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OBSERVATIONS

We have entered upon the last month of the campaign. A few weeks more and the voice of the stump speaker will be stilled, the campaign torch will have sputtered and flashed for the last time, and, it is to be hoped, there will come a compensating quiet for the turbulence of what has been one of the most remarkable political contests in the history of the country. At this time, when the campaign is two-thirds gone, it may be interesting to review some of its more prominent features.

The presidential campaign of 1896 started with an oratorical feat, and oratory has been a distinguishing characteristic ever since. There have been more speeches and better speeches in this campaign than in any that have preceded it. In some campaigns there have been debates and addresses quite as conspicuous as any that have marked the present contest, but when we consider the number of oratorical achievements, the diversity of effort, the dignity of the speakers, in the campaign

that is now on, it must be clear that all records have been broken.

Mr. Bryan has done a world of talking that very properly went into one ear and out of the other. With these ephemeral and very boyish declamations we have nothing to do in a consideration of the eloquence of political debates. But Mr. Bryan has made two remarkable speeches, one the inflammatory and more or less incendiary utterance in Chicago that was used as a bait for the presidential nomination, and the other, the labored and much ridiculed address delivered in Madison Square Garden, New York. The crown of thorns and cross of gold speech, ridiculous as it seems, when dissected and considered sentence by sentence, was a masterful appeal to the emotions and prejudices of mankind, and stamped its author as, if not a great man, at least one who understands human nature. Much as it has been criticised and condemned and made light of that speech was the greatest act of Mr. Bryan's life. Mr. Bryan went to Chicago with a definite object in view. He was to meet a multitude of strangers, and by the simple eloquence of a speech, win a nomination for president. Did ever orator for such honor contend? Mr. Bryan knew full well that his address must be no ordinary, conventional speech. It must stir men to their very hearts, and rouse them as they had never been roused before. Mr. Bryan set about his task with a serene confidence that almost make us believe he is a great man. And the result! In that speech he sounded the depths of human cupidity and desire. He inflamed men with his fiery words. He melted them with his emotion. He aroused them with his boldness. To accomplish his purpose he ventured closer to the red flag of danger than ever man in a like position ventured before. He risked a riot and won the prize! That achievement must ever stand as an unexampled personal triumph, worthy of ranking with the greatest efforts of the world's greatest orators. The second speech of importance made by Mr. Bryan, that in New York, accepting the popocratic nomination, was remarkable for the contrast to the Chicago speech which it afforded. In the heart of the "enemy's country" Mr. Bryan laid aside all of those arts and graces with which he had hypnotized the national democratic convention, and made a sober attempt to convince the people of the east that he was not as dangerous a man as the public had been led to believe by his unbridled eloquence in the first speech. While it lost in force by reason of the fact that it was made up of denials of what were in many cases imaginary accusations, instead of being an aggressive independent declaration of principles, it was a fair presentation of the socialist program which he is

pledged to carry out, and was one of Mr. Bryan's best speeches. In fact it was the only dignified address on the issues in this campaign that Mr. Bryan has delivered.

In the annals of American public speeches there is no record of an achievement such as Mr. McKinley wrought at Canton since he received the republican nomination for president. The pilgrimages to the little Ohio town have made a demand upon the candidate's intellectual powers that, had he been an ordinary man, would have yielded a product that would have subjected him to much adverse criticism. Few men would have attempted to respond to these unlimited calls, and probably no man in the country could have duplicated Major McKinley's great triumph. The republican candidate has appeared in a new light. He has been shown to be a man of versatile talents, of infinite tact, of great mental power, of broad statesmanship, of unvarying dignity.

But Mr. Bryan and Major McKinley have not had a monopoly of the oratory in this campaign. Bourke Cochran, in many respects, the best public speaker in the country, has given us some of his best work from the platform and Carl Schurz has added to his renown. The best all round stump speeches that have been made on either side have been the witty talks, full of apparent concessions to the enemy, delivered by Tom Reed. President Harrison, our own Thurston, Foraker, Sherman, Depew, Tillman, Watson, Williams and many others have made notable efforts. It has been a talking campaign.

The tour of the generals was an inspiration on the part of the republican campaign managers. And the pilgrimages to Canton constitute one of the most effective campaign demonstrations. Mr. Bryan's tour is without a parallel. Whether it was a good move may be apparent after election. The most striking fact on the popocratic side is that the pseudo democratic candidate is making his fight without any assistance whatever from the men who have in times past led the party. Arthur Pue Gorman continues to croon "Maryland, My Maryland." He does not shout for Bryan. David Bennett Hill is preserving a golden silence. Grover Cleveland is dumb. Bland has retired. Carlisle, Palmer, Morton, Watterson, Dana—the brainy men of the democratic party, are all working against Bryan. Mr. Bryan has overturned precedent, ignored committees, and ridden rough shod over all political traditions and usages. He has invoked the assistance of irresponsible and irrepressible men like Tillman and Penoyer, and slighted the only men who could have been of any use to him.

Another striking fact is the unanimity of the press. Not fifteen journals of metropolitan importance are supporting Bryan. Never before has there been anything like the present unanimity. On the republican side it is to be noted that in the first half of the campaign the managers were stricken with fear, and that in the latter half they are overconfident, and altogether too jubilant.

But the overshadowing fact of this campaign is that for the first time in the country's history, socialism has forged its way to the front, and become the only question at issue between political parties. It is idle to contend that the free and unlimited coinage of silver at the ratio of sixteen to one without waiting for the consent of any other nation, is the issue in this campaign. This is a mere pretext. The real question to be decided on the 3rd of November is whether socialist or communist ideas shall prevail; whether this country shall be turned over to novices with revolutionary ideas, to the exclusion of men who have made this government what it is. This is a socialist campaign, and Mr. Bryan is the chief socialist. It is free socialism against conservatism.

Mr. Bryan has now been before the public constantly for two months. He has made a distinct impression on the public mind. The thought is suggested. Have we, here in Lincoln and Nebraska, where we know Mr. Bryan so well, done him full justice? Have we been mistaken in our estimate of the boy candidate? Has our familiarity with him made us insensible to his qualities of greatness? Is he a great man? Mr. Bryan has been critically considered in these columns, and our endeavor has been to be entirely honest and fair in our opinions. We have always conceded Mr. Bryan to be a remarkable man, and with due respect to his achievements in this campaign, it does not seem that any further concession is warranted. Washington was a great man; so was Jefferson; so was Hamilton; so was Lincoln; so was Grant; so, in a measure was Blaine, and so, equally qualified, is Cleveland. Mr. Bryan is not great like any of these men. It must be remembered that Mr. Bryan's triumphs have always been purely oratorical. He has never manifested intellectual power. He is devoid of originality. His name is associated with no principle of government, no great accomplishment, no successful legislation. He has simply taken up with his tongue what others have originated in their brains, and given a glitter to other men's thoughts. He has remarkable adaptability. He has a good understanding of men, and a genius for politics. As a prophet he has won great triumphs and scored signal defeats. He is daring and pugnacious. He has never lost his temper more than