therefore, fall upon the party and the principles for which our party stands. A Republican victory at this time and in such a district would have an unfavorable influence on congress and might very injuriously affect the campaign of 1920. The Republican reactionaries, now in control of that party, encouraged by their success in 1918, are planning the overthrow of the great economic reforms accomplished under President Wilson's administration. They want to raise the tariff, lower the tax now collected on large incomes, turn the Federal Reserve Bank system over to Wall Street and intrench in power the supporters of trusts and private monopolies. The unprecedented expenditures now under investigation in Michigan show the extent to which they are willing to go to regain power.

They refuse to disclose their purpose by a constructive program; instead they spend the time criticising war activities carried on under the stress of the world's greatest conflict. They have not only suspended the consideration of pressing domestic problems, but they have humiliated our nation before the world. They have wasted months in endless debate while other nations have concluded peace, putting our nation in the position of being unable to get out of the war. They have denied to our country the great distinction of furnishing the first president of the league of nations after giving to the world the idea of such a league. The Republicans, while controlling the senate by a bare majority, are unable to muster a majority for any ratifying resolution and are unwilling to so compromise reservations as to enable the senate to discharge its constitutional duty.

Mr. Milligan's election would be a warning to Republican reactionaries while it would inspire Democrats with hope as they enter upon a presidential campaign. Every Democratic voter should be at the polls and vote for Milligan, and Republicans can, by voting for him, serve notice on the Republican leaders that no backward step will be permitted.

Wishing for our candidate and our cause a splendid triumph on the 14th, I am, very truly yours,
W. J. BRYAN.

COMMITTEEMEN SHOULD BE PAID

The members of the Democratic National Committee should be paid travelling expenses and a per diem for time actually given to committee-work; otherwise, only those can be committeemen who are able to travel at their own expense and give their time. It is not democratic to exclude deserving members of the party from this important committee by a property line, and it is not fair to the masses that only rich Democrats shall be eligible. The predatory interests will have an advantage over the rank and file of the party just as long as the poor are barred by their lack of means. Now is a good time to turn over a new leaf and put the organization in harmony with the voters of the party.

Hoover in Receptive Mood

A New York dispatch, dated Feb. 8, says: Herbert Hoover tonight issued a statement defining his attitude toward the presidency. He announced that he is not a candidate for the nomination, and that no one is authorized to speak for him politically. If the league of nations is made an issue in the election he says he will vote for the party that stands for the league. In response to requests that he declare allegiance to either one or the other of the great political parties, Mr. Hoover says he will wait until it more definitely appears what the party managers stand for, and will "exercise a prerogative of American citizenship and decline to pledge my vote blindfold."

STATEMENT OF POSITION

His statement follows:

"In order to answer a large number of questions all at once, let me emphasize that I have taken a day off from the industrial conference in Washington to come to New York solely to attend to pressing matters in connection with the children's relief. I want to say again: I have not sought and I am not seeking the presidency. I am not a candidate, I have no 'organization.' No one is authorized to speak for me politically.

"As an American citizen by birth and of long ancestry, I am naturally deeply interested in the present critical situation. My sincere and only political desire is that one or both of the great political parties will approach the vital issues, which have grown out of the war and are new, with a clear purpose looking to the welfare of our people and that candidates capable of carrying out this work should be nominated.

FOR PARTY THAT SUPPORTS LEAGUE

"If the treaty goes over to the presidential election (with any reservations necessary to clarify the world's mind that there can be no infringement of the safeguards provided by our constitution and our nation-old traditions) then I must vote for the party that stands for the league. With it there is hope not only of the prevention of war but also that we can safely economize in military policies. There is hope of earlier return of confidence and the economic reconstruction of the world. I could not vote with a party if it were dominated by groups who seek to set aside our constitutional guarantees for free speech or free representation who hope to re-establish control of the government for profit and privilege.

"I could not vote with a party if it were dominated by groups who hope for any form of socialism whether it be nationalization of industry or other destruction of individual initiative. Both these extremes, camouflaged or open, are active enough in the country today. Neither of the dominations would enable these constructive economic policies that will get us down from the unsound economic practices which of necessity grew out of the war, nor would they secure the good will to production in our farmers and workers or maintain the initiative of our business men. The issues look forward, not backward.

TWO BIG PARTIES ENOUGH

"I do not believe in more than two great parties. Otherwise, combinations of groups could, as in Europe, create a danger of minority rule. I do believe in party organization to support great ideals and to carry great issues and consistent policies. Nor can any one man dictate the issues of great parties. It appears to me that the hope of a great majority of our citizens in confronting this new period in American life is that the great American parties will take positive stands on the many issues that confront us, and will select men whose character and associations will guarantee their pledges.

"I am being urged by people in both parties to declare my allegiance to either one or the other. Those who know me, know that I am able to make up my mind when a subject is clearly defined. Consequently, until it more definitely appears what the party managers stand for, I must exercise a prerogative of American citizenship and decline to pledge my vote blindfold.

"I am not unappreciative of the many kind things that my friends have advanced on my behalf. Yet I hope they will realize my sincerity in not tying myself to undefined partisanship."