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Article Summary: The Baltimore Convention was the high point of Bryan's career. He made three dramatic speeches and succeeded in defining himself as an advocate of the American people and the opponent of Tammany Hall and Wall Street.

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Cataloging Information:

Names: William Jennings Bryan, Alton B Parker, William Howard Taft, Champ Clark, Woodrow Wilson, John W Kern, J Pierpont Morgan, Thomas Ryan, August Belmont, Richard Washburn Child, Theodore Roosevelt, Charles Willis Thompson, Judson Harmon, Oscar W Underwood

Place Names: Baltimore, Maryland

Keywords: William Jennings Bryan, Alton B Parker, Champ Clark, Woodrow Wilson, J Pierpont Morgan, Thomas Ryan, August Belmont

Photographs / Images: Bryan circa 1905; the Bryans and their children with members of the press at the Bryan home in Lincoln, 1896; Bryan campaigning from a train in Stromsburg; Bryan at his desk 1906; Bryan in front of the offices of *The Commoner*; Mr and Mrs Bryan circa 1900; the Bryans and their daughters on their way home after a world tour 1906; Bryan in an oat field at Fairview; the Bryans' house and farm; Bryan with his horse 1906; Bryan in an early automobile; cartoons: Bryan opening a suitcase full of reforms for big businesses ("And here's something nice that I have brought all this long way to give to little choo-choo"), Nebraska and the West welcoming Bryan home in 1913 ("No foreign relations, these."), Bryan "Going Home to Nebraska With the Game" after shooting the Tammany tiger and the Champ Clark hound, Baltimore sign reading "Ryan Controls Democratic Convention" being changed to "Bryan Controls Democratic Convention"

BRYAN AT BALTIMORE
THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION OF 1912

BY BOYCE HOUSE

THE greatest triumph ever achieved by William Jennings Bryan was not the "Cross of Gold" speech which catapulted him, at the age of thirty-six, from semiobscurity to the Democratic presidential nomination at the Chicago convention in 1896, dazzling and unique as that feat was.

That was, after all, only a single effort, while the Nebraskan's achievement at the Baltimore convention in 1912 was a whole series of maneuvers and speeches, bold in conception, brilliant in execution. Like a great play, the story began with failure, then moved—through excitement and fury—to success.

It has been said that the Baltimore gathering had more dramatic elements than any other national political gathering in American history, and Bryan's achievement has been

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described, "As a parliamentary coup d'main, for dramatic interest and effectiveness, it stands without parallel in convention annals."[1] Solomon Bulkley Griffin, editor of the *Springfield Republican,* stated in 1923, "Bryan's convention mastery has not been exceeded in the politics of my time."[2]

The eminent journalist and diplomat, Richard Washburn Child, pictures Bryan as "sitting like a sphinx in his delegate's seat or hurling an explosive at an unexpected moment" and also depicts him as "the sardonic Jove of the convention, with a concealed fistful of thunderbolts."[3] *Collier's Weekly* says, "Fighting not for himself but for the rank and file of his party, Bryan reached the fullness of his strength at Baltimore."[4] A political correspondent of thirty years' experience on the national scene, Charles Willis Thompson, records of Bryan, "He left the convention a conqueror, and a bigger figure than he had ever been in his life."[5]

All in all, Baltimore was the high-water mark of the Peerless Leader's career.

Three times Bryan had been the nominee of his party for the presidency and, each time, he polled around 6,500,000 votes, a greater total than any other Democrat had ever received. First named in 1896, he lost to McKinley. He was renamed in 1900 and again lost to McKinley. Four years later, many leaders, especially those in the East, felt that the party would have a better chance under a new standard-bearer and so a conservative, Judge Alton B. Parker of New York, was chosen. He would, his leading supporters asserted, receive generous campaign contributions from large business interests which, in the two pre-

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[1] Henry Minor, *Story of the Democratic Party* (New York, 1928), pp. 424, 430.

[2] Solomon Bulkley Griffin, *People and Politics Observed by a Massachusetts Editor* (Boston, 1923), p. 447.

[3] Richard Washburn Child, "Bryan Says Boo," *Collier's, the National Weekly,* XLIX, No. 17 (July 13, 1912), 9, 8.

[4] *Ibid.,* 5.

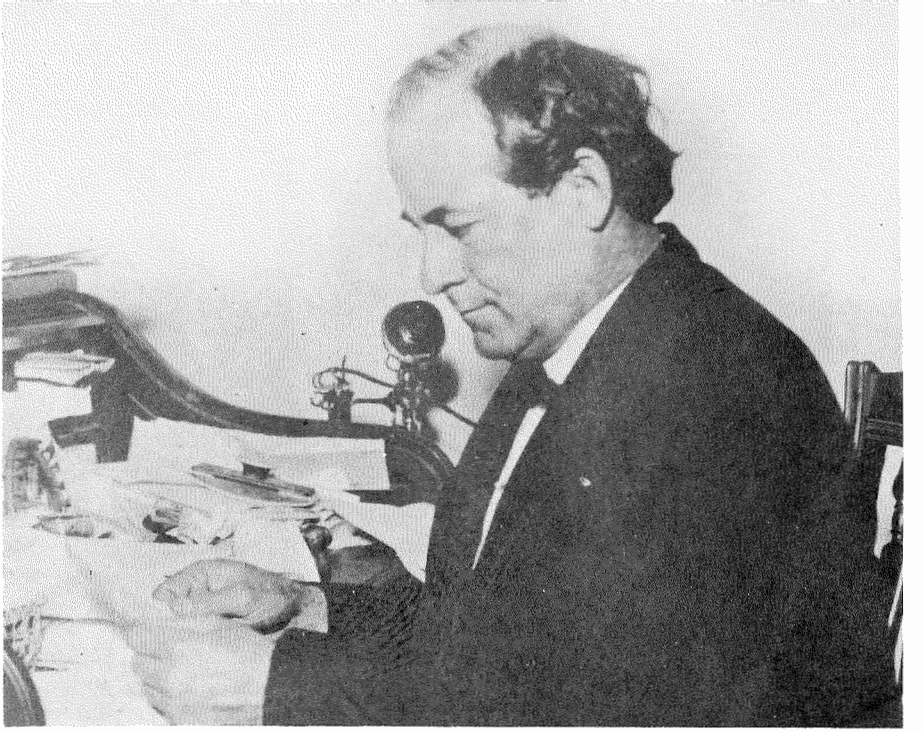
[5] Charles Willis Thompson, *Presidents I Have Known and Two Near Presidents* (Indianapolis, 1929), p. 57.

William Jennings Bryan
(Photo, circa 1905)
STATESMAN AND ORATOR

Above—The presidential nomination in 1896 focused national attention on the Bryans. Mr. and Mrs. Bryan and their children, Ruth, William Jennings, Jr., and Grace with representatives of the press at the Bryan home, 1625 D Street, Lincoln

INDEFATIGABLE CAMPAIGNER

Below—Bryan at Stromsburg, Nebraska
Left to right on the train, H. B. Maxwell, Fritz Ahlquist, George O. Brophy, W. H. Thompson, George O. Brophy, Jr., W. J. Bryan, and Joe Pesek



Above—Back at his desk in 1906 after his world tour

REFORMER AND CRUSADER

Below—In 1901 Bryan founded **The Commoner**

Above—Mr. and Mrs. Bryan
(Photo circa 1900)

Bryan met Mary Baird in college at Jacksonville, Illinois, and after a romantic courtship they were married in 1884. Mrs. Bryan studied law to enable her to assist her husband in his career.

DEVOTED HUSBAND AND FATHER

Below—Homeward bound after their world tour in 1906, the Bryans pose with their daughter Grace and Mrs. Norman Mack of Buffalo, New York.

Above—Bryan in an oat field at Fairview
(Photo, 1906)

GENTLEMAN FARMER - - -

Below—In 1902 the Bryans built their country home "Fairview" on their farm on the outskirts of southeast Lincoln.
(Photo, 1908)

Above—Bryan was always an enthusiastic horseman
(Photo, 1906)

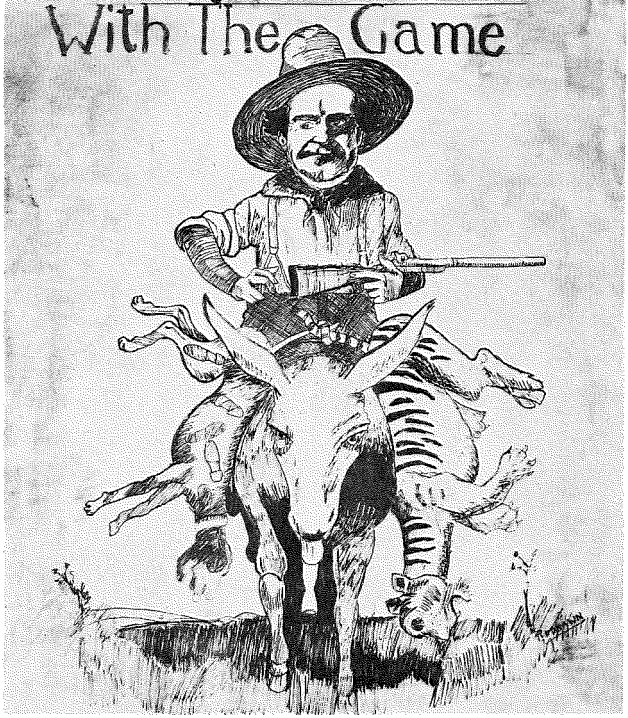
AND COUNTRY SQUIRE

Below—Bryan in an early automobile. The young girl is probably his granddaughter, Ruth.

Above—Many of the reforms which Bryan advocated have since been enacted.

POPULAR SUBJECT FOR CARTOONS

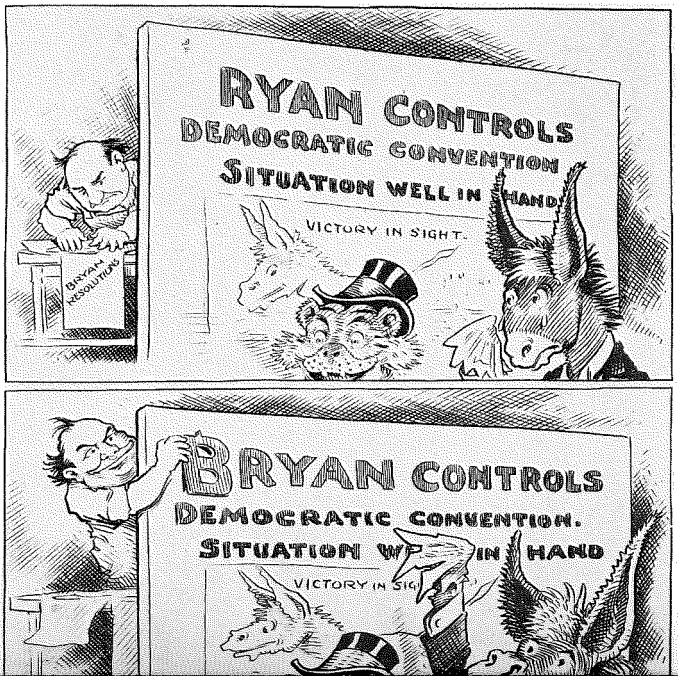
Below—In 1913, while he was Secretary of State, Bryan was honored by an elaborate birthday banquet in Lincoln.



Above—Bryan captured the Tammany tiger and the Champ Clark hound.

MASTER OF THE BALTIMORE CONVENTION

Below—Bryan took the control of the convention away from the conservative elements of the party and engineered Wilson's nomination.



vious contests, had backed the Republican ticket. This promised assistance, however, was not forthcoming. Parker fell far short of the vote which Bryan had polled and was overwhelmed by the picturesque and popular Theodore Roosevelt. In 1908, the Democrats turned once more to Bryan who, this time, lost to Roosevelt's choice as his successor, William Howard Taft.

When the season approached for the quest for 1912 delegate support, Bryan left the field clear by announcing that he would not be a candidate for a fourth nomination. As the race took shape, the leading contenders were Champ Clark of Missouri, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Governor Woodrow Wilson of New Jersey. There was substantial support also for Governor Judson Harmon of Ohio and Congressman Oscar W. Underwood of Alabama. Among others mentioned were four governors in the role of "favorite sons": Foss of Massachusetts, Marshall of Indiana, Baldwin of Connecticut, and Burke of North Dakota.

Of 1,088 delegates, Wilson had 248 instructed for him and, even with the support of friendly but uninstructed delegates, the best that he could hope for at the outset was one-third of the total vote. Clark's supporters were estimated at 436, which was 109 short of a majority, and the New York Tammany-controlled delegation, with ninety votes, could, if it desired, almost provide the margin. While a two-thirds majority was required for the nomination, not since 1844 had a Democratic convention denied the honor to one who had succeeded in obtaining a majority.[6] Certainly the outlook was not bright for Wilson.

Bryan considered Clark and Wilson as progressives and regarded Harmon and Underwood as conservatives. A friend informed the Nebraskan that he had attended a meeting at which Wall Street had named Harmon as its choice. Bryan recorded in his *Memoirs* that he was fond

[6] Arthur S. Link, *Woodrow Wilson, the Road to the White House* (Princeton, 1947), pp. 429-30.

of the Ohio governor personally but that Harmon's business connections and bias "made it impossible for him to be the exponent of the masses in their struggle for reforms."[7]

As a newspaper writer, Bryan had attended the Republican convention in Chicago where he saw delegations that were pledged to Theodore Roosevelt, who undoubtedly was the choice of the majority of the members of his party, thrown out by the Old Guard operators of the "steamroller." Only through these tactics, coupled with the support of the postmasters and other federal appointees of the South where the G.O.P. was only a paper organization, was President Taft able to regain the nomination. As the Democratic observer saw it, the Chicago convention had selected a candidate under the pressure of the influence of Wall Street and he feared the same power would seek to rule at Baltimore.[8]

As a basis for his fear was the fact that among the Democratic delegates were two financiers who were considered as closely allied to the great J. Pierpont Morgan. One of these was August Belmont, a member of the New York delegation which, under the unit rule, was controlled by Charles Murphy, the head of Tammany Hall, and the ties were reputedly close between Murphy and Morgan, the most powerful financier in America.[9] The other Wall Street leader was Thomas Fortune Ryan, who had been named from Virginia, where he maintained a home.[10]

Bryan discerned a move which seemed to him to be the first step by the influences which had controlled at Chicago, to rule at Baltimore also. A subcommittee recommended Judge Parker as the convention's temporary chairman. Bryan therefore made his opening move and an adroit one it was. He telegraphed to the candidates—other than the conservatives, Harmon and Underwood:

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[7] William Jennings Bryan and Mary Baird Bryan, *Memoirs of William Jennings Bryan* (Philadelphia, 1925), p. 159.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 161.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 174.

[10] Mark Sullivan, "Comment on Baltimore," *Collier's, the National Weekly*, XLIX, No. 17 (July 13, 1912), 10.

> In the interest of harmony, I suggested to the sub-committee of the Democratic National committee the advisability of recommending as temporary chairman some progressive acceptable to the leading progressive candidates for the presidential nomination. I took it for granted that no committeeman interested in Democratic success would desire to offend the members of a convention overwhelmingly progressive by naming a reactionary to sound the keynote of the campaign. Eight members of the sub-committee, however, have, over the protest of the remaining eight, agreed upon not only a reactionary but upon the one Democrat who, among those not candidates for the presidential nomination is, in the eyes of the public, most conspicuously identified with the reactionary element of the party.
>
> I shall be pleased to join you and your friends in opposing the selection by the full committee or by the convention. Please answer here.[11]

Thus the candidates had to take a stand. Three of the favorite sons, Foss, Marshall and Baldwin, declined to join in the fight. Burke agreed to do so. What of the two principal contenders? Clark answered that harmony was the chief consideration. Wilson's reply began, "You are right."[12]

The vote of the full committee favored Parker; and so Bryan determined to carry the issue before the convention. He asked Ollie James, a Clark man, to permit his name to be presented but, after consulting with other Clark leaders, the Kentuckian declined. Then Bryan tried to gain the consent of Senator James A. O'Gorman of New York but he was a member of the New York delegation, which was pledged to Parker. Next, Bryan asked Senator John W. Kern of Indiana, who had been his running-mate in 1908. Kern did not give a definite answer.[13]

The day before the convention opened, Baltimore hotel lobbies were filled with excited delegates and visitors who were on hand for that unparalleled spectacle of democracy in action, a national political convention. Rumors filled the air. Dozens of newspaper correspondents filed dispatches consisting of thousands of words which would be eagerly

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[11] *Memoirs*, p. 164.
[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 164-5.
[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 166-7.

read by millions. There were band music and song, the tune oftenest heard being that of the Clark supporters:

> Makes no difference if he is a houn'
> You gotta stop kickin' my dog aroun'—

and some of the Missourian's supporters strolled down the sidewalk or even out in the middle of the street, leading two or three hounds. The backers of Wilson and the other aspirants also were much in evidence.

The scene of the convention was the huge-domed Armory. The gaunt interior had been dressed with flags, banners and bunting, which provided vivid coloring. Big pictures of two of the party's "greats," Jefferson and Jackson, were displayed. Standards marked the place of each state's delegation and these markers had been nailed to the floor; nevertheless, during moments of frenzy, they would be uprooted and carried in parades.

Cardinal Gibbons, in his scarlet garments, gave the invocation, "Bryan with his fine old lion face dominating the assembly."[14] Scarcely had the session gotten under way before the Great Commoner arose to speak and he was greeted with cheers. The audience saw a portly man, fifty-two years old; bald, except for a fringe; his eyes still possessing their magnetic glance, the jaw showing power. As he waited for the applause to subside, his ample-sized mouth wore a smile, imparting to his broad countenance a look of benevolence.

As his first words rolled forth, they were heard with ease by all the assembled thousands and the tone had the golden quality of earlier years. He arose, he said, to nominate Senator John W. Kern of Indiana for the temporary chairmanship. In thus dissenting from the judgment of the national committee, Bryan conceded, the burden of proof was on him but "confidence reposed in a human being carried with it certain responsibilities, and I would not be worthy of the confidence and the affection that have been

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[14] Honore Willsie, "Sound and Madness in Baltimore," *Collier's, the National Weekly,* XLIX, No. 17 (July 13, 1912), 19.

showered upon me by the Democrats of this nation if I were not willing to risk humiliation in their defense."[15]

Pointing to an inscription beneath a picture of Andrew Jackson, he said, "I take for my text the quotation that someone has been kind enough to place upon the walls for my use, 'He never sold the truth to serve the hour.' That is the language of the hero of New Orleans, and I would not deserve the support I have received if I were willing to sell the truth to serve the present hour." Mrs. Bryan, who was in the audience, related that one delegate leaned over to another and exclaimed, "I told them, if they put it there, he would use it."

Referring to the charge that he was disturbing harmony by opposing the committee's choice, the speaker stated that, on the contrary, no one had worked harder to secure harmony and, in support of this, he cited that he had declined the honor of the temporary chairmanship because he was more interested in harmony than in "standing before the convention and voicing the rejoicing of my party." He had, he said, suggested to the committee that its members obtain approval of a temporary chairman from the two candidates who, between them, had almost two-thirds of the delegates instructed for them. The night before, the friends of Wilson and the friends of Clark joined in the support of James, who had been Clark's original choice, but the committee rejected the joint request.

Bryan eulogized the loyalty and the services of Kern to the party and disclaimed any reflection on the character or good intent of the other candidate; but, he added,

> Not every one of high character and good intent is a fit man to sound the keynote of a progressive campaign. This is not a time when personal ambitions or personal compliments should be considered. We are writing history to-day, and this convention is to announce to the country whether it will take up the challenge thrown down at Chicago by a convention controlled by predatory wealth, or put ourselves under the same control and give the people no party to represent them.

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[15] *Official Report of the Proceedings of the Democratic Convention,* 1912, compiled by Urey Woodson, p. 3.

Then he uttered words that were prophetic,

We need not deceive ourselves with the thought that that which is done in a national convention is done in secret. If every member of this convention entered into an agreement of secrecy, we would still act under the eyes of these representatives of the press, who know not only what we do, but why we do it.

The delegates of this convention must not presume upon the ignorance of those who did not come, either because they had not influence enough to be elected delegates or money enough to pay the expenses of the trip, but who have as much interest in the party's welfare as we who speak for them to-day. These people will know that the influences that dominated the convention at Chicago and made its conclusions a farce are here and more brazenly at work than they were at Chicago.

I appeal to you; let the commencement of this convention be such that the Democrats of this country may raise their heads among their fellows and say: The Democratic party is true to the people. You can not frighten it with your Ryans nor buy it with your Belmonts.

The orator then launched a dignified, but no less devastating, attack on Parker.

We know that he is the man who was selected as the party candidate eight years ago when the Democratic party, beaten in two campaigns, decided that it was worth while to try to win a campaign under the leadership of those who had defeated us in the campaigns before.

The Democrats of the country have not forgotten that that convention was influenced by the promise of large campaign funds from Wall Street, and they have not forgotten the fact that, after corporation management had alienated the rank and file of the party, Wall Street threw the party down and elected the Republican candidate.

They have not forgotten that, when the vote was counted, we had a million and a quarter less votes than we had in the two campaigns before, and a million and a quarter less than we had four years afterward. They have not forgotten that it is the same man, backed by the same influence, who is to be forced on this convention to open a progressive campaign with a paralyzing speech that will dishearten the fighting force of the party. You ask me how I know, without reading it, that that speech would not be satisfactory. A speech is not so many words; it is the man and not the words that make a speech. . . .

Around the world, the democratic movement has been sweeping all obstacles before it [and he mentioned the emancipation of the serfs in Russia, and gains in Persia, Turkey, China and Great Britain]. And while the outside world has been marching at double-quick in the direction of more complete freedom, our nation has kept step; on no other part of

> God's footstool has popular government grown more rapidly than here. In every state the fight has been waged. The man whom I present has been the leader of the progressive cause in his state, and once joint leader in the nation. . . .
>
> Judge Parker has not been with us; he is not the one to speak to-day.
>
> The Democratic party has led this fight until it has stimulated a host of Republicans to action. I will not say they have acted as they have because we acted first; I will say that at a later hour than we, they caught the spirit of the time and are now willing to trust the people with the control of their own government. We have been traveling in the wilderness; we now come in sight of the promised land. During all the weary hours of darkness, progressive democracy has been the people's pillar of fire by night; I pray you, delegates, now that the dawn has come, do not rob it of its well-earned right to be the people's pillar of cloud by day.

Kern then took the platform and, of his performance, Bryan said afterward that he had never seen it surpassed on the stage. The speaker urged that, in the interest of harmony, Parker join with him in withdrawing from the contest; then, looking at the New Yorker, he paused. The silence was intense. There was no answer. Next, Kern appealed to Tammany's chief, Murphy, the chairman of the New York delegation, to use his influence for Parker's withdrawal; and the speaker, gazing at Murphy, paused. Again there was a deadly stillness. Then Kern turned toward the presiding officer and said, in a defiant tone, if there was to be a contest, there was only one man to lead the people's side—William Jennings Bryan.[16]

The roll was called and Bryan was defeated, 579 to 508. Virtually all of the Wilson delegates had voted for Bryan. Those favoring Underwood and Harmon had voted for Parker. The Clark delegates had divided, but most of the leaders had worked on behalf of Parker and approximately two-thirds of the delegates from Clark's home state had voted against Bryan.[17]

When Bryan saw that he had lost, he returned to his hotel room. The next issue of journals which were hostile to Bryan contained editorials rejoicing that he had been

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[16] *Memoirs*, p. 168.
[17] Link, *op. cit.*, p. 437.

"buried." But the Nebraskan had been buried before—after 1896, after 1900, and at the 1904 convention, but always his demise, like that of Twain, had proved to be greatly exaggerated.

As Bryan had prophesied, the folks back home began to be heard from. In fact, he had hardly reached the hotel before telegrams approving his stand started to arrive; messages poured in as well to the delegates; and the expressions were overwhelmingly in favor of Bryan.[18]

The Clark forces sent a committee to offer him the permanent chairmanship but he declined, saying, "Those who own the ship should furnish the crew. When my friends controlled a convention, we never asked the minority to supply officers." He was then tendered the chairmanship of the resolutions committee but he suggested that the majority should furnish the chairman, "as it might be necessary for me to present a minority report and it would not look well for such a report to be presented by the chairman."[19] The prospect of a minority report presented by Bryan no doubt sent a chill down the backbones of the messengers. After Kern was chosen as chairman of the resolutions committee, Bryan agreed to be a member as he always attached great importance to the writing of the platform on which the ticket went before the voters.

Bryan became aware that the representatives of Morgan, Ryan and Belmont were at work. Because of the intimate relationship between these financiers and Murphy, he was increasingly alarmed lest they should be able, by means of the control of the New York delegation, to choose the nominee.[20]

Who were Ryan and Belmont?

Thomas Ryan—with the appropriate middle name of Fortune—had interests in street railways, coal and railroads. In 1905 he had purchased the controlling interest in

[18] *Memoirs,* p. 169.
[19] *Ibid.,* pp. 170-1.
[20] *Ibid.,* pp. 173-4.

the Equitable Life Assurance Society of America. He was a major figure in the so-called "tobacco trust" and was said to have been the largest individual owner of the Congo diamond fields. At one time, he was an officer and director in more than thirty corporations.[21]

Belmont's father had been the American representative of the international bankers, the Rothschilds, before establishing his own banking house, August Belmont and Company, which the son now headed. Other positions included the board chairmanship of the Interborough Rapid Transit Company and the presidency of a canal company as well as the trusteeship of a savings bank. Belmont was a noted sportsman, and the Belmont race track was named for him.[22]

The banking houses of Morgan and Belmont were the combination through which President Cleveland marketed an issue of bonds in 1895, a transaction which brought the comment from the *New York World* that the syndicate required only twenty-two minutes to sell off the issue and pocket a profit of $5,000,000 which "was gratuitously given to the syndicate in a secret conference and will be paid out of the public treasury." Others placed the profit at $7,000,000. Bryan, then a member of Congress, denounced the transaction in a speech in the House, after having the clerk read Shylock's bond.[23]

Bourke Cockran, who bolted Bryan to support McKinley in 1896, had, in a speech in Congress some years later, placed Ryan and Belmont "in the same category as James J. Hill and E. H. Harriman, both of whom had been denounced by Roosevelt as 'undesirable citizens' and 'malefactors of great wealth.' "[24]

To combat Ryan and Belmont, Bryan's brother, Charles W., suggested a resolution which Bryan dictated. Then Charles reported that none of the friends with whom he

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[21] *Who Was Who in America* (Chicago, 1942), p. 1070.
[22] *Ibid.*, p. 81.
[23] Allan Nevins, *Grover Cleveland* (New York, 1932), pp. 663-665.
[24] James McGurrin, *Bourke Cockran* (New York, 1948), p. 282.

had consulted thought it wise to introduce the resolution. When Bryan started for the convention, he was uncertain as to whether to present it, his hesitancy being due to the fact that there had been no encouragement from those who were most in sympathy with his aims. But on the way, he reached a decision—the resolution, of right, should be introduced, and so it was his duty to do it.[25]

As he was proceeding to the platform, someone stopped him to introduce him to Mrs. Taft, who was attending, as a spectator, of course. This meeting caused Bryan to change a sentence in the first paragraph regarding Taft's nomination in Chicago as he did not want to give Mrs. Taft pain by such a reference to her husband. There was a little sequel to this chivalrous act, for Taft learned about it and thanked Bryan for the consideration shown to his wife.[26]

"Mr. Chairman," Bryan began, "I have here a resolution which should, in my judgment, be acted upon before a candidate for president is nominated, and I ask unanimous consent for its immediate consideration." He then read the resolution:

> Resolved, That in this crisis in our party's career and in our country's history this convention sends greetings to the people and assures them that the party of Jefferson and Jackson is still the champion of popular government and equality before the law. As proof of our fidelity to the people we hereby declare ourselves opposed to the nomination of any candidate for president who is a representative of, or under any obligation to J. Pierpont Morgan, Thomas F. Ryan, August Belmont, or any other member of the privilege-hunting and favor-seeking class.
>
> Be it further resolved, That we demand the withdrawal from this convention of any delegate or delegates constituting or representing the above-named interests.[27]

When he completed reading the resolution, the storm broke.[28] Never before had such an outburst of disorder, of confusion, of jeers, been seen and heard at a national con-

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[25] *Memoirs,* pp. 175-6.
[26] *Ibid.,* p. 176.
[27] *Official Proceedings, Democratic Convention,* 1912.
[28] *Memoirs,* pp. 176-8; Child, *op. cit.,* 9; Paxton Hibben, *Peerless Leader* (New York, 1929), p. 312; Wayne C. Williams, *William Jennings Bryan* (New York, 1936), pp. 327-8; Link, *op. cit.,* pp. 443-5.

vention as now exploded on the floor, all of it directed at the author of the resolution. Many sprang to their feet, shouting angrily and shaking their fists at Bryan. A member of Congress rushed to the platform and denounced him with wild gestures accompanying his utterances until friends led the man away, so infuriated that he was frothing at the mouth.

"Beat him up!" some roared, referring to Bryan. "Throw him out!" others cried. "He ought to be hanged! He ought to be hanged!" still others screamed. One man shouted, "I'll give $25,000 to anyone who will kill him!" For the first time in his political career, Bryan was in danger of physical violence and even of assassination. He faced the mob-like fury as immovable as a giant cliff in a tempest.

Congressman Flood of Virginia came to the platform and, when the raging delegates subsided so that he could be heard, he condemned the resolution, which he branded as an insult to Virginia. Bryan, awaiting an opportunity to speak to his motion, became the target of a chant by hundreds of delegates, "Sit down! down! down! sit down!" But he stood there. At last when he was able to speak, he began by acknowledging that this was an extraordinary resolution but extraordinary conditions called for extraordinary remedies. Then he declared:

> It is that we may advance the cause of our candidate that I present this resolution. There are questions of which a court takes judicial notice, and there are subjects upon which we can assume that the American people are informed. There is not a delegate in this convention who does not know that an effort is being made right now to sell the Democratic party into bondage to the predatory interests of this country. It is the most brazen, the most insolent, the most impudent attempt that has been made in the history of American politics to dominate a convention, stifle the honest sentiment of a party and make the nominee the bond-slave of the men who exploit the country.
>
> I need not tell you that J. Pierpont Morgan, Thomas F. Ryan and August Belmont are three of the men who are connected with the great money trust now under investigation, and are despotic in their rule of the business of the country.

> Someone has said that we have no right to demand the withdrawal of delegates who come here from a sovereign state. I reply that if these men are willing to insult six and a half million of Democrats by coming here, we ought to be willing to speak out against them and let them know we resent the insult. No sense of politeness or courtesy to such men will keep me from protecting my party from the disgrace that they bring upon it.
>
> I can not speak for you. You have your own responsibility, but if this is to be a convention run by these men; if our nominee is to be their representative and tool, I pray you to give us, who represent constituencies that do not want this, a chance to go on record with our protest against it. If any of you are willing to nominate a candidate who represents these men or who is under obligation to these men, do it and take the responsibility. I refuse to take that responsibility.
>
> It is not necessary for the gentleman from Virginia to deliver a eulogy upon his State. My father was born in Virginia and no one has greater reverence for that great commonwealth than I. Neither is it necessary for me to defend my reputation as a Democrat. My reputation would not be worth defending if it were necessary to defend it against a charge made against me by any friend of Thomas F. Ryan.
>
> The resolution is not only sober and serious, but it is necessary. We plant ourselves upon the Bible doctrine, 'If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off.' The party needs to cut off those corrupting influences to save itself.[29]

Cone Johnson, in a short speech, in a tone like the bellow of a longhorn of his state, Texas, declared, "All I know and all I want to know is that Bryan is on one side and Wall Street is on the other."

Just before the vote was taken, Bryan withdrew the latter part of the resolution "in order that honest friends might not be embarrassed by the argument that the demand for withdrawal of the offending delegates invaded the rights of the state, and in order that the second part of the resolution might not be used as an excuse by those who desired to vote against the main question."[30] However, the disorder and excitement were so great that it is doubtful that many of the delegates understood that the second portion had been withdrawn.

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[29] *Official Proceedings, Democratic Convention*, 1912, pp. 131-132, 135.

[30] William Jennings Bryan, *A Tale of Two Conventions* (New York, 1912), p. 175.

When the name of a state was called and the chairman announced the vote, members would leap to their feet, shaking their fists, to demand a poll of the delegation. A great number voted furiously, hectically, hysterically against the resolution. Richard Washburn Child wrote, "Before they knew it, many had gone on record as being in favor of nominating a man under obligation to Morgan, Ryan and Belmont. They voted in anger and begged to change their vote when they saw the trap. They had rushed forward to challenge like wolves; they tumbled back like sheep covered with gooseflesh."[31]

The resolution carried by four and one-half to one. Even New York voted "Aye," Murphy turning to Belmont and saying, "August, listen and hear yourself vote yourself out of the convention." Nearly all of the Wilson delegates voted for the resolution and so did nearly all of the Clark supporters, although many of the Clark leaders voted "No."[32]

"Once more Bryan had outmaneuvered his opponents. He had underscored the point he had made in his struggle over the temporary chairmanship."[33]

When voting for a nominee began, the results of the first ballot were: Clark 440½; Wilson, 324; Harmon, 148; Underwood, 117½; scattering, 56. The balloting continued, and Bryan was attending a session of the resolutions committee when he heard cheering and was told that New York's votes had just swung from Harmon to Clark on the tenth ballot. The Missourian's supporters began a great demonstration, for the shift gave their candidate a majority, with eleven votes to spare.[34]

While the demonstration was in progress, Bryan returned to the auditorium and took his place with the Nebraska delegation, of which he was chairman. The Clark

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[31] Child, *op. cit.*, 9.
[32] *Memoirs*, p. 178.
[33] Hibben, *op. cit.*, p. 312.
[34] J. C. Long, *Bryan the Great Commoner* (New York, 1928), p. 263.

supporters anticipated that the momentum would bring the necessary two-thirds on the next ballot. In Washington, the candidate prepared his telegram of acceptance. But the landslide did not take place on the eleventh ballot and so at 4:00 a.m. Saturday, June 29, the convention adjourned.[35]

So grim was the outlook, however, that William F. McCombs, Wilson's campaign manager, called his candidate to suggest that the governor authorize him to withdraw Wilson's name, so the latter sent the telegram and even considered dispatching a message of congratulations to Clark. Later in the morning, W. G. McAdoo, a Wilson leader, learning of the telegram, immediately called Wilson and urged him not to consider withdrawing and so Wilson authorized McAdoo to countermand the withdrawal authorization.[36]

Because Clark's majority had been made possible by the Murphy-controlled New York delegation, Bryan was not willing to swell Clark's vote to the two-thirds which would nominate. The Nebraskan felt that Clark's nomination, under such circumstances, would leave the party open to the charge, in the campaign, that Wall Street had exercised the decisive influence in selecting the nominee. Further, Roosevelt had not yet announced whether he would be the candidate of a third party; and Bryan felt sure that T. R. would run if he could charge that both candidates had been named by Wall Street. By appealing to the progressives of both parties, Roosevelt would, Bryan believed, be elected.[37] It was reported, too, that one of Roosevelt's sons had said, "Pop's praying for Clark."[38]

From the time that Bryan left the resolutions committee to take his seat with the Nebraska delegation, he remained there continuously as long as the convention was in session. A friendly doorman brought water; and his brother, Charles, provided sandwiches. The Nebraska dele-

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35 Link, *op. cit.*, p. 450.
36 *Ibid.*, p. 451.
37 *Memoirs*, p. 181.
38 Link, *op. cit.*, p. 422.

gates, instructed for Clark with Wilson as second choice, continued to vote for the Missourian, it being Bryan's belief that New York really preferred Underwood and would leave Clark; then Clark would be in position to gain the nomination, if he could, from the progressive element.[39] After the thirteenth ballot, Senator Hitchcock, who was originally for Harmon, demanded that the Nebraska delegation be polled. Bryan replied that, if a poll were insisted on, he might be compelled to change his vote. Hitchcock insisted and so Bryan went to the platform.[40]

His opening words indicated that, because of New York's support, he was changing his vote from Clark and his voice was drowned in a mighty roar of wrath. For the second time, he was the object of a violent demonstration of hatred—boos, catcalls and hisses.[41] When at last the storm had subsided, he began reading a prepared statement but was interrupted by questions from the floor. He more than held his own.

Asked whether he would refuse to support the nominee if the two-thirds was made up in part by the vote of New York, Bryan replied,

> I distinguish between refusing to participate in the nomination of a candidate and refusing to support a candidate nominated over my protest. I distinguish between these two propositions just as the law distinguishes between the act of a lawyer who defends a prisoner after a crime has been committed and the act of a lawyer who conspires with the prisoner to commit a crime.[42]

A delegate took his place in front of the speaker and shouted over and over, "Are you a Democrat? Are you a Democrat?" Bryan, in his rolling tone, replied, "My Democracy has been three times certified by 6,500,000 voters but I will ask the secretary of the convention to enter one dissenting vote," then he paused and continued, "if the

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[39] *Memoirs*, p. 182.
[40] *Ibid.*, p. 183.
[41] Link, *op. cit.*, pp. 453-4; Hibben, *op. cit.*, p. 315; Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 329-30.
[42] Bryan, *A Tale of Two Conventions*, p. 196.

gentleman will kindly give me his name!" The retort so disconcerted the heckler that he walked away.

In explaining his position, Bryan reminded the delegates of their approval of the resolution pledging that the convention would not nominate any man who represented, or was obligated to, Morgan, Ryan and Belmont; and this promise, he continued, "if kept will have more influence on the result of the election than the platform or the name of the candidate. The vote of the State of New York in this convention, as cast under the unit rule, does not represent the intelligence, the virtue, the democracy or the patriotism of the ninety men who are here. It represents the will of one man, Charles F. Murphy, and he represents the influences that dominated the Republican convention at Chicago and are trying to dominate this convention."

Bryan declared that he and some of the other Nebraska delegates, although he could not say how many, since there had not been a chance to take a poll, "will not participate in the nomination of any man whose nomination depends upon the vote of the New York delegation. We, therefore, withhold our vote from Mr. Clark as long as New York's vote is recorded for him. The position that we take in regard to Mr. Clark, we will take in regard to any other candidate whose name is now or may be before the convention," and concluded by casting his vote for Wilson.

The hostile clamor broke out afresh and continued after Bryan had again seated himself with his delegation. The strife spread even to the press section. Two correspondents had a physical encounter, one a pro-Wilson man and the other a representative of the pro-Clark Hearst newspapers, this belligerent being the philosophical and scholarly Arthur Brisbane.[43]

One observer recorded that Bryan "sat with his palm-leaf fan, without a tremor in his finger . . . and, with the light springing in his eyes as the few who came to greet him touched his shoulder, Mr. Bryan was the figure of a

[43] Child, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

master."[44] Bryan "betrayed not the slightest emotion; his calm was tremendously effective."[45]

Fuel was added to the uproar when members of the Missouri delegation displayed a banner on which were inscribed words of praise for Clark by Bryan in 1910 and this was flaunted before the Nebraska delegation. Bryan attempted to speak but was denied a hearing by the chairman. Missourians shook their fists at him; police came forward and the Texas delegation of forty stood in readiness to rush to his protection.[46]

A New York delegate, John B. Stanchfield, gave scathing expression to the wrath of the riotous delegates when he denounced Bryan as "a money-grubbing, selfish, office-seeking, favor-hunting, publicity-loving marplot,"[47] and adding, "Any man who for pay has been writing from the Republican convention in favor of the election of Mr. Bryan's partner and ally, Theodore Roosevelt, ought to be expelled from the floor of this convention."[48]

The banner was ordered from the hall and the business of balloting was resumed. There was no immediate change of consequence in the voting, but Wilson made slow, steady gains. As the weary days went by, the delegations became an "exhausted mass of coatless, collarless, wet, sleep-short, gray-faced, sullen men" in the "pale blue fog" of the Armory. The Wilson supporters drew encouragement from those whom they represented. Typical was a telegram with numerous signers which one delegation received, "Stay till Wilson is nominated. If you need expense money, will mortgage our furniture and pawn our clothes and send it."[49] After the twenty-sixth ballot, adjournment was agreed upon from Saturday until Monday.

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[44] *Ibid.*, p. 24.
[45] Hibben, *op. cit.*, p. 315.
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 315.
[47] Champ Clark, *My Quarter Century of American Politics* (New York, 1920), II, 419.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 420.
[49] Child, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

On Monday, the second ballot of the day gave Wilson, for the first time, the lead; and, on the forty-sixth ballot of the convention, at 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, July 2, Woodrow Wilson was nominated for the presidency of the United States.

Bryan (a commentator summed up), played a lone hand, keeping his own counsel; remained patient amid abuse and cool under fire; correctly judged the sentiment of the people and refused to compromise a wrong.[50] Senator Robert M. LaFollette said, "It was Bryan's superb leadership and courage at Baltimore which nominated a candidate for the presidency who had made a progressive record as governor of New Jersey."[51] The Kansas editor, William Allen White, an acute observer and sometimes an active participant in matters political—and, moreover, a Republican, wrote, "Probably Wilson owed his nomination more to Bryan than to any other man."[52] Of Wilson's nomination, Edward Macartney wrote, "This was the most remarkable triumph in Bryan's long political career."[53] Griffin, editor of the *Springfield Republican,* declared, "Without Mr. Bryan, Woodrow Wilson would have failed of nomination in 1912. Beyond any doubt, Bryan was the pivot on which great history turned."[54]

Some historians have contended that Wilson's nomination was not due to Bryan's actions. It can be stated incontrovertibly that, had it not been for Bryan, Wilson would not have received the nomination. Clark entered the convention with a lead so great that, almost any time that the ninety-vote delegation of New York (voting as a unit and controlled by one man) swung to him, Clark would have a majority, and once a majority was attained, the momentum would have been such that the necessary two-

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[50] *Ibid.*

[51] Robert M. LaFollette, *Autobiography* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1913), p. 751.

[52] William Allen White, *Masks in a Pageant* (New York, 1928), p. 267.

[53] Edward Macartney, *Men Who Missed It* (Philadelphia, 1940), p. 110.

[54] Griffin, *op. cit.,* p. 447.

thirds would have resulted. Such would have been the normal flow of events.

But Bryan made the fight against a reactionary for temporary chairman, then he made the fight for the anti-Belmont-Ryan-Wall Street-Tammany Hall resolution; and, in doing so, he rallied the country behind him. The delegates heard from the people and the reaction, redounding to the benefit of Wilson, created the atmosphere in which he was ultimately victorious. Both Wilson and Clark credited Bryan with Wilson's victory.

Wilson, in a speech in Lincoln during the campaign, said,

> I am proud to come to Lincoln and render my tribute of respect to the great champion of liberty who set the Democratic Party free at Baltimore. With the tact which ought to characterize a great leader, Mr. Bryan did not attempt to dictate what the choice of the convention should be, but he did attempt to prevent, and he splendidly succeeded in preventing, the control of that convention by those interests inimical to the people. If I, as a result of the freedom of that convention was the choice of the convention, my responsibility is all the greater to live up to the standard to which Mr. Bryan brought that body of Democrats.[55]

Clark issued a statement the day after Wilson's nomination and he repeated it in his autobiography, "I lost the nomination solely through the vile and malicious slanders of Colonel William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska. True, these slanders were by innuendo and insinuation but they were no less deadly for that reason."[56] (In fairness to Bryan, it should be pointed out that he declared that he did not criticize Clark for any act but rather for his failure to act.)

An impression of the skill, ability and power of Bryan's performance is given in the words, written immediately afterward, by Charles Willis Thompson, a correspondent who had covered national political events for many years,

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[55] Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 331-2.
[56] Clark, *op. cit.*, II, 393.

> He was the great figure of the convention. He never was so great and he never was so victorious. Long as I have known Bryan, and many as are the aspects in which I have seen him, he was a revelation to me. The concerted onslaught upon him was a total failure, and the men who made it seemed like pigmies before him.[57]

In the view of a large majority of the citizens, the Great Commoner had drawn a line; on one side were Bryan, Wilson and the people; on the other side were Clark, Tammany Hall and Wall Street.

Bryan had made three dramatic speeches, two of them against a background of fury, but one more occasion was in store for the Peerless Leader. Adopting the platform and roll call for nominations for the Vice-Presidency dragged on till long after midnight. The clerk finally reached the District of Columbia, next to last on the list, and a delegate arose.

> He nominated Mr. Bryan for vice president. The pause which ensued seemed to last ten minutes. It actually lasted ten seconds, and then came the wildest, most hysterical outburst of cheering that had marked the convention. From the delegates themselves, from the galleries, and from the dim recesses of the great, dust-filled building, there went up a roar that seemed like the whistle of a thousand locomotives merged into one. . . .[58]

> Bryan slowly mounted to the same spot where, a few days ago, he had denounced to their faces Murphy, Ryan and Belmont. He did not speak long, but every word he uttered will ever be remembered by those who heard it.

For simplicity, for sentiment, for sincerity, this impromptu utterance is a gem of oratory:

> Mr. Chairman and members of the convention: You have been so generous with me in the allowance of time that I had not expected to trespass upon your patience again, but the compliment that has been paid me by the gentleman from the District of Columbia justifies, I hope, a word in the form of a valedictory.
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> For sixteen years I have been a fighting man. Performing what I regarded as a public duty, I have not feared to speak out on every public question before the people of the nation for settlement, and I have not hesitated to arouse the hostility of individuals where I felt it was my duty to do so in behalf of my country.

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[57] Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

[58] Quoted in *Pittsburgh Press*, Bryan, *A Tale of Two Conventions*, pp. 203-4.

I have never advocated a man except with gladness and I have never opposed a man except in sadness. If I have any enemies in this country, those who are my enemies have a monopoly of hatred. There is not one single human being for whom I feel ill will. Nor is there one American citizen in my own party or in any other whom I would oppose for anything unless I believed that in not opposing him I was surrendering the interests of my country, which I hold above any person.

I recognize that a man who fights must carry scars and I decided long before this campaign commenced that I had been in so many battles and had alienated so many persons that my party ought to have the leadership of someone who had not thus offended and who might, therefore, lead with greater hope of victory.

Tonight I come with joy to surrender into the hands of the one chosen by this convention a standard which I have carried in three campaigns, and I challenge my enemies to say that it has ever been lowered in the face of the foe.

The same belief that led me to prefer another for the presidency rather than to be a candidate myself, leads me to prefer another for the vice presidency. It is not because the vice presidency is lower in importance than the presidency that I decline. There is no office in this nation so low that I would not accept it if I could serve my country by so doing. But I believe that I can render more service when I have not the embarrassment of a nomination and the suspicion of a self interest—more service than I could as a candidate, but your candidate will not be more active in this campaign than I shall be. My services are at the command of the party. I feel relieved that the burden of leadership is transferred to other shoulders.

All I ask is that, having given us a platform, the most progressive that any party has ever adopted in this nation, and having given us a candidate, who, I believe, will appeal not only to the Democratic vote but to some three or four million of Republicans who have been alienated by the policies of their party, there is but one thing left, and that is to give us a vice president who is also progressive, so that there will be no joint debate between our candidates.[59]

Baltimore was Bryan's finest hour.

[59] *Ibid.*