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SARAH B. HARRIS Editor and Manager  
W. MORTON SMITH Associate Editor

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## OBSERVATIONS

Will Bryan carry his own state? Mr. Bryan is so sure of Nebraska's eight electoral votes that he does not think it necessary to make any personal campaign in the state other than the incidental speeches in this city. Senator Thurston has repeatedly said Nebraska will go republican by 20,000 plurality. The republican state central committee does not admit that there is any doubt of a McKinley victory. The truth is no accurate information as to the probable result is possessed by either side. Both committees have attempted to poll precincts, counties and districts, but the work has not been carefully done, and the estimates thus far made are unsatisfactory. Nebraska is a doubtful state. Election figures of the last four years, when considered in connection with present political conditions, yield encouragement to the supporters of Mr. Bryan. On the other hand there are modifying circumstances that seem to indicate a republican victory.

Nebraska has gone republican in every republican election since 1872.

Republicans were elected to state offices until 1890, when James E. Boyd, democrat, was elected governor under peculiar conditions. The second break in republican control occurred in 1894 when Silas A. Holcomb, demo-pop, was elected governor. In 1888 the total vote cast in the state was 202,663. Cleveland electors received 80,552, and Harrison electors 108,425. The republican plurality was 27,873. That was before the birth of the populist party. The populist forerunner, the Farmers' Alliance, had not begun to dabble with politics. Four years later, in 1892, there was a great change. The populist party had then become an important factor. The total vote in 1892 was 199,814. The average vote for republican electors was 86,894. The average vote for populist electors was 82,587. The vote for the democratic national ticket was 24,943. The republican plurality was 4,307. Populist strength was not so marked in the vote for state officers. C. H. Van Wyck, the populist candidate for governor, received 68,617 votes. The democratic candidate, J. Sterling Morton, received 44,195 votes. Crouse, republican, was elected, receiving 78,426 votes. The political situation was very much mixed that year. The republican candidate for governor fell behind the republican electoral vote 8,468. The democratic candidate for governor ran ahead of the democratic candidates for electors 20,000 votes.

The next year, 1893, there was an election for judge of the supreme court and regents of the state university. Candidates were nominated by the republicans, democrats, and the peoples-independent party, or populists. T.O.C. Harrison, republican candidate for judge, who was elected, fell a little behind the Crouse vote of the year before. He received 72,032 votes. Silas A. Holcomb, the present governor, was the candidate of the populists. His vote was 65,666, practically the same as that cast for Van Wyck. Frank Irvine, who represented, as did J. Sterling Morton in the election of 1892, the straight democrats, and who was opposed by W. J. Bryan, received 37,545 votes. The vote for regent was practically the same as that cast for judge.

In 1894 there was a general state election. Holcomb, this time running as a demopop, was elected governor by a vote of 97,815. There was complete fusion that year, so far as the head of the ticket was concerned. Holcomb received all the populist votes and all of the democratic votes, except 6,695, which were cast for the straight democratic candidate, who was nominated for the same reason that Palmer was nominated for president this year—to preserve the organization of the party. It is interesting to note that these 6,695 votes grew to 18,000 the next year, as will be seen further on. Most of the democrats who

wanted to see the demopop candidate defeated voted for Majors, the republican candidate. The latter received 94,613 votes. There was a bitter fight on Majors, and a considerable number of republicans voted for Holcomb by way of protest against what they considered a bad nomination. The republican candidate for auditor of public accounts received 98,728 votes, leading the ticket. While Majors ran behind his ticket Holcomb ran ahead of his. He was the only populist elected to a state office. Republicans were elected to congress in five out of the six districts.

Last year the people of Nebraska voted for candidates for judge of the supreme court and regent. The split in the free silver party was widened. Mr. Bryan conducted a vigorous campaign as editor of the World-Herald and as a stump speaker in behalf of Phelps, the nominee of the free silver wing of the democracy for judge. Five candidates for judge were named. Samuel Maxwell, ex-justice of the supreme court, having been several times elected by the republicans, was the candidate of the peoples independent, or populist party. Judge F. L. Norval was nominated by the republicans. The straight democrats named T. J. Mahoney. Phelps represented the free silver democrats, and the prohibitionist supported A. G. Wolfenbarger. The vote stood: Norval, 79,291; Maxwell, 70,566; Mahoney, 18,636; Phelps, 10,079; Wolfenbarger, 4,344. The fight between Mahoney and Phelps was made on the money issue. There was no expectation of electing either candidate, but a determined effort was made by both sides to get out a large vote. The sound money democrats were jubilant over the result, and anti-Bryan democrats who claim that Bryan will be defeated in Nebraska this year very largely base their claims on these figures.

But the figures of 1895 do not represent the actual conditions in Nebraska at the present time. While the vote for Mahoney represented the entire strength of the sound money democrats including all the federal office-holders in the state, the vote cast for Phelps did not represent the full strength of the free silver wing of the democracy. A great many silverites in the democratic party, looking upon the election of Phelps as hopeless, cast their vote for Maxwell, who was as strong a free silver advocate as Phelps. There were probably 40,000 democrats in Nebraska last year. The combined vote of Mahoney and Phelps was less than 29,000. At least 10,000 democrats who had up to that time withstood the blandishments of the populists went over to Maxwell and populism.

The vote of 18,000 cast for Mahoney and sound money in 1895 cannot remain intact this year. There is complete

fusion between the populists and free silver democrats in this campaign, the fusion arrangement covering both the electoral and state tickets. The sound money democrats have no state ticket, and they will not put a Palmer and Buckner electoral ticket in the field. Secretary J. Sterling Morton said, several weeks ago, that he did not believe there were more than 5,000 democrats in the state who would not vote for Bryan. Tobias Castor, the deposed national committeeman thinks the number may not be more than 3,000. The postmasters and other federal office holders who voted for Mahoney last year will vote for the Bryan ticket this year. The accepted estimate of the total vote this year is 205,000. If the populists can hold the 70,000 votes cast for their candidate in 1895 and capture all of the votes cast for Phelps and all but 5,000 of those cast for Mahoney there would be a total of 93,000 for Bryan. But this is presidential year, and the populist vote may reasonably be expected to show an increase. If there is an increase of 10,000 votes Bryan will have a plurality. If the demopop vote that was cast for Holcomb in 1894 can be held together the Bryanites will have to secure only 6,000 additional votes to give the state to their candidate. It is conceded that there is some republican disaffection on account of free silver. If this disaffection is only 5,000 votes it would, apparently, put the demopop very near to victory. But on the other hand there is much dissatisfaction over the details of fusion as at present arranged. Under the preliminary agreement, the populists and democrats were to divide the candidates for elector equally between them; the populists were to have a majority of the state offices, and three congressional nominations were to go to each party, each candidate to be supported jointly. This arrangement has been carried out with the exception that the populists have taken four out of the five candidates for congress that have thus far been named. This is not wholly satisfactory to the democrats, and there is a growing complaint on the part of the middle-of-the-road populists that Senator Allen and Governor Holcomb have sold out the party in this state to the rival party. The visit of Tom Watson has aroused a considerable protest against the naming of Bryan and Sewall electors. The republicans expect some desertions from the populist camp, and this, with a rigid lining up of their own ranks, is expected to carry the state for McKinley. The largest republican vote ever cast in Nebraska, excepting that for Harrison electors in 1888, before the populists mixed up things, was 98,728, cast for Eugene Moore in 1894. That vote with the vote of 5,000 democrats, would give McKinley a plurality. It is contended by the republican managers, and not without some reason, that McKinley will gain a populist vote for every republican backslider. Nebraska is debatable territory.

W. MORTON SMITH.