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Article Summary: Reprint of Lindsay's poem, subtitled "The Campaign of Eighteen Ninety-Six, as Viewed at the Time by a Sixteen-Year-Old, etc."

Cataloging Information:

Photographs / Images: "And torchlights down the street, to the end of the world," political cartoon from the *St Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 1, 1896; "And just a hundred miles behind, tornadoes piled across the sky," political cartoon from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 1, 1896; "When the rigs in many a dusty line jammed our streets at noon," photograph of a Bryan visit to Scottsbluff during the 1908 campaign; "Then we stood where we could see . . . and Bryan took the platform," photograph of Bryan's acceptance of the presidential nomination in Lincoln, September 8, 1896; "Election night at midnight: Boy Bryan's defeat . . .," illustration from *Judge*, November 7, 1896.

BRYAN BRYAN BRYAN BRYAN

The Campaign of Eighteen Ninety-six,
as Viewed at the Time by a
Sixteen-Year-Old, etc.

In a nation of one hundred fine, mob-hearted, lynching,
relenting, repenting millions,
There are plenty of sweeping, swinging, stinging, gorgeous
things to shout about,
And knock your old blue devils out.

I brag and chant of Bryan, Bryan, Bryan,
Candidate for president who sketched a silver Zion
The one American Poet who could sing outdoors,
He brought in tides of wonder, of unprecedented splendor,
Wild roses from the plains, that made hearts tender,
All the funny circus silks
Of politics unfurled,
Bartlett pears of romance that were honey at the cores,
And torchlights down the street, to the end of the world.

There were truths eternal in the gab and tittle-tattle.
There were real heads broken in the fusian and the rattle.
There were real lines drawn:
Not the silver and the gold,
But Nebraska's cry went eastward against the dour and old,
The mean and cold.

It was eighteen ninety-six, and I was just sixteen
And Altgeld ruled in Springfield, Illinois,
When there came from the sunset Nebraska's shout of joy:
In a coal like a deacon, in a black Stetson hat
He scourged the elephant plutocrats
With barbed wire from the Platte.
The scales dropped from their mighty eyes.
They saw that summer's noon
A tribe of wonders coming
To a marching tune.

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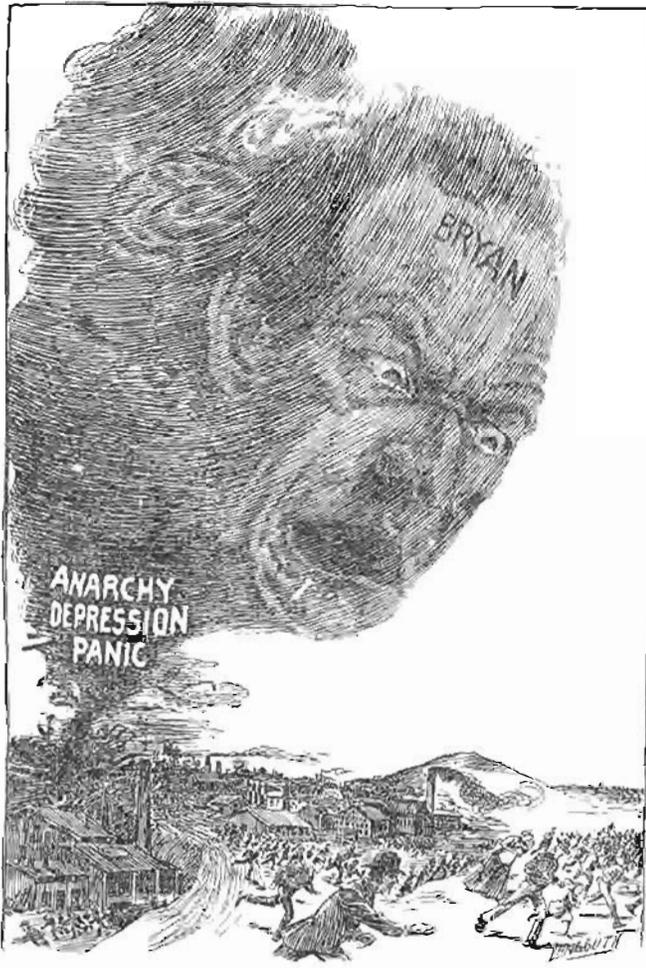


"And torchlights down the street, to the end of the world."
St. Louis Post-Dispatch, November 1, 1896

Oh, the longhorns from Texas,
The jay hawks from Kansas,
The plop-eyed bungaroo and giant giassicus,
The varmint, chipmunk, bugaboo,
The horned-toad, prairie-dog and ballyhoo,
From all the newborn states arow,
Bidding the eagles of the west fly on,
Bidding the eagles of the west fly on,
The fawn, proclactyl and thing-a-ma-jig,
The rakaboor, the hellangone,
The whangdoodle, batfowl and pig,
The coyote, wild-cat and grizzly in a glow,
In a miracle of health and speed, the whole breed abreast,
They leaped the Mississippi, blue border of the West,
From the Gulf to Canada, two thousand miles long.—
Against the towns of Tubal Cain,
Ah,—sharp was their song.
Against the ways of Tubal Cain, too cunning for the young,
The longhorn calf, the buffalo and wampus gave tongue.

Bryan, Bryan, Bryan, Bryan

These creatures were defending things Mark Hanna never dreamed:
 The moods of airy childhood that in desert dews gleamed,
 The gossamers and whimsies,
 The monkeyshines and didoes
 Rank and strange
 Of the canyons and the range,
 The ultimate fantastics
 Of the far western slope,
 And of prairie schooner children
 Born beneath the stars,
 Beneath falling snows,
 Of the babies born at midnight
 In the sod huts of lost hope,
 With no physician there,
 Except a Kansas prayer,
 With the Indian raid a howling through the air.



"And just a hundred miles behind, tornadoes piled across the sky." *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 1, 1896

And all these in their helpless days
 By the dour East oppressed,
 Mean paternalism
 Making their mistakes for them,
 Crucifying half the West,
 Till the whole Atlantic coast
 Seemed a giant spiders' nest.

And these children and their sons
 At last rode through the cactus,
 A cliff of mighty cowboys
 On the lope,
 With gun and rope.
 And all the way to frightened Maine the old East heard
 them call,
 And saw our Bryan by a mile lead the wall
 Of men and whirling flowers and beasts,
 The bard and the prophet of them all.
 Prairie avenger, mountain lion,
 Bryan, Bryan, Bryan, Bryan,
 Gigantic troubadour, speaking like a siege gun,
 Smashing Plymouth Rock with his boulders from the West,
 And just a hundred miles behind, tornadoes piled across the
 sky,
 blotting out sun and moon,
 A sign on high.

Headlong, dazed and blinking in the weird green light,
 the scalawags made moan,
 Afraid to fight.

II

When Bryan came to Springfield, and Altgeld gave him
 greeting,
 Rochester was deserted, Divernon was deserted,
 Mechanicsburg, Riverton, Chickenbristle, Cotton Hill,
 Empty: for all Sangamon drove to the meeting—
 In silver-decked racing cart,
 Buggy, buckboard, carryall,
 Carriage, phaeton, whatever would haul,
 And silver-decked farm wagons grinded, banged and rolled,
 With the new tale of Bryan by the iron tires told

The State House loomed afar,
 A speck, a hive, a football,
 A captive balloon!
 And the town was all one spreading wing of bunting,
 plumes, and sunshine,
 Every rag and flag, and Bryan picture sold,
 When the rigs in many a dusty line
 Jammed our streets at noon,
 And joined the wild parade against the power of gold



"When the rigs in many a dusty line jammed our streets at noon." Bryan's visit to Scofield during the 1908 campaign showed he had not lost his power to draw a crowd. NSHS-PC0802-K65

We roamed, we boys from High School,
With mankind,
While Springfield gleamed,
Silk-lined.
Oh, Tom Dines, and Art Fitzgerald,
And the gangs that they could get!
I can hear them yelling yet.
Helping the incantation,
Defying aristocracy,
With every bridle gone,
Ridding the world of the low down mean,
Bidding the eagles of the West fly on,
Bidding the eagles of the West fly on,
We were bully, wild and woolly,
Never yet curried below the knees.
We saw flowers in the air,
Fair as the Pleiades, bright as Orion,
—Hopes of all mankind,
Made rare, resistless, thrice refined.

Oh, we bucks from every Springfield ward!
Colts of democracy—
Yet time-winds out of Chaos from the star-fields of the
Lord.

The long parade rolled on. I stood by my best girl.
She was a cool young citizen, with wise and laughing eyes.
With my necktie by my ear, I was stepping on my dear,
But she kept like a pattern, without a shaken curl!

She wore in her hair a brave prairie rose.
Her gold chums cut her, for that was not the pose.
No Gibson Girl would wear it in that fresh way,
But we were fairy Democrats, and this was our day.
The earth rocked like the ocean, the sidewalk was a deck.
The houses for the moment were lost in the wide wreck.
And the bands played strange and stranger music as they
trailed along.
Against the ways of Tubal Cain,
Ah, sharp was their song!

Bryan, Bryan, Bryan, Bryan

The demons in the bricks, the demons in the grass,
The demons in the bank-vaults peered out to see us pass,
And the angels in the trees, the angels in the grass,
The angels in the flags, peered out to see us pass.
And the sidewalk was our chariot, and the flowers bloomed
higher,
And the street turned to silver and the grass turned to fire,
And then it was but grass, and the town was there again,
A place for women and men.

III

Then we stood where we could see
Every band,
And the speaker's stand.
And Bryan took the platform.
And he was introduced.
And he lifted his hand
And cast a new spell.
Progressive silence fell
In Springfield,
In Illinois,
Around the world.
Then we heard these glacial boulders across the prairie
rolled:
*'The people have a right to make their own mistakes. . . .
You shall not crucify mankind
Upon a cross of gold.'*

And everybody heard him—
In the streets and State House yard.
And everybody heard him
In Springfield,
In Illinois,
Around and around and around the world,
That danced upon its axis
And like a darling broncho whirled.

IV

July, August, suspense.
Wall Street lost to sense.
August, September, October,
More suspense,
And the whole East down like a wind-smashed fence.

Then Hanna to the rescue,
Hanna of Ohio,
Rallying the roller-tops,
Rallying the bucket-shops.
Threatening drouth and death,
Promising manna,
Rallying the trusts against the bawling flannelmouth;
Invading misers' cellars,
Tin-cans, socks,

Melting down the rocks,
Pouring out the long green to a million workers,
Spondulix by the mountain-load, to stop each new tomado.
And beat the cheapskate, blatherskite,
Populistic, anarchistic,
Deacon—desperado.



"Then we stood where we could see every band, and the speaker's stand. And Bryan took the platform." Bryan accepted the presidential nomination of the National Silver Party at the Nebraska state capitol on September 8, 1896. NSHS-B915-286

V

Election night at midnight:
Boy Bryan's defeat.
Defeat of western silver.
Defeat of the wheat.
Victory of letterfiles
And plutocrats in miles
With dollar signs upon their coats,
Diamond watchchains on their vests
And spats on their feet.
Victory of custodians,
Plymouth Rock,
And all that inbred landlord stock.
Victory of the neat.
Defeat of the aspen groves of Colorado valleys,
The blue bells of the Rockies,
And blue bonnets of old Texas,
By the Pittsburg alleys.
Defeat of alfalfa and the Mariposa lily,
Defeat of the Pacific and the long Mississippi
Defeat of the young by the old and silly.
Defeat of tornadoes by the poison vats supreme.
Defeat of my boyhood, defeat of my dream.



"Election night at midnight: Boy Bryan's defeat. Defeat of western silver. Defeat of the wheat." *Judge*, November 7, 1896.
NSHS Museum Collections-11055-1740

IV

Where is McKinley, that respectable McKinley,
The man without an angle or a tangle,
Who soothed down the city man and soothed down the
farmer,
The German, the Irish, the Southerner, the Northerner,
Who climbed every greasy pole, and slipped through every
crack;
Who soothed down the gambling hall, the bar-room, the
church,
The devil vote, the angel vote, the neutral vote,
The desperately wicked, and their victims on the rack,
the gold vote, the silver vote, the brass vote, the lead vote,
Every vote? . . .

Where is McKinley, Mark Hanna's McKinley,
His slave, his echo, his suit of clothes?
Gone to join the shadows, with the pomps of that time,
And the flame of that summer's prairie rose.

Where is Cleveland whom the Democratic platform
Read from the party in a glorious hour,
Gone to join the shadows with pitchfork Tillman,
And sledge-hammer Altgeld who wrecked his power.

Where is Hanna, bulldog Hanna,
Low-browed Hanna, who said: 'Stand pat'?
Gone to his place with old Pierpont Morgan,
Gone somewhere . . . with lean rat Platt.

Where is Roosevelt, the young dude cowboy,
Who hated Bryan, then aped his way?
Gone to join the shadows with mighty Cromwell
And tall King Saul, till the Judgment day.

Where is Altgeld, brave as the truth,
Whose name the few still say with tears?
Gone to join the ironies with Old John Brown,
Whose fame rings loud for a thousand years.

Where is that boy, that Heaven-born Bryan,
That Homer Bryan, who sang from the West?
Gone to join the shadows with Altgeld the Eagle,
Where the kings and the slaves and the troubadours rest.