

8-1936

# Kentucky in the Election of 1896

John Dickey

*Western Kentucky University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses>



Part of the [American Politics Commons](#), [Political History Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Dickey, John, "Kentucky in the Election of 1896" (1936). *Masters Theses & Specialist Projects*. Paper 2274.  
<https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses/2274>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses & Specialist Projects by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact [topscholar@wku.edu](mailto:topscholar@wku.edu).

Dickey,

John Edward

1936

Copies

May Not

Film

Well!

KENTUCKY IN THE ELECTION OF 1896

BY

JOHN EDWARD DICKEY

A THESIS  
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

WESTERN KENTUCKY STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE

AUGUST, 1936

Approved:-

Major Professor

Department of

Minor Professor

Graduate Committee

*W. M. Stukles*  
History  
*W. J. H. Economics*  
W. J. H. Economics  
*W. J. H. Economics*

. CONTENTS.

	1
PREFACE	PAGE
CHAPTER	
I THE ISSUE BEFORE THE COUNTRY	1
II THE STATE AND NATIONAL CONVENTIONS	25
III THE GOLD STANDARD DEMOCRATS	59
IV THE CAMPAIGN	85
V THE GOLD STANDARD VICTORY	117
BIBLIOGRAPHY	139

TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
I	Popular Vote for President in 1892 by Kentucky Counties	122
II	Popular Vote for Governor in the Kentucky Election of 1895 by Counties	125
III	Popular Vote for President in 1896 by Kentucky Counties	128

## MAPS.

MAP		BETWEEN PAGES
I	Popular Vote for President in the Election of 1892 by Congressional Districts	124-125
II	Popular Vote in the Kentucky Gubernatorial Election of 1895 by Congressional Districts	127-128
III	Popular Vote for President and Vice President in the Election of 1896 by Congressional Districts	129-131
IV	The Congressional Election of 1896 by Congressional Districts	131-132



## PREFACE

The story of the election of 1896 and the part played by Kentucky in that great conflict offers no parallel, so far as interest in a national election is concerned, in the annals of the political history of the state. Perhaps in no other nationwide campaign did both Kentucky's leaders and her citizenry as well take such an active and intensive part. State and national leaders were extolled on the one hand, and degraded on the other. Party principles were invoked to bear witness to the truth by one group, and condemned as the diabolical instruments of the money power or anarchy by another. Men and women of all ages and description took up the fight for or against free silver and the gold standard. Even children were enthralled by the parades, the speeches, and the general enthusiasm expressed during those hectic days.

In this study the impossible attempt to exhaust the subject has not been made. So much was written and spoken during the time that to include even a small part of it would fill volumes. Songs, poetry, and literature of all kinds poured forth daily from interested and enthusiastic pens. An effort has been made, however, to separate the wheat from the chaff, and to include those facts that will best tell the history of the election of 1896 and at the same time give a cross-section of the political and economic life of Kentucky on the eve of and during that struggle.

My sincere appreciation is accorded Dr. A. M. Stickles of the department of history and Dr. N. O. Taff of the department of

v

economics at Western Kentucky State Teachers College, both of whom, during and after the study was made, offered constructive criticisms and helpful suggestions. To Mrs. M. A. Leiper of the Kentucky Library at Western Kentucky State Teachers College, to the staff of the Louisville Public Library, the Cincinnati Public Library, the Carnegie Library at Nashville, and to the Filson Club of Louisville, I am indebted for aid in enabling me to carry on the research. To those who lived during and took a part in the campaign I am grateful for personal and other useful information. And to my wife, whose encouragement of the work and whose aid in its preparation has made the task easier, I owe my heartfelt appreciation. To these and others who in many ways helped the progress of this study, I tender my thanks.

CHAPTER I

THE ISSUE BEFORE THE COUNTRY

The election of 1896 marked the culmination of the economic maladjustment and its corollary, political discontent, that had been brewing and seething since the Civil War. Third-party movements, such as the Greenback and Populist crusades, arrayed themselves against the existing evils for the purpose of securing economic justice. These movements, the fight for and against resumption of specie payments, the efforts of the muckrakers to eradicate the economic and social evils that had grown up with expanding America, and the panics of 1873 and 1893 occupied the center of the stage in American history during the last third of the nineteenth century. In 1896 came the grand climax. The Greenback and Populist revolts had united certain of the causes for the unrest, but in the first Bryan-McKinley campaign the major issues of forty years were summed up and fought out on one question---whether or not it should thenceforth be the policy of the United States government to establish the free and unlimited coinage of silver. All of the political, economic, and social discontent became concentrated on the free silver issue.

The years following the war had seen the accumulation of huge fortunes, in many instances secured by decidedly dishonest and fraudulent methods which were "within the limits of the law but condemned by elementary morals." Added to this was the increasing sentiment of the working masses in the cities against wealth, capital, and special privilege. These forces "were bound in the long run to bring forth political cleavages as deep as the

corresponding social cleavage." At the close of the century the political cleavage came.<sup>1</sup>

"The monetary issue, on which events ostensibly revolved, was, it is true, an ancient one, but the real conflict was not over the remonetization of silver or the gold standard. Deep, underlying class feeling found its expression in the [1896] conventions of both parties, particularly that of the Democrats, and forced upon the attention of the country, in a dramatic manner, a conflict between great wealth and the lower middle and working classes, which had hitherto been recognized only in obscure circles."<sup>2</sup>

Since it was the monetary issue on which the campaign of 1896 hinged, it is necessary to trace that issue from its civil-war origins, and to make at least a cursory study of the events and movements connected with the financial and monetary history of the United States during the three decades following 1865.

The Civil War caused monetary policies of a new and unusual nature to be taken up by the federal government. The financial situation had grown more and more critical from the fall elections of 1860 until Lincoln took office March 4, 1861. On that date the new President found the treasury practically empty.<sup>3</sup> However, measures were immediately initiated in order to bring in money necessary to carry on the expenses of the government during the critical times through which it was passing. The revenues from all sources, including loans, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1861, totaled \$86,835,900.27. After deducting expenditures, a

---

<sup>1</sup> Charles A. Beard, Contemporary American History: 1877-1913 (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1921), p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>3</sup> Davis R. Dewey, Financial History of the United States (N.Y., Longmans, Green and Co., 1928), p. 272.

3

balance of \$2,257,065.80 was left in the treasury. For the first quarter of the fiscal year ending September 30, 1861, there was in the treasury a balance of \$4,232,776.18.<sup>4</sup>

The results of the elections of 1860 gave a severe shock to public and private credit. Southern banks withdrew large amounts of money on deposit in northern banks; loans were contracted; and by the middle of November the panic was complete. With the beginning of the year 1861 the replacement of Howell Cobb as secretary of the treasury by John A. Dix restored, to some extent, public confidence. Other changes in the cabinet at this time strengthened public credit.<sup>5</sup>

The financial straits into which the government soon found itself led to the issue of legal tender notes, begun in 1862 and issued at various times throughout the period of the war. The financial crisis of December, 1861, which resulted in the suspension of specie payments, was caused by a lack of confidence on the part of the public in the success of the war and because Congress had failed to show any signs that it would support the credit of the government by a vigorous system of taxation. Depositors were withdrawing specie for hoarding, with the result that on January 1, 1862, the banks had \$87,000,000 in specie to meet an indebtedness of \$459,000,000. Chase on the one hand and the banks on the other gave their respective reasons for the sus-

---

<sup>4</sup> Lincoln's first annual message to Congress. James D. Richardson, Messages and Papers of the Presidents (Washington, D. C., Government Printing Office, 1908), Vol. VI, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> Dewey, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

pension of specie payments, but it seems that the true causes are those mentioned above.<sup>6</sup>

In the debate over the first legal tender bill even men conservative in their ideas as to money and credit supported the issue of the notes. On February 6, 1862, Thaddeus Stevens declared that, if made legal tender, the notes would "remain at par and pass in all transactions....at the full value of their face; we shall have one currency for all sections of the country, and for every class of people, the poor as well as the rich."<sup>7</sup> On January 28, Spaulding had declared in the House that the bill was a war measure, one "of necessity and not of choice," and that it was necessary to resort to such to bring the war to a speedy close.<sup>8</sup> In the Senate, Charles Sumner admitted that he consented to the issue of the notes "reluctantly, partially," but with the warning that the "medicine of the Constitution must not become its daily bread."<sup>9</sup> Even Senator John Sherman, a man recognized as "being the best informed man during those critical years of money, banking, and finance,"<sup>10</sup> asserted that notes made legal tender would "circulate all over the country...."<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 281-283.

<sup>7</sup> Congressional Globe, 37th Congress, 2nd session, p. 680.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 523.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 800.

<sup>10</sup> Don C. Barrett, The Greenbacks and Resumption of Specie Payments, 1862-1879 (Cambridge, Harvard Press, 1931), p. 22.

<sup>11</sup> Congressional Globe, 37th Congress, 2nd session, Appendix, p. 338.

The result of the debate was the first legal tender bill, enacted with promises in both House and Senate that it would be the last.<sup>12</sup> The act provided for the issue of \$150,000,000 of United States notes, receivable in payment of all taxes, internal duties, excises, debts, and demands of every kind due the United States except duties on imports.<sup>13</sup>

The \$150,000,000 of greenbacks proved a valuable resource in the hands of the treasury, but it was not long before it was exhausted, and another legal tender act was resorted to. Passed on July 11, 1862, the second legal tender act provided for the issue of \$150,000,000 more greenbacks, carrying provisions similar to those of the first bill.<sup>14</sup> As no means had been provided to pay soldiers in the field, a third legal tender act was inevitable, and it became law on March 3, 1863.<sup>15</sup> By this time, opposition in Congress had practically disappeared. In the House, the bill passed its third reading the day it was presented, and the following day the Senate concurred by a vote of thirty-eight to two.<sup>16</sup> This was the end of the issue of legal tender notes, although some of the notes were later reissued after they had been retired. Thus the total amount of United States notes (called greenbacks

---

<sup>12</sup> Barrett, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>13</sup> Congressional Globe, 37th Congress, 2nd session, Appendix, p. 338.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 395.

<sup>15</sup> Congressional Globe, 37th Congress, 3rd session, Appendix, p. 203.

<sup>16</sup> Dewey, op. cit., p. 288.

and legal tenders) authorized by war legislation was \$450,000,000.

Borrowing was used extensively by the government to aid in financing the war. The national banking system set up by the acts of 1863 and 1865 intended "to provide a market for United States bonds, though there were other reasons for its adoption."<sup>17</sup> The acts created a demand for government bonds, as had been anticipated by the authors and supporters of the acts. A 10 per cent tax on state bank issues, to take effect July 1, 1866, made the burden on state bank notes so oppressive that "the national banks took complete possession of the field."<sup>18</sup>

At the end of the war there were many proposals by political as well as business leaders of the country to retire the legal tenders issued during the war. In his report to Congress in December, 1865, secretary of the treasury Hugh McCulloch made a thorough review of the finances. He declared that the legal tender notes were issued as a war measure only, and that the law making the notes legal tender for all debts was not, under ordinary circumstances, within the power of Congress. He stated that the issue of greenbacks as lawful money had been no doubt expedient and necessary in an emergency. Since the emergency no longer existed, he argued, the notes should be retired, and recommended that the secretary of the treasury be authorized to sell United States bonds to gradually retire United States notes from circu-

---

<sup>17</sup> Walter W. Jennings, History of Economic Progress in the United States (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1928), p. 522.

<sup>18</sup> Dewey, *op. cit.*, p. 328.



7  
lation.<sup>19</sup>

On December 18 the House adopted McCulloch's recommendations, but the funding act of April 12, 1866, was not exactly what the secretary wished.<sup>20</sup> The act provided that the secretary could receive any treasury notes or other obligations issued previously in exchange for any description of bonds authorized by the act of March 3, 1865. Of the United States notes already issued, not more than \$10,000,000 might be retired within six months from the passage of the act. Thereafter, not more than \$4,000,000 might be retired within any one month.<sup>21</sup> The notes that were retired under this act affected the market so little that "no one outside the department would have known that what was called contraction was going on but for the monthly published statements of the condition of the treasury."<sup>22</sup> Senator Sherman was of the opinion that the act of 1866 was "the most injurious and expensive financial measure" ever indulged in by Congress, since it postponed resumption of specie payments until 1879 and since it compelled the continuance of high war rates of interest for many years.<sup>23</sup> After the passage of the refunding act of April 12, 1866, public

---

<sup>19</sup> Hugh McCulloch, Men and Measures of Half a Century (New York, Scribners, 1888), pp. 210-211.

<sup>20</sup> Congressional Globe, 39th Congress, 1st session, p. 75.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix, p. 317.

<sup>22</sup> McCulloch, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-212.

<sup>23</sup> John Sherman, Recollections of Forty Years in the House, Senate, and Cabinet (New York, The Verner Co., 1895), pp. 375-384.

sentiment was becoming increasingly hostile to contraction as a means toward the resumption of specie payments, and it was demanded that the five-twenty bonds be paid in greenbacks. Some interests held that contraction would reduce prices, carrying with it an adverse effect on trade, even to the point of bringing on a panic. Government interests argued that contraction would decrease the public revenues through a falling off of commerce and industry, unemployment, reduced consumption, and a decrease of imports. Some inflationists contended that more rather than less currency was needed, in view of the fact that the country was becoming more widely settled and that the population of the country was increasing. It was also argued that the national banks had as much to do with the decreasing value of paper money as any action on the part of the federal government, inasmuch as the circulation of national bank notes was expanding to the detriment of government notes. Therefore, if there should be any contraction, it should begin with the notes of the national banks.<sup>24</sup>

McCulloch and the contractionists were driven to the defensive, and accepted the inevitable. The secretary of the treasury saw that further resumption was impossible, and it was with difficulty that he prevented inflation. The policy of gradual contraction was abandoned by the act of February 4, 1868, which suspended the authority of the secretary of the treasury "to make any reductions of the currency by retiring or canceling United States notes." The President failed to return the bill, and it became

---

<sup>24</sup> Dewey, *op. cit.*, pp. 338-339.

a law without his approval.<sup>25</sup>

Another phase of the inflation movement at this time was the demand that United States bonds be paid in greenbacks. The various acts between 1861 and 1867 were indefinite as to the payment of bonds in United States notes or coin. In his fourth annual message to Congress on December 9, 1868, President Johnson indicated that he leaned toward payment of the bonds in legal tenders.<sup>26</sup> Thad Stevens in fiery language declared that he was opposed to payment of the bonds in gold. "I would vote for no such swindle upon the taxpayers of this country; I would vote for no such speculation in favor of the large bondholders, the millionaires, who took advantage of our folly of granting them coin payment of interest."<sup>27</sup>

The "Ohio Idea" proposed to pay both the principal and interest of the war bonds, unless the bond definitely stated that it was to be paid in gold. This plan, so-called because it originated in Ohio (1867), was "conceived in the womb of economic discontent that followed the Civil War," and was opposed by many Republican editors in the East.<sup>28</sup> Dana of the New York Sun declared that "if we mean to be honest at all, there is no escaping payment in specie."<sup>29</sup> Horace Greeley flatly stated that should he

---

<sup>25</sup> Congressional Globe, 40th Congress, 2nd session, Appx., p. 497.

<sup>26</sup> Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 678.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted by Dewey, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

<sup>28</sup> R. C. McGrane, "Ohio and the Greenback Movement," Miss. Valley Hist. Review, Vol. IX, p. 526.

<sup>29</sup> Charles H. Coleman, The Election of 1868 (New York, Columbia University Press, 1933), p. 28.

"ever consent to argue the propriety and policy of wholesale swindling, I shall take your proposal into consideration."<sup>30</sup>

Greenbacks and the question of whether or not bonds should be paid in currency became issues in the presidential campaign of 1868. The issue was bi-partisan. It was not an issue between Democrats and Republicans, but between the East and the West, for the eastern Republicans were no less opposed to payment of bonds in United States notes than the eastern Democrats. In the West, both Democrats and Republicans favored the idea. The western Democratic merchants had invested their capital in business and real estate; the eastern Democrats had invested theirs in government securities.<sup>31</sup> The Republican national convention of 1868 straddled the financial issue, and the Democratic convention came out openly for payment of the bonds in paper money.<sup>32</sup> The outcome of the campaign was victory for Grant. Although it has long been considered that Grant rode into the presidency upon his military reputation, recent research seems to indicate that the greenback issue defeated the Democrats. "If the Reconstruction policy of Congress had been the sole issue, it is quite possible that the Republicans would have lost the election, even with the most popular man in the North as their standard bearer."<sup>33</sup> Coleman declares that "the general impression---that Grant's victory was a 'walk-over' and that the Democrats had no chance--is not

---

30 Loc. cit.

31 Ibid., p. 26.

32 Edward Stanwood, A History of the Presidency, 1788-1897 (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1898), p. 323.

33 J. W. Burgess, Reconstruction and the Constitution (New York, Scribners, 1902), p. 213.

accurate."<sup>34</sup>

The decade of the seventies brought with it the panic of 1873, and with it a renewed effort on the part of the debtor classes to effect more inflation. The feverish industrial and agricultural activity on the part of the North and West during the Civil War had caused millions of dollars of capital to be invested, but with the cessation of hostilities there came a sudden check in earnings, and with it the panic. Farmers and laborers found that they were receiving less for their products and work, and the debtor classes in general found it increasingly more difficult to pay what they owed. The low tone of public morality, as shown by the Tweed cabal, the impeachment of the President, and the Credit Mobilier, when added to the already painful conditions to which the farmer and laboring classes were exposed, made it easy to blame the conditions on the holders of great wealth.

The panic naturally caused a clamor for more money. In October, 1873, the secretary of the treasury, Richardson, found it necessary to reissue the greenbacks that had been retired by McCulloch in order to meet the expenses of the government. Twenty-six millions of them went back into circulation.<sup>35</sup> On March 23, 1874, the House by an overwhelming majority voted down a bill to limit greenbacks to \$356,000,000,<sup>36</sup> and on April 14 passed the

---

<sup>34</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 368.

<sup>35</sup> Finance Report, 1873, pp. xi-xvi.

<sup>36</sup> Congressional Record, 43rd Congress, 1st session, pp. 2374-2378.

inflation bill<sup>37</sup> which was subsequently vetoed by President Grant.<sup>38</sup> A move to pass the bill over his veto failed, and there was very little demand on the part of the public for more inflation. "Economy and hard work" seemed to be the forces public sentiment recognized as necessary to recovery.<sup>39</sup>

After the congressional elections of 1874, Republicans thought that the opportunity had presented itself for them to recover favor with the best element of the country by enacting conservative legislation looking toward resumption, although the inflationists of the party had to reverse their position by this sudden change of policy. They believed, too, that after March 4, 1875, it would be impossible for any financial legislation to be agreed upon by a Republican Senate and a Democratic House. Led by Senator Edmunds of Vermont, they determined to enact sane legislation concerning resumption while the Republicans had a majority in both houses of Congress.<sup>40</sup> The Resumption Act became law on January 14, 1875, to take effect January 1, 1879.<sup>41</sup>

John G. Carlisle of Kentucky, who was in the House of Representatives at the time, opposed resumption, although much later

<sup>37</sup> *Loc. cit.*, p. 3073.

<sup>38</sup> Richardson, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 244-246.

<sup>39</sup> Ellis P. Oberholtzer, A History of the United States Since the Civil War (New York, Longmans, Green and Co., 1924), Vol. VIII, p. 117.

<sup>40</sup> Barrett, *op. cit.*, pp. 199-200.

<sup>41</sup> Sherman, *op. cit.*, pp. 511, 518.

during the 1896 campaign he stood up stoutly for the gold standard. It was his contention that there was "no justice in adding to the debt of the farmer and laborer while the government voted away millions of acres of land to the railroads and in addition aided them with bond loans."<sup>42</sup>

Failure to repeal the resumption act was followed by the demand for the free coinage of silver, accentuated by the discovery of silver mines in the West. It was at this time that the "crime of '73" was first discovered, and as time wore on the demand for free silver solidified. In 1876 a commission was appointed to study the currency question, but before it had time to report there was introduced in 1877 by Richard P. Bland of Missouri a free coinage bill. It was amended in the Senate, and finally passed over President Hayes' veto. It provided for the issuing of silver certificates of ten dollars and over upon the deposit of silver dollars. The Bland-Allison Act, as the act came to be known, neither disturbed the financial system nor checked falling prices.<sup>43</sup>

The act of 1878 was satisfactory neither to the advocates of free silver nor to its opponents. The former were dissatisfied because it had not been carried far enough and had not accomplished the goal they had set. Prices continued to fall, and the debtor who had borrowed a fifty-cent dollar was forced to pay with a ninety-cent dollar. By 1889 the silver in the dollar had

---

<sup>42</sup> James A. Barnes, John G. Carlisle: Financial Statesman (New York, Dodd, Mead and Co., 1931), p. 33.

<sup>43</sup> Harold Underwood Faulkner, American Economic History, (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1931), p. 634.

fallen to seventy-two cents. The opponents of the Bland-Allison Act were afraid that the continued coinage of silver dollars would result finally in more money than business needed, and inflation would follow. In spite of the opposition of President Harrison and Secretary John Sherman, the Republican party passed the Silver Purchase Act "as a matter of political expediency and as a means of insuring the passage of the McKinley tariff...."<sup>44</sup> The saving feature of the bill, as far as the opponents of silver were concerned, was the fact that by the act of 1890 the silver was to be purchased by ounces instead of dollars, which enabled the government to keep the amount of silver purchased at a uniform level.

The Greenback Party had been launched in 1874 at Indianapolis. A national convention of the party met in Cleveland in 1875, declared the "proper solution of the money question" the chief issue, and went on record as favoring the repeal of the resumption act of 1875. In the election of 1876 their candidate polled more than 80,000 votes. In the congressional elections of 1878 their vote jumped to nearly a million, and they naturally looked forward to the coming national election. But in the election of 1880 they polled only a few more than 300,000 votes.<sup>45</sup>

The fifteen years following the 1880 campaign saw another third-party, that of the Populists, come to the front. The demand for a more inflated currency gave way to the increasing de-

---

<sup>44</sup> Loc. cit., p. 635.

<sup>45</sup> See Lester Durrell Shippee's Recent American History (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1930), Chapter XI.



mand for free silver. Senator Jones of Nevada, speaking in the Senate on May 12, 1890, after discussing the importance of time contracts in connection with the industrial and commercial revolution of the nineteenth century, declared:

"The natural concomitant of such a system of industry is the elaborate system of debt and credit that has grown up with it and is indispensable to it. Any serious enhancement in the value of the unit of money between the time of making a contract or incurring a debt and the date of fulfillment or maturity always works a hardship and frequently ruin to the contractor or debtor.

"Three-fourths of the business enterprises of this country are conducted on borrowed capital. Three-fourths of the homes and farms that stand in the name of the actual occupants have been bought on time, and a very large proportion of them are mortgaged for the payment of some part of the purchase money.

"Under the operation of a shrinkage in the value of money, this enormous mass of borrowers, at the maturity of their respective debts, though nominally paying no more than the amount borrowed, with interest, are, in reality, in the amount of the principal alone, returning a percentage of value greater than they received, more than in equity, they contracted to pay and oftentimes more, in substance, than they profited by the loan. To the man of business this percentage in many cases constitutes the difference between success and failure. Thus a shrinkage in the value of money is a prolific source of bankruptcy and ruin....

"It is remarkable circumstance...that throughout the entire range of economic discussion in gold-standard circles it seems to be taken for granted that a change in the value of the money unit is a matter of no significance, and imports no mischief to society so long as the change is in one direction. Whoever heard from an Eastern journal any complaint against a contraction of our money volume, any admonition that in a shrinking volume of money lurks evils of the utmost magnitude?"<sup>46</sup>

The Peoples' Party, officially launched in February, 1892, had its origin in the various alliance movements that had sprung up all over the country since 1874. Political revolt was rearing its head, with the result that the two major parties were fast

---

<sup>46</sup> Congressional Record, 51st Congress, 1st session, Appendix, pp. 239, 247.

losing control in many states. In the Kentucky gubernatorial election of 1891, although the Democratic candidate, John Young Brown, won over his Republican opponent, A. T. Wood, the "significant feature of the election" was the Populist vote.<sup>47</sup> Growing out of the Farmers' Alliance, the Populist Party held its first convention at Omaha on July 2, 1892. The platform advocated a "national currency, safe, sound, and flexible, issued by the general government only," the free coinage of silver, a graduated income tax, postal savings banks, and a per capita circulation of money not less than fifty dollars.<sup>48</sup> In the 1892 campaign the Populists polled over a million votes and secured twenty-two electoral votes from five western states.<sup>49</sup>

After 1892 both Democrats and Republicans recognized the power of the Populists, and were anxious for their alliance. "Political accident happened to give the Democrats the first opportunity, and they absorbed most of the Populist vote in 1896." After Weaver's race in 1892, his place in the alliance of the Populists and Democrats was inevitable an important one. During 1893 he continued his campaign of free silver education, speaking in both the East and the West. In August of that year he declared America to be on the eve of a "great political revolution." Public interest had increased in financial affairs, and "the free-silver and anti-monopolist elements and all who believe that America should have an independent system of finance are coming

---

<sup>47</sup> Samuel W. Wilson, History of Kentucky (Louisville, S. J. Clark Publishing Co., 1928), p. 133.

<sup>48</sup> Stanwood, *op. cit.*, pp. 508-513.

<sup>49</sup> Shippee, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

together without regard to party." Weaver's ready acceptance of any man, regardless of party, who was in accord with the Populist doctrines, was indicative of the bi-partisan sentiment gathering force over the nation. When a free silver Democrat from Kansas was elected senator by Democratic and Populist votes, Weaver declared he believed "that the best possible result was accomplished....Judge Martin....is a free silver man, opposed to the National banks and in favor of an increase in the circulating medium...."<sup>50</sup>

Despite the fact that the free silver forces were gaining momentum and numbers, enough votes were secured in Congress in 1893 to repeal the Sherman silver act. However, the act was unsatisfactory even to the silverites, who desired unlimited coinage. President Cleveland called an extra session of Congress, and in August repeal was effected.<sup>51</sup>

By 1896 it was plain that the Democratic party was divided on the silver question, and as the year wore on the schism widened. But the break between the gold and silver Democrats did not begin in 1896. For years conditions had been shaping themselves for such an event, particularly since 1890. That the silver issue split the Democratic party "was largely the result of the appearance of two irreconcilable leaders---Grover Cleveland and William Jennings Bryan---and the succession of the Democracy to

---

<sup>50</sup> Frederic Emory Haynes, James Baird Weaver (Iowa City, State Historical Society of Iowa, 1919), pp. 344-349.

<sup>51</sup> Stanwood, op. cit., p. 522.

the control of the government in 1893."<sup>52</sup> In July, 1890, Bryan was nominated for Congress on the Democratic ticket. The First Nebraska District that nominated him adopted a free coinage plank that Bryan himself had written. "We demand the free coinage of silver on equal terms with gold and denounce the effort of the Republican party to serve the interests of Wall street as against the rights of the people."<sup>53</sup> The following year Bryan wrote to A. B. Farquar: "I hope that the two wings of the Democratic party may flap together, but I believe the time has come when the western wing shall have some say-so in regard to the flapping."<sup>54</sup> On July 20, 1891, Bryan wrote that "The more I have studied the silver question the better satisfied I have become that the free and unlimited coinage of silver at the present ratio is the necessary settlement of the question."<sup>55</sup>

The other wing of the Democratic party was represented by Grover Cleveland, who reaped the whirlwind of the Harrison administration's "extravagant expenditures." There was no middle ground. The administration had to declare for gold or silver. Cleveland chose the former, and party schism was the result.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Barnes, op. cit., p. 431.

<sup>53</sup> William J. Bryan, The First Battle (Chicago, W. B. Conkey Co., 1896), p. 71.

<sup>54</sup> Bryan to A. B. Farquar, Oct. 31, 1891. Bryan MSS. Quoted by James A. Barnes, "The Gold Standard Democrats and the Party Conflict," Miss. Valley Hist. Review, Vol. XVII, p. 424.

<sup>55</sup> Barnes' Carlisle, op. cit., p. 432.

<sup>56</sup> Barnes' "The Gold Democrats," op. cit., p. 425.

Cleveland's secretary of the treasury, John G. Carlisle, stood by the President's side on the gold question. Champ Clark several years later wrote that when Carlisle "became a single Gold Standard advocate, it nearly broke the hearts of his friends, who had followed his fortunes with unshaken fidelity and who had dreamed for twenty years of placing him in the White House."<sup>57</sup> The fight between the Democrats of the East and West had already begun when Cleveland took office on March 4, 1893. The speeches made on silver during the special session of Congress in 1893 indicated definitely that the South and West were being drawn closer together. Even a few easterners joined the union.

As the silver Democrats drew together indications pointed toward an increase of silverite strength by Democratic-Populist fusion. Weaver's nomination for Congress in 1894 was probably due to increased silver agitation in the West. In Iowa, in 1894, five congressional districts fused and nominated either free silver Democrats or Populist candidates. Thus "the movement that was to lead to national fusion of Democrats and Populists in 1896....began in Iowa two years earlier." The fact that the strength of the Populist vote in 1894 had increased 42 per cent over 1892, from 1,027,329 to 1,471,590, thus almost guaranteed its absorption by the Democratic or Republican party.<sup>58</sup> In 1894 Kentucky Republicans sent six of the eleven congressmen to Washington as a reaction against Democracy and free silver.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Quoted by Barnes, Carlisle, op. cit., p. 425.

<sup>58</sup> Haynes, op. cit., pp. 359, 365.

<sup>59</sup> Wilson, op. cit., p. 133.

During this time the Cleveland administration was having its troubles. The "syndicate" bond sale of February, 1895, to Morgan and Belmont was the straw that broke the camel's back, as far as silverite strength of the administration was concerned. Yet it was Cleveland and the gold forces that announced open conflict between the gold and silver Democrats. On April 13, 1895, the President wrote a public letter to Henry S. Robbins of Chicago, stating that the fight was on for the control of the convention of 1896. "Disguise it as we may," declared Cleveland, "the line of battle is drawn between the forces of safe currency and those of monometallism."<sup>60</sup> So the gauntlet was thrown down and open conflict had begun.

Cleveland tried to hold the South to sound money. Carlisle was sent on a tour of the border states, making speeches at Covington, Louisville, Bowling Green, and Memphis; and Cleveland personally attended the Cotton States' Exposition in Atlanta on October 24. In a speech there he criticised those who were trying to gain advantages at the expense of some one else, but he directly avoided the money question.<sup>61</sup>

It was evident to the silver as well as the gold forces that the faction of the Democratic party winning the South would have a decided advantage at the Democratic national convention the following year. Early in 1895 the National Bimetallic Union was formed, and in October of the same year came the first issue

---

<sup>60</sup> Barnes' Carlisle, op. cit., p. 436.

<sup>61</sup> Allen Nevins, Grover Cleveland: A Study in Courage (New York, Dodd, Meade and Co., 1932), pp. 680-681.

of the National Bimetallist, urging the silver forces to get together. "...Now is the time---your city, town or neighborhood the place. The National Bimetallic Union is in the field to stay, and has raised the righteous standard of '16 to 1'.... the 'Silver Craze' is not dead! It will not die!"<sup>62</sup>

In June, 1895, the silver Democrats held a convention in Memphis. The convention, headed by Bryan and attended by many Populists and silver Republicans, outlined definite plans to organize the silver forces and to secure control of the Democratic national convention of 1896.<sup>63</sup> By the spring of 1896 the silver crusade was blatantly in progress.

"Free silver was everywhere; it went with the farmer on his icy chores in the winter of '95, and it followed his plow in the springtime. Thousands sent their dimes and quarters to the National Bimetallist for tie-pins, 1. cel-buttons, and cuff-links that they might show their allegiance. Western swains talked boastfully to their inland ladies of what they would accomplish when the 'bloated money holders' were destroyed; dusty farmers condemned the 'furrin conspirators' as they swapped 'chaws' of tobacco over neighboring fences; and old ladies mixed 16 to 1 with their gossip."<sup>64</sup>

At the beginning of 1896 the condition of the Democratic party "was as hopeless as it had ever been at any time during the second administration of Mr. Cleveland."<sup>65</sup> A rural editor in Kentucky wrote: "Politics down here has gone mad. Every crank in the country is loose and nothing less than a stone will stop

---

<sup>62</sup> Barnes' Carlisle, op. cit., pp. 443, 447.

<sup>63</sup> Bryan, op. cit., p. 162.

<sup>64</sup> Barnes' Carlisle, op. cit., p. 448.

<sup>65</sup> Stanwood, op. cit., p. 525.

them. Four men out of seven are to be made wealthy by a simple twist of the wrist and paupers are to become princes...."<sup>66</sup> But nothing could halt the silver sentiment, and the money question was to be the paramount issue "until it is settled by the intelligence and patriotism of the American voters."<sup>67</sup>

The efforts of the gold Democrats to stem the rising tide of silver sentiment proved fruitless. W. H. Hinrichsen, secretary of state of Illinois, wrote Bryan on April 16: "I think 90 of the 120 counties will declare for 16 to 1. We held our convention in Sangamon County yesterday. This was regarded as a gold stronghold, but the convention passed 16 to 1 resolutions by a vote of 125 to 5."<sup>68</sup> Since they realized that they would not be able to write the Democratic platform, the gold men of the party sought to prevent the nomination of a silver candidate. Among others, Carlisle's name was mentioned. Many of his friends in Kentucky and the East urged him to permit his name to be considered.<sup>69</sup> His refusal came in a letter to the chairman of the Kentucky State Central Committee. "...While I feel a profound interest in the welfare of my party, I am much more concerned about its declaration of principles than in its selection of candidates....I think my duty to the party will be best performed by

---

<sup>66</sup> Emmett Orr to W. C. P. Breckinridge, April 20, 1896. Breckinridge MSS. Quoted in Barnes' Carlisle, op. cit., p. 449.

<sup>67</sup> Bryan, op. cit., p. 156.

<sup>68</sup> Bryan MSS. Quoted in Barnes' Carlisle, op. cit., p. 453.

<sup>69</sup> Barnes' Carlisle, p. 454.



declining...the nomination."<sup>70</sup>

In the Kentucky gubernatorial race of 1895, the money question became one of the chief issues, and the Republicans for the first time in Kentucky history placed a governor at Frankfort. The Democratic candidate, P. Watt Hardin, was a free silver man nominated on a gold platform. His Republican opponent, William O. Bradley, although not popular with the gold Democrats, secured enough of their votes and the votes of other dissatisfied elements within the Democratic party so that, with the backing of the Republicans, he was elected.<sup>71</sup> Out of a total vote of nearly 300,000, Bradley secured a plurality of almost 9,000. The Populists polled close to 17,000 votes.<sup>72</sup> Whether the Democrats lost the race because of the money issue involved, or because of other reasons, is open to question. A recent writer has declared that candid Democrats "knew and admitted that much if not most of the result was due to the factional fights in the state house for the four years preceding."<sup>73</sup>

On the eve of the Kentucky state conventions the Democrats, both gold and silver advocates, were ready for the fight that they knew was coming, but when the convention proceedings were over the silver Democrats had ridden triumphantly over their

---

<sup>70</sup> Published in the Louisville Courier-Journal, April 6, 1896.

<sup>71</sup> Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

<sup>72</sup> Courier-Journal Almanac for 1898 (Louisville, The Louisville Courier-Journal Co., 1898), Vol. I, No. 1 (Jan.), p. 390.

<sup>73</sup> George Lee Willis, Sr., Kentucky Democracy (Louisville, Democratic Historical Society, 1935), Vol. I, pp. 353-354.

"gold-bug" opponents. In the Republican convention there was no such division over the money question. The only fight came over the indorsement of McKinley or Governor Bradley for the presidency. That the Republicans of Kentucky would declare for gold was certain.

## CHAPTER II

### THE STATE AND NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

The first of the state conventions to be held in Kentucky was that of the Republicans, which met in Louisville on April 15. At the outset it was clear that there would be a struggle over whom the convention should indorse for the presidential nomination. Kentucky's Republican governor, William G. Bradley, had a strong following, but the McKinley forces were hard at work to secure the Ohioan's indorsement. The McKinley managers secured the first floor of a prominent Louisville hotel for their headquarters. "Open house is to be kept for the McKinley people from all over the state, and nothing will be too good for the visitors. It costs money to get the best rooms...and the McKinley crowd are the only ones which seem to have the wherewith."<sup>1</sup>

The Kentucky district conventions which met early in April did not definitely show where the indorsement would go, although the Cincinnati Enquirer, a Democratic free silver paper, stated that the "county and precinct meetings all over the state...show that Governor Bradley is in danger of losing the indorsement of his own state for the presidency."<sup>2</sup> The Louisville Commercial, a staunch Republican paper, urged that Bradley's name be presented by the Kentucky delegates to the Republican national convention in June. "Under all the circumstances it is fit and becoming

---

<sup>1</sup> The Cincinnati Enquirer, April 5, 1896.

<sup>2</sup> April 6, 1896.

that Governor Bradley should be presented to the St. Louis Convention....we believe that it will be for the best interests of the party in Kentucky to make a unanimous declaration to that effect."<sup>3</sup> The result was a Bradley victory over McKinley's supporters, but the delegates were instructed to vote for McKinley if the Governor's name were withdrawn. The Louisville Courier-Journal declared that "nearly all the members of the Committee on Resolutions were for McKinley at heart," and that in view of the prospects of Bradley's nomination at St. Louis, the "resolutions were looked on as a McKinley victory."<sup>4</sup>

Temporary chairman, Judge Morrow, urged Kentucky Republicans to "act in harmony" concerning the money question, but to adopt a sound money platform, "so that he who runs may read. Let us act in favor of protection, that the laboring man may know that the Republican party is his friend."

The platform drawn up by the convention dealt mainly with the tariff issue, although the money plank was given first consideration.

"We are opposed to the free and unlimited coinage of silver, believing that it would involve the country in financial ruin. The gold dollar is the best dollar and the least subject to fluctuation, and for these reasons, and in order to conform our standard to that of the other great commercial nations, we favor it as the standard money of the United States and the maintaining on a parity with it of every other dollar, whether silver or paper."<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> The Louisville Commercial, April 15, 1896.

<sup>4</sup> April 17, 1896.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

The platform went on to state that "a tariff so regulated as to protect the interests of all classes of our citizens..." would do much to "relegate to the rear the undue excitement now prevailing concerning the currency."<sup>6</sup>

Republican papers declared that Republican rule in Kentucky had come to stay, and enthusiastically commended the "solid, all-gold Republican timber used in the construction of the State platform." It was hinted that the coming Democratic state convention would do some "straddling or juggling on the silver business in Kentucky...." At least if it were done at all it would have to be done by the Democrats.<sup>7</sup>

The Louisville Courier-Journal, a Democratic paper but in sympathy with the money plank of the Republican convention, commended the convention's "declaration in favor of sound money," and hoped that the "Democratic conventions of this State shall do as well." However, since the Republican legislature had been elected in 1895 on a sound money platform, "but had never made an effort to elect a sound-money Senator," the Courier-Journal discredited the Republican platform, especially since they, in effect, indorsed McKinley for the presidency, "a man who has never disavowed his former free silver views, who is universally regarded as a straddler of the money issue, and whose platform, written by himself...is nothing more than a straddle." So the Republicans of Kentucky had no more right to declare themselves a sound-

---

<sup>6</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>7</sup> The Cincinnati Times-Star, April 17, 1896.

money party than the Democrats, had the latter elected to the Senate J. C. S. Blackburn, an exponent of free silver, on a gold platform.<sup>8</sup>

The Louisville Commercial declared editorially that there "was no quibbling or equivocation about the platform," that it spoke "emphatically against the free coinage of silver, for sound money and a gold standard...."<sup>9</sup>

On June 2, two weeks before the Republican national convention met in St. Louis, Governor Eradley announced that he had withdrawn from the race for the nomination. "Kentucky Republicans won a signal triumph last fall," he stated, "on a ringing declaration for sound money. They should stand by their guns, forgetting all internecine strife, and march shoulder to shoulder to a grand victory in November." When evidence indicated that the free silver power was feeling its strength, the "time had come for state favorites and personal preferences to be laid aside."<sup>10</sup>

The Republican national convention met at St. Louis on June 16. With the nomination of McKinley practically assured, it remained for a money plank to be drawn up, a plank that would suit the party and would secure the greatest number of votes in the fall election. Whether to declare outright in favor of a gold standard as opposed to free silver, or to attempt to straddle the issue, was the main problem the convention had to solve. A small

---

<sup>8</sup> April 17, 1896.

<sup>9</sup> April 17, 1896.

<sup>10</sup> The Cincinnati Enquirer, June 3, 1896.

but united minority from the western states were in favor of free silver, but that was so opposed by the majority of the party leaders that it received scarcely any consideration.<sup>11</sup>

Immediately after the platform as drawn up by the committee on resolutions was read on June 18, Senator Henry M. Teller of Colorado, the leader of the silver Republicans, offered a substitute for the gold standard plank that had been incorporated into the platform by the majority of the committee. "The Republican party," read the minority report, "favors the use of both gold and silver as equal standard money, and pledges its power to secure the free, unrestricted, and independent coinage of silver and gold at our mints at the ratio of sixteen parts of silver to one of gold."<sup>12</sup> The report was defeated by a large majority, and Senator Teller and his followers withdrew from the convention. Later Teller issued an address advising Republicans who believed in free silver to support the Democratic ticket.<sup>13</sup> Bryan, at the time editor of the Omaha World Herald, attended the convention "ostensibly in the character of a newspaper man. As a matter of fact, however, I was there to encourage the Silver Republicans in the fight they were making."<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Edward Stanwood, A History of the Presidency from 1788 to 1897 (New York, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1898), p. 532.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 537.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Archer, "The Silver Campaign of 1896," National Republic, April, 1934, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> W. J. Bryan and Mary Baird Bryan, Memoirs of William Jennings Bryan (Chicago, John C. Winston Co., 1925), pp. 99-100.

The platform as adopted denounced the Democratic party because it had "precipitated panic, blighted industry and trade with prolonged depression, closed factories, halted enterprise, and crippled American production while stimulating foreign production for the American market." After a discussion of the tariff issue and a renewal of allegiance to protection, the platform declared for the gold standard.<sup>15</sup>

"We are unalterably opposed to every measure calculated to debase our currency or impair the credit of our country. We are, therefore, opposed to the free coinage of silver, except by international agreement with the leading commercial nations of the world, which we pledge ourselves to promote, and until such agreement can be obtained the existing gold standard must be preserved. All our silver and paper currency must be maintained at a parity with gold, and we favor all measures designed to maintain inviolably the obligations of the United States and all our money, whether coin or paper, at the present standard, the standard of the most enlightened nations of the earth."

After Teller's resolution was tabled, the convention adopted its money plank by a vote of 812 1/2 to 110 1/2. The rest of the platform was adopted by acclamation.<sup>16</sup>

William McKinley's nomination was a result of the tireless efforts of his friend and campaign manager, Mark Hanna. These two men who became national characters in 1896 first met at Canton, Ohio, in 1876, at a miners trial. They shared an apartment at the national convention of 1884, and the national convention four years later increased their friendship. Hanna, with the help of Myron T. Herrick, H. H. Kohlsaatt, and others saved McKinley from financial ruin in 1893 when McKinley was governor

---

<sup>15</sup> Stanwood, op. cit., p. 535.

<sup>16</sup> James Ford Rhodes, History of the United States (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1928), Vol. IX, p. 16.



of Ohio. From January 1, 1895, Hanna bent his energy to secure McKinley's nomination.<sup>17</sup> Hanna had so well prepared for the Republican convention that the Ohioan's nomination "was carried through without a hitch." Of the contesting delegations, only those from Texas and Delaware were considered, and even in these cases the McKinley delegations were seated. McKinley's triumph "was so decisive and so overwhelming that no outsider could realize how much effort and contrivance had been spent upon making it irresistible."<sup>18</sup>

McKinley's capacity and manner made him good presidential timber. The hard times during Cleveland's second administration and the fact that McKinley had been re-elected governor of Ohio in 1893 served to make him an available and acceptable candidate. Garrett A. Hobart of New Jersey was chosen as his running mate. Despite any advantages the Republican presidential candidate may have had, party leaders knew that a terrible fight lay ahead. In a letter to Cleveland Mark Hanna said: "The fight will be in the Mississippi Valley states. The 'gold' basis is giving us lots of work."<sup>19</sup>

Kentucky Republicans met at Lexington on July 23 to indorse the St. Louis nominations. "Nearly every delegate present," wrote a reporter, "is carrying a McKinley cane or is covered with badges."<sup>20</sup>

---

17 Loc. cit.

18 Herbert David Croly, Marcus Alonzo Hanna: His Life and Work (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1922), pp. 190-191.

19 Rhodes, op. cit., p. 17.

20 The Cincinnati Times-Star, July 23, 1896.

Nearly two weeks before the Republican national convention the Democrats of Kentucky met at Lexington with considerable debate and threshed out their views on the gold-silver issue. After the Democrats of Missouri came out for free silver in their state convention in April, the Louisville Courier-Journal urged that Kentucky's convention "be as unequivocal for sound money." There was to be "no evasion of the question this year. The party cannot straddle or avoid the question if it would, and it would not deserve success if it should."<sup>21</sup>

But all indications seemed to point toward a free silver Democratic state convention. In the county conventions on May 30 all districts except the Fifth were for free silver. In the Sixth, the silver men did not have a unanimous following, but nevertheless sent a majority to Lexington.<sup>22</sup> Admitting that the Democratic party was split, a Republican paper asserted that the minority of the party (those for gold) had repudiated the policy of the Democrats in the past and had adopted Republican principles. "The free-silver Democrats are sorry, of course, but they have been wrong all the time, and they would rather stay wrong than to acknowledge that the Republicans have been right."<sup>23</sup> Though it was probable that the Democratic convention would declare for free silver, there were among the Democrats "men who appreciate the value of the Democratic trade-mark and want to keep control

---

<sup>21</sup> April 17, 1896.

<sup>22</sup> George L. Willis, Sr., Kentucky Democracy (Louisville, Democratic Historical Society, 1935), Vol. 1, p. 357.

<sup>23</sup> The Louisville Commercial, June 2, 1896.

of it---the sound-money men will be afforded the opportunity of having harmony by the simple process of abandoning their principles."<sup>24</sup> The effect of Democratic schism upon the Republican party in Kentucky would mean victory for the latter, since "it has already gone the limit in sound money, and, with the prestige of a victory last year, the party will go into the fight this fall with a new courage born of confidence."<sup>25</sup>

As soon as convention proceedings began the struggle between the gold and silver Democrats was on. Of the twenty-two delegates sent to the national convention, twenty were in favor of free silver. The Fifth District (Louisville and Jefferson County) alone had two gold delegates.<sup>26</sup> An editor across the Ohio summed up the work of the first day's proceedings.

"This was a day of days for Kentucky Democracy. It was a day of days for free silver in Kentucky.

"The little band of free silver advocates of 18 months ago, whose members were denominated cranks, unfortunates, and other undesirable names, have lived to see the free silver movement develop into an avalanche, and they have seen it sweep everything before it.

"This morning it was conceded on all sides that today's convention would declare for the free and unlimited coinage of gold and silver at the ratio of 16 to 1; that it would indorse Senator Blackburn as the Democratic nominee for the United States Senate; that it would nominate him for president and ask that the Democracy of the country support him, and that it would condemn the present national Administration."<sup>27</sup>

In the opening address to the convention, temporary chairman Charles R. Long of Louisville, a gold man, was shouted down when he commended Cleveland and Carlisle. The same fate met Bennett

---

24 Loc. cit., June 4.

25 Ibid., June 2.

26 The Louisville Courier-Journal, June 4, 1896.

27 The Cincinnati Post, June 3, 1896.

H. Young when he indorsed the Cleveland administration. In the vote on the chairmanship of the convention, Charles J. Bronson of Fayette County won over his gold-standard opponent, Alex P. Humphrey of Louisville, by a vote of 691 to 206. The only counties giving Humphrey a majority were those in the eastern and mountain regions of the state.<sup>28</sup>

Arguments for free silver came on every hand. Chairman Bronson declared that "the Democracy of Kentucky has declared that silver is not only money for the toiler and producer, but shall be alike the money of the capitalist and bondholder." J. C. S. Blackburn, one of the most prominent silver Democrats of the state, vindicated the stand of the silver men, since "the people of Kentucky have declared that we were right." Granting that the gold men had a right to their own opinions, Blackburn added that "the Democracy of Kentucky has rendered its verdict, and declares after more than twenty years of trial of wrong medicine, that they want and mean to have free silver."<sup>29</sup> All of the misery of two decades Blackburn laid at the door of the gold advocates. He continued:

"I say to you, my gold friends, in the spirit of candor, of kindness, and of fraternal affection, unfortunately, in my judgment, you have dominated politics for twenty years, and I know the profit that you have brought to the few--- God himself cannot describe the misery that you have settled upon the many. But thank heaven a new day has dawned: the sun of Austerlitz rose this morning. A new epoch is to be marked, and from this time out, having captured the Convention of Kentucky, we will go on and capture the Conven-

---

<sup>28</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, June 8, 1896.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

tion of Chicago....I say to my gold bug friends, you tried this thing for twenty years and made a failure. Let us, or some one else, take a hand at the business."<sup>30</sup>

P. Watt Hardin, the defeated candidate for governor in 1895, urged that the convention in its platform "come out straightforward for the free coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1, and the absolute and complete restoration of that metal as it was prior to 1873."<sup>31</sup>

The gold men had practically no voice in the convention. But their determination not to accept the convention's stand on the money issue led to a second "Democratic" convention, held two months later. While the silver question was being discussed, W. C. P. Breckinridge admitted that he did not agree with the majority of the convention, but urged Democratic unity. Unity did not come, however, except the unity of the free silver forces.<sup>32</sup>

After reaffirming their "allegiance to the principles of the party as announced by Jefferson and Jackson," the platform announced its adoption of free silver.

"Second---We are in favor of bimetallism, and to that end we hold to the use of both gold and silver, without discrimination against either metal, at the ratio of 16 to 1, independent of agreement of any other nation. We favor the immediate repeal of all laws by which silver was demonetized, and demand its unqualified restoration to the right of unlimited coinage in the mints of the United States as money of final redemption.

"Third---We hold that the Secretary of the Treasury should exercise his legal right to redeem all coin obligations in gold or silver, as may be more convenient, and are opposed to the issue of bonds in time of peace for any other purpose.

---

30 Loc. cit.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

"Fourth---We are opposed to the national banking system and to any enlargement of its powers, and opposed to any contraction of the currency by the retirement of greenbacks or otherwise."<sup>33</sup>

The platform also advocated a tariff for revenue only.

The platform met with the shouting approval of the majority of the convention, and loud acclamations of indorsement kept the convention hall ringing with the free silver fever.

The minority report, read by A. J. Carroll of Louisville, met with "hisses, yelling, and shouting." It stood for and insisted upon "a firm maintenance of the present legal standard of value," and the use of silver and paper money, convertible into gold on demand, as could be maintained without injuring the credit of the government or lessening the purchasing and debt-paying power "of the money in the hands of the people." In the absence of an agreement of the greatest commercial nations, "we protest against the free coinage of silver or the compulsory purchase of silver bullion by the United States as injurious to the commercial and industrial interests of the country, and especially disastrous to the interests of the farmer and the laboring man." As did the majority report, that of the minority continued adherence to the doctrine of taxation for revenue only.<sup>34</sup>

The convention's indorsement of Senator Blackburn for president was more of a compliment than anything else. Blackburn, who was said to favor Horace Boies of Iowa for the presidential

---

<sup>33</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., June 5.

nomination, knew "that no man who wears a confederate button can ever sit in that high place."<sup>35</sup>

The resolutions committee instructed the delegates to the national convention to follow the unit rule, so that the two gold delegates from Louisville would have no voice at the Chicago proceedings. Radical silver men urged the committee on credentials to unseat enough delegates from the Fifth District to send silver delegates even from that gold stronghold, but with the unit rule as adopted that was unnecessary. Blackburn and Hardin, running mates in the previous year's governor's race, were selected as delegates-at-large. The other two, John S. Rhea of Logan County and V. T. Ellis of Daviess County, had been "the leading stump speakers in the free silver canvass which closed last Saturday. They are exceptionally brilliant orators...."<sup>36</sup>

Silver Democrats were jubilant over the work of the state convention. Said Blackburn: I have lived a long time, but I never thought I would live long enough to be as happy as I am today."<sup>37</sup> From northern Kentucky came the report that "some of the staunchest Republican farmers in this section openly declare their intention of voting the Democratic ticket if the St. Louis convention declares for gold and the Chicago convention puts up a free silver ticket."<sup>38</sup> A northeastern Kentucky editor sympathized

<sup>35</sup> Loc. cit., June 8.

<sup>36</sup> The Nashville American, June 5, 1896.

<sup>37</sup> James A. Barnes, John G. Carlisle: Financial Statesman (New York, Dodd, Mead and Co., 1931), p. 455.

<sup>38</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, June 5, 1896.

with the predicament of the gold Democrats, and endeavored to console them in rhyme.

"Yes, boys, the road is rough,  
And the fare is tough;  
But hold your holt---  
Whatever you do, don't bolt."<sup>39</sup>

The Louisville Courier-Journal was decidedly disappointed but not surprised at the outcome of the Democratic state convention. "Against overwhelming odds the sound-money men made a gallant fight in which the opposition often betrayed a spirit of vindictiveness....Of course, the resolutions demanded the free coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1." A gold standard man of Florida stated that the action of the Kentucky Democratic convention might turn what looked like a gold majority in Florida to a majority for silver. "It is something on the McKinley order. The boys want to get on the band wagon. It is a silver wagon, it is true, but the Democrats in Florida see no reason to oppose what looks like the inevitable."<sup>40</sup> A neighboring editor advised the Courier-Journal "not to throw up the sponge too soon. The Kentucky outlook is favorable to Republicans, but after a trial of Republican rule the Kentucky Democrats will be willing to get together on State issues."<sup>41</sup>

The attacks of the Watterson newspaper on free silver were perhaps the most severe of those in any state paper, Republican journals included. Many of the editorials in the Courier-Journal

---

<sup>39</sup> Cattletsburg Democrat. Quoted by the Louisville Courier-Journal, June 5, 1896.

<sup>40</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, June 8, 1896.

<sup>41</sup> The Nashville American, June 4, 1896.



80  
were answered by the editor of the Cincinnati Enquirer. To the former's accusation that the "Democrats of Kentucky have repudiated the only President the Democratic party has elected and seated for fifty years," the Enquirer's editor replied: "Well, what of it? Is Grover Cleveland sacred? Must he be allowed to lead the party down to defeat and prevent it from electing a President in fifty years more?"<sup>42</sup> "They have repudiated," continued the Louisville newspaper, "the most distinguished of Kentucky's distinguished sons [John G. Carlisle]." But the Ohio editor differed.

"Oh, no; they haven't. The most distinguished son of Kentucky at this writing is the Hon. Joseph C. S. Blackburn, and he has been soundly and heartily approved. He has been vindicated after having been kept out of his right by treachery. In the vindication of Blackburn the Democratic party of Kentucky triumphs. He is the man who most conspicuously represents the vast majority sentiment of the Democracy of Kentucky, not only on the money question, but on the primary and enduring propositions of party faith, and in the matter of fidelity to Democratic action. No man is better qualified to defend the true principles."<sup>43</sup>

To the Courier's thrust that the convention "spit upon the fathers of the party whose name and organization they claim, have proclaimed Jefferson an ignoramus, Jackson a conspirator, Benton a knave, Cleveland a traitor," the Enquirer disgustingly declared that "this thing of claiming Democratic fathers and patriarchs as progenitors of modern mugwumpery is getting tiresome."<sup>44</sup> Biting satire answered the Courier-Journal's statement that the work of

---

42 June 3, 1896.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

the Democrats at Lexington would make Kentucky "Republican for years to come."

"Come, brother; permit yourself to be soothed. It is not so bad as that. It cannot be worse than it was last year. Be just and sensible. You ought to be glad to shift the responsibility. Through persistent application of the Administration policy and the employment of the Federal establishment, your friends succeeded in turning Kentucky over to the Republicans in the election of Bradley, and in the Legislature they held out enough bolters to prevent the election of the Democratic caucus nominee to the Senate. Now let the silver men and anti-Administrationists have a chance. If the proper thing is to keep Kentucky in the hands of the Republicans, why not divide the honors?"

"Do you want to 'hog' everything?"<sup>45</sup>

The Cincinnati editor hoped that the "Louisville Courier-Journal will be calm again, and even useful, after its heart ceases to palpitate...."

The action of the Kentucky Democratic convention in attacking Secretary Carlisle was widely commented upon. The New York Times, hearing that the convention "drowns the name of Secretary Carlisle with hisses, cat-calls, and hooting," remarked that "Mr. Carlisle's character, career, and reputation are such that to be opposed to him is not a matter of self congratulation," and declared that "Kentucky has not now, has not had for the last fifty years, a citizen in public life of whom her people may more justly be proud."<sup>46</sup>

A month after the Kentucky Democrats had met and announced their opposition to gold, the national convention of the party met in Chicago. After preliminaries disastrous to the hopes of the gold Democrats, the convention got under way with the tribute

---

45 Loc. cit.

46 Quoted in the Nashville American, June 8, 1896.

of temporary chairman, Senator John W. Daniel of Virginia, to the silver host.<sup>47</sup>

"It begins with the sunrise in Maine and spreads into a sunburst in Louisiana and Texas. It stretches in unbroken line across the continent from Virginia and Georgia to California. It sends forth its pioneers from Plymouth Rock and waves the palmetto in South Carolina. It has its strongholds in Alabama and Mississippi and its outposts in Delaware and Minnesota, Florida and Oregon. It sticks like a tar heel in the old north State and writes 10 to 1 on the saddle bags of the Arkansas Traveler. It pours down its rivulets from the mountains of New Hampshire and West Virginia and makes a great lake in New Mexico, Arizona, Wyoming and Idaho, Montana and Colorado. It stands guard around the National Capitol in the District of Columbia and taps at the door in far off Washington. It sweeps like a prairie fire over Iowa and Kansas and lights up the horizon in Nebraska. It marshals its massive battalions in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri.

"Last but not least, when I see this grand army and think of the British gold standard that recently was unfurled over the ruins of Republican promises at St. Louis, I think, too, of the battle of New Orleans, of which 'tis said

"There stood John Bull in martial pomp,  
But there was old Kentucky."<sup>48</sup>

The Kentucky delegation organized July 6, the day before the convention opened. Over the heads of Zack Phelps and W. E. Waldeman, the gold delegates from Louisville, the delegation elected Ollie James as their chairman.<sup>49</sup> With the exception of the Louisville men, Kentucky's vote went to Daniel as temporary chairman of the convention. And when the Democrats from the Bluegrass state aided in ousting the Michigan gold delegates, the Louisville Courier-Journal asserted that the "only parallel to

---

<sup>47</sup> Stanwood, op. cit., pp. 541-542.

<sup>48</sup> William J. Bryan, The First Battle (Chicago, W. E. Conkey Co., 1896), p. 189.

<sup>49</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, July 7, 1896.

the outrage perpetrated by the Chicago Convention was that perpetrated by the Kentucky Convention when it fired out of the music hall at Lexington delegates simply because they were sound-money Democrats."<sup>50</sup>

In a speech before the Chicago convention that was compared to "a fierce cavalry charge," Blackburn urged the convention to "construct a platform that neither human nor devilish ingenuity can submit to but one construction...a platform that will tell the truth, and then rally as one man to vindicate its utterances."<sup>51</sup>

It was a foregone conclusion that the convention would declare for free silver. "The Democratic party," stated a Kentucky editor, "of Jefferson and Jackson, so far as its fundamental principles of hard money and free trade are concerned, will, after this convention, be known no more for years, and it may be forever." The day the convention began the same editor wailed: "Today begins a convention whose action is to close for years the career of the Democratic party."<sup>52</sup> In a public letter to Fred Dubois of Springfield, Illinois, Henry M. Teller indicated that he believed it impossible for the gold men to control the Chicago convention, and urged, "for this campaign at least," that the silver forces "overlook all minor differences, and put the country on a sound financial system...."<sup>53</sup>

The gold men found their case without hope. They watched "the proceedings...with humiliation and sorrow, and, withal,

---

50 Loc. cit., July 9.

51 Ibid., July 9.

52 Ibid., July 3; July 7.

53 Published in the Louisville Courier-Journal, July 4, 1896.

steadfast resolution to take up the work of reorganizing and regenerating the party when the present debauch shall have ended."<sup>54</sup>

One of the resolutions offered by the minority of the committee on resolutions, to "commend the honesty, economy, courage, and fidelity of the present Democratic administration," was defeated by 564 to 357. The financial resolution offered by the minority, that free silver would "impair contracts, disturb business, diminish the purchasing power of the wages of labor, and inflict irreparable evils upon our nation's commerce and industry," was downed by a vote of 626 to 303.<sup>55</sup>

"Not since 1860," wrote the editor of the Louisville Courier-Journal, "when the Democratic party met in convention at Charleston and split on the subject of slavery, has such irreconcilable differences of opinion existed on the great question in issue...."<sup>56</sup> In "An Address to Democratic Leaders," the Cincinnati Enquirer advised that the convention pay its particular attention to the formation of a platform, and not imperil the existence of the party "in a Quixotic attempt to redress all human wrongs. Let it grapple with the gold dragon first...."<sup>57</sup>

And it was the "gold dragon" that was slain by the platform drawn up by the convention. After mentioning that the silver dollar was the first monetary unit established by Congress, and

---

54 The Louisville Courier-Journal, July 7, 1896.

55 Stanwood, op. cit., pp. 547-548.

56 July 4, 1896.

57 July 8, 1896.

that the act of 1873 in demonetizing silver had caused "the prostration of industry and impoverishment of the people," the platform came to the point on the silver issue.

"We are unalterably opposed to monometallism, which has locked fast the prosperity of an industrial people in the paralysis of hard times. Gold monometallism is a British policy, and its adoption has brought other nations into financial servitude to London. It is not only un-American, but anti-American, and it can be fastened on the United States only by the stifling of that spirit and love of liberty which proclaimed our political independence in 1776 and won it in the war of the Revolution.

"We demand the free and unlimited coinage of both silver and gold at the present legal ratio of sixteen to one without waiting for the aid or consent of any other nation. We demand that the standard silver dollar shall be a full legal tender, equally with gold, for all debts, public and private, and we favor such legislation as will prevent for the future the demonetization of any kind of legal tender money by private contract."<sup>58</sup>

The nomination of Bryan a recent writer has declared to be "one of the most skilfully prepared and carefully executed 'accidents' in American politics."<sup>59</sup> But it was his now famous "cross of gold" speech that swept the convention into nominating him when it did.

"...Therefore, we care not upon what lines the battle is fought. If they say bimetalism is good, but that we cannot have it until other nations help us, we reply that, instead of having a gold standard because England has, we will restore bimetalism, and then let England have bimetalism because the United States has it. If they dare to come out in the open field and defend the gold standard as a good thing, we will fight them to the uttermost. Having behind us the producing masses of this nation and the world, supported by the commercial interests, the laboring interests, and the toilers everywhere, we will answer their demand for a gold standard by saying to them: You shall not

---

<sup>58</sup> Stanwood, op. cit., p. 545.

<sup>59</sup> Barnes, op. cit., p. 460.

press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."<sup>60</sup>

The platform adopted and the candidate nominated met with shouting approval of the silver forces and with deriding disapproval from the Republican and gold Democratic ranks. Judge Charles H. Breck of Richmond, Kentucky, declared of Bryan:

" he is a combination of little Matt Adams and Pilly Breckinridge, for he has all the energy, fire, aggressiveness and clearheadedness of the one and all the magnetism and eloquence of the other. Sprinkle this mixture with youth, freshness, and ardor, and you have the next President of the United States."<sup>61</sup>

Arthur J. Sewall of Maine was nominated with Bryan so as to have an eastern man on the ticket. Although they did know each other before the convention met, a strong friendship grew up between them.<sup>62</sup>

Mark Hanna had hoped to make the tariff question the issue. Before Bryan's nomination he had remarked that "the money matter is unduly prominent. In thirty days you won't hear anything about it." William R. Day had answered him by saying that "in thirty days you won't hear of anything else." Hanna soon discovered he was mistaken. As the political parties began to marshal their forces and as the silver army steadily increased in numbers and strength, Hanna recognized that the campaign would be "work hard from the start."<sup>63</sup>

To Henry Watterson the Chicago platform was "monstrous." It

---

<sup>60</sup> Bryan, op. cit., p. 206.

<sup>61</sup> The Cincinnati Enquirer, July 12, 1896.

<sup>62</sup> Bryan and Bryan, op. cit., p. 117.

<sup>63</sup> Rhodes, op. cit., pp. 18-19.

meant not only repudiation but was the "open door to anarchy." There were many Democrats who could not easily be made into Republicans, "yet whose votes can be made just as effective in defeating Bryan." Watterson sounded the note for the Democrats in favor of the gold standard to bolt, since they "must have some abiding place. They cannot find it under a flag of which one half is for sound money and the other half for protection." He warned that the destruction "of the Democratic party is an event to be contemplated by thoughtful persons only with forebodings of evil."<sup>64</sup>

The editorial pages of the Watterson newspaper carried comment from Republican newspapers all over the country. The Philadelphia Press called the work of the convention "the high tide of organized fanaticism and delerium in American history." The Indianapolis Journal asserted that the platform was "an assault upon that established order which is the foundation of civilization," since it arrayed "man against man and draws battle between the well-to-do and those who are not." The Baltimore American was indignant. "The free silver men and Populists and anarchists and greenbackers and all other political cranks have stolen the keel of the Democratic vessel and put new ribs and new planking to it, and hoisted an ensign which all honest and enlightened people abhor." The Pittsburg Chronicle-Dispatch announced that "the anarchist bomb and Populist pitchfork have triumphed over the Democracy."<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, July 18, 1896.

<sup>65</sup> Quoted in the Louisville Courier-Journal, July 12, 1896.



An Ohio editor, speaking of the convention's failure to indorse Cleveland's administration, believed that act was highly complimentary to the President. "Never before had the Democratic leader received a greater compliment than that 'paid by the assembly of Democrats, Populists, anarchists, and what-is-its in Chicago...when...that convention of conglomerates refused to indorse the only Democratic President elected in forty years.' The men of the convention sought 'to substitute anarchy for law, repudiation for honor. These are the men who repudiated Cleveland.'"<sup>66</sup>

The first of the national conventions, that of the Prohibitionist party, had met at Pittsburg in May. It was from the first divided into two factions, one of which favored a free coinage plank among the resolutions, the other opposing free coinage and desiring a platform with but one issue, the prohibition of intoxicating liquors. The report of the majority of the committee on resolutions omitted the money plank, although it was deemed "of right to leave every Prohibitionist the freedom of his own convictions upon all other political questions...." Whereupon the minority withdrew from the convention, organized themselves into the "National" party, and drew up a platform, the third plank of which declared that they favored "the free and unlimited coinage of both silver and gold, at the ratio of 16 to 1, without consulting any other nation." Rev. Charles E. Bentley of Nebraska was nominated for president and James H. Southgate

---

<sup>66</sup> The Cincinnati Times-Star, July 10, 1896.

of North Carolina for vice president. The regular Prohibitionists had nominated Joshua Levering of Maryland and Hale Johnson of Illinois.<sup>67</sup>

The Socialist Labor party held its convention in New York beginning July 4, but the Democratic convention was so near that the newspapers paid it slight heed. Nothing was said in the platform concerning the money issue. Charles H. Matchett of New York received the presidential nomination and Matthew Maguire the vice presidential honors.<sup>68</sup>

The last convention in Kentucky was that of the Populists, held at Paducah on July 20. Nearly a month earlier the Populists had been advised to unite with the silver forces of the Democrats and Republicans. "Mr. McKinley's only chance for success is a division among the silver men. If the silver Democrats have one candidate and the silver Populists another and the silver Republicans a third, we shall fall an easy prey to the world's usurers, as heretofore...."<sup>69</sup>

But when the Kentucky Populists met they did not heed the advice, and failed to indorse Bryan for the presidency. Parker, chairman of the State Central Committee of the Populist party, speaking of the failure of the Populists of Kentucky to indorse Bryan, said: "Yes, the once recreant Democracy has rushed hurriedly, enthusiastically and madly back into line. We have forced them to accept Populism and we have forced them to accept a patriot for

---

<sup>67</sup> Stanwood, op. cit., pp. 528-532.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., pp. 538-541.

<sup>69</sup> The Cincinnati Enquirer, June 20, 1896.

their candidate. But we are yet afraid to entrust all the machinery in their hands." A. L. Sims, former Populist candidate for governor of Tennessee, attending the convention with 150 prominent Populists from the middle and western part of his state, stated that the Democrats at Chicago did not know how to write a platform, "though they are learning pretty fast." A Populist of Louisville admired "the McKinley gold-bugs even more [than he did the Democrats], for the silver Democrats have tried to steal Populist thunder. The McKinley gold-bug enemy is not sneaking, but is open and above board. This silver Democratic movement is a scheme to deceive us, rise to power and then belittle and disgrace us."<sup>70</sup>

The platform as adopted by the Peoples' Party of Kentucky is as follows:

"That the Peoples' Party of Kentucky are unalterably opposed to the indorsement by the National Convention of the Peoples' Party at St. Louis of the Democratic platform and ticket nominated at Chicago.

"Second, we are decidedly opposed to nominating any man for any office who will not indorse and advocate a straight Populist platform. We believe an honest, courageous, straightforward adherence to all the principles of our party and the preservation of our organization in this crisis of our party to be the wisest policy to be pursued by our convention at St. Louis, both for our country and our party.

"Third, we favor a union of all reform forces on an honorable basis, if one preserving intact the organization and principles of the Peoples' Party can be devised. This may be done by an equitable division of electors, and not by surrender or fusion."<sup>71</sup>

Although seventy-six counties were not represented, the con-

---

<sup>70</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, July 21, 1896.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*

vention was the largest ever held by the Populists in the state. seven delegates were sent to the national convention, coming from the respective counties of Calloway, Jefferson, Logan, Anderson, Henderson, and Woodford. One reporter to the convention, attempting to verify the report that Populists were men of bushy whiskers, wrote that of the 200 delegates, 104 had large bushy whiskers, exclusive of goatees, sideburns, and moustaches.<sup>72</sup>

The sentiment of the Kentucky Populists, however, was not that of the leaders of the Populist party at large. As the contest of 1896 drew near, James B. Weaver urged a union of the reform forces, since he believed that neither the Republicans nor Democrats could poll a united vote. He believed that "in order to stand any reasonable show of success," 5,500,000 more votes than the Populists had secured in 1892 were necessary. At the same time, he regarded the union of 1896 as "an alliance, not fusion."<sup>73</sup> On May 29, 1896, Weaver wrote Bryan:

"As we are nearing the time of our National Conventions I think it important that I shall make the following suggestion to you. We all understand that a union of all the silver forces is absolutely essential to victory. Should the silver men be able to control the Chicago convention both as to platform and nominations be careful to have the platform cover the entire money question: second, let your nominations be advisory simple and not final. This will afford opportunity to confer with our conventions at St. Louis and open the way for union. Should your forces be in control, the gold men will doubtless bolt and this will afford ample reason for making your nominations advisory. I regard these suggestions as important. I am at the head of the Iowa delegation to St. Louis and will do all in my

---

<sup>72</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>73</sup> Frederic Emory Haynes, James Baird Weaver (Iowa City, State Historical Society of Iowa, 1919), pp. 308-370.

power to bring about a consolidation of forces."<sup>74</sup>

Replying to those Populists who opposed alliance, Weaver stated that the Populists knew what they wanted, that the question involved was how it could best be secured. "I have nothing to conceal in this matter," he said. "I shall favor going before the people in 1896 with the money question alone....Concerning the proper attitude toward other forces that may be forming to grapple with the money power," he commended the reading of Luke 9: 49,50.<sup>75</sup>

Meeting at St. Louis on July 22, the Populist national convention demanded "the free and unrestricted coinage of silver and gold at the present legal ratio of 16 to 1, without waiting for the consent of foreign nations." Bryan was nominated for the presidency, receiving 1,042 of the 1,375 votes cast. Thomas E. Watson of Georgia was nominated for the vice presidency instead of the regular Democratic nominee, Sewall.<sup>76</sup>

Meeting on July 22, simultaneously with that of the Populists and at the same place, the National Silver party declared their unalterable opposition "to the single gold standard," and demanded "the immediate return to the constitutional standard of gold and silver by the restoration by this government...of the unrestricted coinage of both gold and silver at the ratio of 16 to 1...." Both Bryan and Sewall were nominated by acclama-

---

<sup>74</sup> Bryan MSS. Quoted by Barnes, op. cit., pp. 457-458.

<sup>75</sup> Haynes, op. cit., pp. 272-273.

<sup>76</sup> Stanwood, op. cit., pp. 551-555.

tion.<sup>77</sup>

With the conventions over the forces for and against free silver launched their respective campaigns for victory in November. But in Kentucky, the group of gold Democrats who had been left without a party by the Lexington convention, were only beginning to marshal the "true" Democrats of the state and nation, in order "to beat Bryan and save the principles of the Democratic party."<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>77</sup> Loc. cit., pp. 555-557.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Judge Henry Watkins, Munfordville, Ky., Aug., 1934. Judge Watkins was the private secretary of Simon Bolivar Buckner, the vice presidential candidate of the gold Democrats.

## CHAPTER III

## THE GOLD STANDARD DEMOCRATS

The gold Democrats of Kentucky and the nation as well were indeed in a quandry. To bolt the party of their fathers and join the Republicans was out of the question, for the gold standard combined with a high tariff was a mixture as distasteful to them as silver and free trade. But it was evident that, if they refused to follow the regular Democracy, they would have to support the Republican ticket and platform or start a movement of their own, taking for their platform some of the planks built by the national conventions of the two major parties. Many former enemies were drawn together during the campaign. The statement, "This is a time when patriotism should be placed above party, and national honor above sectional necessity; there is no politics in honesty," found itself used as an argument by both silver and gold advocates to support the stand they had taken on the money issue.<sup>1</sup>

Many prominent Kentucky Democrats had indicated their aversion to free silver even before the national convention of the party had declared for the white metal. Early in May, 1896, General Simon Bolivar Buckner, a venerated leader of Kentucky Democracy, in opposing free silver, stated in an interview: "I have always been entirely frank with the people of Kentucky and will continue to be so...." And in view of the honor the people

---

<sup>1</sup> James A. Barnes, John G. Carlisle: Financial Statesman (New York, Dodd, Mead and Co., 1931), p. 465.

of his state had in previous years conferred upon him, "it would be an ill return for such generosity" for him to endeavor to keep their support "by concealing from them my sincere convictions on public questions in which they are interested. I prefer to live in their respect rather than win, with loss of it, the highest office in the land." In the same interview he set forth arguments that supported the gold standard. Speaking of the attempts of 1878 and 1890 to raise the price of silver that resulted so disastrously, he feared "that the wholesale experiment which it is now proposed to try will prove fatal to the country." The disasters accompanying a free silver policy would be "suicidal."<sup>2</sup>

At the Democratic state convention in June, W. C. P. Breckinridge, another of Kentucky's noted Democrats, had said:

"I know that I do not agree with the majority of this convention. I have always spoken honestly from my heart, and I am too old now to do differently. The party is in your hands. Upon you devolves the responsibility of governing it, and to you has been given the power. When the result is reached, whether it be victory or defeat, if you need my services, they have always been offered freely when the Democracy needed them...."

"We are more than Democrats; we are more than Kentuckians; we are the heirs of the conditions of freedom. As man to man, as a laboring man to laboring men, as a suffering man to suffering men, I beg you to so exercise your duties here, that when you go to your homes, when the clamor of applause has died away, you can say in the quiet of your own hearts, I did the best I could to restore confidence to the country and prosperity to the people."<sup>3</sup>

The decision to bolt the party, if necessary, did not come after the work of the Chicago convention. For weeks before that

---

<sup>2</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, May 6, 1896.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., June 5.



convention met the gold Democrats had prepared to send to its sessions non-delegates, "not so much with the hope of influencing the action of the convention as for the purpose of protesting against the course which will likely be taken and of consulting together as to the best course for sound money men to pursue subsequently." Both President Cleveland and Secretary Carlisle had indicated their approval of such action.<sup>4</sup> Before the Chicago convention met Cleveland had written to a friend that the only chance for the future success of the Democratic party lay in establishing a sound money platform. "If this means the loss of votes, present defeat, or even a party division, the seed will be saved from which I believe Democratic success will grow in the future."<sup>5</sup>

To follow the crusade of the gold Democrats of Kentucky one need only to run the files of Henry Watterson's Courier-Journal. Although Watterson was traveling in Europe at the time, the noted editor's policies and views on the gold question were ably carried out by his friend and business associate, W. B. Haldeman. Watterson himself sent lengthy editorials from across the Atlantic, and quite frequently a cablegram. Speaking of an editorial in the Watterson newspaper, a Cincinnati editor declared it "frantic, but that may have come from its electric transmission under the sea. The fact that it was 'salty' may be accounted for

---

<sup>4</sup> Barnes, op. cit., p. 468.

<sup>5</sup> James A. Barnes, "The Gold Standard Democrats and the Party Conflict," Miss. Valley Hist. Review, Vol. XVII, p. 432.

on the same ground."<sup>6</sup>

As soon as the outcome of the Chicago convention was known, the Louisville Courier-Journal began a movement for a third ticket. As a result of this, Kentucky was the first state to call a gold Democratic convention. In the meantime, there were published in the Watterson newspaper interviews from prominent Democrats all over the state, most of the quotations of course favoring gold and condemning the work of the Chicago convention. In the city of Louisville workmen by the hundreds were interviewed and their ideas given prominence in the paper. Editorials declaring the Chicago convention Populistic and anarchistic poured forth daily, as well as arguments of a theoretical nature showing how and why free silver would ruin the country. Quite often an editorial was headed, "They Want to Know," and answers were given to questions that had been sent in by various persons concerning some phase of the theory of money or the historical significance of silver or gold. Questions concerning the candidates were also answered. Seldom during the campaign did the newspaper print a speech of a silver man or give any information concerning the work of the silver forces of the state. Unless a silver crowd howled down an attempt of a gold Democrat to speak, or unless some prominent "Popocrat" (the name given the silver Democrats by the gold men of the party) visited the state, the news columns of the Courier-Journal gave little notice to the campaign efforts of the free silver men of the state. The Populist movement was

---

<sup>6</sup> The Cincinnati Enquirer, June 3, 1896.

given some attention, principally for the purpose of ridiculing the silver Democrats.

Before the Democratic national convention met it was a foregone conclusion that the silver forces would run things their way. "The free silverites who have captured the name and organization of the Democratic party are anxious to have the co-operation of Republicans, Populists, Socialists and Communists...." And it had begun to look as if the convention leaders "want all sorts of votes except the votes of sound-money Democrats. And it begins to look as if the 'Democrats' now in the saddle will have very few sound-money votes thrust upon them." The Democratic party was split, for "from the Alleghenies west to the Pacific and from the Potomac south to the Gulf," save for some gold forces in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, "the Democracy...so far as its voice will be heard in the convention next week stands for free coinage of silver at 16 to 1 against the equally solid gold standard of the East."<sup>7</sup>

A gold paper in the Democratic convention city stated that W. B. Haldeman "enjoys the special distinction this year of being one of the few Democrats who will represent the sound-money sentiment of the South in the National Democratic convention."<sup>8</sup> Haldeman held that the action of the Kentucky state convention was not binding upon him.

"I believe that a very numerous body of Democrats in

---

<sup>7</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, July 4, 1896.

<sup>8</sup> The Chicago Times-Herald, quoted in the Louisville Courier-Journal, July 6, 1896.

Kentucky and throughout the South who are not in accord with the free silver declarations of State Conventions. I believe this because I knew in the South there are thousands of Democrats---men of intelligence, who are farmers, merchants, professional and business men---who first of all look to preserving unsullied the honor and integrity of the Government, and who are against repudiation, no matter what form it may assume....I do not believe a majority of those who have been Democratic workers and voters throughout Kentucky and the South during and since the reconstruction period have been enabled to express their sentiments in the various assemblages, styled Democratic State Conventions, choosing delegates to Chicago."<sup>9</sup>

A Republican editor of Louisville stated the problem that faced the gold Democrats:

"The Chicago Convention, which nominated a Nebraska Populist for President, and an old Solon Chase greenbacker from Maine for Vice President, robbed the sound-money delegates of their vote, treated them and their appeals to reason with contempt, and adopted a platform which flies in the face of all Democratic platforms of the last fifty years, has adjourned, and the question is, what will the sound-money Democrats do?"<sup>10</sup>

The editor offered them one way out. McKinley and the Republican party stood for "law and order, for public and private honesty, for the interests of American labor and American enterprise...." Bryan and his followers stood "for disorder, the reign of the mob, for dishonest dealings, and for the principles of the Red Republicans of France...." In view of these extremes, the gold Democrats were advised to vote for McKinley, and especially since all business men knew that the country had enjoyed prosperity under sound money and protection. It was his opinion that "the conservative elements of the country" and everybody who was a friend to "American enterprise and industry...will...rally

---

<sup>9</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>10</sup> The Louisville Commercial, July 12, 1896.

under the banner of McKinley, and keep control of our government and its destinies out of the hands of the allies of Anarchy, who are trying to grasp it."<sup>11</sup>

The Louisville Courier-Journal lambasted the Chicago convention even more unmercifully.

"...when that convention, leaping madly into the arms of communism, snatched up the alien flag of Populist and amid scenes of the wildest abandonment to unreason and passion proclaimed it the ensign of Democracy; when that convention, breaking in contempt the time-honored tablets of the Fathers' creed, set up in their stead the new faiths of all the clashing and clashing malcontents who had fashioned their fanaticism upon opposition to Democracy; when that convention, following out its frantic surrender to heretic dogmas, nominated for the presidency a young and desperate adventurer, because he had the voice and the presence to best give expression to the evil passions of the hour, and nominated for the vice presidency a lobbyist for Government subsidies and to his industrial interests, it struck a stinging blow full in the face of every true Democrat in America."<sup>12</sup>

If the gold Democrats deserted their party, they would merely "waste their strength by organizing a party on the old Democratic lines...." What was best was to "give their votes to the only party in a situation to make a successful fight for sound-money."<sup>13</sup> But that was what the gold Democrats were not going to do. Unless there was formed a new Democratic ticket, declared the Louisville Courier-Journal, there was danger of the true Democratic party being absorbed by the Populist and Republican parties. "We must keep all the Democrats we can in the Democratic fold; we must give Democratic ground on which to stand and fight; and in that way...strike our blow against the mad assailants of the

---

11 Loc. cit.

12 September 2, 1896.

13 The Louisville Commercial, July 5, 1896.

honor and welfare of our country...."<sup>14</sup> Henry Watterson had cabled Maldeman: "Another ticket our only hope. No compromise with dishonor. Stand firm."<sup>15</sup>

The Louisville newspaper was not the only Democratic journal in the fight for a gold Democratic crusade. The Chicago Chronicle deemed it necessary for another Democratic convention to be called. It declared the Chicago convention controlled "by the foes of commerce, of labor, of sound finance, and of democracy...." But there was still time to call another convention, and with "proper concert of action among the leaders of democracy among the various states the preliminaries can be arranged at once and the convention can be held not later than September 1."<sup>16</sup>

A few days after the Chicago convention adjourned, Postmaster General William L. Wilson wrote W. C. P. Breckinridge:

"...Much as I love my party, I put duty to my country higher, and with my conviction as to the effect of free silver, and its moral stain on the country to say nothing of the other heresies of the platform, I cannot see how I can vote with it under any circumstances....As to your course I can offer no helpful suggestion, ordinarily I should say that you could do nothing more patriotic or honorable to yourself than to assume the leadership of true Democracy in Ky at this time, and to canvass the state on that somewhat heroic plane."<sup>17</sup>

On July 21 there came to Kentucky a telegram from S. C. Pickens, chairman of the Sound Money League. "We ask for a conference," read the telegram, "of two or more representatives

---

<sup>14</sup> July 14, 1896.

<sup>15</sup> Published in the Louisville Courier-Journal, July 14, 1896.

<sup>16</sup> July 11, 1896.

<sup>17</sup> Barnes' Carlisle, op. cit., p. 466.

from each of the states of Missouri, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana," and declared that immediate action was necessary "to preserve and crystalize sound-money sentiment." Nine gold Democrats from Kentucky responded to the call, among them W. D. Haldeman and Zack Phelps, who had been delegates to the Chicago convention, A. J. Carroll, and George A. Davie, the last mentioned the author of the platform later drawn up by the gold Democratic convention of Kentucky.<sup>18</sup>

The conference met at Chicago on July 23. W. D. Bynum of Indiana and F. W. Lehman of Missouri were united in the belief that sound-money Democrats of their respective states were in favor of calling a convention to nominate a third ticket. A letter from W. C. P. Breckinridge, urging immediate action, was read, and a resolution drawn up declaring that a convention should be held not later than September 2.<sup>19</sup> Haldeman, who had been assigned the duty of securing men for the conference, wrote Watterson that "It was by no means an easy task, for the free silver heresy had thoroughly permeated the South."<sup>20</sup> Indianapolis was designated as the meeting place for the convention and Louisville the place of notification. "Both selections were wise, because these cities lay in the two borderlands---that between the East and West, and between the North and South."<sup>21</sup>

On July 28 a conference of Kentucky gold Democrats was held

18 The Louisville Courier-Journal, July 22, 1896.

19 Ibid., Sept. 24.

20 Barnes' Carlisle, op. cit., p. 468.

21 Ibid., p. 469.

62  
in Louisville. A state convention was called to meet August 20, for the purpose of assisting "the organization of Democratic opposition to the revolutionary action of the recent convention held in Chicago." Such a convention was necessary, since the "Democratic party of the nation and state being...left without representatives or party officers...." Therefore, it was their duty "to assist in reorganizing the party."<sup>22</sup>

The conference, it was stated by a gold paper, was composed of "thoroughly representative Democrats of Kentucky." They had gathered "in devotion to party principle and national welfare" and in order "not only to protest against the Chicago convention ...but they met to uplift the desecrated flag of their party and to reenlist under its folds, for its own and the country's protection." And "under the flag thus uplifted," the "hundreds of thousands of Democrats" would march and battle in the fall campaign. It could never be said that the real Democratic party, "when the honor, the welfare and the very life of the nation was threatened by frenzied assaults of Error, Fanaticism, and Anarchy," had failed the country in such a crisis.<sup>23</sup>

On August 3 was published the address of the gold Democratic state executive committee.

"...the true Democrats of Kentucky and the nation are refusing to recognize [the Populist and Chicago] platforms, or their joint candidate, as Democratic; and do not recognize any organization thereunder as the Democratic party

---

<sup>22</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, July 29, 1896.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.



organization.

"We believe that no more serious condition...has been before the Democrats of Kentucky or of the United States than will, by this movement, be submitted to their thoughtful judgment. It calls for immediate thought and action. No candid person now doubts that the great panic and depression from which we are still suffering was caused chiefly by the growing mistrust of our financial integrity as a nation and a people, induced by a belief of the world that a controlling portion of our voters are in danger of being tempted to this lawless course of currency debasement and repudiation."<sup>24</sup>

On August 15 mass meetings were held in various county seats of the state to send delegates to the gold convention. The National Democratic League of Clark County was organized with more than 200 signers, and it was predicted that a third ticket would get 600 or 700 votes there.<sup>25</sup> The resolutions of the Hart County convention (Hart County was the home of Simon Foliver Luckner) declared that the members of a party were "bound by the action of their agents only within the limits of the power granted them," and that it was the plain duty of every Democrat to oppose "such revolutionary action" of the Chicago convention, which had "adopted a platform essentially Populistic and anarchistic...; and that when it did so it ceased to be a Democratic convention."<sup>26</sup> The gold men of Logan County stated that the "triumph of the principles enunciated by the convention held at Chicago...will be disastrous to the best interests of the country," and the election of the nominees "destructive to the rights of the people and would tend to the ultimate disintegration of our Federal system."

---

<sup>24</sup> Loc. cit., Aug. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., Aug. 13.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., Aug. 17.

They pledged themselves to use "all honorable means" to defeat the Chicago ticket.<sup>27</sup> In Lincoln County the "intelligent people" were for sound money, and hard work on their part was necessary, for "the silver men will not stop at anything that will gain them success."<sup>28</sup>

The Louisville Courier-Journal gave prominence to statements of Kentuckians in sympathy with a third ticket. "I am heartily in sympathy with the movement for a genuine Democratic ticket," said Simon Duckner, "and propose to do all in my power to promote the rallying of sound-money Democrats as the nucleus of the true Democracy."<sup>29</sup> A gold man from Warsaw declared he wanted "a straight-out, honest, old-fashioned Democrat [to vote for], on an old-fashioned Democratic platform, without any Altgeld trimmings."<sup>30</sup> A wealthy farmer in the Bluegrass wanted "sound money and honest Government." A senator of Harrodsburg wrote: "The tenets of the Populist party have been appropriated by the Chicago convention and labeled Democracy....I favor a new ticket running on a platform of Jeffersonian Democracy."<sup>31</sup> A group of central Kentucky Democrats sent to W. B. Haldeman a paper with 600 names affixed, refusing "to be turned over bodily to the Populist party," and demanding "that a true Democrat on a true

---

<sup>27</sup> Loc. cit., Aug. 15.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., July 31.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., July 29.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., July 21.

Democratic platform shall be nominated."<sup>32</sup>

The address of the "National Democratic Party," as the gold Democrats called themselves, after denouncing the Chicago convention for its failure to commend the Cleveland administration, declaring the Chicago platform "at variance with the essential principles of the Democratic party," and with the assertion that there was "a deliberate attempt to mislead the people," concluded with an appeal to the Democracy of America.<sup>33</sup>

"The duty of the hour is to stand steadfast in the defense of our ancient faith. In this crisis there is at stake more than the possibility of temporary victory. The honor and perpetuity of the Democratic party are at stake. A political organization that is untrue to itself, its principles, its history and traditions, is disgraced and dishonored. The existence of our great historical party, that has withstood the assaults of every foe, is threatened by reason of the recreancy of many of its members. That this party, as we have known it, may not die, let the faithful of years rally round its historic banner, reform its broken lines, and, with an abiding faith in the final triumph of its principles, unite to restore the name 'Democracy' to its former meaning and proud distinction."<sup>34</sup>

The state convention of the gold Democrats was held in Louisville, August 20, with more than 100 counties represented. Oratory abounded on all sides, yet the proceedings were carried through in the quickest time possible. The session lasted until 11:30 P.M. The platform, drawn up by George M. Davie, was highly commended at the Indianapolis convention in September.

"...We...demand the best, the most stable and the most honest of money for the people of this greatest of nations: which money, by the wisdom, experience and usage of this and

---

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, July 29.

<sup>33</sup> Campaign Text-Book of the National Democratic Party (Chicago, National Democratic Committee, 1896), pp. 1-4.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

other enlightened countries, must, under existing circumstances; be bimetallic, but must be measured by the existing standard of gold, with a bank currency as well secured and redeemable in gold, and with the use of silver and other metals within the reasonable limit prescribed by convenience and safety, and to be kept at a par with gold. We believe it undemocratic and unwise for the Government to debase our money, or to issue paper currency, or, by adopting the silver standard, to set this nation back from its place among enlightened peoples, to a monetary fellowship with the silver monometallists of Asia. We deem it rashness and folly on the part of this country to discard the long existing gold standard of the United States, of England, of Germany, of Austria, of Denmark, of Norway, of Sweden, of Greece, of Holland, of Portugal, of Spain, of Italy, of Brazil, of Chile, of Belgium, of France and other enlightened nations of the world; and to adopt the outgrown and discredited silver standard of Mexico, of Peru, of China and of the other half-civilized and pauper nations. We believe the unlimited free coinage of silver at the ratio of 16 to 1, when in the markets of the world its ratio is only 32 to 1, would bring disaster upon our people and threaten the stability of our institutions."<sup>35</sup>

Half the platform was given over to denouncing the Chicago convention as undemocratic, since it

"...repudiated...the principles of sound money... [was] insincere and double-dealing with the people...would lead to a repudiation of national and individual debts...threaten an inviolable right of individual liberty, by denying to the people the right to make their contracts payable in gold or other safe money...denounce [d] the Supreme Court... seek [s] to obtain votes and office by stirring up jealousies, discontent and hatred between the West and the East, the North and the South....

"We, therefore, disclaim fellowship with, or fealty to, that convention and its proceedings: marked as they were by the disenfranchisement of Democratic representatives: by the abandonment of Democratic principles: and (for the first time in the history of conventions purporting to be Democratic) by the denunciation of the party itself, through its administration."<sup>36</sup>

Many of the state's prominent gold Democrats attended the

---

<sup>35</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, Aug. 21, 1896.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

convention: Simon D. Buckner, W. C. P. Breckinridge, A. J. Carroll, George A. Davie, Wilbur F. Browder, and others. The entire convention was composed of men who were "the brain and brawn of a state that never lacked for men when men were needed. They came from the mountains and from the meadows: from the farm and from the town," and they were there not to promote any selfish interests nor "fevered ambition," but "in response to the call of duty and country...." They presented a fortress against "disruption and dishonor mightier than any granite or steel."<sup>37</sup>

In contrast to the earlier Democratic convention, the meeting of the gold men was marked by harmony. "Dissent and political trickery had no place in that body of Democrats; office-seeking gave way to the modesty which the old-time politicians felt and which the latter-day place-hunter can not even sham."<sup>38</sup>

One of the greatest orators at the convention was the white-haired W. C. P. Breckinridge. He declared:

"You see in the Chicago platform the half ripe fruit. The blossom is in all the heresies of anarchy and disruption in the past; the half ripe fruit is in the Populist platform of St. Louis. The result is in the utter destruction of our institutions that will come if that party gets power.

"You need not tell me that it is a regular Democratic nomination. I walk not into the cesspool of that miserable policy under any pretence....It had no power to make a pledge of Populist and half Republican policy in the name of the Democratic party. It had no power to take hostile policies and pledge the people---the Democratic people---to carry both hostile policies into statutes. And it is not Democratic merely because it is clothed in the Democratic robe and wears the Democratic garment. It is the hand of

---

<sup>37</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

Isau, it is true, but we recognize the voice of Jacob in every tone."<sup>39</sup>

As for the money issue, the gold Democrats would do their part to see that the American nation issued an honest dollar, "the soundest and most universal currency the world over...."<sup>40</sup>

The Democracy of Kentucky had again reached a crisis, continued Breckinridge.

"We stand now in the attitude of the first Democratic convention that has met since the Chicago convention to proclaim the older principles of the Democratic party, so the national Democracy may again follow us....We stand as Democrats and Kentuckians pleading with the people of the land to save our national honor. We stand against all in the Chicago platform just as our ancestors did....

"...The election of Bryan is the greatest national calamity that can befall us.

"I shall do all I can to prevent it....If this convention means anything, it means the determination that Kentucky shall not vote for Bryan. We have no quarrel with our Democratic brethren. We ask them to go with us, but we owe them two duties. First---to stand firm in our places, and give the nucleus around which to preserve the Democratic party, and, second, we owe our brethren a home for their refuge, so when the day of defeat is over, when they can see the errors of their ways, they can come to us.

"We are as much for free trade as before the Chicago convention betrayed us. We are for the most honest dollar made anywhere....We will have no sectional spirit, and we will present Ruckner for Vice President. We will ask the Indianapolis convention to declare that we are one country and one people; that the race question is dead and that all animosities are buried....

"...When another generation is in our places...the father will tell them of Kentuckians who loved their country too well to sacrifice it to heresies...."<sup>41</sup>

The Watterson newspaper called Breckinridge's speech "the master effort of half a century." His eloquence was such that

<sup>39</sup> The Nashville American, Aug. 21, 1896.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> The Louisville Commercial, Aug. 21, 1896.

he well deserved the title, "the silver-tongued orator of the Bluegrass." Despite his thrusts at the Republican party, which thrusts the "Republicans are accustomed to...and ready to meet...", his announcement "that it was the duty of all sound-money Democrats, who adhered to the old doctrines and faith of the Democratic party, to defeat Bryan," Breckinridge's "partisan assaults on the Republican party" could be condoned.<sup>42</sup>

General Buckner, who a few weeks later was nominated for the vice presidency by the Indianapolis convention, laid down the purpose of the National Democracy.

"The party which attempts to usurp our name...is sectional in its purpose and professedly so. It says, we will unite one section of this great Union against another. Not only that, but we will have warfare at every fireside and incite neighbor against neighbor, and friend against friend, for the sake of the miners of the Northwest. Our party is no such a one. We have been very national....

"We are now seeking not power today, but we are seeking to save the life of that party which, in our opinion, is essential to liberty and freedom in this country. We care not for ourselves....

"We are willing to sacrifice ourselves for the good of our party, and for the welfare of this country....

"I thank you, fellow-Democrats, for this warm demonstration you have given me. I recognize in it this fact, that you, like all Democrats, are National in spirit, and our brethren in the North, with whom I have recently met, are actuated by the same sentiment that exists here. There shall hereafter be no imaginary lines dividing section from section.

"...If I should be selected, it is from no motive or desire of mine for any position. As I said, it was my purpose to retire from public life. If I appear before you today, it is because I am actuated by a feeling which actuates every patriot. There are times in the history of every country when old and young alike must step forth to do their utmost in behalf of their country, and that is what calls me before you tonight."<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, Aug. 21, 1896.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

The Louisville Courier-Journal naturally led the way in praising the work of the convention. It was one "upon which brooded the calm of an inflexible determination and through which swelled the storm of resistless inspiration." In the transaction of its business, in the "sweep of exultation" with which it greeted the eloquence of Breckinridge, in the "ardent devotion and exultant fervor" with which it responded to the venerated Buckner, the convention was recognized as the greatest "ever held in this State by any party."<sup>44</sup> "...the spirit of that convention--- was voiced to the country a resonant assurance that the Democratic party should not perish from the earth and a defiant warning that 'by the Eternal' its enemies should not triumph through the election of William Bryan."<sup>45</sup>

The Buffalo Courier announced that "Kentucky has the distinction of heading the revolt against the Chicago platform and ticket. The outlook now is that Bryan...cannot carry that State in November." From a neighboring state came the word that "the Democrats of Kentucky have done well....The men who composed the Louisville convention were not politicians or office-seekers, but business men, farmers and working-men," whose sole aim was to save their country and "their party from wreck and ruin."<sup>46</sup> The reports from the convention prompted the New York Post to declare that "With such leaders as Buckner, Lindsay, Breckinridge,

---

44 The Louisville Commercial, Aug. 21, 1896.

45 The Louisville Courier-Journal, Aug. 21, 1896.

46 The Chattanooga Times, quoted in the Louisville Courier-Journal, Aug. 24, 1896.



Watterson and the sound-money Democratic press of the State opposing the Bryan ticket, it is pretty safe to put Kentucky in the Republican column." In the opinion of the Ohio State Journal, "The division of the Democrats on the money question...will offset Mr. Bryan's gains by fusion and make Republican victory in Kentucky certain." "In point of intelligence and the business standing of the delegates," said the Brooklyn Eagle, "the convention outranked any similar gathering that has been seen in the State for years."<sup>47</sup>

But the obstacles that confronted the gold Democrats were not easy to surmount. It was impossible that they could carry the traditionally "solid" South. It was just as impossible to look for any support from the free-silver West, and very few times had the party won in the North. Even in the ranks of the gold Democrats themselves there was weakness. Hoke Smith, Cleveland's secretary of the interior department, had been touring the southern states in favor of the gold standard, but as editor of the Atlanta Journal, felt it his duty to follow Bryan because of "Democratic regularity."<sup>48</sup> Smith's resignation had been expected, for he had announced before the Chicago convention met that he expected to follow its actions. Although he did not change his views on the money question, he preferred to go with his party rather than aid McKinleyism and help to elect the "apostle of

---

<sup>47</sup> The quotations from these papers are published in the Louisville Courier-Journal, Aug. 24, 1896.

<sup>48</sup> Barnes' Carlisle, op. cit., p. 469.

Protection."<sup>49</sup>

As the time neared for the Indianapolis convention, the gold Democrats worked hard for the cause. On August 22, W. P. Halde-  
man wrote Henry Watterson: "We have done much hard, and, I am  
glad to say, effective work, and the premise now is for a great  
convention of first class men, the delegates representing every  
State and Territory in the American Union, excepting possibly  
three of the rotten boroughs of the West."<sup>50</sup>

The important question facing the Indianapolis convention  
was that of a leader of the movement. As early as July 30  
William M. Wilson had written to W. C. P. Breckinridge:

"The personnel of the ticket, though as yet a matter  
to be kept in the background, is very important. It ought  
to be headed by some such man as Palmer, with a Southern  
Confederate V. P....While it is the impression of Eastern  
politicians that Bryan's chances are somewhat past the zen-  
ith and will further wane, they have been so steadily mis-  
taken and so blind to the strength and volume of the silver  
movement, that one does not know what faith to put in their  
judgment. Be this as it may, it does not relieve the situa-  
tion of its distress to Democrats like you and me who look  
at principles and not at names or 'regularity.'"<sup>51</sup>

Carlisle was handicapped because he was in Cleveland's  
cabinet, and the latter did not want to be a candidate a third  
time. Replying to a telegram from Daniel G. Griffin concerning  
his attitude toward the nomination, Cleveland replied: "My  
public and personal inclinations are so unalterably opposed that  
I cannot for one moment entertain the suggestion."<sup>52</sup> The majority

---

49 The Nashville American, Aug. 26, 1896.

50 Quoted in Barnes' Carlisle, op. cit., p. 469.

51 Ibid., pp. 470-471.

52 The Louisville Times, Sept. 3, 1896.

70

of the southern and western delegates to the Indianapolis convention, when they first arrived, favored Henry Watterson, but when it was discovered that the national administration did not agree and that Kentucky had declared for Buckner for vice president, his nomination was considered impossible. Watterson himself had cabled to the convention: "I am not a candidate and have not been. The efforts in my behalf have been made without my authorization. General Buckner is my friend and if I were in the convention I should work for his nomination."<sup>53</sup>

The Chicago Chronicle, a gold paper, had predicted a hot fight over the nomination of a president. Those favoring General Bragg of Wisconsin and Henry Watterson declared that the nomination of W. D. Bynum would be a mistake, since he had been making speeches after his retirement from Congress for a pecuniary consideration. There were charges that Bragg was not sound on the money question and would be unacceptable as a candidate. Watterson was accused of having run editorials in his newspaper favoring silver. W. B. Waldeman admitted the accusation against Watterson, but said that Watterson had been in Europe at the time and knew nothing of it until his return. These editorials had appeared in the Louisville newspaper "some years ago."<sup>54</sup>

General Buckner was being boosted for first place on the ticket by the New York and Pennsylvania delegations. They held that in view of Buckner's friendly relations with Grant and his

---

<sup>53</sup> The Chicago Chronicle, Sept. 4, 1896.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., Sept. 2.

visit to the ex-President during the latter's last illness, the Kentuckian would make a good candidate. However, since Buckner was a Confederate soldier, his nomination would be unwise. It was conceded that he would be nominated for vice president if a southern man were not placed at the head of the ticket. When asked how the Kentucky delegation would vote, Breckinridge replied: "I can only say that we are instructed for Buckner for vice president and on that, of course, we are solid. As to the presidential nomination I cannot say what may be the preference of the delegates...." When asked how Kentucky stood for "atter-son, he answered that "Kentucky cannot ask for both places on the ticket."<sup>55</sup> The end of the matter saw General John A. Palmer of Illinois and General Buckner of Kentucky, the former a Unionist and the latter a Confederate soldier of Civil War days, nominated to lead the gold Democrats.<sup>56</sup>

General Buckner stated the aims of the National Democracy even more clearly at the Indianapolis convention than he did at the Louisville meeting.

"I am a delegate at large from Kentucky, but I should not have come were it not for the possibility that some good Democrats might misinterpret my feelings. This is a great convention...Almost every county in Kentucky participated in our sound money state convention and there were no hoodlums there, either. With only ten days' notice we succeeded in creating an interest that, to my mind, was remarkable, and I presume Kentucky leads the South in the new movement. Of course, we do not expect to win, but we do expect to keep the party together and to furnish a basis of action for the

---

<sup>55</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>56</sup> Barnes' Carlisle, op. cit., p. 470.

masses of honest, thinking Democrats who do not regard the Chicago platform as an expression of their sentiments. I believe that a majority of the sound money Democrats will vote for the third party ticket."<sup>57</sup>

General Buckner was described as "a typical Kentuckian... witty, a good story teller, extremely dignified, and a man of wide experience and broad sympathies." He "smoked a large corn-cob pipe with a wooden stem...His manner is unaffected," and his personality would "make him a unique character in the Indianapolis convention."<sup>58</sup>

The only difficulty that concerned the drawing up of the platform was finding language strong enough to condemn the Chicago convention and to support the gold standard. The plank of the Kentucky platform on the money question was given considerable praise, and the one adopted at Indianapolis did not differ greatly from the one drawn in Louisville.<sup>59</sup>

"The experience of mankind has shown that, by reason of their natural qualities; gold is the necessary money of the large affairs of commerce and business, while silver is conveniently adapted to minor transactions, and the most beneficial use of both together can be insured only by the adoption of the former as a standard of monetary measure, and the maintenance of silver at a parity with gold by its limited coinage under suitable safeguards of law....

"...To this long-established Democratic policy we adhere, and insist upon the maintenance of the gold standard, and of the parity therewith of every dollar issued by the government, and are firmly opposed to the free and unlimited coinage of silver and to the compulsory purchase of silver bullion....

"The fidelity, patriotism, and courage with which President Cleveland has fulfilled his great public trust, the high character of his administration...are fully recognized by the Democratic party...."<sup>60</sup>

---

57 The Chicago Chronicle, Sept. 2, 1896.

58 Ibid.

59 The Louisville Courier-Journal, Sept. 2, 1896.

60 Stanwood, *op. cit.*, pp. 559-560.

Kentucky eloquence was not lacking at the convention. Besides General Buckner, Breckinridge addressed the asserblage, attacking the Chicago convention as he did at Louisville two weeks earlier. "This masquerade of latter days in the guise of democracy is not democratic," he asserted.... "Our duty lies in giving the Populists an object lesson in patriotism...." Some people accused the gold Democrats of trying to elect McKinley, but "the free silver Democrats took that job out of our hands since 1894." The silver Democrats "disavowed the teachings of that extraordinary and lucid Carlisle and we have a Republican governor in Kentucky."<sup>61</sup>

"And when this convention adjourns and returns home we will win no elections, no states, perhaps, not a single one, but certainly will vote for our ticket.... We will be defeated at the polls, but we shall save---what? The honor of the country, and the good name of our people and the Democratic party from ruin."<sup>62</sup>

General Buckner also predicted temporary defeat.

"This movement was inaugurated to save democracy and to put down populism. I want to do my share of that work. The platform is all that could be desired, an enunciation of principles that may not be successful today, but which will certainly furnish the foundation for the democracy of the future. I would rather be defeated for vice president on that platform than be elected president on either of the others."<sup>63</sup>

Ex-Governor Roswell P. Flower, temporary chairman of the convention said: "This gathering is notice to the world that the Democratic party has not yet surrendered to populism and anarchy.... The true principles of Democracy...are not dead because these

---

<sup>61</sup> The Chicago Chronicle, Sept. 4, 1896.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

principles have been repudiated by a convention calling itself Democratic...."64 The editor of the Chicago Chronicle declared on the opening day of the convention: "When the party of repudiation, national dishonor, nullification and anarchy shall have passed away," the party represented by the men of the Indianapolis convention "will remain the indestructible Democratic party of America...."

The nomination of Palmer and Buckner, both born in Kentucky, was very satisfactory indeed to the gold Democrats of that state. Declared a Louisville editor:

"Of General Buckner we shall not allow ourselves to speak without restraint. Here in Kentucky, where we know and love him so well, we do not measure our words when we talk of him. His life is as spotless as the silver hairs of his venerable head, and his Democracy is as unsullied as his life. He does not know how to draw any but a Democratic breath. Like Palmer, a soldier of distinction, he is no less distinguished on the loftier plane of statesmanship. No man has a firmer grasp of the eternal truths of Democracy, and none at every step of his career has been more inflexibly loyal to these truths. His official record is flawless....As a President, his administration would be Jacksonian, without Jackson's austerity, and his state papers would be classics."65

Another editor in the same city spoke of the candidates as "men of high character, exceptional ability, wide reputation and great personal popularity." But despite the acceptability of the men, the main strength of the ticket "is derived from the fact that it is the representative of a principle and a cause worthy of devotion."66

---

64 Loc. cit.

65 The Louisville Courier-Journal, Sept. 4, 1896.

66 The Louisville Commercial, Sept. 4, 1896.

At Mumfordsville, Kentucky, the home of General Buckner, bonfires were built and many speeches made. A crowd rode out to the estate of the General, Glen Lily, and cheered Mrs. Buckner. Telegrams from over the state indicated the pleasure of the gold Democrats with the ticket. In Louisville, the nomination of Kentucky's sons "created great enthusiasm." Bulletin boards in front of the newspaper offices kept the public advised as to the proceedings of the Indianapolis gathering. When Palmer's name was announced heading the ticket, "the anxious watchers cheered wildly," and when Buckner's name was added, "there was a deep roar of satisfaction." All over the state the ticket and platform "met with the approval of every true Democrat."<sup>67</sup>

Not all sentiment, however, was favorable. An editor whose paper was widely read in northern Kentucky had no fault to find with the work of the Indianapolis convention. "It did as poorly as could have been done. It did that which was least embarrassing to the regular democratic nominees and the regular democratic party." The editor admitted, however, that "General Buckner is, by all comparisons, the best end of the ticket." The convention accomplished the purpose it had in view, "a refuge for the McKinleyites who haven't the courage to vote for McKinley direct. It is a knifing arrangement that will not be dangerous to the success of the Democratic ticket."<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> The Chicago Chronicle, Sept. 4, 1896.

<sup>68</sup> The Cincinnati Enquirer, Sept. 4, 1896.



The exponents of the gold standard, however, were pleased, for they had launched a crusade to fight the silver heresy that had caused schism within the Democracy. William Lindsay of Frankfort, who had become Senator from Kentucky upon the resignation of John G. Carlisle in 1893 and who remained in that office for several years following,<sup>69</sup> wrote to George L. Davis shortly after the Indianapolis convention had adjourned: "You and your associates did a great work....The platform adopted is Democratic....The ticket is beyond all comment or criticism.... I congratulate you and the Kentucky delegation, and I especially congratulate the country and the Democratic party."<sup>70</sup> During the convention's sessions he had telegraphed that body a message approving the convention's motives and urging an "unequivocal democratic platform."<sup>71</sup>

Despite the following of the Democratic silver army, many of the party's outstanding leaders, in Kentucky and elsewhere, were outspoken in their condemnation of the action of the "so-called Democrats" at Chicago and their praise of the gold forces. Judge Samuel S. Savage of Ashland, Kentucky, who had been the "delegate from Alaska" at Indianapolis, declared: "With such men as Senator Lindsay, Dick Tyler, General Buckner, and Secretary Carlisle on the side of our cause, there is no more chance for Bryan to carry Kentucky than there is for our blessed Easter to

---

<sup>69</sup> Biographical Directory of the American Congress, House Doc. 783, 69th Congress, 2nd session, pp. 416 ff.

<sup>70</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, Sept. 6, 1896.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., Sept. 4, 1896.

visit Chicago."<sup>72</sup> Many sound-money Democrats had doubted that Senator Lindsay would support their ticket, but when he telegraphed Buckner upon the latter's nomination, "Kentucky honored in your nomination. Contragulate you. A Kentucky as well as a national ticket. The partition wall broken down at last," it settled "the question of Senator Lindsay's position on the money question and in the campaign...."<sup>73</sup> Democrats of the administration at Washington indorsed the movement. From the President and members of his cabinet came wires to W. D. Bynum, chairman of the Democratic National Committee. Regretting that he could not be present at the notification meeting in Louisville, Cleveland was glad that "the voice of true Democracy shall not be smothered, and...that the glorious standard shall be borne aloft as of old in faithful hands."<sup>74</sup> Secretary Carlisle was proud to take his stand "with the old-fashioned Democrats who have refused to abandon their honest convictions in order to form unnatural alliances...and I pledge you and your associates such support as I can properly give during the campaign."<sup>75</sup>

Gold newspapers over the country, both Democratic and Republican, commended the third party and predicted for it great success. From West Virginia came the report that Palmer and Buckner would poll many votes in that state and Tennessee as well,

<sup>72</sup> The Chicago Chronicle, Sept. 4, 1896.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Campaign Text-Book of the National Democratic Party, op. cit.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

but the statement, "there is no reason why the National Democratic party should not poll even more than the million votes claimed by it," was rather optimistic.<sup>76</sup> An independent Ohio paper called the nomination of the war veterans "an indorsement of their worth,"<sup>77</sup> and the New York Times "a logical and worthy outcome of the national democratic movement."<sup>78</sup> A Republican editor believed that the gold convention of Democrats "showed a little better judgment in its ticket than it did in its platform," but resented the attacks made on the Republican party, the more so because the battle of 1896 was not between "republicans and democrats as such, but between the champions of public honesty, order and national stability and the advocates of repudiation, riot and anarchy."<sup>79</sup>

The sentiment of the English press toward the American election was strongly in favor of gold. The London Daily News wished there were a chance for the election of Palmer and Buckner, but added that if they kept Bryan "out of the white house" they "will have fulfilled the purpose of democratic mugwumps."<sup>80</sup> The London Times was not so hopeful. Said an editor of that paper:

"The American electors, with the instinct for taking a side, will probably ignore the Palmer ticket as something too refined and sublimated for everyday life. The outcome of the

---

76 The Louisville Courier-Journal, Sept. 4, 1896.

77 The Cincinnati Post, Sept. 4, 1896.

78 quoted in the Chicago Chronicle, Sept. 4, 1896.

79 The St. Louis Globe-Democrat, quoted in the Chicago Chronicle, Sept. 4, 1896.

80 Quoted in the Chicago Chronicle, Sept. 4, 1896.

contest is, therefore, as doubtful as ever. Without understanding the evils of the protection regime, we are compelled to confess that they would be insignificant compared with a free silver regime. Looking to the indecisive attitude of the republican leaders on the question, we shall be greatly surprised if Mr. McKinley obtains such a majority as will give a permanent check to the free silver movement. It is more likely that Mr. Bryan will receive so large a share of the popular vote as to encourage the silverites and populists to pursue the propaganda with such increasing energy that it would be rash to predict the future. It is evident that political parties and principles in the United States are in a state of solution detrimental both to the material interests of the United States and their commercial relations with Great Britain."<sup>81</sup>

From the deep South it was voiced that the Indianapolis meeting was "a convention of dead men," that it had "resurrected" the oldest men in the Democratic party, Palmer at the time being seventy-nine and Buckner seventy-three, and from the same region came the promise to support both Bryan and Palmer.<sup>82</sup> That the silver issue would be fought out along the states bordering the Ohio and Mississippi rivers was the view of some commentators.<sup>83</sup> The extreme South and West, because of the regularity of the former and the strength of the silver forces in the latter, would go for Bryan. The North and East for opposite reasons would vote for McKinley. Therefore, the ticket and platform of the gold Democrats "is likely to make Illinois and Kentucky, as well as other states, safe for sound money...."<sup>84</sup> This would tip the balance in favor of the Republican party in November.

---

<sup>81</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>82</sup> The New Orleans Times-Democrat, quoted by the Chicago Chronicle, Sept. 4, 1896.

<sup>83</sup> The New Orleans Picayune, quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> The Baltimore Sun, quoted in *ibid.*

The nomination of a Confederate and a Unionist general was intended to draw votes from both North and South, and patriotic sentiment was appealed to in order to secure support from both sections. "For the first time since the war...the blue and the gray are associated as emblems of national conciliation, of re-united Americanism, of patriotism as broad as the continent, and of honest money for all the people, north and south, east and west!"<sup>85</sup> The New York World declared sectional strife at an end in national politics. "For the first time since 1861 the issues of the civil war have been ignored in making nominations for president and vice president....Our politics is again national. It is no longer disturbed by apparitions of a dead and gone past."<sup>86</sup> An editor from a Gulf state saw in the third party's nominations "the final laying away of the old antisouthern sectionalism."<sup>87</sup> The fact that General Buckner was a Kentuckian would add to his strength in the South, and the fact that he was a close friend of Grant after the war would not lose the ticket support in the North."<sup>88</sup>

The notification meeting was held in Louisville, and the gold Democrats on September 12 formally launched the campaign against the Satanic elements of "repudiation and anarchy." Telegrams from the party's leaders were read and the crowd cheered.

---

85 The Chicago Chronicle, Sept. 4, 1896.

86 Quoted in *ibid.*

87 The New Orleans Times-Democrat, quoted in *ibid.*

88 The Chicago Chronicle, Sept. 4, 1896.

Palmer and Buckner made their acceptance speeches and were "applauded vigorously."<sup>89</sup> Palmer declared that the "cheap dollar" is against the "experience of mankind," that gold must be the standard, and committed his hearers and the party to "the maintenance of the Democratic faith." To the assertion of the silver Democrats that it was their group who was regular, Buckner answered that Benedict Arnold was regular in his proceedings, but when those proceedings became known, Washington refused to support his regularity. Buckner recognized in the movement of the "true" Democracy the disappearance of the last vestige of sectionalism, and the union which "makes us one people and one nationality."<sup>90</sup>

So the lines of battle were drawn. The gold Democrats were late getting into the campaign, but they pursued their cause earnestly. Dubbed the "McKinley Aid Society," Palmer and Buckner and the leaders of the gold Democracy nevertheless went on in the face of opposition and ridicule to accomplish their goal: to defeat Bryan and save the Democratic party. Kentucky was the leader of the gold movement, and she had a right to be "proud of the part she has played and the recognition she has won in this historic drama....The campaign for Palmer and Buckner, for Democracy and patriotism is now formally open. Let it never falter to the end."<sup>91</sup>

---

<sup>89</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, Sept. 12, 1896.

<sup>90</sup> Campaign Text-Book of the National Democratic Party, op. cit., pp. 20-22.

<sup>91</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, Sept. 13, 1896.

CHAPTER IV  
THE CAMPAIGN

At the beginning of the campaign of 1896 the political situation was rather unusual. Party lines and issues were drawn in such a way that it was both difficult and embarrassing for each group to explain its status. The silver Democratic forces were composed of such diverse elements that they could conduct but one campaign. The gold Democrats had lost a great following by their course of action, and could do nothing but stand adamant for the gold standard and "true Democracy." The Republicans had been forced to lay aside the issue on which they would have preferred the campaign hinge, a protective tariff, and endeavor to elect their candidate on the money issue, an issue which was somewhat embarrassing to McKinley and which he preferred less than the high tariff ideas of his manager, Mark Hanna.<sup>1</sup> One campaign writer aptly put the political concoction into clear but current English:

"Where are we at? In a single day's round of interviews our political reporter encountered gentlemen advocating the following views:

- "A--Sound money Republicans, for McKinley and Hobart.
- "B--Free silver Republicans, anti-McKinley.
- "C--Sound money Democrats, anti-Bryan.
- "D--Free silver Democrats, for Bryan.
- "E--Free silver Populists, for Bryan.
- "F--Middle-of-the-road Populists, anti-Bryan.
- "G--Augsumps, anti-everybody.
- "God save the commonwealth!"<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> James A. Barnes, John G. Carlisle: Financial Statesman (New York, Dodd, Mead and Co., 1931), pp. 471-472.

<sup>2</sup> The Nashville American, Sept. 4, 1896.

But in spite of what any party or any leader would have made the issue, it was gold.

"Gold, gold, gold, gold.  
 Bright and yellow, hard and cold.  
 Molten, graven, hammered and rolled.  
 Heavy to get and light to hold;  
 Hoarded, bartered, bought and sold.  
 Stolen, borrowed, squandered, doled;  
 Spurned by the young, but hugged by the old  
 To the very verge of the churchyard mold;  
 Price of many a crime untold.  
 Gold, gold, gold, gold."<sup>3</sup>

From the outset the Republicans realized that their part of the campaign was to be one of education and instruction. The Democrats were bidding for popular support by appealing to the poor against the rich; the masses against the classes. The exigencies of the campaign necessitated a departure from the accustomed organization, and the Republican battalions were prepared for the defense with the National Committee at the head and Hanna at the helm.

Hanna secured the confidence of New York business men and received from them large contributions. He assessed firms according to his idea of their financial interest in the campaign. On banks he levied an assessment of one-fourth of 1 per cent. During the campaign the Republicans spent between three and three and a half million dollars, and had in reserve a fund that was not used. More than \$600,000 was spent for documents printed in French, Spanish, Italian, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Dutch, Hebrew, and English. There were printed and circulated 200,000,000

---

<sup>3</sup> The Cincinnati Enquirer, July 26, 1896.



copies of the New York Evening Post's "Free Coinage Catechism," written by its financial editor, Alexander B. Noyes, and more than 1,000,000 copies of a speech of Carl Schurz were circulated. Men in the western states were provided with sound money literature and were hired to read and explain the pamphlets at school-houses and other gathering places.<sup>4</sup> Nearly all of the pamphlets dealt with the currency question, but toward the end of the campaign protectionist material was demanded. County journals with a total circulation of 1,650,000 received 3,500,000 columns a week, and other county newspapers with a circulation of 1,000,000 received plates. Says Hanna's biographer: "Mr. Hanna merely systematized and developed a practice which was rooted deep in contemporary American political soil, and which was sanctioned both by custom and, as he believed, by necessity."<sup>5</sup> Not all of the Republican campaign fund was spent by the Republicans directly, for Hanna gave the gold Democrats money to help them to carry on their fight.<sup>6</sup>

A hot fight in Kentucky was predicted even before the national conventions had met. The silver Democrats of the state, having no campaign fund to work with and "no advantage from Federal patronage," were handicapped, but with the able leaders of the party in Kentucky, the Democratic party and silver would

---

<sup>4</sup> James Ford Rhodes, History of the United States (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1928), Vol. IX, pp. 23-24.

<sup>5</sup> Herbert David Croly, Marcus Alonzo Hanna (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1922), pp. 217-221.

<sup>6</sup> James A. Barnes, "The Gold Standard Democrats and the Party Conflict," Miss. Valley Hist. Review, Vol. XVII, p. 445.

be victorious.<sup>7</sup> Before the regular Democratic state convention in June, a free silver paper, speaking of the "attempt to disenfranchise the voters in the distant parts of the counties, by compelling them to travel to the county seats to choose their delegates to the State Convention," insisted that "Democrats will travel further than the length of any county in Kentucky to choose their representatives."<sup>8</sup> Unless "bribery and corruption are stronger in the land than the honest expression of the peoples' will," free coinage was an almost accomplished fact.<sup>9</sup>

Early in April Ben Tillman visited Kentucky and spoke at Lexington. He saw in a union of the South and West the only salvation of the country against the oppression of the East. Of the leading Democratic journal in the state he was not complimentary, nor was he of some Kentucky Democrats. "He informed the Democrats they were a party of cowards; that the proprietors of the Courier-Journal were scoundrels, and, as masters of Henry Watterson, had made him grovel in the dirt, and that the paper was a political harlot, whose presence would disgrace any decent Democratic household." Blackburn he highly praised, but Carlisle was a traitor. Commenting upon Tillman's attack upon Carlisle, a Republican editor agreed that the secretary of the treasury was no longer a pure Democrat. "When Secretary Carlisle became converted to the policy of sound money he became over half Repub-

---

<sup>7</sup> The Cincinnati Enquirer, May 19, 1896.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., May 28.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., May 21.

lican...."<sup>10</sup> The silver forces were bent on victory, and the people of South Carolina, promised Tillman, would vote for silver men, no matter to what party they belonged.<sup>11</sup>

The outlook for free silver in Kentucky before the campaign got under way gave Republicans as well as gold Democrats cause for alarm. Governor Bradley believed it "the cause for the deepest concern," and urged members of his party to "meet the issue bravely." One editor remarked that it would "not be surprising if the Lexington Democratic convention instructs its delegates for Altgeld...."<sup>12</sup> The gold Democrats were to blame for permitting their party to support the silver heresy. They had swung into action too late, and the declaration of Kentucky Democrats for the white metal had "persuaded some free silver Democrats that the free silver cause is...going to do something remarkable next fall...."<sup>13</sup> But it would no doubt have taken more gold Democrats than existed in Kentucky to stem the rising tide of silver sentiment. When Simon Buckner and John S. Rhea held a debate at Winchester, Kentucky, early in the year, the crowd listened to Rhea, but left before Buckner made his closing argument.<sup>14</sup> Evidently there was some truth in the statement that "the State of Kentucky is practically unanimous for free silver."<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> The Louisville Commercial, April 14, 1896.

<sup>11</sup> The Cincinnati Enquirer, April 11, 1896.

<sup>12</sup> The Louisville Commercial, June 3, 1896.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, June 8.

<sup>14</sup> The Cincinnati Enquirer, May 26, 1896.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, June 1.

It was thought early in the campaign that the Populists of the state would fuse with the Democrats because of their mutual ideas on the money issue. In the summer of 1895, Blackburn and Hardin had held a conference with the Populist candidate for governor, Thomas Pettit, of Owensboro. At that time it was agreed, according to a Republican editor, that if the Democratic state convention should adopt a free silver platform, the Populists should not make a nomination of their own but should support the Democratic platform and ticket. Some silver men claimed that they had assurances that the Populists would join them.<sup>16</sup> Pettit was openly for Bryan, however, and hoped that the Populist convention of his state would indorse him for the presidency.<sup>17</sup>

A fusion of Populists and Democrats in the South would be accomplished with more serious difficulties than in the West, for in the former region the antagonism between the two was "decidedly pronounced." Perhaps if fusion occurred at all, it would be a fusion of Populists into Democracy, and not the reverse. The demand of the Populists, that Watson be substituted for Sewall on the Democratic ticket, was not to Democratic liking.<sup>18</sup> In August, Joe A. Parker of the Populist State Central Committee declared that Sewall would get no votes in Kentucky, as he favored protection and sympathized with monopolists and national

---

<sup>16</sup> The Louisville Commercial, June 7, 1896.

<sup>17</sup> The Cincinnati Enquirer, July 17, 1896.

<sup>18</sup> The Nashville American, Aug. 23, 1896.

banks. Then, too, the silver Democratic leaders had promised that if the Populist national convention nominated Bryan, Sewall should be withdrawn and Watson substituted. "This promise," declared Parker, "has been broken, and we intend to see that Sewall at least gets no votes from the Populists in Kentucky, who, I believe, will poll nearly 30,000 votes, an increase of 7,000 over last year."<sup>19</sup>

Early in September Parker agreed to combine with the silver Democrats if his party were given two Bryan and Watson electors. "We don't want and won't have Bryan and Sewall electors," stated Parker, "and will accept no such proposition." If the Democrats would agree to give them the two electors, "then there will be only one or two Populist candidates in the State."<sup>20</sup> The editor of a Republican organ explained the hesitancy of the Populists in carrying out fusion with the silver Democrats.

"Some people imagine that the Populist leaders are wild-eyed, long-haired enthusiasts, and that they are stubborn and pig-headed like all typical cranks; not being business men, they do not understand the rule about half a loaf being better than no supper; not being politicians, they do not understand how to stoop and conquer. Such an estimate of men like Tom Pettit and Joe Parker is the very farthest from the truth. There is very little 'hayseed' in the hair of either of these worthies; in fact, they are eminently practical; they understand on which side their bread is buttered, and they never forget the interests of A No. 1.

"Now, the leaders of this party of bucolic enthusiasts are level-headed, clear-sighted men. They know that Bryan is beaten, that he cannot carry Kentucky, fusion or no fusion: beaten by 14,000 or 15,000 in the former case, by about 30,000 in the latter. Why should they give up the

---

<sup>19</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, Aug. 31, 1896.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., Sept. 8.

leadership of the small army which now obeys their command and enter as subalterns into a bigger army, only to share in its speedy and ignominious defeat. The Populists of Kentucky and those of most other states have the advantage that, not hoping for, or claiming success, they cannot be beaten, and they will hold on to this happy condition until they find a combination that can win."<sup>21</sup>

Late in September, however, the Populists and Democrats came together. By the terms of the agreement, the Populists got two electors. In the signed agreement it was stated that "the Populist electoral ticket shall be withdrawn; that the support of both parties shall be given" to the Democratic ticket on which there were two Populist electors.<sup>22</sup> The election returns showed that only in the First, Second, and Fourth congressional districts were there any Populist candidates for Congress, and none of these was elected.<sup>23</sup> But the Populists could not agree among themselves. At Bardwell, Kentucky, in a Populist mass meeting to select delegates to the state convention at Paducah, there was considerable opposition to instructing the delegates to come out for Bryan, and the delegates attended the convention uninstructed.<sup>24</sup> The Populist candidate in the First congressional district made the best showing, lacking about 1,000 votes equaling that of the Republican candidate, who received 2,000 less than the Democratic candidate, C. K. Wheeler.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> The Louisville Commercial, Sept. 19, 1896.

<sup>22</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, Sept. 23, 1896.

<sup>23</sup> The Courier-Journal Almanac for 1898 (Louisville, The Courier-Journal Co., 1898), Vol. 1, No. 1 (Jan.), p. 390.

<sup>24</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, July 12, 1896.

<sup>25</sup> The Courier-Journal Almanac for 1898, op. cit., p. 390.

Conditions early in July looked dark for the Republican party and the gold Democrats. Even before the Chicago convention came out for free silver, Democratic state conventions all over the country were instructing their delegates for the white metal. When the state convention of Tennessee assembled at Clarksville and announced for silver, the editor of the Louisville Courier-Journal declared: "That, which is illustrative of what is going on throughout the South and West ought to be filed away for the instruction of the historian who shall attempt to write the history of the Democratic party in the year of our Lord 1896."<sup>26</sup> Vice President Stevenson declared himself "bitterly disappointed" over the action of J. L. S. Blackburn and other senators who had promised to support him for the presidency; that after Blackburn's victory over Carlisle and the sound-money men of Kentucky, the Senator ignored him and would not even visit him in Washington.<sup>27</sup> Blackburn declared that "there is not an iota of truth in it. I deny most emphatically that I had agreed to support Mr. Stevenson for President."<sup>28</sup>

Harry Sommers of the Elizabethtown News ably managed the campaign for Bryan in Kentucky, and it was due to his efforts that "Kentucky Democracy's first great humiliation and defeat" was prevented from developing "into a distressing if not a disgrace-

---

26 The Louisville Courier-Journal, July 3, 1896.

27 The Brooklyn Eagle, June 30, 1896.

28 The Louisville Courier-Journal, July 4, 1896.

ful rout."<sup>29</sup> For the Silver Democrats, the campaign following the Chicago convention began with high praise for the work of that assembly. From Cynthiana came the statement that there was "but one National Democratic ticket, and we are for it first, last and all the time." A western Kentucky editor said the platform would "meet all the demands of the suffering people." The Paducah News believed that Bryan, "a leader of the new Democracy and himself a great part of it," was a standard-bearer of whom the party could be proud. From Harrodsburg came the word, "The Democratic platform reads like an inspiration. It is a new Declaration of Independence, and the man must be void of patriotic impulse indeed whose soul is not fired with enthusiasm as he reads its courageous lines." A Warren County editor thought that the platform embodied "the views not only of a large majority of the Democrats of this country but of the great mass of people who have been left free to think dispassionately and without prejudice upon the situation as it is." At Russellville A. G. Rhea, chairman of the Democratic county committee, said "the nominations are typical of the parties---McKinley's was bought, Bryan's was a spontaneous outburst of enthusiasm." From all over the state the free silver press extolled the Democratic nominee and platform as the best that could be secured. A few of the Democratic papers, declining to be "irregular," agreed to follow the party, even though their personal inclinations did not lean

---

<sup>29</sup> George L. Willis, Sr., Kentucky Democracy (Louisville, Democratic Historical Society, 1935), Vol. 1, p. 258.



in that direction. Other Democratic papers, considering it a point of "honor" and "honesty," refused to follow in the wake of the silver host.<sup>30</sup>

The Louisville Courier-Journal continued its crusade in the interests of the Gold Democracy. Interviews of Louisville business men "at random" indicated that few would support the Chicago ticket. A merchant in the city declared he had discussed the question with nineteen merchants on Main Street. "Fourteen of these said they would vote for McKinley, three said they would not vote at all, and two said that they would vote for yellow dogs if they had been nominated at Chicago." Of 225 persons interviewed, 155 expressed themselves as against the regular Democratic ticket, forty were non-committal, and thirty said they would support Bryan.<sup>31</sup> As a protest against the policy of the Courier-Journal in publishing daily the words of sound-money Democrats, thus giving the impression that Kentucky Democracy favored the gold standard, the Cincinnati Enquirer carried in its columns quotations from Kentucky silverites. "The few gold standard newspapers in Kentucky," declared the editor of the Enquirer, "seem to have lost all sense of decency, and are reveling in flagrant misrepresentations." Scores of prominent citizens there had written the Cincinnati paper complaining of the false interviews. "One compensating fact is," concluded the Ohio editor, "that the falsehoods are so notorious that they are doing the gold standard

---

<sup>30</sup> These comments appeared in the Louisville Courier-Journal, July 12, 1896.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

cause as much harm as its own rottenness. Still, there should be a limit to lying."<sup>32</sup>

Comment from many Kentucky Republicans indicated that they would have preferred that the campaign be fought out on the tariff issue. Word came from Danville that a Republican of that city believed that "the legislation and platform declarations of the Republican party touching the tariff and other national issues should be fully presented and upheld by the press and public speakers." But the issue was not the tariff. Congressman Evans, of Louisville, urged that the money question, "whether we would have preferred it or not...has been forced to the front as the most pressing issue of the campaign. The public interest demands that it shall be settled wisely and at once." Even on the money issue, however, success was possible by a thorough campaign of education in the press and on the stump. At the same time, "It is never safe to act on the theory that there is to be a walk over."<sup>33</sup>

Free silver Democrats claimed that there were around 20,000 Republicans in Kentucky who would vote for Bryan and Sewall. A Republican paper discredited that estimate, placing the number at between 1,000 and 1,500. State officials at Frankfort were being kept informed of the bolters in the Republican ranks, and when such news arrived it was "accompanied by the additional report that a greater number of sound-money Democrats have declared

---

<sup>32</sup> July 31, 1896.

<sup>33</sup> The Louisville Commercial, July 17, 1896.

themselves for McKinley and the sound-money platform." Giving the Democrats the 20,000 free silver Republicans they claimed, the newspaper believed that half of them would refuse to vote for a Populist for president, thereby cutting down to 10,000 the free silver Republican votes hoped for by the Democrats. "But give the free silver Democracy all the 16,000 [Populist] and 10,000 Republican votes and...there are from 20,000 to 40,000 sound-money Democrats who will be for McKinley this year, and Bradley's majority of nearly 9,000 will thus be increased instead of diminished."<sup>34</sup>

During the campaign Republicans spoke highly of Cleveland and Secretary Carlisle. Congressman Walter Evans commended Carlisle's stand on the money question,<sup>35</sup> and at Princeton the Republicans of the First District declared their indorsement of the "financial policies of President Cleveland and Secretary Carlisle," especially in view of the attacks made upon them by the Democratic and Populist platforms.<sup>36</sup> No doubt these were honest convictions, but the statements sounded of political flattery, perhaps in the hope that by such compliments a few more Democrats might be induced to join the Republican ranks.

The campaign for Bryan was formally opened in Louisville on August 8. From the newspaper reports of the opening, it seems

---

<sup>34</sup> Loc. cit., July 19.

<sup>35</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, Aug. 2, 1896.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., Aug. 6.

that the Louisville Courier-Journal's report that there were few silver Democrats in Louisville was inaccurate. Enthusiasm ran high. "This is a contest between the new system of finance that has been forced upon the country by the Republican party and the old system that has always been advocated by the Democrats," was the opinion of a Covington silverite. One Democrat wondered how the distress they were going through with was the result of over-production, as the Republicans would have them believe, when "any man can tell you whether you have all you want to eat and all the clothing you want." A speaker from eastern Kentucky laid the distress on "the legislation on finances," and warned the people of the cities that if they trod upon the rural population, grass would grow in the city streets.<sup>37</sup>

The Silver Democracy in Kentucky was sadly in need of money, and to consider a solution to the problem a conference of twenty-five editors of the free silver newspapers of the state met in Louisville late in August. A representative was sent to Washington to try to get money from the national campaign fund, but discovered that the money used in Kentucky by the advocates of free coinage would have to be raised by the free silver supporters of that state.<sup>38</sup> But the Silver Democrats continued the fight, no whit abated by their lack of money, and reports of silver strength continued to come in. The leaders battled incessantly, one de-

---

<sup>37</sup> Loc. cit., Aug. 9.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., Aug. 20.

clarifying: "If my hands can lift the crown of thorns from labor's brow, they will not hesitate to do so; if my life can aid to prevent mankind from being crucified upon a cross of gold, I will give it."<sup>39</sup> Evidence indicated that in some districts of the state the gold power was weakening. The Carlisle Club of Dayton, Kentucky, organized in 1882, changed its name to the Andrew Jackson Club. Cleveland and Carlisle were repudiated by the organization and the Chicago candidates and platform indorsed.<sup>40</sup>

Democratic argument was answered by Republican counter-argument, and the arguments were often the same. As the gold papers announced the growth of gold sentiment and a weakening of the silver following, the free coinage advocates were as stout in their assertions that exactly the reverse was true. A writer from Perry County informed the Louisville Commercial that the farmers in that section were being "rapidly educated in the financial school, and are disposed to think twice before voting for 'Free silver.'" A well-to-do merchant and landowner of Meade County notified all his mortgagees that as soon as a free silver victory became apparent, he would foreclose: "otherwise he is perfectly satisfied to let the mortgages stand as they are." In western Kentucky the Republicans were certain of victory. "It is perfectly evident that the silver craze is wrecking the Democratic party...the Republicans will get a third

---

<sup>39</sup> Bronson in Lexington speech. The Louisville Commercial, Aug. 11, 1896.

<sup>40</sup> The Cincinnati Enquirer, Aug. 21, 1896.

more votes than they got last year."<sup>41</sup>

In the meantime, the Gold Democrats were losing no time. Although their candidate had not as yet been selected and their platform framed, they were hard at work to down the silver heresy. Bryan had started his tour, and the Watterson newspaper refuted or attempted to refute his every argument in favor of free coinage.

"It tickles the groundlings to tell them that they are as capable of deciding great questions as scholars and experts, and it appeals to the debtor class to point out that men with property object to having it taken away from them by debasing the currency. The Popocratic candidate has come to the conclusion that this course will win him more votes than to rely upon arguments which he must feel are inadequate and unworthy....it would be satisfactory to honest money Democrats if he would protract his story in the East until November."<sup>42</sup>

From Watterson's own pen came the goal of the Democrats in favor of the gold standard:

"Not to defeat Bryan because he is Bryan---not to elect McKinley because he is McKinley---is our purpose: but to plant deep in freedom's soil the hickory staff of freedom's flag; and, in the person of that leader who shall be named by the Indianapolis convention, to say---  
"Here I raise my Ebenezer."<sup>43</sup>

And to prove that all "real" Democrats were following the lead of the gold men of the party came the hundreds of interviews published in the Louisville Courier-Journal. One is characteristic. "I am a Democrat. I do not believe the Chicago platform was Democratic. Am not for free silver, and while I

---

41 The Louisville Commercial, Aug. 2, 1896.

42 The Louisville Courier-Journal, Aug. 24, 1896.

43 Ibid., Aug. 29.

will not say I will not vote for Bryan and Sewall, yet if a gold Democratic ticket is put in the field I will support it."<sup>44</sup> As a matter of fact, the author of that statement voted for McKinley in November,<sup>45</sup> and in view of the election returns, there must have been many other verbal supporters of the Gold Democracy who followed a like course.

But the Gold Democrats were having their troubles. When their county convention assembled at Lunfordville to elect delegates to the state convention, the "Popocrats" howled them down. At the same place Simon Boliver Buckner was howled down when he attempted to speak, but the General "smoked his time out."<sup>46</sup> The free silver press ridiculed the movement. Across the Ohio came the jibe that it would "be as funny as anything could be....It will be a dime museum of political freaks...."<sup>47</sup> But if the Gold Democrats encountering obstacles, they were at the same time alarming the free silver press. "In Kentucky there is a dissension that is serious," wrote an editor from Tennessee. "There is no reason to deny the facts. The convention of gold Democrats in Louisville shows this." Even if the Democrats and the Populists were to fuse, the Populist vote was small and the Republicans had

---

<sup>44</sup> Loc. cit., Aug. 10.

<sup>45</sup> This statement was made by the writer's uncle, Prof. J. H. Dickey, who stated to the writer that he voted the Republican ticket in 1896.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Charles Watkins, Lunfordville, Ky., Aug., 1935.

<sup>47</sup> The Cincinnati Enquirer, July 26, 1896.

won control of the state in 1895: therefore, a "hard and gallant" fight would have to be made "to overcome the defections of those who insist, wrongfully, that the Chicago convention turned the Democratic party over to the Populists."<sup>48</sup>

While Kentuckians were crusading in their own state and elsewhere, speakers from other states were stamping the Bluegrass Commonwealth. Early in September the Republicans had secured the services of such men as Stephen A. Douglas, Jr., Senator Shelby M. Cullom of Illinois, and Congressman John K. Thomas of that state. In view of the outside talent brought into Kentucky, when added to the state's gold forces already at work, Republicans were the more certain of victory at the polls. Gold men of other states had similar hopes. Chairman Sam J. Roberts of the Republican campaign committee believed that the "silver wave...is subsiding, and many states which have been vociferously claimed by the silver Democrats are sure to be carried by McKinley." Stephen A. Douglas, Jr., made a tour of the Bluegrass region of Kentucky, and in an interview gave high praise to the Louisville Courier-Journal for its crusade against free silver.<sup>49</sup> Senator Cullom, speaking in Louisville on September 21, discussed the money question from an historical standpoint and gave examples of nations that had failed to make a success of a free

---

<sup>48</sup> The Nashville American, Aug. 22, 1896.

<sup>49</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, Sept. 24, 1896.



From a workman came a letter to the desk of a Republican editor. "The people of Kentucky are not such nozzieheads as to believe that any man, party or country can or is going to give them free silver, free gold, free greenbacks or anything else free that is worth anything...." Were it possible to have money plentiful all the time, it would lose its purchasing power and become valueless. She had once lived in a free coinage country, and with "stacks of money" coffee sold at fifty and sixty cents a pound, eggs at thirty-five cents per dozen, sugar fifteen cents per pound, "an ordinary stick of furniture costs from \$25 to \$30 and \$35....The poor people were poor indeed. They had plenty of money, but it was such poor money...." How Mr. Bryan could advocate such a "flimsy policy, and how people can listen open-mouthed and gulp it down is more than an ordinary woman can understand...."<sup>51</sup>

The Indianapolis convention of the Gold Democrats having adjourned, that "fearless" group set to work on a state campaign to make sure that Kentucky did not go for Bryan. The Louisville Courier-Journal sounded the battle cry. "Everywhere we should show the seriousness and determination of our movement by... supporting stalwart Democrats, whether or not there appear any chance to elect them. We must not only fight, but we must fight

---

<sup>50</sup> Loc. cit., Sept. 22.

<sup>51</sup> The Louisville Commercial, Sept. 18, 1896.

at every step."<sup>52</sup> Silver was not the real issue of the campaign. "The confusion of voices, the unlimited talk, the clamor, crimination and redrimination, and all the multifarious concomitants of a political campaign," tended to obscure the real issue. The battle was one in which the silver forces were "stirring up... the owners of one species of property against another: of the farmer against the merchant or the banker; of the manufacturer against the working-man... in short, an Ishmael policy which seeks to raise the hand of every man against every other man, and to revert the country back to a state of savagry."<sup>53</sup> In the face of such dangers and in the light of her history, "Kentucky cannot afford to be led by an adventurous Populist."<sup>54</sup> Speaking at Frankfort on September 24, W. C. P. Breckinridge declared that "Kentucky's contributions to the political system of America have been extremely important," and therefore the honor bestowed by the National Democratic party upon Kentucky was merited by that state.<sup>55</sup>

General Buckner traveled on a speaking tour through the Bluegrass region, urging every citizen to "use his utmost endeavor to preserve the honor of his country."<sup>56</sup> At the same time Senator Lindsay was endeavoring to keep Louisville to the gold

---

52 The Louisville Courier-Journal, Sept. 9, 1896.

53 Ibid., Sept. 4.

54 John C. Lathan to Alexander Campbell, *ibid.*, Sept. 26.

55 The Louisville Courier-Journal, Sept. 25, 1896.

56 *Ibid.*, Sept. 19.

standard. The "ablest minds of the Democratic minds in Kentucky are in favor of sound finance and honest money, and we welcome their aid in the great battle to preserve the country from dishonor and the people from disaster."<sup>57</sup> At the ratification of Palmer and Luckner at Henderson, a Gold Democrat declared:

"When the doors closed on the Chicago convention...I knew I was politically orphaned and homeless." Such being the case, "there was but one thing for me to do, and that was to repudiate without hesitation in its entirety the action of that convention....The word 'fusion' is not to be found in the vocabulary of a true Democrat."<sup>58</sup>

The Gold Democrats had a hard road to travel. The Republicans gave some sympathy and commendation, but the silver men of their own party ridiculed their efforts and many times kept their speakers from being heard. At a debate between Silver and Gold Democrats at Owenton, Kentucky, the audience listened attentively to Blackburn, but when the gold speaker arose "the crowd would not allow him to open his mouth. It shouted, hissed, jeered and groaned by turns." After thirty minutes' of waiting, the gold men saw that their case was hopeless and left.<sup>59</sup> At the notification meeting of the National Democrats in Louisville the "Popocrats" stationed "braces of penny-whistlers at the street corners to grate for Bryan and Sewall."<sup>60</sup> Even Republican ire

---

57 *Ibid.*, Sept. 20.

58 *Ibid.*, Sept. 22.

59 *Ibid.*, Sept. 11.

60 *Ibid.*, Sept. 12.

was raised at such occurrences. Said the indignant editor of the Louisville Commercial:

"The occurrences at the Owen county fair yesterday were a disgrace to the Democratic Party, to Owen county, and to the state of Kentucky.

"The refusal to hear Dr. Aberton, and the way in which he was howled down by the mob, was as contemptible an exhibition of cowardice, as gross a denial of the right of free speech as ever disgraced a civilized community.

"A party that is afraid of debate, afraid to listen to reason, and that tries to suppress free speech, is too contemptible to retain popular support, and it is doomed to the overwhelming defeat it deserves...."<sup>61</sup>

One of the most noted instances of a refusal to hear a Gold Democrat and expression of open violence occurred late in October. John G. Carlisle had been invited to speak at his home town, Conington, by the sound-money advocates. In the midst of his speech he was interrupted by cries and jeers. "Rotten eggs, pieces of bricks, cigar stubs, and other missiles were thrown at him in the town in which, scarcely ten years before, his carriage had been drawn through the streets by hand."<sup>62</sup>

This and similar instances called forth much criticism. After the insult to Carlisle, a group of Louisville citizens, inviting him to speak in their city, wired him: "You will have such complete protection against insult and so grand an ovation... as will wipe out forever the attempt of last night to dishonor the fair name of Kentucky and to discredit her foremost citizen."<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> Sept. 11, 1890.

<sup>62</sup> Barnes' Carlisle, op. cit., p. 483.

<sup>63</sup> Telegram in the Mrs. William S. Carlisle collection. Quoted by Barnes, *ibid.*

Even before the Covington Journal had called attention to the tactic of the silverites: their refusal of the right of free speech in "howling down" Atherton at Oenton, Hardinsburg, and Willis at Salvisa. The silver men argued that such tactics would not win, that "free speech is going to be maintained in this country at all hazards." The enemies of Gold Democracy "assail its advocates with vituperation and violence, but they dare not to meet its votaries in the field of open and honorable debate. That is the secret of the attempt to burn down every man who stands up to advocate the traditional principles of Democracy."<sup>64</sup>

As the campaign progressed gold advocates increased their assertions that free coinage would be defeated. A correspondent for an eastern paper wrote that all indications in Kentucky pointed toward a Republican victory in the Bluegrass state. Early in September it was feared by the gold men that Bryan would get the electoral vote of Kentucky. "The dissatisfaction prevalent in both parties, the solidarity of the Populists, and the absence of organization and aggressiveness on the part of the sound-money Democrats combined to incite this apprehension...." But the registration of voters in the cities and towns showed the strength of the gold forces. In Louisville, a Democratic city, the registered Republicans outnumbered the registered Democrats by 1,800. The answer of the silver men pointed out

---

<sup>64</sup> Sept. 15, 1896.

that, even if the cities and towns went Republican, there were enough dissatisfied rural Republicans and working men who favored free coinage to more than offset the gains of the gold men in the urban sections.<sup>65</sup> In Lincoln County, the failure of the Populists and the Silver Democrats to get together and the refusal of the silver men of a fair discussion of their platform would cost them 150 votes.<sup>66</sup> All over the state the Republicans, "enthusiastic, perfectly organized and harmonious . . . acting as a unit," were meeting "a disheartened, disorganized, and rebellious mass of Popocrats, deserted and repudiated by the only element of the Democratic party which alone prevented it from sinking beneath the odium its history had created." And the silver campaign was nothing but "wind and bluster," the advocates of the white metal "afraid to bring the issue at stake before the people."<sup>67</sup>

The campaign of the silver forces was waged as zealously and with as much hope for success as that of their foes. Senator Teller, who had bolted the Republican national convention, toured the Ohio River border of Kentucky as far south as Louisville. From his hotel veranda at Ashland he addressed an audience, and made excursions from that city to many points on the C. & O. Railroad.<sup>68</sup> He met with no hearty reception at Louisville, and

---

<sup>65</sup> John A. Carson in the Philadelphia Public Ledger, quoted in the Louisville Courier-Journal, Sept. 15, 1896.

<sup>66</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, Sept. 17, 1896.

<sup>67</sup> The Louisville Commercial, Sept. 21, 1896.

<sup>68</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, Sept. 19, 1896.

upon his departure from that city a Republican editor remarked: "He has shaken Kentucky dust off his shoes and left the State, refusing to fill an engagement in its largest city: sternly refusing the urging of...Ash Caruth....the boss Senatorial silver bandit must feel serriful, and should be pitied in his tears."<sup>69</sup> Coin Harvey visited the state's metropolis on September 10, and addressed an audience mainly of laborers. At a basket picnic of the Bryan and Sewall Democratic Club of Shelby County John B. Thompson, the candidate for Congress, "roasted" the "political ghost dancers [Palmer and Buckner] masquerading as the McKinley Aid Society." A negro school teacher in the Lexington section who had resigned as secretary of a McKinley club to speak for free silver was assaulted and badly beaten by four of his colored brethren.<sup>70</sup>

In his tour of the country Bryan visited Kentucky, entering the state at Henderson, following the Ohio to Louisville, thence to Lexington and Maysville, and turning south passed through Somerset on his way to Knoxville.<sup>71</sup> Great crowds attended his speakings, and such was the interest in the issue involved that Bryan himself believed "the electoral vote of the State safe beyond peradventure."<sup>72</sup> At Henderson he was greeted by 15,000

---

<sup>69</sup> The Louisville Commercial, Sept. 24, 1896.

<sup>70</sup> The Cincinnati Enquirer, Sept. 11, 1896.

<sup>71</sup> William J. Bryan, The First Battle (Chicago, W. P. Conkey Co., 1896), pp. 445-446.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

people on September 14, and from that point until he reached Louisville he addressed 30,000 people. It was reported that Ollie James, who bore a striking resemblance to the Nebraskan, spoke at some of the villages through which the special train passed, and the audiences did not know the difference. "I do not come to the State of Kentucky to preach a new gospel," announced Bryan at Henderson. "I come to defend these principles which have been made Democratic since the time that Jefferson organized the Democratic party...." The silver men asked for the white metal the same privileges accorded to gold. "We want the free coinage of silver...." We want the unlimited coinage of silver."<sup>73</sup>

At Louisville Bryan spoke to 30,000 people, no doubt a conservative enough estimate since it appeared in a gold paper. He received a much more hearty reception than one viewing the election returns from Jefferson County would have supposed. He reiterated his and his followers' opposition to the gold standard.

"We are opposed to the gold standard because it makes money dear. Dear money makes cheap property, and cheap property makes hard times. Hard times make every producer of wealth taste of distress, and out of those who would be employed it makes idle men. And out of idle men it makes destitute men. And out of destitute men it makes criminal men. The gold standard means more of crime and a larger army to keep the criminal in subjugation."<sup>74</sup>

At Frankfort he struck a blow at the Gold Democrats. "I do not question the right of each man to make his vote represent

---

<sup>73</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, Sept. 15, 1896.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.



what he believes, but I do deny the right of a man to try and wrest the name of Democracy away from the Democrats of this country...."<sup>75</sup> At Lexington he answered the charge that both Gold Democrats and Republicans had flung at the silver men--- that they were anarchists. "In the olden times...complaint was answered with the lash, but now the just complaint of the toiling millions of the United States is answered by the charge that they are anarchists," and he protested "against the use of that name for a purpose which deprives it of all its terrors." From Lexington he made a hurried trip to Maysville, with brief stops at Carlisle and Paris.<sup>76</sup>

Bryan's visit to Kentucky made the silver forces of the state certain that he would carry the Bluegrass Commonwealth in November. The gold men discounted the idea, the Louisville newspapers as usual leading the refutation. Bryan's efforts to "arouse the worst passions of the people" was unparalleled in the history of this country. "No such infamous prostitution of ambition was ever made before by an American citizen."<sup>77</sup> "The boy wonder from the wild and woolly West...has honored this portion of God's vineyard with his presence, and tried while here to work his mesmeric spell on the good people residing hereabouts."<sup>78</sup> Bryan had come to Kentucky

---

<sup>75</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>76</sup> Bryan, op. cit., pp. 448-449.

<sup>77</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, Sept. 4, 1896.

<sup>78</sup> The Louisville Commercial, Sept. 17, 1896.

"...sending out his advance agents to declare that there would be a miraculous display of oratory before the community, which, from long experience with orators, is, perhaps, the best judge of eloquence of any people on earth. He has come; he has been weighed, and found wanting, and the sound-money half of the State of Kentucky is in a broad grin, and the silver half of Kentucky is weary and apologetic."<sup>79</sup>

As the campaign drew to a close the feeling rose to a white heat. Animosity grew up between friends, even families were divided on the issue. Hatred and bitterness that lasted for a lifetime grew out of the free silver struggle. And through it all both gold and silver crusaders predicted victory, met threat with threat, ridicule with ridicule, and accusation with accusation. Speaking in Atlanta on October 9, Tillman assured his audience that "Kentucky, which is called a doubtful State, is certainly and safely Democratic. I have been through the State and form that opinion from personal observation."<sup>80</sup> But the campaign funds of the Silver Democrats were dwindling, and on October 18 the state chairman, Sommers, sent out a circular to Federal officeholders asking for money. "You know, of course," it read, "that upon Bryan's election depends your continuing in office. Of course, if he is defeated, you will have to get out."<sup>81</sup>

On October 16 a group of Kentucky Republicans left Louisville for Canton to visit their presidential candidate. McKinley encouraged them in the fight they were making. "We take you at

---

<sup>79</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, Sept. 19, 1896.

<sup>80</sup> The Louisville Commercial, Oct. 19, 1896.

<sup>81</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, Oct. 19, 1896.

your words, men of Kentucky. He will be satisfied here in Ohio with 40,000 for McKinley. I do not believe...that you will reverse that splendid verdict for good money and national honor that you rendered a year ago...."<sup>82</sup> Governor Bradley had earlier predicted victory for his party in Kentucky, that the stories of large numbers of free silver Republicans "are almost entirely without foundation," and that "thousands of Democrats are going to vote for McKinley, and as many thousands of sound-money Democrats who will not vote for McKinley will vote for Palmer and Euckner."<sup>83</sup> The Republican state chairman, Sam J. Roberts, stated that the Republican gains in the eastern part of the state would be offset by the silver increase in the western end, therefore a McKinley victory would depend upon the vote cast in Louisville.<sup>84</sup>

The Republicans and Gold Democrats were naturally drawn together in the conflict, an alliance not particularly tasteful to the latter. To President Cleveland came the complaint that the "constitutional Democrats" were "compelled to give aid and support to the party that had made that ruin of the country possible."<sup>85</sup> And in Kentucky, where the Gold Democrats and even Republicans<sup>86</sup> were attacked verbally and otherwise, the alliance

---

<sup>82</sup> See the Louisville Courier-Journal and the Louisville Commercial, Oct. 17-19, 1896.

<sup>83</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, Oct. 5, 1896.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 10.

<sup>85</sup> Quoted in Barnes' Carlisle, *op. cit.*, p. 480.

<sup>86</sup> The Louisville Commercial, Oct. 18, 1896.

was close indeed. The tariff issue was forgotten, for the time at least, in the united efforts of sound-money men to loosen the hold of the silver dragon that threatened to strangle the state. W. C. P. Breckridge was nominated for Congress by the Republicans of the Seventh District.<sup>87</sup> R. G. Herr, financial editor of the New York Tribune, spoke in the state for the gold forces,<sup>88</sup> and the tireless pen of Henry Watterson poured forth its arguments for sound money and true Democracy. Watterson concluded a long editorial early in October:

"...invoking the faith of the fathers and the memories of the past, I entreat Democrats everywhere, but particularly the Democrats of Kentucky and the South, to withdraw themselves out from the body of this death, and to stand with me upon the sunlit heights of truth; truth for the sake of the honor of the country and the glory of the flag sought by these madmen to be desecrated in the sight of foreign nations; truth for the sake of the moral character and well-being of the people menaced by this rash essay in political debauchery and last, not least; truth for the sake of that constitutional party which though misled by reckless leaders and rent by factions, is still capable of good works for conservative government and popular liberty."<sup>89</sup>

Carlisle continued his tour of Kentucky despite the treatment he had received in his home city. On October 24 he spoke at Bowling Green, two days later he was at Owensboro, and on the twenty-eighth spoke at Louisville. Urging the people of his state to support the gold standard, he believed if every person voted according to "the honest convictions of his own judgment... there will be an overwhelming majority against the free coinage of silver."<sup>90</sup>

---

87 The Louisville Courier-Journal, Oct. 15, 1890.  
 88 Ibid., Oct. 22.  
 89 Ibid., Oct. 9.  
 90 Ibid., Oct. 29.

One of the most able speakers supporting the silver standard in Kentucky was Joseph C. S. Blackburn. So vehement were his words condemning gold, the Gold Democrats, and the Republicans, that he earned the intense dislike if not the hatred of the gold press of the state. And because of his recognized leadership of the silver forces of Kentucky, he was constantly held up to ridicule. Blackburn, "the leader of this crusade of frenzy and force," was given the blame for Carlisle's reception in Covington. It was he who had "frothed up and down the state denouncing with vile and venomous tongue every Democrat who dared refuse him personal allegiance," and who had "boasted that no sound-money Democrat should be heard in Kentucky" during the latter part of the campaign. An editorial in the Louisville Courier-Journal literally roasted the Versailles senator, and the orator's indiscreet choice of words was played upon in an attempt to discredit him in the eyes of Kentuckians.

"He [Blackburn] spoke two hours....He referred to the Indianapolis convention as a political abortion and the followers of the ticket as political outlaws, and said he had no time to waste on the McKinley side-show....He repeated the expression at Owenton Kentucky, that the people in hell were even better entitled to be called Christians than were the followers of Palmer and Buckner to be called Democrats; they knew they had no chance to elect their candidates and were purposely giving aid to the Republicans. He was sorry that Carlisle was egged at Covington; he was 'also sorry that for the second time he has insulted the manhood of Kentucky by his presence within her borders.' Carlisle was trying to hoodwink the people and catch suckers; the only remedy he suggested for the depressed condition of things is to vote against Bryan. He denied that Mr. Carlisle was equipped or fitted for the place he had; he had capacity only enough to sign bonds when put before him....The fight was one between plutocrats and Democrats; between bondholders and plowholders. A treacherous, bastard, Administration and a venal, purchasable press were trying to defeat the Chicago platform and ticket...."

The Republicans can neither buy nor steal the presidential election; the only chance is to corrupt the officers of the election, as they have money without limit, and will use it."<sup>91</sup>

Perhaps in no other national campaign was Kentucky rent by so much strife. Political disturbances were widespread. Two brothers, one a Silver Democrat and the other a Republican, started a fistic encounter that resulted in a general melee, when the former, in answer to the latter's query as to the meaning of the term, "16 to 1," replied that it meant "sixteen 'niggers' to one white man in the Republican party." So high ran the excitement and the feeling that "the only way you could keep out of a fight was to keep your mouth shut."<sup>92</sup> Forty years later the ill-feeling and prejudice that grew up as a result of the campaign has not entirely died away. Not only the voters, but women and children talked free silver and the gold standard. As one Gold Democrat put it, "even the boys talked for him [Bryan]; wherever a boy could get a soap box and say something about Bryan and free silver, people would listen to him, whether he had any sense or not."<sup>93</sup> One well-to-do uncle disinherited his nephew because the latter declared that "no gold-bug can sleep in my bed."<sup>94</sup>

Kentucky was the scene of a fierce battle in 1896, and a close battle, too, for out of a total of 445,861 votes cast, McKinley had a plurality of only 281.<sup>94</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> Loc. cit., Oct. 24.

<sup>92</sup> Interview with J. L. Spillman, Cave City, Ky., June, 1936

<sup>93</sup> Interview with W. L. Porter, Glasgow, Ky., Aug., 1934

<sup>94</sup> Interview with Mrs. R. R. Earbour, Cave City, Ky., June, 1936.

<sup>95</sup> The Courier-Journal Almanac for 1898, op. cit., p. 390.

## CHAPTER V

## THE GOLD STANDARD VICTORY

The sentiment expressed as a result of the campaign showed great relief on the part of the gold advocates and keen, even poignant disappointment of the silver supporters. The latter group explained their defeat on two grounds: the fraud practiced by their opponents and the failure of the common people to comprehend their opportunity. "I take off my hat to Mr. Hanna and the 'campaign of education,' and at the same time I divest myself of every vestige of respect I may hitherto have entertained for the 'masses,'" wrote a free silver man to Bryan. A Kentuckian sent him word, "I am heartily ashamed that the good old State of Kentucky should have gone astray, although the power of the enemy was against us."<sup>1</sup>

The Gold Democrats were as pleased as possible under the circumstances. "Thank God for the triumph, and thank God for the travail," wrote an editor. "For without the trial such a triumph could not have been; and until such a triumph was achieved by our people, we could never have been sure of one of the pillars of our governmental fabric...." But the heresy had come and gone. And it had come under favorable conditions: a nation-wide panic, a fearless leader who was "strong and attractive in his personality." Like a prairie fire it had swept the country, feeding on "the deadwood or sloth or the drift of failure and misfortune."

---

<sup>1</sup> James A. Larnes, John G. Carlisle: Financial Statesman (New York, Dodd, Mead and Co., 1931), pp. 485-487.

But it had passed, and with its passing "constitutional democracy stands forth stauncher and stabler than ever before.... Kentucky opened the fight against bad money and repudiation, and Kentucky leads in the victory won."<sup>2</sup> A cartoon showed crowds in Louisville exulting over Bryan's defeat. At the head of the cartoon was the caption,

"The Little Boy Orator, Long  
May He Sleep,  
Rocked in the Cradle of the  
Bryany Deep."<sup>3</sup>

From over the state came echoes of relief, joy, disappointment, explanation, and a hope for the future. A Shepherdsville editor declared that Bryan "deserved to be beaten, but he deserved success. McKinley was overwhelmingly elected, but his success is attributable to the demerits of his chief opponent, and not to any merit of his own." The Adairville Banner predicted Bryan's nomination in 1900, when he would again "be the star that directs the course of the downtrodden masses of this United States to a glorious victory for peace and prosperity." A mountain editor believed there would be neither so much weeping nor wailing "if McKinley and Bryan were both dead physically and politically." The emotions of one Silver Democrat were complex. "Our feelings at this time are similar to the big boy who stumped his toe and was being laughed at by his comrades when he replied: 'I am too big to cry, but it hurts too d---d bad to laugh.'" A Carrolton

---

<sup>2</sup> The Louisville Courier-Journal, Nov. 4, 1896.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



Democrat attributed the defeat to a lack of organization and a deficiency of funds, and the Lebanon Enterprise warned that the "battle will be fought over again in 1896." The editor of the Brooksville Review opened his eyes with the query, "Where the h--- are we at?," and a central Kentucky writer advised the losers to "Pay your election bets and get to work." The Cynthiana Democrat declared: "Speaking of the election, we have come to the conclusion that all men are liars, including ourselves." The Leitchfield Eagle asserted "It was the peoples' election, and the people don't believe in repudiation and anarchy." The Mt. Vernon Republican was proud that "The honest, patriotic American citizen can always be depended upon for doing the right thing at the right time."<sup>4</sup>

In Kentucky, "the field of many a hard-fought political battle," the people had never before "contended more earnestly or acrimoniously" than in the 1896 campaign, was the view of an eastern newspaper. The Dallas News remarked: "To yell for sound money meant death in some portions of Kentucky, but it is evident that all the good dollarites were not killed before they voted." To the Kansas City Star "The Republican victory in Kentucky simply emphasizes the humiliation of Missouri and Kansas."<sup>5</sup>

To McKinley was sent the following telegram from Chairman Roberts:

"Kentucky, for the first time in its history, has been

---

<sup>4</sup> These and other quotations appeared in the Louisville Courier-Journal, Nov. 9, 1896.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., Nov. 11-14.

carried by the Republicans in a presidential year. After four days of anxious watching and waiting the official returns tonight show you have carried the state by about 500 plurality. Four years ago Kentucky gave Cleveland 40,000 plurality and cast about 23,000 Populist votes. The fusion of Populists and Democrats this year was complete, and your victory means a reversal of 64,000 votes based on the figures of 1892.

"On behalf of Kentucky Republicans and thousands of patriotic Democrats who joined in our common cause, permit me to congratulate you on your great victory and the breaking of a time-honored record in Kentucky...."<sup>6</sup>

Roberts had wired Hanna that "fusion and fraud almost robbed us of victory."<sup>7</sup>

After its successful crusade, the Louisville Courier-Journal published its advice to the Democrats of Kentucky. So long as the party held to its traditional principles, the electorate of the state put it in power, but when, in 1895, it adopted the Populist tenets, it met with defeat. The Louisville newspaper did not believe that "Allen G. Myers, Blackburn, Hardin, Phea, Bronson, and Ollie James can, again, delude the Democrats from Democratic principles...." And in the face of the election figures, it was evident that the sound-money Democrats held the balance of power in the state. "In no other way can the wiping out of the 40,000 Democratic majority for Cleveland in 1892, and the overcoming of the 20,000 Populists, be accounted for."<sup>8</sup>

As Kentucky had, in 1895, sent its first Republican governor to the State House at Frankfort, so in 1896 the Bluegrass state for the first time in its history went Republican in a national

---

<sup>6</sup> Loc. cit., Nov. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., Nov. 7.

election. But the victory was won (and lost) by an almost infinitesimal margin. McKinley polled 48.92 per cent of the popular vote, Bryan 48.86 per cent, Palmer and Buckner 1.14 per cent, and the Prohibitionist candidate, Joshua Levering, 1.07 per cent.<sup>9</sup>

Kentucky Democracy had indeed suffered a reversal since the election of 1892. In that election Cleveland had won over Harrison and Weaver (the Prohibitionist, Lidwell, had polled less than 2 per cent of the total) by a plurality of 40,000. Weaver at that time had polled in excess of 20,000 votes. In light of these figures, the returns of 1896 show that the Democratic party of Kentucky had suffered a reversal of more than 60,000 votes since 1892.

Western Kentucky was the stronghold of the Populists, who in 1892 had polled 30 per cent, 17 per cent, 8 per cent, and 15 per cent of the popular vote in the First, Second, Third, and Fourth congressional districts, respectively. Although the four districts in the western part of the state went Democratic in 1896, the Republicans made gains over 1892, despite the fact that the Populists and Democrats were casting their votes for the same candidate for the presidency. In the First District they advanced 6 per cent, 8 per cent in the Second, 6 per cent in the Third, and 13 per cent in the Fourth. Dissatisfied Democrats as well as dissatisfied Populists more than offset the few silver Republicans who cast their votes for Bryan in western and west-central Ken-

---

<sup>9</sup> All of the figures and percentages quoted in this chapter, and those in the accompanying tables and maps, have been taken or compiled from the Courier-Journal Almanac for 1898, op. cit., pp. 388-390; 485-486.

TABLE I  
POPULAR VOTE FOR PRESIDENT IN 1892 BY KENTUCKY COUNTIES

County	(Democrat) Cleveland	(Republican) Harrison	(Prohibitionist) Bidwell	(Populist) Weaver
Adair	1,024	1,119	21	208
Allen	1,116	989	25	257
Anderson	1,142	749	58	20
Ballard	910	277	13	221
Barren	2,061	1,369	53	524
Bath	1,443	1,148	34	51
Bell	693	1,019	15	20
Boone	2,609	545	32	10
Bourbon	2,216	1,657	79	15
Boyd	1,537	1,526	36	25
Boyle	1,249	1,144	52	48
Bracken	1,472	996	62	111
Breathitt	977	566	5	6
Breckinridge	1,497	1,167	32	576
Bullitt	862	398	16	143
Butler	715	1,327	43	330
Caldwell	960	1,126	58	281
Calloway	1,581	379	33	439
Campbell	4,302	3,959	97	112
Carlisle	811	223	36	348
Carroll	1,574	542	73	3
Carter	983	1,319	27	61
Casey	1,039	1,223	77	20
Christian	2,324	2,868	106	510
Clark	1,958	1,599	37	33
Clay	401	860	17	60
Clinton	250	589	7	83
Crittenden	1,118	1,212	49	145
Cumberland	584	880	19	8
Daviess	3,431	1,638	73	1602
Edmonson	491	618	19	119
Elliott	1,079	453	2	36
Estill	690	752	16	177
Fayette	3,753	2,431	251	101
Fleming	1,787	1,567	98	91
Floyd	1,141	634	14	42
Franklin	2,186	1,231	85	163
Fulton	1,157	383	33	74
Gallatin	737	237	20	5
Garrard	1,126	1,155	47	10
Grant	1,591	1,034	66	76
Graves	2,563	1,028	56	832
Grayson	1,251	1,173	27	703-

TABLE I (CONT'D)  
 POPULAR VOTE FOR PRESIDENT IN 1892 BY KENTUCKY COUNTIES

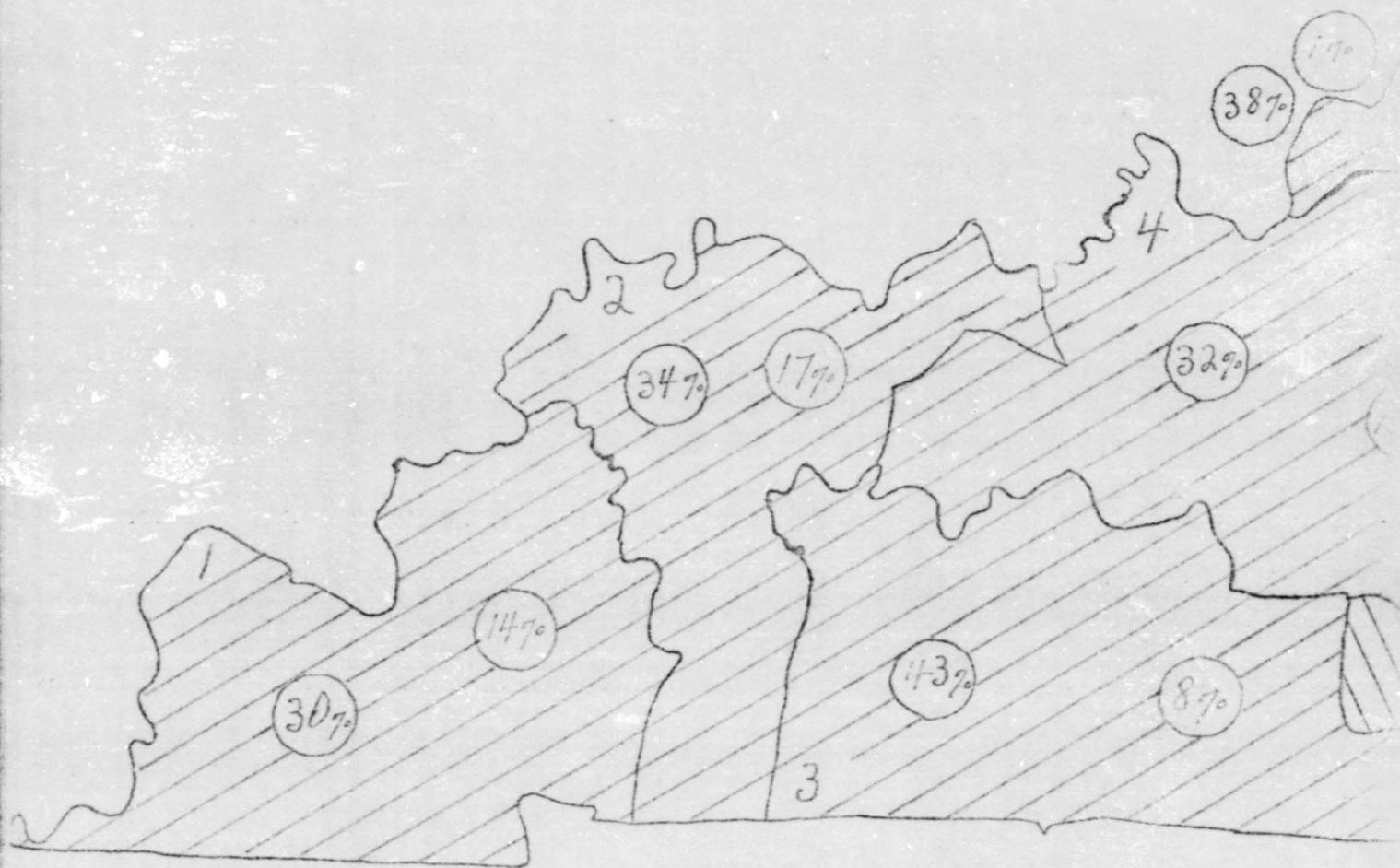
County	(Democrat) Cleveland	(Republican) Harrison	(Prohibitionist) Bidwell	(Populist) Weaver
Green	585	739	15	535
Greenup	1,109	1,143	22	16
Hancock	786	607	14	318
Hardin	1,909	1,075	41	490
Harlan	231	674	11	34
Harrison	2,172	1,273	208	11
Hart	1,414	1,034	40	509
Henderson	2,278	1,746	86	971
Henry	1,793	1,019	106	160
Hickman	1,155	460	50	227
Hopkins	2,014	1,726	85	555
Jackson	188	868	7	8
Jefferson	20,915	12,454	551	358
Jessamine	1,042	922	177	15
Johnson	785	1,340	25	72
Kenton	5,686	3,494	210	155
Knott	566	236	1	0
Knox	668	1,305	18	87
Larue	797	568	47	285
Laurel	832	1,080	32	73
Lawrence	1,724	1,445	20	33
Lee	507	565	3	12
Leslie	76	528	1	1
Letcher	274	513	1	2
Lewis	1,044	1,531	43	251
Lincoln	1,473	1,175	195	42
Livingston	928	550	17	175
Logan	2,191	1,763	41	592
Lyon	727	499	30	131
Madison	2,565	2,312	118	30
Magoffin	660	844	10	73
Marion	1,451	954	30	108
Marshall	1,081	360	23	537
Martin	229	475	6	7
Mason	2,686	2,001	65	46
McCracken	1,735	1,125	100	366
McLean	869	534	36	407
Meade	1,171	416	16	189
Menifee	475	258	13	62
Mercer	1,562	1,185	139	76
Metcalf	495	756	11	382
Monroe	631	1,125	11	256
Montgomery	1,507	1,041	50	18
Morgan	1,125	620	5	279
Muhlenberg	1,421	1,688	37	243




TABLE I (CONT'D)  
POPULAR VOTE FOR PRESIDENT IN 1892 BY KENTUCKY COUNTIES

County	(Democrat) Cleveland	(Republican) Harrison	(Prohibitionist) Eidwell	(Populist) Weaver
Nelson	1,858	1,025	24	151
Nicholas	1,312	808	225	45
Ohio	1,664	1,581	44	973
Oldham	783	365	40	62
Owen	2,579	748	184	177
Owsley	229	660	1	19
Pendleton	1,419	1,014	79	658
Perry	346	500	2	8
Pike	1,534	1,233	21	7
Powell	580	446	6	30
Pulaski	1,752	2,457	130	239
Robertson	567	438	35	17
Rockcastle	684	966	54	6
Rowan	562	564	15	31
Russell	646	765	9	52
Scott	1,999	1,201	172	9
Shelby	2,122	1,169	40	142
Simpson	1,166	725	47	171
Spencer	848	316	20	58
Taylor	653	630	26	326
Todd	1,588	1,406	59	134
Trigg	1,088	814	24	396
Trimble	1,149	264	42	18
Union	2,275	777	28	318
Warren	2,867	2,053	133	252
Washington	1,193	1,035	25	238
Wayne	931	986	20	105
Webster	1,278	839	24	824
Whitley	619	1,734	37	27
Wolfe	658	386	20	82
Woodford	1,289	1,097	67	30
Totals	175,461	135,441	6,442	23,500
Plurality	40,020			
Per cent	51.48	39.44	1.89	6.89
Total vote cast:	340,844			

MAP I

POPULAR VOTE FOR PRESIDENT IN THE ELECTION OF 1892  
BY CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS



Cleveland   
Harrison   
Weaver 

Congressional districts are numbered in red.

Minorities for each district are expressed in terms of per cent within the circles.

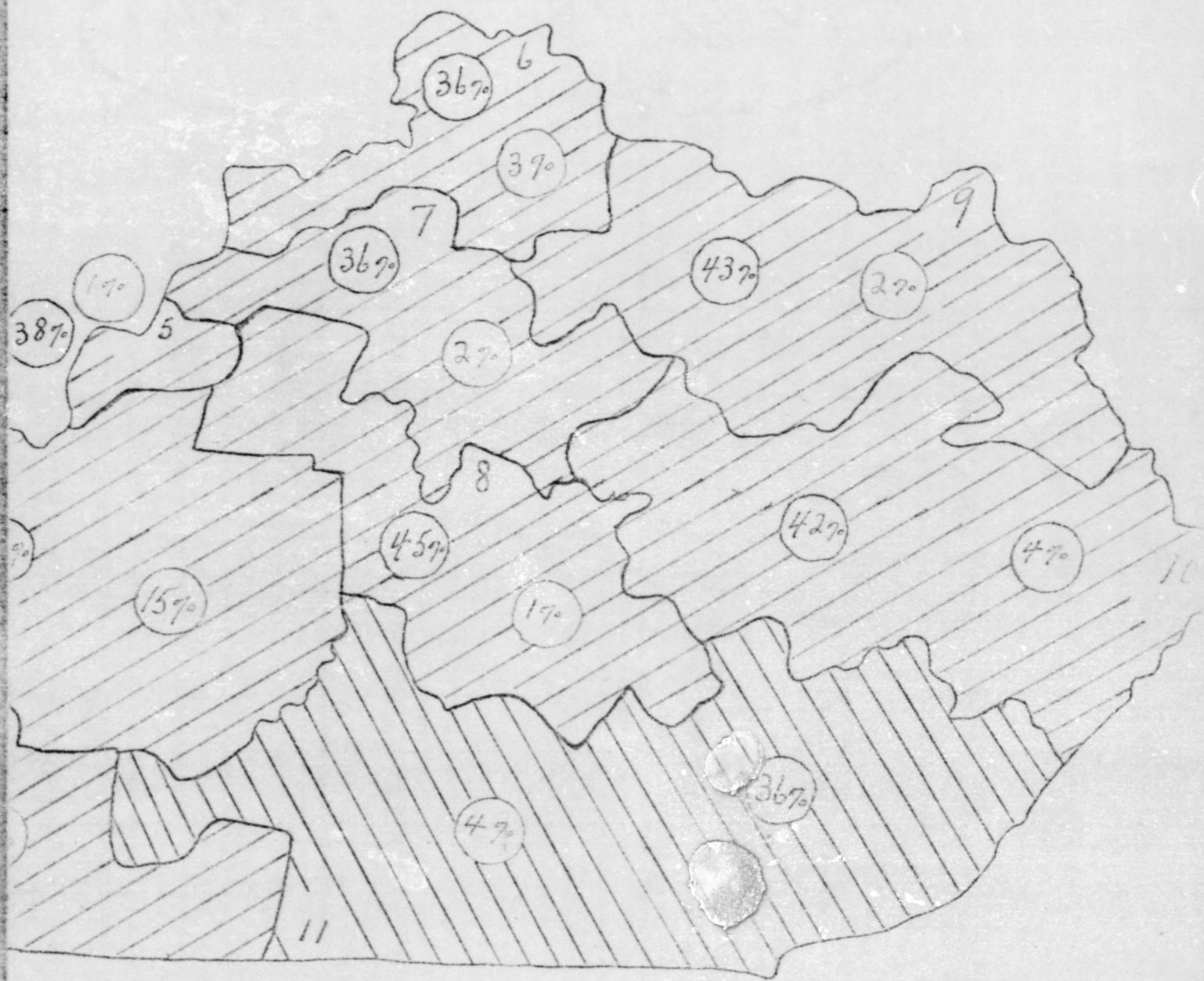




TABLE II  
POPULAR VOTE FOR GOVERNOR IN THE KENTUCKY ELECTION OF 1895

BY COUNTIES

County	(Republican) Bradley	(Democrat) Hardin	(Populist) Pettit	(Prohibitionist) Demaree
Adair	1,382	1,051	66	19
Allen	1,440	1,226	83	32
Anderson	994	1,245	16	26
Ballard	304	722	285	14
Barren	1,780	2,290	245	40
Bath	1,403	1,492	18	31
Bell	1,185	459	11	3
Boone	595	1,976	1	32
Bourbon	2,030	2,309	5	46
Boyd	1,806	1,313	7	49
Boyle	1,423	1,266	43	22
Bracken	1,083	1,255	61	82
Breathitt	733	985	0	17
Dreckinridge	1,902	1,715	364	39
Bullitt	520	732	41	14
Butler	1,612	713	121	22
Caldwell	1,227	797	241	27
Calloway	474	1,530	575	15
Campbell	4,729	3,380	45	47
Carlisle	275	610	426	34
Carroll	603	1,471	8	37
Carter	1,974	1,384	13	54
Casey	1,311	930	5	40
Christian	3,637	2,415	200	77
Clark	1,662	1,926	15	23
Clay	1,373	547	10	11
Clinton	791	211	91	2
Crittenden	1,323	887	157	87
Cumberland	879	417	9	14
Daviess	2,068	2,638	1,227	136
Edmonson	933	717	20	14
Elliott	548	1,022	2	7
Estill	1,055	632	47	16
Fayette	3,138	3,379	43	50
Fleming	1,849	1,662	62	84
Floyd	913	1,215	6	8
Franklin	1,716	2,188	157	27
Fulton	207	779	153	53
Gallatin	290	713	3	7
Garrard	1,471	1,114	9	56
Grant	1,264	1,661	20	38
Graves	1,227	2,264	736	31
Grayson	1,794	1,414	449	19

TABLE II (CONT'D)  
 POPULAR VOIE FOR GOVERNOR IN THE KENTUCKY ELECTION OF 1895

BY COUNTIES

County	(Republican) Bradley	(Democrat) Hardin	(Populist) Pettit	(Prohibitionist) Demaree
Green	1,153	888	144	29
Greenup	1,538	1,057	6	51
Hancock	828	635	251	16
Hardin	1,325	2,090	334	37
Harlan	917	186	1	5
Harrison	1,541	2,225	6	131
Hart	1,535	1,377	489	19
Henderson	1,820	1,473	859	56
Henry	1,315	1,858	142	27
Hickman	291	767	427	43
Hopkins	1,917	1,903	464	71
Jackson	1,320	177	5	4
Jefferson	19,529	15,700	251	109
Jessamine	1,196	1,240	7	81
Johnson	1,570	818	11	22
Kenton	4,875	5,528	66	73
Knott	320	664	1	0
Knox	1,850	581	16	16
Larue	830	1,102	81	27
Laurel	1,495	637	59	24
Lawrence	1,936	1,800	10	15
Lee	736	555	4	17
Leslie	786	70	3	2
Letcher	593	244	0	3
Lewis	2,000	1,026	143	78
Lincoln	1,620	1,522	9	133
Livingston	566	720	201	12
Logan	2,244	2,036	641	43
Lyon	584	689	121	23
Madison	2,591	2,461	24	107
Magoffin	941	623	3	11
Marion	1,324	1,651	48	7
Marshall	414	811	675	17
Martin	568	137	0	1
Mason	2,110	2,211	40	69
McCracken	1,640	1,462	475	49
McLean	790	693	386	24
Meade	608	929	307	12
Menifee	313	504	25	5
Mercer	1,378	1,460	131	40
Metcalf	912	614	176	11
Monroe	1,240	587	112	9
Montgomery	1,277	1,513	13	39
Morgan	837	1,123	81	7

TABLE II (CONT'D)  
POPULAR VOTE FOR GOVERNOR IN THE KENTUCKY ELECTION OF 1895

BY COUNTIES

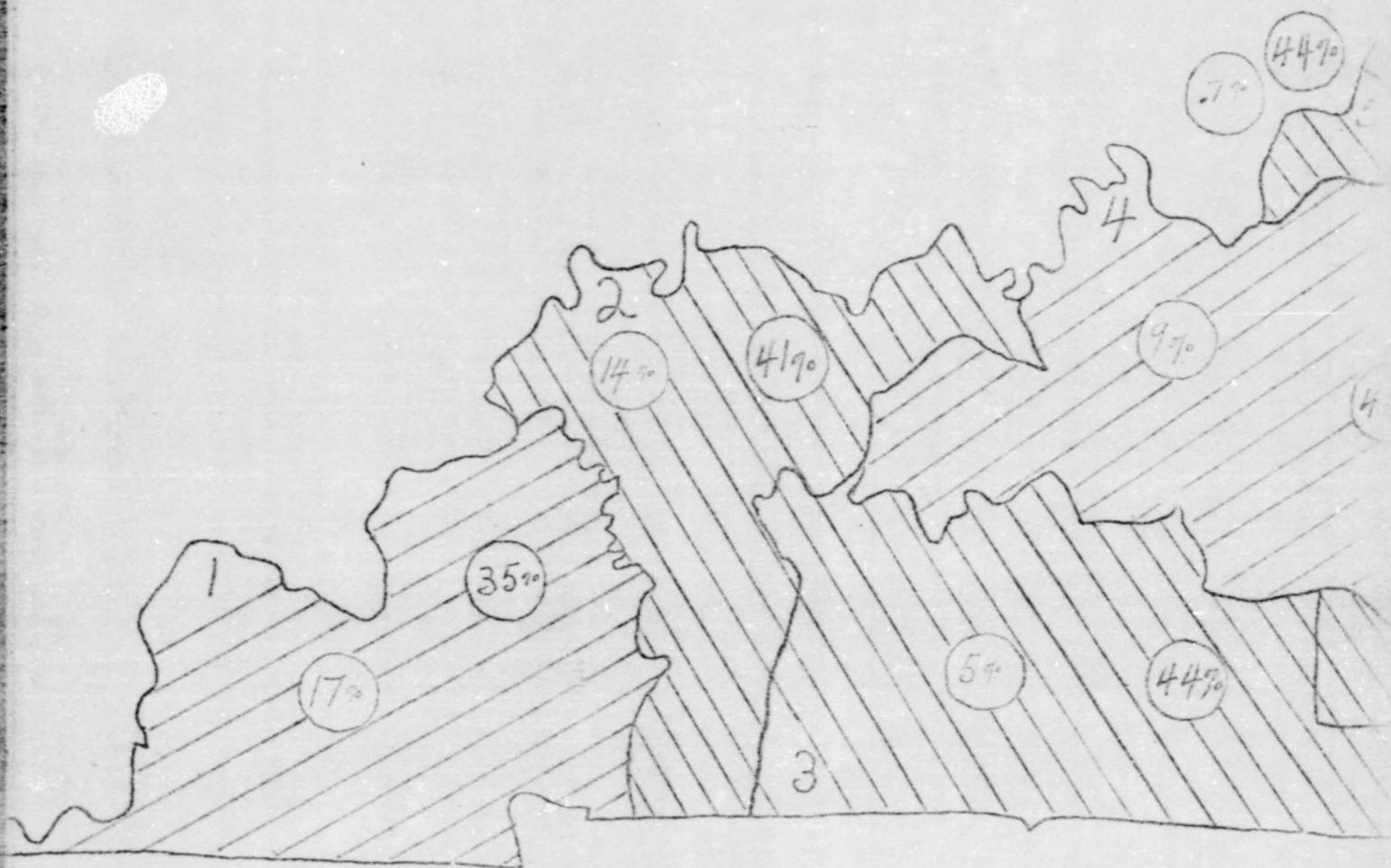
County	(Republican) Bradley	(Democrat) Hardin	(Populist) Pettit	(Prohibitionist) Demaree
Muhlenberg	1,817	1,138	264	39
Nelson	1,145	1,945	101	26
Nicholas	1,069	1,365	44	135
Ohio	2,154	1,870	626	73
Oldham	415	826	25	15
Owen	1,010	2,289	98	149
Owsley	814	199	5	4
Pendleton	1,290	1,293	210	40
Perry	640	318	5	9
Pike	1,977	1,754	6	19
Powell	582	618	5	11
Pulaski	2,949	1,259	161	42
Robertson	380	491	10	35
Rockcastle	1,292	720	4	34
Rowan	604	444	7	18
Russell	738	425	35	17
Scott	1,554	2,105	16	83
Shelby	1,464	2,058	181	32
Simpson	854	1,122	81	25
Spencer	452	931	17	16
Taylor	846	732	229	15
Todd	1,656	1,515	41	25
Trigg	1,126	1,132	273	13
Trimble	285	921	22	16
Union	818	1,839	213	17
Warren	2,560	3,272	104	35
Whshington	1,332	1,264	122	17
Wayne	1,070	927	40	10
Webster	1,121	942	486	18
Whitley	2,511	562	78	22
Wolfe	478	630	42	10
Woodford	1,257	1,559	16	33
Totals	172,436	163,524	16,911	4,186
Plurality	8,912			
Per cent	48.29	45.79	4.73	.12
Total vote cast	357,057			


TABLE III  
POPULAR VOTE FOR PRESIDENT IN 1896 BY KENTUCKY COUNTIES

Population of County	County	McKinley	Bryan	Palmer	Levering
13,721	Adair	1,612	1,345	40	22
13,692	Allen	1,595	1,460	13	32
10,610	Anderson	1,151	1,286	45	17
8,390	Ballard	495	1,670	9	35
21,490	Barren	2,092	3,006	43	56
12,813	Bath	1,579	1,791	23	41
10,312	Bell	1,900	615	21	13
12,246	Boone	781	2,317	13	25
16,976	Bourbon	2,578	2,210	58	40
14,033	Boyd	2,087	1,241	35	44
12,948	Boyle	1,687	1,206	71	35
12,369	Bracken	1,226	1,762	14	47
8,705	Breathitt	877	1,275	5	12
18,976	Breckinridge	2,276	2,202	43	51
8,291	Bullitt	799	1,168	55	26
13,956	Butler	1,898	1,139	16	39
13,186	Caldwell	1,544	1,530	24	11
14,675	Calloway	561	2,572	9	85
44,208	Campbell	5,821	4,304	36	102
7,612	Carlisle	390	1,624	16	58
9,266	Carroll	685	1,778	26	30
17,204	Carter	2,440	1,665	39	30
11,848	Casey	1,643	1,061	26	33
34,118	Christian	4,525	3,145	66	83
15,434	Clark	2,032	2,055	98	33
12,447	Clay	1,725	707	7	26
7,947	Clinton	1,004	360	11	11
13,119	Crittenden	1,574	1,576	9	15
8,452	Cumberland	1,154	621	12	9
33,120	Daviess	3,105	4,952	122	140
8,005	Edmonson	952	863	8	12
9,214	Elliott	577	1,294	3	14
10,836	Estill	963	798	9	4
35,698	Fayette	5,143	3,938	89	40
16,078	Fleming	1,935	2,013	51	35
11,256	Floyd	1,057	1,410	5	15
21,267	Franklin	2,175	2,464	84	28
10,903	Fulton	603	1,414	47	37
4,611	Gallatin	396	933	8	8
11,138	Garrard	1,595	1,171	45	57
12,671	Grant	1,417	1,852	35	37
28,534	Graves	1,628	4,699	53	94
18,688	Grayson	1,874	2,002	31	19
11,463	Green	1,389	1,142	17	7


LAP II

POPULAR VOTE IN THE KENTUCKY GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION  
OF 1895 BY CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS



W. O. Bradley (Republican) 

P. Watt Hardin (Democrat) 

Thomas Pettit (Populist) 

Congressional districts are numbered in red.

Minorities for each district are expressed in terms of per cent within the circles.

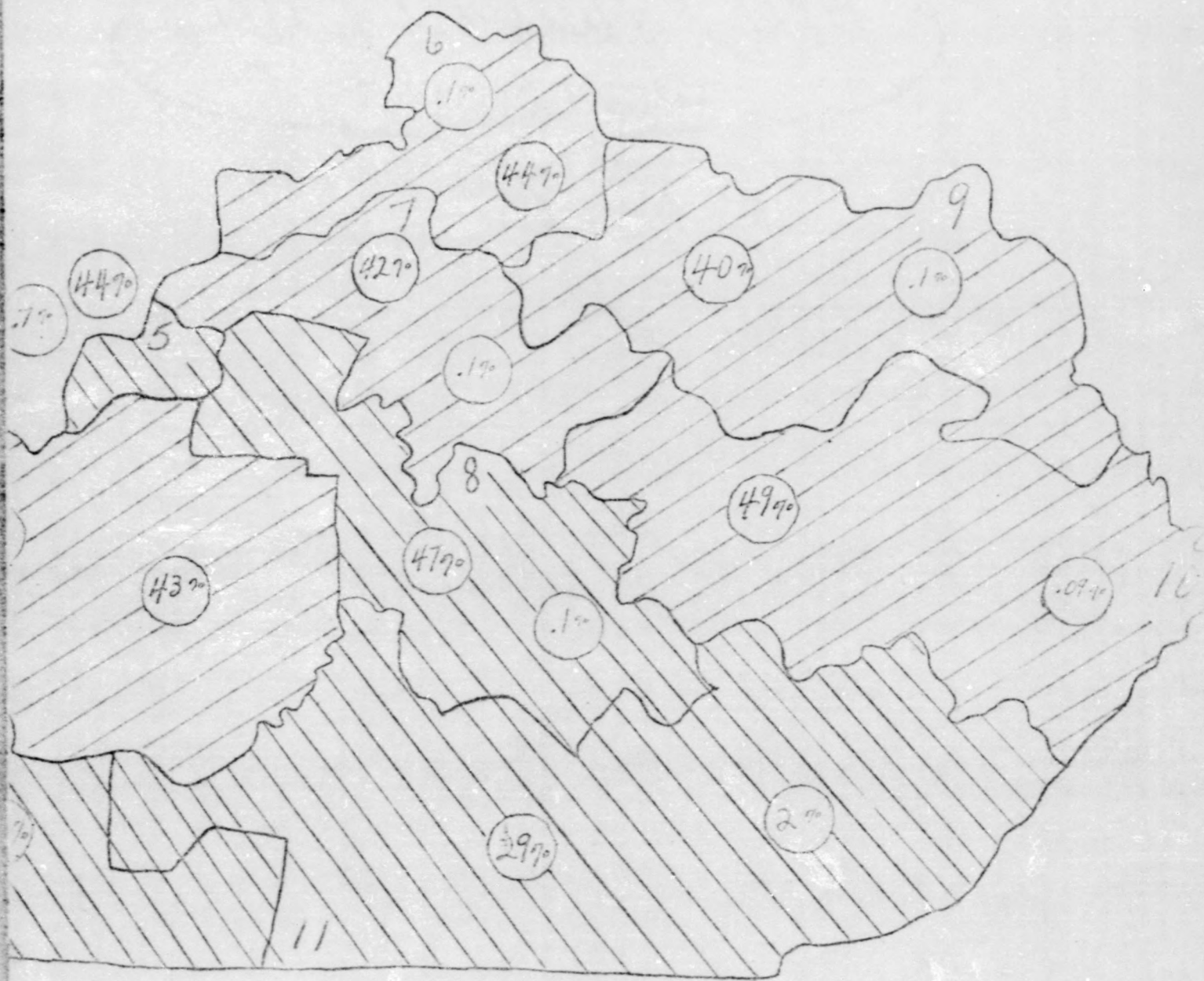


TABLE III (CONT'D)  
 POPULAR VOTE FOR PRESIDENT IN 1896 BY KENTUCKY COUNTIES

Population of County	County	McKinley	Bryan	Palmer	Leaving
11,911	Greenup	1,802	1,369	15	52
9,214	Hancock	1,026	1,080	13	15
21,304	Hardin	1,885	2,848	58	82
6,197	Harlan	1,189	216	11	14
16,914	Harrison	1,705	2,690	61	71
16,439	Hart	1,999	1,951	62	19
29,536	Henderson	2,750	4,000	69	44
14,164	Henry	1,711	2,115	92	39
11,637	Hickman	727	1,298	26	59
23,505	Hopkins	2,490	3,470	54	38
8,261	Jackson	1,517	189	15	7
188,598	Jefferson	29,107	16,707	1078	380
11,248	Jessamine	1,343	1,428	48	67
11,027	Johnson	1,794	975	12	19
54,161	Kenton	6,165	7,008	41	108
5,438	Knott	404	795	3	4
13,762	Knox	2,237	833	15	25
9,433	Larue	955	1,321	10	13
13,747	Laurel	1,921	909	41	8
17,702	Lawrence	1,966	1,820	22	18
6,205	Lee	881	587	12	11
3,964	Leslie	913	81	3	2
6,920	Letcher	813	388	11	9
14,803	Lewis	2,348	1,433	20	30
15,962	Lincoln	1,833	1,628	61	124
9,474	Livingston	872	1,346	48	4
23,812	Logan	2,484	3,266	91	61
7,628	Lyon	763	969	24	25
24,348	Madison	3,100	2,756	74	67
9,196	Magoffin	1,148	833	4	13
15,648	Marion	1,575	1,873	42	8
11,287	Marshall	568	1,926	16	47
4,209	Martin	730	227	4	3
20,773	Mason	2,575	2,698	32	42
21,051	McCracken	2,284	2,955	31	89
9,887	McLean	935	1,389	24	50
9,484	Meade	781	1,519	30	12
4,666	Menifee	359	636	4	10
15,034	Mercer	1,765	1,745	91	51
9,871	Metcalf	1,153	908	33	33
10,989	Monroe	1,613	794	18	24
12,367	Montgomery	1,484	1,624	35	17
11,249	Morgan	910	1,642	11	50
17,955	Muhlenberg	2,217	1,700	49	25
16,417	Nelson	1,446	2,223	46	53

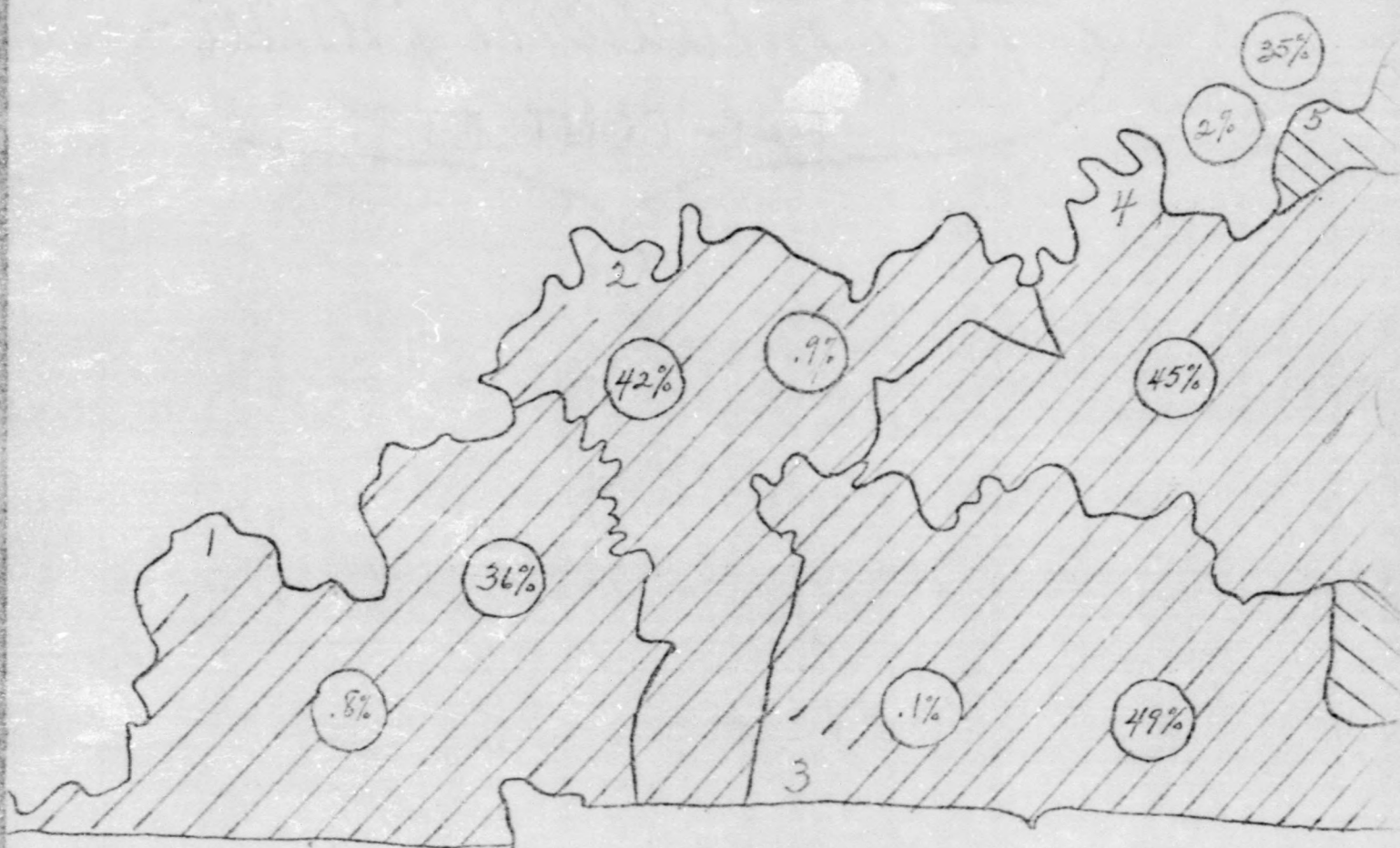
TABLE III. (CONT'D)  
 POPULAR VOIE FOR PRESIDENT IN 1896 BY KENTUCKY COUNTIES




Population of County	County	McKinley	Bryan	Palmer	Levering
10,764	Nicholas	1,159	1,878	19	0
22,946	Ohio	2,653	2,679	58	119
6,754	Oldham	691	946	46	24
17,676	Owen	1,086	3,373	38	40
5,975	Owsley	983	197	12	5
16,346	Pendleton	1,585	1,939	26	43
6,331	Perry	824	340	27	6
17,378	Pike	2,141	1,900	13	19
4,698	Powell	625	688	0	0
25,731	Pulaski	3,668	2,099	58	46
4,684	Robertson	449	666	3	19
9,841	Rockcastle	1,480	846	16	21
6,129	Rowan	767	650	10	20
8,136	Russell	1,038	612	37	16
16,546	Scott	2,111	2,237	61	72
16,521	Shelby	2,029	2,524	122	52
10,878	Simpson	888	1,531	31	63
6,760	Spencer	596	960	21	15
9,353	Taylor	1,050	1,166	24	13
16,814	Todd	1,793	1,707	72	68
13,902	Trigg	1,295	1,633	28	25
7,140	Trimble	418	1,267	32	30
18,229	Union	1,249	3,183	43	58
30,158	Warren	2,866	3,716	97	161
13,622	Washington	1,573	1,536	38	30
12,852	Wayne	1,413	1,190	17	24
17,196	Webster	1,484	2,471	21	18
17,590	Whitley	3,130	862	29	43
7,180	Wolfe	583	981	12	13
12,380	Woodford	1,665	1,546	32	45
Total		218,171	217,890	5,019	4,781
Plurality		281			
Per Cent		48.92	48.86	1.14	1.07
Total votes cast	445,861				



MAP III

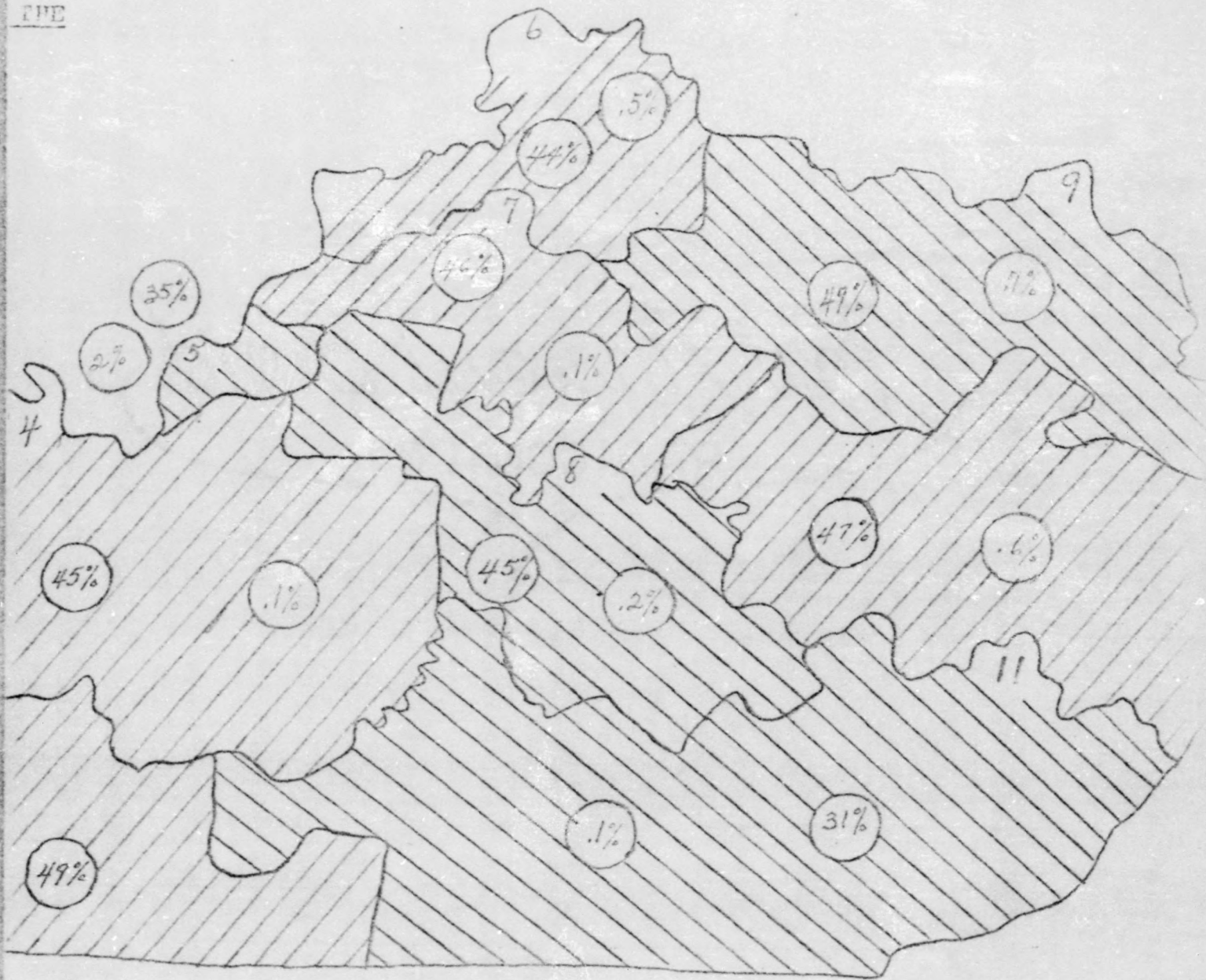
POPULAR VOTE FOR PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENT IN THE  
ELECTION OF 1896 BY CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS



- Bryan and Sewall 
- Ackinley and Hobart 
- Palmer and Buckner 

Congressional districts are numbered in red.

Minorities for each district are expressed in terms  
of per cent within the circles.



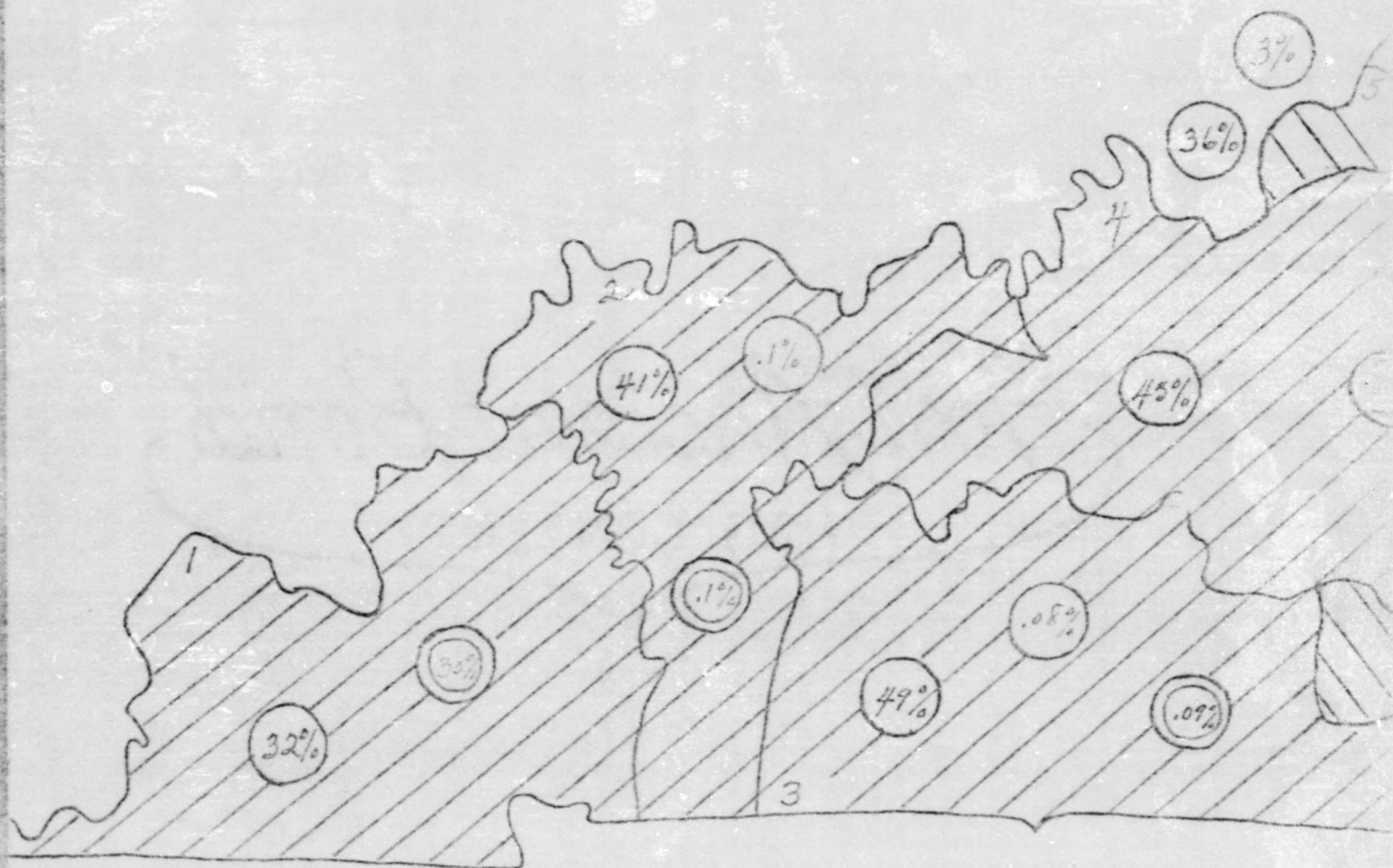
tucky. Populism in eastern and central Kentucky was weak both in 1892 and in 1896. In the former election they polled from 1 per cent of the total vote in their districts in the Fifth and Eighth to 4 per cent in the Tenth and Eleventh. In the latter fight, even if they voted the Democratic ticket, their strength was not sufficient to offset Republican gains.

In 1896 the Republicans of Kentucky made gains in every congressional district, and carried four out of the eleven for McKinley as well as sending four representatives to Washington. In 1892 the mountain Eleventh was the only Republican region. In 1896 they added the Fifth, the Eighth, and the Ninth. However, the margin was close in the last two mentioned, the Democrats polling 46 per cent in the former and 49 per cent in the latter. The same districts that went for McKinley in 1896 also voted Republican in the congressional election of that year. Because of fusion with the Democrats, the Populists had only three candidates running for Congress. In the Second and Fourth districts they secured hardly a showing, but in the First they polled 30 per cent of the total, lacking only 2 per cent equaling the Republican vote in that district. In the Third District an "anti-Free Silver" candidate for Congress polled less than 1 per cent of the total vote, but in the Eleventh an "Independent" received 11 per cent.

A comparison of the gubernatorial race of 1895 with the presidential and congressional elections of 1896 show that the Republicans in the former struggle invaded western Kentucky and carried two districts even in that Democratic, and at that time Populist territory. They carried not only the Fifth, Eighth,

MAP IV

THE CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION OF 1896 BY CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS



Democratic



Republican



Gold Democratic



Populist



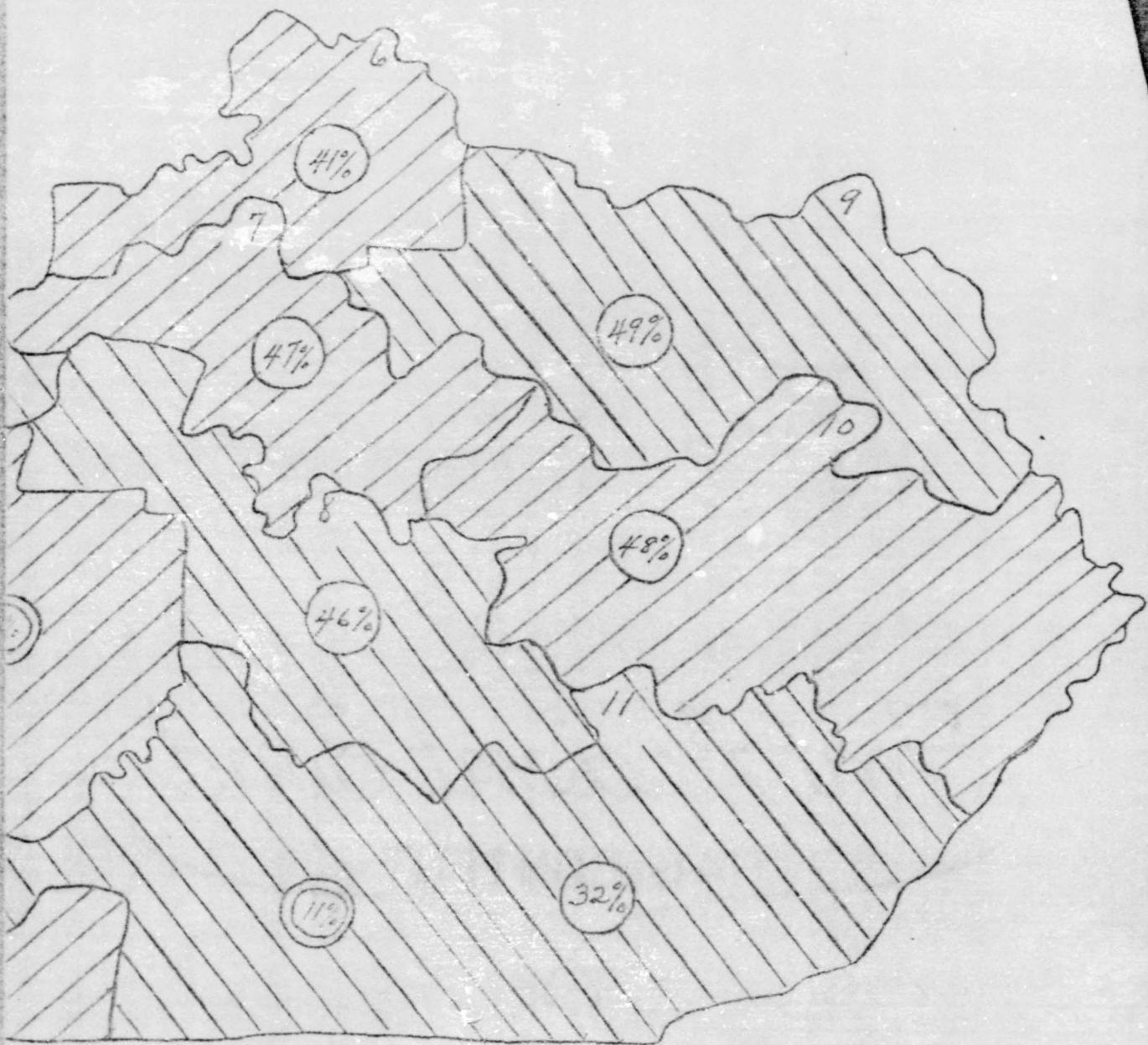
Anti-Free Silver



Independent



Congressional districts are numbered in red. Minorities for the circles.



each districts are expressed in terms of per cent within

and Eleventh districts in central and eastern Kentucky for William O. Bradley, but also the Second and Third. Although the money question in 1895 was the paramount issue, the lack of harmony in Democratic ranks and their factional fights at Frankfort during the years preceding must have had some bearing on the outcome. This conclusion is substantiated by the fact that the Second and Third districts, traditionally Democratic, voted for Bradley in 1895, but in the national campaign the year following marked the ballots for Bryan and sent Democratic representatives to Washington. In 1895 Kentucky Republicans carried five of the eleven districts. A year later they lost their two western supporters, but gained the Ninth in the northeastern part of the state.

Although the Gold Democrats polled only 5,019 votes in the state, that fact is quite significant, since whether or not Kentucky went for McKinley hinged on less than 300 ballots. Louisville and Jefferson County gave Palmer and Buckner 1,078 votes, which was two per cent of the total vote cast by the Fifth District. The Gold Democratic candidate for Congress from that district, J. B. Baskin, made a slightly better showing, polling 1,638 votes, or 3 per cent of the total. In the other ten districts, however, Gold Democratic votes were practically negligible, ranging from .1 per cent in each of the Third, Fourth, Seventh, and Eleventh districts to .9 per cent in the Second. Powell County registered no votes at all for the third ticket, and Daviess and Shelby were the only counties outside of Jefferson showing the Civil War veterans more than 100 votes.

That the elections of 1896 were too close for the political comfort of all parties concerned is evidenced by the election returns. In the Third District the Democratic candidate for Congress, John S. Phea, won over his Republican opponent, W. G. Hunter, by 346 votes. In Preckinridge County McKinley received seventy-six more votes than Bryan and only fourteen more in Caldwell County. Clark County gave Bryan thirteen more votes than it did McKinley, and in Crittenden County the Nebraskan got two more ballots than McKinley. In Jefferson County there were no such margins. In 1892 that county gave Cleveland more than 7,000 plurality, but in 1896 McKinley received nearly 13,000 plurality. Had the percentage of increase of Republican strength in the Fifth District been no more than the percentage of increase of that party's gains in the other districts, Kentucky would undoubtedly have gone Democratic in the 1896 election.

The victory of the Republican party was so close and the factors possibly responsible for it are so numerous that it cannot be definitely stated what particular thing lost the state for the Democrats. The crusade of the Louisville Courier-Journal for a third ticket and the intensive part it took in the campaign may easily account for the victory of the gold standard in Kentucky. And in view of the 5,019 votes for the Gold Democratic ticket in the state, it seems a safe assertion to say that a less vigorous policy on the part of the Louisville newspaper might have lost for McKinley more than 281 ballots. The insult slapped at one of Kentucky's most noted citizens, John G. Carlisle, may have turned away in disgust from the silver forces enough votes

to cause its defeat. The Populists of Kentucky, too, were not satisfied with the presidential candidate of their party, and since they polled 23,500 votes for Weaver in 1892, it is more than likely that 300 of their number voted for McKinley. The Republicans of the First District showed a gain of 6 per cent in 1896 over 1892, and that gain must have come from Democrats and Populists, with a sprinkling, perhaps, of Prohibitionists. In that district the Populist party was stronger for its candidate for Congress in 1896 than it was for Weaver in 1892, polling 20 per cent in the former instance and 14 per cent in the latter. So the Populists of the Third District must have had a greater aversion for Bryan in '96 than for Cleveland in '92.

Yet another incident may have caused the defeat of the Democratic party in 1896. When the electoral votes were cast, twelve of Kentucky's thirteen went for McKinley: the other was cast for Bryan. The name of W. B. Smith had stood at the head of the list of Democratic electors on the ballot, and he received a few more votes than the other twelve, enough to defeat a Republican elector.<sup>10</sup> Whether some Democratic voters voted for Smith with the belief that they were voting for all of the electors, or whether they intentionally voted for Smith and cast their votes at the same time for twelve Republican electors, the writer is unable to determine. A Democrat explained the circumstance thus: "I believe the Democrats know how to vote now. They did not know

---

<sup>10</sup> George Lee Willis, Sr., Kentucky Democracy (Louisville, Democratic Historical Society, 1935), Vol. 1, p. 358.



[in 1896] that a mark under the rooster [the symbol of the Democratic party] meant a vote for the whole ticket, so they just put a mark there by Smith's name, and he was elected."<sup>11</sup> If this is the true explanation, and it seems a logical one, then the ignorance of a few voters prevented the state of Kentucky from going Democratic in 1896. There is the possibility, however, that some Republican voters may have marked their ballots in a similar way because of a desire to vote for Smith and yet indicate their preference for McKinley.

In the nation at large nearly 14,000,000 citizens went to the polls, the largest number to vote in any presidential election up to that time. The states in the eastern, middle, and central-northwestern part of the country were carried by McKinley without exception. Delaware, West Virginia, Maryland, and Kentucky gave majorities to the Republicans. All of the mining states, California excepted, went Democratic, as did Texas, Arkansas, Alabama, and Missouri. Of the nearly 14,000,000 votes cast, McKinley received slightly over 7,000,000 and Bryan about 6,500,000. In the electoral vote McKinley received 251 to Bryan's 176.<sup>12</sup>

To say that it was the money issue that defeated the Democratic party in the election of 1896 is so obvious as to be

---

<sup>11</sup> Interview with James L. Gerald, Glasgow, Ky., Aug., 1934

<sup>12</sup> Edward Stanwood, A History of the Presidency from 1789 to 1897 (New York, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1898), pp. 566-568.

trite. As to what would have been the outcome of the fight had some other question been the issue is undecided, and cannot be definitely stated without laying one's self open to criticism because of presumption. Had the money issue not been involved in the election, the years of depression following the panic of 1893 would have seriously injured Democratic success. Bank failures, a shrinkage in values, and a general falling off of business activity which accompany a business depression always has an adverse effect on the political party in power when the storm breaks. And behind the demand for the free and unlimited coinage of silver in the election of 1896 "was thirty years of agrarian unrest and the cumulative protest against a currency and credit system and against railroads and other monopolies which had borne hard upon them [the advocates of free coinage]."<sup>13</sup> The culmination of this discontent, the panic of 1893, and the years of depression that followed coming as they did during a Democratic administration, when that party at the same time put itself on the offensive in regard to the money issue, makes a circumstance rather unusual in political history. To what extent Democrats, either those favoring gold or supporting the silver standard, voted the Republican ticket in 1896 as a protest against the hard times of the Cleveland administration and as punishment to the party for permitting such evils to break out, cannot be exactly determined. But viewing the 1896 election in the light of those that came

---

<sup>13</sup> Harold Underwood Faulkner, American Economic History (New York, Harper and Bros., 1931), pp. 638-639.

before and those that have come after it, there is no doubt that some Democrats used their votes in 1896 consciously or unconsciously to punish the Democratic party for holding the reins of government during the critical four years following 1892. On the other hand, had not the domestic issues of the election quite submerged all matters of foreign policy, the success of the Cleveland administration in "giving the Monroe Doctrine both a wider scope and a stronger legal standing" than it had ever enjoyed before, "must have played a great part in the election of 1896."<sup>14</sup>

Events other than the Republican "campaign of education" are listed in explaining that party's success in the campaign. In August, 1896, wheat touched a low of fifty-three cents. In October news came of the failure of the wheat crop in India, a country that had to import the grain that year despite the fact that it was a leading wheat producer and had exported 56,000,000 bushels in 1891. Therefore, Liverpool, in view of the shortage on the world market, advanced its bid for American wheat. At Chicago, wheat rose to seventy cents in September, seventy-four and seven-eighths in October, and to ninety-four and three-eighths in election week. Bryan's party managers had declared that the money interests were raising the price of wheat to fool the agricultural voter, since they had previously told the Westerners that under the existing money standard prices could

---

<sup>14</sup> Stanwood, *op. cit.*, p. 520.

not rise. For the price of wheat was the highest in years, and that under the existing monetary standard. The realization of the true causes for the conditions accounts for McKinley's lead of 148,000 votes in Ohio, Michigan, and Minnesota, which in 1892 had given the Populists and Democrats a plurality of 21,000.<sup>15</sup>

Bryan's statement of the silver crusade, "The campaign of 1896 was a remarkable one whether we measure it by the magnitude of the issues involved or by the depth of interest aroused,"<sup>16</sup> may well be applied to Kentucky. Argument, both sound and unsound; oratory, both sane and insane; crimination, both just and unjust---all these and more traveled the length and breadth of the Bluegrass Commonwealth during the year 1896. Men left the party of their fathers never to return, and some retired from politics altogether. The gold men were fighting against a movement of which they were afraid and which they believed would bring untold disaster in its train. The silver men were struggling and fighting with the same intensive sincerity against what they believed was entrenched greed and the money power. And Kentucky in that year was the scene of the most hard-fought political battle than had ever before taken place within its borders.

---

<sup>15</sup> Alexander D. Noyes, Forty Years of American Finance (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), pp. 264-266.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Barnes' Carlisle, op. cit., p. 489.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

I.

## PRIMARY SOURCES

## GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

Biographical Directory of the American Congress, House Document 783, 69th Congress, second session.

The Congressional Globe.

The Congressional Record.

Finance Report, 1873.

## OTHER DOCUMENTS

Richardson, James D., Messages and Papers of the Presidents: 1789-1902 (Washington, D. C., Washington Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1902).

## INTERVIEWS

Barbour, Mrs. R. B., Cave City, Kentucky, June, 1936.

Dickey, J. H., Louisville, Kentucky, June, 1936.

Gerald, James L., Glasgow, Kentucky, August, 1934.

Porter, W. L., Glasgow, Kentucky, August, 1934.

Spillman, James L., Cave City, Kentucky, June, 1936.

Watkins, Charles, Mumfordsville, Kentucky, August, 1935.

Watkins, Henry, Mumfordsville, Kentucky, August, 1934.

## MEMOIRS AND REMINISCENCES

Bryan, William J., The First Lattle (Chicago, The W. B. Conkey Co., 1896).

Bryan, W. J., and Bryan, Mary Baird, Memoirs of William Jennings Bryan (Chicago, John C. Winston, Co., 1925).

McCulloch, Hugh, Men and Leasures of Half a Century (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888).

Sherman, John, Recollections of Forty Years in the House, Senate, and Cabinet (Chicago, The Verner Co., 1895).

Watterson, Henry, The Editorials of Henry Watterson, edited by Arthur Krook (New York, George H. Doran Co., 1923).

II. SECONDARY SOURCES

NEWSPAPERS

- The Chicago Chronicle, September, 1896.  
 The Cincinnati Inquirer, January-November, 1896.  
 The Cincinnati Post, January-November, 1896.  
 The Cincinnati Times-Star, January-November, 1896.  
 The Louisville Commercial, January-November, 1896.  
 The Louisville Courier-Journal, January-November, 1896.  
 The Louisville Times, September 3, 1896.  
 The Nashville American, January-November, 1896.

MISCELLANEOUS

- The Courier-Journal Almanac for 1898 (Louisville, The Louisville Courier-Journal Co., 1898), Vol. I, No. 1.  
Text-Book of the National Democratic Party (Democratic National Committee, 1896).

III. SECONDARY MATERIAL

MAGAZINE ARTICLES

- Archer, Robert L., "The Silver Campaign of 1896," National Republic, April, 1934.  
 Barnes, James A., "The Gold Standard Democrats and the Party Conflict," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, Vol. XVII (December, 1930).  
 McGrane, R. C., "Ohio and the Greenback Movement," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, Vol. XI.

BIOGRAPHY

- Barnes, James A., John G. Carlisle: Financial Statesman (New York, Dodd, Mead and Co., 1931).

Croly, Herbert David, Marcus Alonzo Hanna: His Life and Work (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1922).

Haynes, Frederic Emory, James Baird Weaver (Iowa City, State Historical Society of Iowa, 1910).

Ne vins, Allen, Grover Cleveland: A Study in Courage (New York, Dodd, Mead and Co., 1932).

#### SPECIAL STUDIES

Barrett, Don C., The Greenbacks and Resumption of Specie Payments (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1931).

Coleman, Charles H., The Election of 1868 (New York, Columbia University Press, 1933).

#### SPECIAL HISTORIES

Burgess, J. W., Reconstruction and the Constitution (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902).

Devey, Davis B., Financial History of the United States (New York, Longmans, Green and Co., 1928).

Faulkner, Harold Underwood, American Economic History (New York, Harper and Bros., 1924).

Jennings, Walter W., History of Economic Progress in the United States (New York, Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1926).

Kerr, Charles, editor, History of Kentucky (New York, American Historical Society, 1922).

Noyes, Alexander D., Forty Years of American Finance (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909).

Stanwood, Edward, A History of the Presidency from 1788 to 1897 (New York, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1924).

Villis, George Lee, Sr., Kentucky Democracy (Louisville, Democratic Historical Society, 1935), Vol. I.

Wilson, Samuel W., History of Kentucky (Chicago, S. J. Clark Publishing Co., 1928).

#### GENERAL HISTORIES

Beard, Charles A., Contemporary American History (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1921).

Oberholtzer, Ellis P., A History of the United States Since the Civil War (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1926).

Rhodes, James Ford, History of the United States (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1928), Vol. IX.

Shippee, Lester Burrell, Recent American History (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1930).