

BRYANISM AND JEFFERSONIAN DEMOCRACY.

(Albert Watkins in The Forum for May.)

* * * The English people were forcing their way, surely, though not with clear sight, toward representative or parliamentary government, with a subordinate or responsible executive. This principle of popular sovereignty had been recognized, though not firmly established, under William and Anne. George III undertook to go back to the comparative absolutism of the Stuarts. This contest between reactionary Toryism and progressive democracy was waged alike in England and in the colonies. In the mother country it resulted in the evolution of a government more quickly and surely responsive to the popular will, and with less obstruction to it, probably, than the government of any other country. In the colonies it resulted in independence, and in a government under a constitution which was largely infused with the Toryism of the time of George, and in which the process of evolution has been obstructed by its written form. This circumstance explains the presence to so large a degree of George-the-Third-Hamilton Toryism in our government today, without exciting wonder or even consciousness.

The framers of our constitution did not comprehend that the same struggle which won our independence had also, in effect, won for the English people, independence from the hereditary upper house of parliament, and the sovereign or executive—in short, a government, directly by the elective house of commons. Excepting such moral influence as they wield, and their expense as a relic, preserved by the peculiar conservative spirit of the English people, the monarchial executive and the titled upper house of parliament have been almost inert since the reform bill of 1832. On the other hand, our own constitution, patterned as much as Hamiltonism could make it so, after the English constitution of George—and as liberal and progressive a pattern as the world then afforded, remains to us in its original procrustean letter, and in much of its original Tory spirit.

Jefferson played his momentous game of politics with a cue taken from the great French radicals, whose spirit and principles were even then in a life-and-death grapple with the aristocratic order, which they overthrew, never successfully to rise again. This distinction between two marked political tendencies has come down to the present day through the democratic party, which was born of Jefferson's struggle, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, through the federal party and its successors, the whig and republican parties. The French revolution reorganized the whole social system, and placed it upon a new basis.

The revolution of Jefferson in 1800 established new principles of national

polity, and organized and administered the new American political society along new lines, and in a new spirit. Jefferson's democracy was abreast of the democracy of the French philosophers who inspired the French revolution. Hamilton, on the other hand, was behind Pitt and Fox, who inspired the English revolution against the reactionary Toryism of George, but who were conservatives in comparison with the revolutionists of France. * * *

Sordid Republicanism.

The materialism of the republican issue was sordid and aggressive beyond precedent, yet it seemed only to inspire the desired confidence. The one notable republican campaign speech in Mr. Bryan's home town was made by Senator Frye. He sustained the Philippine position of his party almost in these words: "Some of the peace commissioners went to Paris, determined to take as little as possible from Spain; I went to get all we could lay hands on." This was part one, of his address. Part two was, in substance: "Your bellies were empty when McKinley came in, were they not? Well, they're full now, are they not? What more do you want?" The first sentiment raised a sweeping tornado of applause, the significance of which was startling to me; the second was received all but as ardently. * * *

Incident to this strong, monopolistic programme of the republicans is their policy of taking care of their loyal members to the utmost, at the public expense, by the lavish and greedy use of the tremendous resources now afforded by the public patronage. Popular rebellion against this policy might defeat the republicans in 1902 and 1904, if the opposition should take up new leaders of "safe" principles and tendencies, who would stand for retrenchment and honest, economical administration; in general, for reform—in short, for the corrective policy which brought magnificent success to Tilden once, and to Cleveland twice. But the new leaders must be of later date than the bourbon democrat of the Cleveland regime. The democratic party has moved ahead materially since his day. Tilden and Cleveland won, not because they stood for the restoration of the ancient democracy, but because they boldly cut loose from it. They stripped the party of its out-of-date habiliments and dressed it in contemporaneous clothes.

The power of Tilden's political personality, platform, and letter of acceptance, wrenched the party away from its old obstructive policy, and, more important still, put a summary end to its coquetry with fiat money. Mr. Cleveland, in turn, cauterized the party's silver recrudescence, and raised it to its feet with a tonic of sound-money principles. His personal reputation made a real issue of honest and economical ad-

ministration and the development of civil-service reform. Thus, in 1876, 1884, and 1892 a great body of the most intelligent, conservative, and independent, yet progressive, voters was won over to the long-distrusted party. If the leaders will but let nature take her course, the same class will do the same thing in 1902 and 1904 as it did under Tilden and Cleveland. * * *

Bryan Should Confess Populism.

Mr. Bryan's natural followers, since the election, will be confined to the ultimate or logical Jeffersonian radicals. To accommodate himself to this following he should, consistently, and at once, stand for postal savings banks, public ownership of telegraphs, and all means of transportation, and perhaps of all deposits of coal and other staple minerals. This he will not do because his tendency is to build for the present and not to wait for development or slow party growth. He can win nothing practical on opportunist or temporary issues, because he is too widely distrusted by conservative classes—whether on good grounds or not is not material.

Bryan's Fatalistic Confidence.

A German writer tells, in a current story, of a Hebrew family that was in need of the indispensable, unleavened bread for the approaching feast of Pesach. The improvident husband persisted day after day in spending his slim earnings in unnecessary notions and luxuries, always quieting his wife's remonstrances and fears about the still-wanting bread with the answer, "What must be, must be." He insisted that because he must have the bread for an all-important and sacred purpose, it would be forthcoming. In his case his fatalistic faith sustained him. While he squandered the resources by which he might have secured the bread, at the very last the neighbors chipped in the money and bought it for the distressed wife. Mr. Bryan has had a fatalistic confidence that his democratic ideals would surely be realized, because to him they seemed indispensable. But here the parallel to the Hebrew story ends. The unappreciative public refused to chip in the votes which Mr. Bryan's improvidence had failed to secure by practical means; and his followers, who are wedded to him by the close ties of faith and dependence, go hungry.

The Passing of the "Plain People!"

From the beginning he has sought ostentatiously to win a following of "plain people." This foible I always believed would have a disastrous culmination; and it contributed very largely to the great majorities against him, which distinguished the late election. At the very beginning of his career, before men of conservative, ripe judgment in his home community had acknowledged his capacity or stability, the