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Intra-Party Politics in the Election of 1880

Herbert Joseph Ryan
Loyola University Chicago

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INTRA-PARTY POLITICS IN THE
ELECTION OF 1880

by

Herbert J. Ryan, S. J.

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LIFE

Herbert Joseph Ryan, S. J. was born on February 19, 1931 at Sherbrooke Park, Scarsdale, New York.

He was graduated from L'Academie Mont St. Charles, Woonsocket, Rhode Island in June, 1949 and entered the Society of Jesus at Saint Andrew-on-Hudson July 30, 1949. He received his degree of Bachelor of Arts from West Baden College of Loyola University on June 2, 1954 and the Licentia in Philosophia (magna cum laude) from the same University on June 8, 1956. From 1953 until the present he has persued his historical studies under the direction of the Reverend Charles H. Metzger, S. J., M. A. (Oxon.), Ph. D.

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CHAPTER I

BEFORE THE CONVENTIONS

The student of political history rarely receives so fine an opportunity to practice the science of analysis and the art of synthesis as when he takes the principles he has culled from his lectures and applies them to the complex situation surrounding the Presidential election of 1880. What makes this election a truly rewarding study is not the complexity of its research problems, though these are challenging, nor even the fact that the winner of this bitter struggle, struck down by an assassin's bullet, ultimately lost what he had striven so hard to gain. This would be to exalt the difficult for no other reason than its difficulty or to give sensation and perhaps even sentimentality a day in the researcher's court that their case does not merit. Rather, the element of fascination comes in the intra-party politics displayed by both the Republican and the Democratic organizations. The ruthlessness of party discipline, the bitterness of personal animosities, the shallowness surrounding the contest for the highest office in the land, the almost total disregard for the interests of the nation as a whole, the mere lipservice to truth amid a howling roar of rhetoric, all these have an interest that is

always contemporary. Not that history teaches lessons: it can, but it usually does not. The fascination for the student of politics in the election of 1880 lies not in the extraction of didactic principles which may or may not be relevant to the present day, but rather, in the insight into human beings which this turbulent and confused period gives. Not that history repeats itself, for it most assuredly does not. Yet there is an element in the historical process that remains constant: human nature, and in the election of 1880 that constant element shows the full panoply of its manifestations.

At few times in American history have both major political parties been as badly split as in the months immediately prior to the nominating conventions of 1880. The only point that the Republican Party was united on was disappointment in Rutherford B. Hayes. The Republicans had manipulated Hayes to power in the contested election of 1876.¹ One month after his inauguration in 1877 the President recalled the troops from the South. By the end of April that year the Republican administrations in both South Carolina and Louisiana had fallen. The whole G. O. P. considered Hayes' action little short of

¹ Eugene H. Roseboom, A History of Presidential Elections (New York, 1957), pp. 248-49. cf. for full study Paul L. Haworth, The Hayes-Tilden Election (Indianapolis, 1906).

treason to the party.² But by far the most serious act of political folly that Hayes committed was to alienate the proud and powerful Senator Roscoe Conkling of New York.³

The Secretary of the Treasury, John Sherman, acting for Hayes, appointed a commission in the summer of 1877 to investigate the custom-house service in New York. The collector of customs there was Chester A. Arthur; the naval officer, Alonzo B. Cornell. Both of these men, although afterwards rewarded with national prominence, were at this time merely members of the Conkling machine. The committee which Sherman had appointed found abuses. Hayes determined to dismiss both Arthur and Cornell. Conkling, their political patron, flew into a rage. He interpreted the manoeuvre as a direct reprisal for his failure to work for Hayes during the campaign of 1876.⁴ Conkling had even gone so far that year as to admit that Tilden had really been elected. But "Lord Roscoe", as he had been dubbed by his fellow Senators, was wiser than to hinge his fight

²C. Vann Woodward, Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction (Boston, 1951), pp. 3-21; also Bernard, Hayes, pp. 387-93.

³The most balanced picture of this controversial man is Donald B. Chidsey, The Gentleman from New York: A Life of Roscoe Conkling (New Haven, 1935).

⁴Herbert J. Clancy, S.J., The Presidential Election of 1880 (Chicago, 1958), p. 24.

for his appointees on his personal popularity. He turned the Senate cloakroom into a political wigwam and warned his fellow Senators about the President's disregard of "senatorial courtesy". Each Senator caught the implication immediately. The real issue came down to the control of federal appointments.⁵ When the matter was finally put to the Senate, Conkling, having Arthur and Cornell upheld by a vote of thirty-five to twenty-one. Hayes however was not prepared to yield.⁶ In a special message to the Senate on January 31, 1879, he regarded it as his plain duty "to suspend the officers in question and to make the nominations now before the Senate, in order that this important office may be honestly and efficiently administered."⁷ After this message Conkling could not control the Senate. On February 3, 1879, the Senate upheld the new nominees: E. A. Merritt and Silas W. Burt. The new officers took up their posts on July 20, 1879, and Arthur and Cornell were dismissed. An infuriated Conkling pledged war to the death between himself and any man

⁵ Ibid., and cf. George F. Howe, Chester A. Arthur: A Quarter-Century of Machine Politics (New York, 1934), pp. 73-81.

⁶ Rutherford B. Hayes, The Diary and Letters of Rutherford Burchard Hayes, Edited by Charles R. Williams (Columbus, Ohio, 1922-26), vol. III, p. 454.

⁷ Chester A. Arthur, in Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, Edited by James D. Richardson (Washington, D.C., 1896-99), vol. VIII, pp. 511-12.

who should back Hayes.⁸

The Republican split was actually a three-way affair. The "Stalwarts" were ably represented by Conkling and were devoted to the interests of General Grant, even if it meant his running for a third term as President. The "Half-Breeds" were led by the "Plumed Knight", James G. Blaine. Their one element of unity was opposition to Conkling and everything he represented. The Liberals stood for Civil Service reform and flocked to the banner of Carl Shurz. As antithetical as were these groups their division was mild when compared to the Democrats.

One of the most controversial figures in the political history of New York was "Honest John" Kelly, the quondam Sachem of Tammany Hall. A devoted Catholic, the close friend of Bishop DuBois, Kelly had scored a meteoric rise with the part he played in wresting control of Tammany Hall from the Tweed Ring. Having gained control of the invincible tribe of Saint Tammany, Kelly ruled the politics of the City of New York in the seventies and early eighties of the last century. Even the wealthy and aloof Samuel Tilden was forced to send a congratulatory message to Kelly on election night in 1876. Tilden actually considered

⁸The best study of this complex affair is Venila Shores, The Hayes-Conkling Controversy (Northampton, Mass., 1919).

Kelly his sponsor and the fact was that Kelly had made Tilden Governor of New York, had secured for him the Democratic nomination in 1876 and had delivered the Empire State unquestionably into the column for Tilden in that contested election. But in 1880 all was not well between the "Old Man" and "Honest John".⁹

In 1878, Tilden, realizing that he could never dominate Tammany and smarting under the "sponsorship" of "Honest John" Kelly, thought his position secure enough to bolt Tammany and gain control of the Democratic machinery of New York State for himself. Tilden left Tammany and joined a rather obscure Democratic Club which had been founded in 1875 by the retired heavyweight John Morrissey.¹⁰ With Tilden in control of the formerly insignificant Irving Hall Democracy, Kelly's leadership and Tammany's dominance in New York City politics were severely challenged.

The first shot in the campaign between Tilden and Kelly was Tilden's removal of Henry A. Gumbleton, a Kelly man, as clerk of

⁹The story is accurately detailed in Matthew P. Breen, Thirty Years of New York Politics (New York, 1899), pp. 575-631. The role of Kelly's subordinates is depicted in Lothrop Stoddard, Master of Manhattan: The Life of Richard Croker (New York, 1931) pp. 53-80. A study favorable to Kelly is J. Fairfax McLaughlin, The Life and Times of John Kelly, Tribune of the People (New York, 1885).

¹⁰For Morrissey's rise to fame through his battles with Bill Poole whose subsequent murder is one of New York City's most infamous events cf. Stoddard, p. 32.

New York County, a position rich in patronage. Gumbleton had been dismissed by the Governor, Henry "Sore Eyes" Robinson. Robinson was a close associate of Tilden and was in fact Tilden's and the Irving Hall Democracy's candidate for a second term as Governor. Kelly and Tammany were backing General H. W. Slocum for the post. Gumbleton's dismissal did not leave "Honest John" in a conciliatory mood. Kelly and Tammany were ready to fight for their political lives.¹¹

Kelly attended the State Nominating Convention for the Governorship which was held at Weiting Opera House, Syracuse, New York, September 10 and 11, 1879. He openly declared that he would not support Robinson if "Sore Eyes" were nominated to serve a second term. After an eight hour struggle Robinson received the nomination and Kelly with the seventy-two Tammany controlled delegates walked out of the convention. The Tammany bolters met at Shakespeare Hall that same evening and nominated "Honest John" Kelly for Governor. On election day Kelly polled slightly more than 77,000 votes. He had no chance of winning yet he brought about the defeat of Robinson. Owing to Kelly's bolting the Party the Democrats lost in New York's gubernatorial

¹¹
De Alva S. Alexander, A Political History of the State of New York (New York, 1890), vol. III, pp. 418 et seq.

race in 1879 to the Republican Alonzo B. Cornell, Conkling's protege and the man whom President Hayes had dismissed but a few months before as naval officer of the port of New York. Tilden's Irving Hall Democracy had lost its state patronage and Kelly proved that he still controlled New York City. If the Democrats hoped to take New York in the Presidential election of 1880 a candidate acceptable to both Tilden and Kelly would have to be found.¹²

"Honest John" Kelly was not the only politician whose name was anathema to Tilden. The Old Man of Gramercy Park, though broken in health, retained a fierce resentment against any members of his own Democratic Party who had anything to do with the Electoral Commission of 1876. The most prominent Democratic conciliator and mediator during the disputed election was Thomas F. Bayard. The Senator from Delaware had ingratiated himself with the South throughout the trying days of Reconstruction and he counted on the votes of the Solid South to make him the Presidential nominee for the Democrats in the election of 1880. Though Bayard could count on the support of the South he realized that the split in New York and Tilden's opposition to him were ruining his chances for the nomination. Matters became even more complex when Montgomery Blair characterized Kelly as "the

¹² Clancy, S.J., pp. 60-64.

tool of the man who sold us out in 1876-7." This was a direct attack upon Bayard.¹³

The Democrats and the Republicans shared a common problem. Both parties were severely split and the break in party discipline was in New York State. What made New York so vital? New York State possessed thirty-five electoral votes. To the Republicans it was evident that the South would be solidly opposed to any candidate whom they brought forward. The thirty-five electoral votes of New York when joined with a safely Republican Pennsylvania and Illinois would offset the advantage of the Democrats' southern stronghold. Furthermore, New York's vote was imperative to the Democratic strategy. If the Republicans could get New York, the Democrats would find it almost impossible to win. For the Democrats New York was a crucial state and one in which the combined vote in the gubernatorial contest of 1879 of both the Tilden and Kelly wings of the Party far outweighed the Republican canvass.¹⁴

The Democratic strategy was clear. In 1880 the South could be counted on to give 138 electoral votes to almost any

¹³Charles C. Tansill, The Congressional Career of Thomas Francis Bayard, 1869-1885 (Washington, D.C., 1946), p. 281.

¹⁴A letter of William E. Chandler to Hayes in which Chandler forecast the strategy of the campaign is quoted in Howe, p. 116.

Democratic standard bearer. Two northern states were definitely Democratic in sympathy: Indiana, which possessed fifteen electoral votes, and New York with its thirty-five. The combined total of these electoral votes was one hundred and eighty-eight, three more than the Democrats needed to win the White House.¹⁵

It is clear why New York was of such vital concern to both the major parties in the election of 1880. Important though it was, both parties in New York State were divided by personal conflicts from the major sections of each of the national political parties. This was the political situation which faced the Republicans and the Democrats immediately prior to the struggle for the Presidency in the election of 1880. At few times in American history has intra-party politics played so important a role in a national election. Each Party understood that whoever could first close ranks in New York State would probably win. The first way to close ranks was to get a candidate acceptable to each wing of the divided New York organizations.

¹⁵Clancy, S.J., p. 64.

CHAPTER II

THE REPUBLICAN NOMINATION

The central campaign of 1880 was one to nominate General Ulysses S. Grant for a third term. The movement was begun by political leaders while the General was touring Europe and receiving ovations from the crowned heads of the continent in 1878. The politicians planned to capitalize on Grant's popularity in a dramatic fashion. The former Chief Executive was to remain in Europe until the eve of the nominating convention. Then he was to arrive amidst a grandiose and much-publicized welcome from the American people. His position in the spotlight on the public stage would then make his nomination relatively easy. But Grant, ignoring the importunities of his friends to remain abroad, arrived with his wife at San Francisco in December, 1879. The politicians, slightly dismayed at his premature arrival, nonetheless made the occasion a great one. As the former President moved across the country towards New York, dinners, parades, and receptions of welcome were tendered him; a grateful nation was paying tribute to its former Commander-in-Chief. Wisely no mention was publicly made at the time of a third

term by either Grant or the politicians.¹

Grant had coyly remarked to his aide, "I am not a candidate for any office, nor would I hold one that required any manoeuvring or sacrifice to obtain."² But John Russell Young, one of Grant's companions on his European tour, in a letter to Thomas Nast, reported that the General while still in Europe, "... was scheming for a third term."³ Regardless of his former intentions, Grant was convinced that his popular appeal might very well make his nomination possible at the Republican National Convention. There were two reasons which prompted Grant to allow himself to be a candidate. His triumphal world tour had cost over \$100,000 and the former President needed a source of income. Moreover, the glory of the Presidential office appealed to the man immensely.⁴

Unfortunately for Grant, the ovation was slightly over-done. The excessive touring and speaking (and as a speaker Grant was never adept) made his purpose too obvious. Consequently an immediate reaction to his candidacy set in and other party

¹William B. Hesseltine, Ulysses S. Grant, Politician (New York, 1935), pp. 430-42.

²Adam Badeau, Grant in Peace: From Appomatox to Mount McGregor (Hartford, 1887), p. 318.

³Letter from J. R. Young to Thomas Nast, February 6, 1879 quoted in Albert B. Paine, Thomas Nast: His Period and His Pictures (New York, 1904), p. 411.

⁴Hesseltine, Grant, p. 443.

leaders who desired the nomination began to campaign actively against him. The Republican press showed evidences of hostility toward his Presidential aspirations.⁵

The third-term movement had originated in New York under the tutelage of the violently anti-Hayes Senator Roscoe Conkling. Conkling had much to gain by Grant's election. He had already successfully defied the President and made the chastened Cornell Governor of New York State. State patronage was completely in Conkling's hands. Once he had made a President, complete control of the federal patronage for at least New York State would be his. For Grant obviously would not oppose him after seeing what had happened to Hayes.⁶

Conkling had completely dominated the Syracuse Convention in April and had secured a majority of the delegates from his state to vote for the nomination of Grant at Chicago,⁷ "Lord Roscoe" pushed a motion through the convention to instruct the delegation to vote as a unit for the majority choice.⁸ George W. Curtis, a bitter enemy of Conkling and the editor of Harper's Weekly, informed his readers that this motion to instruct the

⁵ New York Herald, April 6, 15, 26, 28, May 4, 8, 9, 11, 18 and New York Tribune, April 5, 16, 23, 28, May 5, 9, 11, 18.

⁶ Howe, pp. 101-3.

⁷ Chidsey, pp. 279-281.

⁸ New York Tribune, May 14, 1880.

delegates was passed only through trickery on the part of Conkling.⁹

Conkling was well assisted in the Grant movement by the former Governor of Illinois and the then Commander of the G. A. R., John A. Logan, and by Senator Don Cameron of Pennsylvania, both leaders in their respective states. Logan, by questionable tactics, obtained a majority of the Illinois delegation pledged to Grant.¹⁰ Cameron, serving out the remainder of his father's term as Senator, obtained a similar majority in the Pennsylvania State Delegation.¹¹ Upon the cooperation of this "triumvirate" depended Grant's nomination. These men, after all, represented the three most important states at the nominating convention. Despite their assiduous efforts, unity, which was essential to the success of the Republican strategy in these states to offset the "Solid South", could not be achieved. As early as May, one New York delegate signified his intention of voting for James

⁹ Harper's Weekly, May 29, 1880, p. 338.

¹⁰ Ibid., June 5, 1880, p. 370.

¹¹ Chidsey, p. 280.

G. Blaine.¹² Other delegates in the three "instructed" states seen followed in refusing to be bound by the unit rule in their state delegations. Outside of these three states, Grant's strength was mostly in the South; Arkansas, Texas and Alabama had also been instructed to vote as a unit for the former President.¹³ Grant's southern support was valuable for the nomination only, for all realized that the Republicans could not possibly carry any southern state after Hayes' action of 1877. In New England and the West General Grant's strength was negligible.

Meanwhile, the adverse publicity which the General was receiving prompted him to leave on a short tour of Central America in the hope that some of the hostility would subside before the June Convention. Another dramatic return was in the offing, this time from Cuba. But the "return from Elba", as the wags called it, did not change the sentiment against Grant. With the General away, opposition to his candidacy only increased. Anti-Third-Term Clubs were formed throughout the country and

¹²The delegate was William H. Robertson of Westchester County whose letter originally appeared in the Albany Journal on May 6, 1880 and came to general public attention when reprinted in The New York Times, May 15, 1880. It was later reprinted in The Appleton's Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1880 (New York 1881) p. 575. It was Robertson's appointment as Collector of the Port of New York by President Garfield as a political reward for this action that caused Conkling and Platt to resign from the U. S. Senate on May 16, 1881. cf. Howe, p. 103.

¹³New York Tribune, May 28, 1880.

the political stars of other potential candidates were in the ascendancy.

One of the most popular of these candidates groomed to defeat Grant was James G. Blaine, the Pennsylvania-born Senator from Maine. Blaine had lost the party nomination in 1876 as a result of the manipulations of his political enemy, Conkling, and he was eager to obtain it in 1880.¹⁴ Furthermore, he believed that he and other anti-third term groups could and must defeat Grant for the nomination. Blaine confided to his intimate friend, James A. Garfield, that he did not expect the nomination but that his opposition would at least prevent Grant from being the Republican standard-bearer, which, at the time he considered "quite probable".¹⁵ Despite Blaine's pessimistic outlook concerning his own nomination, Garfield believed that the Maine Senator was actually very confident of success at Chicago. Garfield personally hoped that Blaine would not be nominated because there was "an element in him" which he mistrusted.¹⁶

Blaine's opposition to a third term was based not on any

¹⁴David S. Muzsey, James G. Blaine: A Political Idol of Other Days (New York, 1934, p. 158.

¹⁵Garfield to his diary, May 23, 1880 quoted in Theodore Clarke Smith, Life and Letters of James Abram Garfield (New Haven 1925), vol. II, p. 957.

¹⁶Garfield to his diary, April 14, 1880 quoted in Ibid., vol. II, p. 957.

deep respect for tradition but merely on expediency. He considered Grant a liability to the Party. The General was a military man and Blaine believed that the "Bloody Shirt" was a dead issue. The scandals of his two administrations were fresh enough in the public mind to be revived by the Democrats as a campaign issue. Furthermore, Blaine believed that the voters would not elect anyone for a third term. Probably most important in Blaine's mind was the added reason that Roscoe Conkling of New York was for Grant. Whatever Conkling was for, Blaine was against. It was simply a matter of principle.¹⁷

This type of reasoning was not Blaine's alone. Thurlow Weed believed Grant's nomination politically inexpedient and defended the action of New York Republicans who refused to vote for Conkling's conquering General.¹⁸

Several New England and Mid-Western States had pledged their delegates to vote for Blaine at Chicago. He had the advantage of being favored to some extent in all sections of the country. Yet his supporters were irritated by his reluctance to act and speak openly in behalf of his own candidacy.¹⁹

¹⁷James G. Blaine, Twenty Years of Congress (Norwich, 1886,) vol. II, pp. 657-672.

¹⁸Thurlow Weed, Autobiography of Thurlow Weed (Cambridge, Mass. 1884), vol. II, pp. 543-546.

¹⁹Muzzey, pp. 164-167.

Ohio's favorite son was the veteran Congressman and Secretary of the Treasury, John Sherman. Sherman readily admitted that he had "the natural ambition to attain such a distinction."²⁰ However, he would not consent to have his name presented to the convention unless he received "substantial endorsement" by the Ohio Republican delegates. When that body convened in April, 1880 they elected a majority of delegates pledged to his nomination at Chicago. A small but loquacious minority demurred from the convention's choice. Sherman solicited his friend, General Garfield, to be his campaign manager. Garfield consented, according to his biographer, to avoid being nominated himself and to prevent the nomination of Grant.²¹ Actually, however, Garfield accepted Sherman's campaign leadership "without enthusiasm" because he did not believe that Sherman had "much of a chance, if any, of the nomination."²² Garfield believed that Sherman was popular only in Ohio and that he also was disliked by Blaine. Realizing these disadvantages, Sherman confessed that he himself did not consider his nomination possible except as a compromise candidate between Blaine and Grant.²³

²⁰ John Sherman, Recollections of Forty Years in the House, Senate and Cabinet (Chicago, 1895), vol. II, p. 766.

²¹ T. C. Smith, vol. II, p. 946.

²² Ibid., vol. II, p. 954 and 957.

²³ J. Sherman, vol. II, p. 768.

If no majority could be obtained for either of these men, it was believed that the delegates might turn to Sherman.²⁴

It seems strange that this opinion could have been expressed in the papers of the day and actually believed by Sherman himself. The problem which the Republicans had was to find a candidate acceptable to both Conkling and Blaine. It was Sherman who acted for Hayes in the dismissal of Arthur and Cornell.²⁵ Although Sherman campaigned in New York for Cornell in the gubernatorial race of 1879, Sherman had not won Conkling's favor. "Lord Roscoe" considered Sherman's part in the Cornell campaign as owed in justice, a testimony, as it were, to ease Sherman's conscience. Sherman had failed to win over Conkling but by helping him vindicate Cornell he had definitely alienated Blaine.²⁶ It was obvious that Sherman would not be the compromise candidate. It was true that he was not in either camp but the reason for that was that he was acceptable to neither. The only influence that Sherman could have had was with Carl Shurz's Liberals. Most of the Liberals, however, became disgusted with him after his bending to Conkling, the arch-enemy of Civil

²⁴The New York Times, May 15, 1880 and New York Tribune, May 15, 1880.

²⁵Howe, pp. 76-92.

²⁶Ibid., p. 91.

Service reform, in actively campaigning for a man whom he had dismissed from office for incompetence and dishonesty.²⁷

Sherman had other liabilities. The anti-Sherman forces in Ohio accused the Secretary of dispensing offices in such a manner as to further his own nomination, particularly of using the patronage to appoint several Roman Catholics to positions in the Treasury Department. This charge came from the frenzied brain of the bigoted Edwin Cowles, the Editor of the Cleveland Leader and president of the Order of the American Union. Bishop Richard Gilmour of Cleveland characterized the Cleveland Leader as a sheet of such a kind that there was "nothing too vile nor too false for its columns."²⁸ On August 22, 1878 Cardinal Simeoni, Prefect of the Propaganda, wrote Cardinal Gibbons and asked him to investigate the O. A. U. Gibbons contacted Gilmour but the Bishop of Cleveland could not secure a copy of the order's constitution. The Bishop, however, answered the Cardinal that the organization was so anti-Catholic he was sure that no practicing Catholic held membership.²⁹

The Sherman collection is filled with letters of the type

²⁷Clancy, S. J., p. 35.

²⁸Msgr. John T. Ellis, The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons (Milwaukee, 1952), vol. I, pp. 444-45.

²⁹Ibid., vol. I, p. 445.

that William H. Van Nortwick, an old friend and frequent correspondent, sent to Sherman on March 22, 1880. The occasion for the letter was a speech probably given by Cowles himself at a meeting of the O. A. U.

Political Romanism aims to destroy our system of public education---that system once overthrown, the destruction of civil and religious liberty must inevitably follow. If Sherman should attain to the Presidency, his brother's wife the most bitter and active Catholic in the country would have unlimited influence with the Administration and the politico-religious organization of Rome would profit thereby.³⁰

As late as May, 1880 Cowles was still haunted by the spectre of Sherman using the Presidential cloak to cover the dark dealings of "Political Romanism". But this did not stop Cowles, who was a close and devoted friend of Garfield, from urging Sherman's campaign manager to exert his influence on Sherman to have an O. A. U. member reinstated in his job at the Treasury Department.³¹ Was it blackmail or a test to see if Sherman's vehement denials of Catholic sentiment were actually true? Despite Sherman's continued denial of Catholic leanings, Cowles had accomplished his purpose.³² Sherman would never get the nomination and Garfield, Cowles' friend, knew it.³³

³⁰Clancy, S.J., p. 40.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 40, footnote 57 quotes a letter of Cowles to Garfield, May 25, 1880.

³²J. Sherman, vol. II, p. 775.

³³Robert G. Caldwell, James A. Garfield (New York, 1931), pp. 278-283.

As the convention approached Sherman sensed that his popularity had declined. Yet Garfield never advised him of this fact. Sherman himself thought that his cause was suffering from the friendly attitude of the Ohio delegation towards Blaine.³⁴ Subsequent statements by members of that delegation seemed to bear out Sherman's contention.³⁵ It appeared on the surface that the Ohio delegation would support Sherman while his nomination seemed possible, but they were most amenable to Blaine's selection if it seemed more likely to be successful in defeating General Grant. Political expediency, again, would dictate their vote. Sherman, like Blaine, was determined to prevent Grant's nomination.³⁶

There was an undercurrent in the Ohio delegation that never got into the papers of the day. The politicians realized that Grant, Blaine or Sherman would never heal the splits in the Republican ranks. Cowles, despite his blindness and prejudice in matters of religion, was an astute observer of the political scene. His influence with the Ohio delegation was large and through his office in the O. A. U. he maintained a network of

³⁴J. Sherman, vol. II, p. 771.

³⁵New York Tribune, May 31, 1880.

³⁶Thomas Collier Platt, The Autobiography of Thomas Collier Platt, Edited by Louis J. Lang (New York, 1910), p. 113.

information and pressure that was almost nationwide. His power in Pennsylvania was even more extensive than in his native Ohio. Cowles favored his intimate friend, Garfield, for the nomination, and during the convention Cowles' influence was felt and felt decisively.³⁷

Massachusetts made known its determination to resist the nomination of Grant by sending a delegation pledged to support Senator George F. Edmunds of Vermont. Edmunds' strength lay with the Liberal wing of the G. O. P. However, Edmunds did not want the nomination. Publicly at least, he was supporting Grant.³⁸

The Massachusetts delegation realized that Edmunds was not a strong candidate, but his nomination would limit Grant's strength in the convention. His reputation for honesty and frugality appealed to party Liberals who disliked the General. What is more, Curtis, the Editor of the influential Harper's Weekly, regarded Edmunds as the best compromise candidate.³⁹ Curtis' endorsement was the veritable kiss of death. Whomever Curtis favored the unforgiving Conkling opposed.⁴⁰

³⁷T. C. Smith, pp. 951-956 and cf. Clancy, S.J., pp. 39-40, p. 91 footnote 27 and pp. 173-74.

³⁸Selig Adler, The Senatorial Career of George F. Edmunds, 1866-1891 (Urbana, Illinois, 1934), p. 6.

³⁹Harper's Weekly, May 22, 1880, p. 322.

⁴⁰T. C. Platt, pp. 93-95. For cause of bad feeling cf. Chidsey, 281.

Edmunds was out of the race before he was even in it. Did Curtis purposely ruin Edmunds' chances by endorsing him?

Curtis was acquainted with the undercurrents of Republican intra-party politics. His correspondence with political leaders was wide and his friendships many and deep. Among his intimates the Senator from Vermont was not numbered. Edwin Cowles and George William Curtis were thick and fast friends. They saw eye to eye on the important issues of the day, and what is more important they shared a common close friendship with James A. Garfield. Garfield would later risk the entire campaign by insisting that George Curtis be present at the famous Fifth Avenue Conference that mapped the campaign strategy in New York. So infuriated was Conkling at the thought of having to meet Curtis, sit down with him and listen to his thoughts on the campaign that Conkling made Garfield choose between his or Curtis' presence. Garfield chose Curtis and Conkling did not attend the policy session.⁴¹

Elihu B. Washburne of Illinois was mentioned as a candidate for the Republican nomination. Very early in 1880, however, he had written to a friend that he would not "under any circumstances

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 126-27 and cf. Clancy, S.J. p. 191. This was Whitelaw Reid's explanation of Conkling's absence from the famous Fifth Avenue Conference. cf. Garfield MSS., letter from W. Reid to Garfield, August 15, 1880.

be considered a Candidate for president. I am for Gn'l Grant." He commented that his relations with General Logan of Illinois "have always been friendly."⁴² However, his small support in Illinois was not calculated to obtain the nomination for him but rather to secure the German-American vote for the G. O. P. As Minister to France during the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, Washburne made a successful effort to protect German citizens in Paris. This had won him the respect and admiration of German-Americans. The candidacy of Washburne was connected with the sentiment of the German-American citizens of New York State. This group was known to be opposed to Grant and the third term.⁴³ Washburne's nomination would be certain to upset the instructed delegation from New York and cause trouble not only for Grant but for Conkling as well.

William Windom, Garfield and even Conkling were also mentioned as potential nominees but conducted no public canvass

⁴² Washburne MSS: Dreer Collection of Presidents, Pennsylvania Historical Society (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), Washburne to H. W. Jenkins, January 16, 1880. For Grant's view of Washburne cf. Badeau, p. 322. For Hoar's view of the differences between Grant and Washburne cf. George F. Hoar, Autobiography of Seventy Years (New York, 1903), vol. I, pp. 237-38.

⁴³ Chidsey, p. 280.

for their own nominations.⁴⁴ Their names were mentioned chiefly in connection with a deadlocked convention.

Despite the growing popularity of Blaine to the detriment of Grant, the New York Tribune claimed that the various state conventions had given the General a majority of their delegates. However, he still lacked one hundred and fifty votes necessary for the nomination. Thus the Tribune remained bitterly opposed to Grant.⁴⁵ As the convention approached, the editorials reveled in predicting a Blaine victory on the first or second ballot. Readers were told that Grant's strength was ebbing while that of his opponents was growing steadily.⁴⁶ This inconsistency of the Tribune was in all probability a strange combination of fear and hope: fear that Grant would be nominated and hope that he would be defeated. On the eve of the nominating convention, The New York Times assured its readers that Grant would be nominated just as surely as Blaine and Sherman would be defeated.⁴⁷

One of the most interesting and vituperative critics of

⁴⁴T. C. Smith, vol. II, p. 953. For Conkling's reaction to rumours of his candidacy cf. Chidsey, p. 279.

⁴⁵New York Tribune, May 21, 1880.

⁴⁶Ibid., May 31, 1880 and June 4, 1880.

⁴⁷The New York Times, June 1, 1880.

Grant's candidacy was James Gordon Bennett, Editor of the New York Herald. His editorials admonished the General, who he claimed was "over-mastered by ambition", to withdraw from the race and support his former Secretary of State, Hamilton Fish. Bennett proposed Fish as the logical candidate since only he or Conkling could, in the flamboyant Editor's opinion, carry New York State in November. "Most assuredly", he wrote "the ex-president cannot wish a nomination that would lead to inevitable defeat at the polls."⁴⁸ But Grant remained in the race and Fish supported his former chief for the nomination. Bitter at Fish's failure to be a candidate, Bennett consistently made dire predictions that a third term would change the Republic into an Empire. Readers were also told, in a rather amusing editorial, that "... if the Republican leaders adopt the third term, they will be snowed under in November so deep that it will be in another geological age that they will be dug out." Even in the face of his opposition to Grant and despite his predictions, Bennett believed the tide of the Grant movement too great to stem. As early as May, the Herald announced, "We no longer have any doubt that General Grant will be triumphantly nominated at Chicago on the first ballot."⁴⁹ This would be possible only

⁴⁸ New York Herald, May 19, 1880.

⁴⁹ Ibid., June 1, 1880.

on the assumption that Sherman and Blaine would withdraw and throw their support to Grant. The Herald, like the Times, had underestimated the strength and determination of the anti-Grant forces.

Regardless of the predictions of the press, a few facts were clear to the observant followers of the campaign. Grant's nomination would not be easily accomplished. Many were the politicians who were pondering the question whether Grant's popularity was great enough to erase the scandals emanating from his previous administrations. It was evident that the Liberals and the Half-Breeds could not be ignored in order to obtain the conservative and soldier vote for Grant. A compromise candidate had to be found who would appeal to this element of the voting public and at the same time win Conkling's and Blaine's support. Further, it was clear that the first ballots would be inconclusive apart from determining the numerical strength of the Stalwarts and the Half-Breeds. All evidence pointed to the fact that the delegates would support candidates against Grant rather than for their particular "favorite sons". The stage was set for a dark horse and the convention itself would be long and marked with "strong and fierce antagonisms".⁵⁰

⁵⁰ T. C. Smith, vol. II, p. 960 quoting letter of Garfield to his wife, May 30, 1880.

When the delegates to the Republican National Convention met on June 2 in Chicago, the galleries were crowded with those anxious to witness the outcome of the third-term movement. The Conkling faction was more determined than ever to nominate Grant. They realized that in order to accomplish this they must change the procedure of voting in the convention. Three hundred and seventy-nine votes were necessary to nominate, and Grant had only three hundred and six pledged when the convention opened. If each delegate voted individually, as was the custom, there would be more than enough anti-Grant votes to prevent his nomination. Even in states where Grant had a majority, the loss of the minority vote would prevent his being selected. For example, the Illinois delegation contained eighteen anti-Grant men; Pennsylvania had twenty-six opposed to him; and the New York delegation had nineteen. In these important states alone, then, the General would lose sixty-three votes.⁵¹ The Conkling faction hoped to avoid this loss by having the convention adopt the unit rule in voting.⁵² Under that rule, each state would be required to cast its entire vote for the candidate having a majority of

⁵¹ Howe, p. 104.

⁵² Alfred R. Conkling, The Life and Letters of Roscoe Conkling (New York, 1889), p. 588. cf. Chidsey, p. 281.

that state's votes. Then, the sixty-three anti-Grant votes in Illinois, Pennsylvania and New York would be cast for Grant since he had a majority of the delegates in those states.⁵³ His total vote would then have been three hundred and sixty-nine, and the South, voting as a unit, would supply the remainder necessary to nominate him. Success was entirely dependent upon the adoption of the unit rule. The New York Times was so confident of Grant victory that it believed the unit rule was unnecessary. Grant, so the paper claimed, would receive sufficient "floating votes" to secure his nomination even if the members of the convention voted individually.⁵⁴ The General's supporters were less confident than the press. They were too skilled politically to pass over the unit rule as a means of immediate success. This was not the first time that the leaders from Pennsylvania and New York had waged a fight for the unit rule. The convention of 1876, after much political infighting, had voted against the adoption of the unit rule.⁵⁵

The anti-Grant faction was well aware of Conkling's strategy. They fought against the imposition of the unit rule

⁵³ Hoar, vol. I, p. 389-90.

⁵⁴ The New York Times, June 2, 1880.

⁵⁵ Howe, p. 104.

with consummate political skill. William E. Chandler, Blaine's manager at the convention, and James A. Garfield, ostensibly to protect Sherman's interests, championed the anti-Grant forces in the battle against the unit rule.⁵⁶ Chandler and Garfield knew that Conkling's plan was to seat Senator Cameron, Republican National Chairman, as the Temporary Chairman of the convention. Cameron, of course, would insist upon using the unit rule. He needed it to stifle the opposition within the ranks of his own Pennsylvania delegation. If Cameron were Temporary Chairman of the convention even the vote on the use of the unit rule itself would be taken by the unit rule since the Chairman determined the method of voting on a resolution.⁵⁷

The contest over the unit rule lasted three days. The first phase of the anti-Grant campaign was a brilliant political manoeuvre engineered by Garfield. A former Senator from Wisconsin, Timothy O. Howe, convinced the Sergeant-at-Arms of the convention, Colonel William E. Strong of Illinois, that if the National Committee elected a new Chairman to replace Senator Cameron the Sergeant-at-Arms would be legally bound to recognize the new Chairman as the official who had charge of the convention.

⁵⁶ New York Tribune, May 31, 1880.

⁵⁷ Clancy, S.J., p. 84, cf. T. C. Smith, vol. II, p. 964.

To protect his position as Chairman of the National Committee, Senator Cameron agreed to the appointment of Senator George F. Hoar of Massachusetts as Temporary Chairman of the convention.⁵⁸ Senator Hoar was a supporter of Edmunds of Vermont and was considered a neutral in the Stalwart and Half-Breed split.⁵⁹ Hoar, however, was opposed to the unit rule. Among the first pieces of business that Hoar tackled was the selection of chairman for the committees. William E. Chandler was elected to head the Committee on Credentials and Garfield was chosen as chairman of the vital Committee on Rules.⁶⁰

Garfield and Chandler had won the first round but Conkling rallied his forces for a fight on the floor of the convention itself. However bravely Conkling was fighting for Grant, the General was informed by John Russell Young that the time had come for him to yield with grace rather than to fight for the nomination and go down to certain defeat. Grant wrote to Cameron and asked him to authorize his friends, when they saw fit, to withdraw his name from the convention.⁶¹ Young was a close friend of John Sherman's brother, the famous William Tecumseh Sherman, and in all likelihood, Sherman and his manager, Garfield, knew

⁵⁸Chidsey, p. 283 and Hoar, vol. I, pp. 390-392.

⁵⁹Howe, p. 104.

⁶⁰T. C. Smith, vol. II, pp. 966-969 and Chidsey, p. 283.

⁶¹Badeau, pp. 321-22.

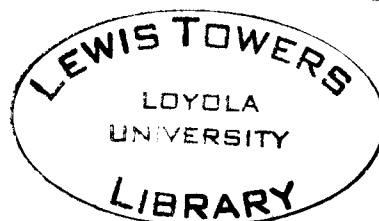
of Grant's letter to Cameron.⁶² Garfield redoubled his efforts against Conkling, delivered a brilliant rebuttal to one of Conkling's resolutions which was before the convention and forced "Lord Roscoe" to withdraw the resolution.⁶³ During Garfield's masterful speech Conkling wrote him a note which Garfield saved and is now in the Garfield Manuscript Collection in the Library of Congress. Senator Conkling wrote, "New York requests that Ohio's real candidate and dark horse come forward. We want him in our seats while we prepare our ballots."⁶⁴ It is impossible to determine whether this note was a piece of Conkling sarcasm, an overture for compromise or a threat. At any event, it showed Conkling's astuteness.

Clever though he was, Conkling still was not prepared to yield. He asked the Chairman if the Committees were prepared to report to the convention. They had been formed only the night before and it would have been remarkable if they had been ready. Conkling thought that he could win, or, at least, make a point in any event. If the Committees had been prepared he could charge them with railroading a program. If the anti-Grant controlled Committees were not prepared he at least would embarrass

⁶²Clancy, S.J., p. 87.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 91-93.

⁶⁴Conkling, p. 592 and T. C. Smith, vol. II, p. 972 seem not to have consulted Garfield MSS, R. C. to Garfield, June, 1880 as quoted in Clancy, S.J. p. 92.



them before the press and gallery. Garfield and Chandler were equal to the occasion.

Eugene Hale, a Blaine Half-Breed from Maine, arose and asked the convention to table Conkling's resolution which asked to adjourn the convention "until it was ready for business at six o'clock this evening." The resolution was tabled and Conkling could not make his point. Furthermore this protected the Committees from working under the threat of a deadline and gave them more time to work or negotiate with the Grant men in the absence of Conkling who was forced to remain on the floor of the convention lest the Committees report in his absence. Garfield retired to his suite at the Grant Pacific Hotel to let Conkling swelter in the hot and crowded convention hall until seven-thirty that evening.⁶⁵

Finally, the Committees reported. It was evident from the majority reports that the unit rule would be defeated. The minority reports supported Conkling fully. Green R. Raum of Illinois, an associate of former Governor Logan made a telling point for the Stalwarts when he quoted from the minutes of the Illinois Convention of the Republican Party in 1860 the following resolution.

⁶⁵ Proceedings of the Republican National Convention Held in Chicago, Illinois, June 2-8, 1880 (Chicago, 1881), p. 43.

Resolved, that Abraham Lincoln is the choice of the Republican party of Illinois for the Presidency, and the delegates from this State are instructed to use all honorable means to secure his nomination by the Chicago Convention, and to vote as a unit for him.⁶⁶

Once the Committees had reported, a seemingly indefatigable Conkling was on his feet and protesting the majority reports in speech after speech. He was movingly eloquent and the sympathy of the gallery was with him. The question of the entire discussion was whether a state convention had the right to override the decision of a district convention and to send as delegates to the national convention men elected by the state conventions without regard to the elections of the district groups. This was actually the unit rule in different words. Though the principles involved in this discussion differed slightly from the unit rule controversy, in the practical realm the discussion was the unit rule debate in other terms. The state conventions in Illinois, Pennsylvania and New York had ignored the district conventions and had elected delegates themselves. The majority of these delegates favored the unit rule. By refusing in every instance to seat delegates elected by state conventions whose credentials were challenged by the district convention the

⁶⁶Clancy, S.J., p. 50.

anti-Grant faction would eliminate many delegates pledged to the unit rule.⁶⁷ Conkling demanded that each case be voted on separately. Hoar, as Chairman of the Convention, exercised his right to determine the method of voting to be used in settling the question of seating the contested delegates. Hoar did not choose the unit rule. Each individual was to vote in every case. The process was time-consuming in the extreme for the entire convention had to be polled in the case of each contested delegate. Conkling fought for each delegate. It was twenty minutes past two o'clock on the morning of Saturday, June 5, before the voting was over and the convention adjourned. Conkling's candidate had been defeated in every case.⁶⁸

Friday, June 4, had seen sixteen hours of eventful intra-party politics. When informed of the happenings of that day President Hayes confided to his diary that Grant's nomination was impossible.⁶⁹ The Cincinnati Commercial reported to its readers on Saturday, June 5, that the crucial point in the convention had been passed and that the third term movement had been stopped. The unit rule had been buried and the man who had killed it had risen in political prominence to a status far

⁶⁷ Proceedings of Republican National Convention, pp. 43-127.

⁶⁸ Clancy, S.J., p. 94.

⁶⁹ Hayes, vol. III, p. 600. Hayes to his diary, June 5, 1880.

above that of a dark horse. Observers were not slow to note the emerging power of James A. Garfield.⁷⁰

Conkling knew that he had lost a battle but he still tried to win the war. His plan was simple. He would remain quiet during the discussion and voting on the platform to be adopted for the coming campaign. When the nominations would be presented to the convention he would ignite a demonstration in favor of Grant which would be so impressive that Grant would sweep to victory on a tide of enthusiasm. It was a desperate measure but Conkling was an able organizer, one of the finest speakers in American public life and an actor with a flare for the dramatic which was almost on the level of genius. Conkling silently steeled himself for one of the greatest efforts of his career.⁷¹

The first candidate to be presented to the convention was James G. Blaine. The gallery, remembering Ingersoll's famed speech in 1876 which even at that time was considered a classic of American oratory, waited in breathless excitement to hear another masterpiece which would echo down through history. But instead of another speech to take its place alongside the incomparable Plumed Knight speech, the convention heard a singularly unimpressive millionaire from Detroit, James F. Joy,

⁷⁰Clancy, S.J., p. 94.

⁷¹Chidsey, p. 282.

stammer his way ineptly through an inadequate outline of Blaine's political career. Joy ended his inaudible effort by apologizing for having been "longer than I intended."⁷²

The speech was a disaster for Blaine. There was no applause, no demonstration such as there had been in 1876. Ingersoll sat silent on the platform and William E. Chandler regretted his mistake in not having the "Eloquent Atheist", as Henry Ward Beecher characterized him, nominate Blaine for the second time. Conkling was visibly pleased at Joy's blundering attempt and relished the embarrassed silence in the Half-Breed camp.⁷³

The next name offered in nomination was that of Senator William Windom of Minnesota. E. F. Drake, a delegate from that State spent only three minutes in his forthright speech reviewing Senator Windom's twenty years in Congress.⁷⁴ The convention grew more restless. When New York was called General William A. Logan, to the delight of the gallery, mounted the speaker's platform.

The General motioned a band which had begun to play during his march to the rostrum to be silent. In an atmosphere of

⁷²Proceedings of Republican National Convention, pp. 175-77.

⁷³Chauncey M. Depew, My Memoirs of Eighty Years (New York, 1922), p. 121.

⁷⁴Proceedings of Republican National Convention, p. 179.

staged goodwill, the National Commander of the GAR, in a deep and loud voice began his brief speech. "In the name of loyalty, of liberty, of humanity and justice I nominate Ulysses S. Grant for President."⁷⁵ The cheering which followed this brief statement was long and loud. It set the stage for Conkling. Disdaining to mount to the rostrum Conkling leaped up on a table and motioned the assembled crowd to be silent. His tall, immaculately clad figure stood out imposingly against the red, white and blue bunting that draped the speaker's platform. Conkling was easily recognized and a hush fell on the audience.

Conkling stood like a statue. Impassive, imperially handsome, he enjoyed the undivided attention of each of the ten thousand people in the hall. In measured, melodic tones he rolled out the opening lines of Miles O'Reilly's famous verse:

If asked what state he hails from
 Our sole reply shall be
 He hails from Appomattox
 And its famous apple tree!⁷⁶

The response was deafening. Roars of approval welled up from the benches on the floor and poured down from the gallery above. The convention was held in the hollow of Conkling's

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 179 and Clancy, S.J., p. 98.

⁷⁶ Conkling, p. 597. Miles O'Reilly was the pseudonym of Adjutant General Charles G. Halpine. cf. Chidsey, p. 423.

hand. He pressed a finger to his lips and like a group of obedient school children the crowd responded.

Conkling continued what was to prove the finest speech of his long career. In elegantly rounded periods "Lord Roscoe" sent broadside after broadside whistling over his opponents' heads. He mixed the magic of rhetoric with the salt of sarcasm in a dazzling display of forensic skill. He scolded the opponents of the unit rule in mock heroics, broke a lance on the Plumed Knight by reminding his listeners that with Grant as their candidate there would be nothing to explain away, and charged threateningly that Grant and only Grant could carry New York in November. In the light of Republican strategy this was a point well made. But Conkling was far from through. In precise, well-enunciated phrases he proceeded to refute the charges of the anti-third term faction. He asked dramatically if Solomon himself would not be dumbfounded at the reasoning of the Republicans, who because they had tried Grant twice and found him faithful, refused to trust him now. Conkling swung out at Curtis and Schurz, who had threatened to bolt to Bayard, and came to his peroration. He maintained, amid the mirth of the gallery crowd, that the only people who were disquieted about a third term were those who sought a first term.⁷⁷

⁷⁷Proceedings of Republican National Convention, pp. 179-182.

His conclusion was as stirring as his speech had been telling. Conkling paused for the audience to grow serious again. When quiet was restored he said:

Gentlemen, we have only to listen above the din and look beyond the dust of an hour, to behold the Republican party advancing, with its ensigns resplendent with illustrious achievement, marching to certain and lasting victory, with its greatest Marshall at its head.⁷⁸

For forty-five minutes Exposition Hall was filled with applause, wild, deafening applause and shouting for Grant. There were marches in the aisle, bands played different tunes: even a fife-and-drum corps added to the din. The convention was in utter bedlam. Conkling had not been just good, he was magnificent. Veteran political observers would recall the scene years later and pronounce it unique. It was Conkling's finest hour. Many believed that if the balloting could have taken place immediately Grant would have been swept into the nomination.⁷⁹ But this was not to be.

Conkling's speech had been a work of art, wonderously delivered, its effect electrifying. Yet it failed in its major purpose. True, it had triggered an unparalleled display for Grant and had won the gallery's heart for it was just such a speech the crowd had come to hear. The Senator from New York, however, had given no ground, promised no compromise, asked no

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 182.

⁷⁹Clancy, S.J., pp. 100-01.

quarter. Since he had asked none he received none. The anti-Grant faction, once the excitement was over, closed ranks. They had been stung by Conkling's barbed remarks. There was a tone of bitterness about their conversation for they had been verbally spanked like bad little boys. They were all ears for the honeyed words of the speaker they expected to appease them and they were not disappointed in James A. Garfield.⁸⁰

At the convention Garfield had had no time to prepare his speech for the nomination of John Sherman and he regretted that he had not written it before coming to Chicago.⁸¹ Yet he was a fluent and forceful man, possessing a voice that carried a tone of sincerity and that projected a quality of honesty and simplicity.⁸² If the convention was to be an orators' forum Garfield was well equipped to match Conkling.

The Senator from Ohio began his speech in a slow and deliberate manner. The opening paragraph contained no such flashes of oratorical brilliance that had won the house for Conkling. Garfield paused and asked a rhetorical question.

⁸⁰ Howe, pp. 106-07.

⁸¹ Letter from Garfield to his wife, June 2, 1880, quoted in T. C. Smith, vol. II, pp. 975-76.

⁸² Caldwell, p. 52. Garfield's career as a preacher and public debater had perfected his excellent voice even before his Congressional career began.

"What do we want?" A loud voice was heard near the speaker's platform with almost suspicious alacrity. "We want Garfield."⁸³ No one took up the cry and the Senator continued. If the anti-Grant faction wanted oil for their wounds they got it and much more. Garfield's speech was a measured, reasoned appeal for party unity. He answered Conkling softly. Never once was there even a hint of sarcasm. It was a friendly, gentle speech but unfortunately for Sherman's friends, Garfield had almost nothing to say about John Sherman. Many of the delegates did not even know whom he was nominating. Garfield had spoken for fifteen minutes and when he finally reached the sixteenth paragraph of his encomium of "peace and unity" he mentioned Sherman for the first time. When he did nominate Sherman Garfield presented his name in a very strange way. He offered the convention Sherman "not as a better Republican or a better man than thousands of others. . . , but . . . for deliberate and favorable consideration."⁸⁴

The speech was hardly calculated to produce wild enthusiasm for the Secretary of the Treasury. Sherman's friends were audibly disappointed.⁸⁵ Sherman was informed by letter of

⁸³ Proceedings of Republican National Convention, p. 184 and cf. comment in T. C. Smith, vol. II, p. 976.

⁸⁴ Proceedings of Republican National Convention, pp. 184-86.

⁸⁵ Clancy, S.J., p. 103.

Garfield's "treason". Governor Foster of Ohio was accused of conspiring to bring Garfield out as a candidate in the hope that he might succeed to Garfield's Senate seat. One thing was certain. Sherman's candidacy had taken a back seat and the speech had established Garfield as a conciliator in the intra-party wrangle that the convention had turned out to be. Garfield had led the anti-Grant forces with skill in combating the unit rule. Now he was playing the role of peace-maker and placed himself before the convention as a man who looked more to the good of the Party as a whole than towards any particular faction. The speech disappointed the Sherman delegates but appealed to practically everyone else. Whatever Garfield's motives were this speech increased his already considerable prestige with the convention.⁸⁶

Though it was close to midnight two more names were submitted to the delegates for them to consider for the nomination. Frederick Billings of Vermont nominated in a very short speech Senator George F. Edmunds.⁸⁷ The next name put before the convention was that of Elihu B. Washburne of Illinois. John B.

⁸⁶ Hoar, vol. II, p. 393 and Howe, pp. 106-07.

⁸⁷ Proceedings of Republican National Convention, pp. 190-91.

Cassoday, chairman of the Wisconsin delegation, eulogized the former Ambassador both for the favors he had done for Grant and for the part he had played in helping the Germans stranded in Paris during the Franco-Prussian War.⁸⁸ This theme was developed further by Augustus Brandegee in his speech seconding Washburne's nomination. Brandegee cleverly pointed out the fact that New York City alone had one hundred and fifty thousand citizens of German origin. Brandegee predicted that Washburne if nominated would carry four-fifths of the so-called German vote.⁸⁹ At this point Conkling shook his head vigorously in dissent. Until then Brandegee and the other speakers had refrained from direct references to Conkling. "Lord Roscoe" had obviously offended the New Londoner and Brandegee ripped into him.

The gentleman from New York shakes his head. He shakes his head magnificently. No man can shake it like him, nor shake such rhetoric and wisdom out of it. But let me tell the gentleman from New York he cannot sit down at the ear of every voter and give the argument that he has given tonight against the tradition of our fathers. . . Does he not know---no one knows so well as he--- that the name of Grant would carry this Convention through by storm if there were not an invincible argument against his nomination? 90

The point was well made and Conkling knew it. His strategy for a Grant stampede had gone awry. It was early Sunday morning

⁸⁸Ibid., pp. 191-93.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 194.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 194.

and the balloting would not commence until Monday. The last words the delegates heard ringing in their ears carried a sober refutation to Conkling's masterful speech. Brandegee had stated what none of the Grant men wanted to hear. His sober tone, the soundness of his argument, the assurance and conviction of his voice gave his message a Delphic quality but without any vagueness. Conkling had lost again.

Amid a fierce thunder storm which had severed telegraph communication and isolated Chicago the balloting began on Monday, June sixth.⁹¹ The delegates voted individually and when the first ballot was completed Grant led with 304 votes, closely followed by Blaine with 284. Sherman received 93 votes and, in a sense, held the balance of power.⁹² If he released his delegates and designated his choice for the nomination he could make a President. But Sherman held firm throughout the twenty-eight ballots on Monday and five more on Tuesday morning. On the thirtieth ballot John Sherman's vote rose to 120. It was evident that the convention was turning to a compromise candidate to end the Grant-Blaine deadlock.⁹³

⁹¹Clancy, S.J., p. 108.

⁹²Proceedings of Republican National Convention, p. 198.

⁹³T. C. Smith, vol. II, p. 980.

On the second ballot W. A. M. Grier of Pennsylvania had cast a vote for Garfield and on almost every ballot from then on the Senator had received one or two votes "to keep his name before the convention."⁹⁴ On the thirty-fourth ballot Governor Pound of Wisconsin cast his State's sixteen votes for Garfield. On the thirty-fifth ballot Indiana went over to Garfield and he collected scattered votes from Maryland, Mississippi and North Carolina. The thirty-sixth ballot saw a stampede of the anti-Grant forces for Garfield and he received the nomination with 399 votes. Conkling moved to make the nomination unanimous and the convention roared its approval.⁹⁵ To appease Conkling, Chester A. Arthur, whose dismissal from the post of collector of customs at the Port of New York had brought about the rift between "Lord Roscoe" and Hayes, was nominated for the second place on the ticket. Only time would tell if this balm would heal Conkling's wounds.⁹⁶

The question that immediately comes to mind is how did Garfield ever get the nomination. The answer lies in intra-party politics. Garfield was not the last-minute choice of disgusted and tired delegates but the carefully groomed nominee

⁹⁴Clancy, S. J., p. 111.

⁹⁵Proceedings of Republican National Convention, p. 276. In his brief speech urging the convention to make the nomination unanimous, Conkling never once mentioned Garfield's name.

⁹⁶For Conkling's reaction to Arthur's candidacy cf. Howe, pp. 108-09.

of clever and experienced politicians who had foreseen a dead-locked convention, estimated the popular choices for a compromise candidate and found all of them wanting and proceeded to create a man of the hour. The reward of their consummate skill was unqualified success.⁹⁷

The men behind Garfield were mostly from Ohio but all of them were connected with Cowles, the Cleveland publisher who was Garfield's trusted adviser during the campaign against Hancock.⁹⁸ Governor Charles Foster, W. P. Nixon, a delegate at large to the convention and his friend and associate, Lionel A. Sheldon, were all from Ohio. Abel D. Streight was chairman of neighboring Indiana's delegation. William H. Robertson, a staunch anti-Grant man and Curtis, the Editor of Harper's were New Yorkers. Henry C. Lea, the politician and historian who was a close friend of Carl Shurz, W. A. M. Grier and the Philadelphia banker Wharton Barker were from Pennsylvania. Thaddeus C. Pound was Governor of Wisconsin and the lieutenant of Elisha W. Keyes, the boss of the Republican machine in that State. Most strategically placed of all the workers for Garfield was Senator George F. Hoar of Massachusetts, the Chairman of the

⁹⁷ Wharton Barker, "The Secret History of Garfield's Nomination", Pearson's Magazine, XXV (May 1916), 435-43.

⁹⁸ Clancy, S. J., pp. 173-74, 192, 201. Note also the tone of the Cleveland Leader's articles concerning the convention, especially issue of June 7, 1880 quoted in T. C. Smith, vol. II, p. 978. Cowles and Garfield were also prominent Masons in the Cleveland area. cf. Caldwell, p. 358.

convention.

Wharton Barker has written a highly interesting account of how these men worked to have Garfield appear to his best advantage by being in the right place at the right time.⁹⁹ They secured for him the chairmanship of the Committee on Rules, organized applause for his dramatically effective late entrances into the convention hall and in general kept the spotlight turned on him during the entire convention. Hoar silenced Garfield's protest which was made during the thirty-fourth ballot after Wisconsin cast its votes for the Senator from Ohio. Whether this protest was part of the stage-play or genuine is impossible to determine.¹⁰⁰

Authors frequently ask whether Garfield was taken by surprise in receiving the nomination, or whether he had full knowledge of the hidden campaign being carried on in his behalf. This question, especially with its disjunction, is misleading.¹⁰¹ It is obvious that Garfield was surprised by the nomination and it is also clear that he knew of the undercurrent forces conspiring to secure the nomination for him. Garfield certainly knew

⁹⁹Barker, p. 440.

¹⁰⁰Hoar, vol. I, pp. 396-97.

¹⁰¹The positions of older historians, e.g. A. K. McClure, Rhodes, etc. are given in T. C. Smith, vol. II, pp. 986-992. cf. Caldwell p. 278.

what was going to be attempted at the convention because he confided to his diary as early as February 4, 1880 that Governor Pound had seen him about the possibility of his being a dark horse and had even outlined the strategy which was actually followed at the convention.¹⁰² Governor Foster wrote Garfield on February 23, 1880 and the letter assumes communication from both Pound and Barker with Garfield.¹⁰³ True, Garfield knew what was going on but he was still surprised that these machinations resulted in success.¹⁰⁴

Garfield had secured the nomination but his task now was to win the election. He could not win without New York and it would require tact and diplomacy to win over the brooding Conkling Stalwarts without losing Blaine's Half-Breeds. This would require more intra-party politics.

¹⁰²Caldwell, pp. 279-80.

¹⁰³Clancy, S.J., p. 38.

¹⁰⁴Barker's account exaggerates his own influence. Pound, Streight and Sheldon and Hoar did far more than Barker. However, Garfield's diary corroborates his "Secret History". cf. Garfield to his diary February 18, 1880; April 24, 1880; April 25, 1880 and also Caldwell, p. 281.

CHAPTER III

THE DEMOCRATIC NOMINATION

Like the Republicans, the Democrats had many aspirants to the Presidential nomination. Unlike the Republicans, however, they had more to overcome than factional strife based on personal antagonisms. True, Tilden and Kelly had become bitter personal enemies but the Democratic Party as a whole was characterized by splits that were based on sectional interests and economic theory. Thus not only must their nominee satisfy the northern Democrats as well as the southern but he also had to appeal to the "soft" and "hard" money men in the party. The division in the Democratic Party was far more serious, more deep seated than that in the Republican ranks. Unlike the Republicans who were completely disgusted with Hayes and who considered the contested election of 1876 to belong to a past which could not be recaptured, the Democrats were nominally led by Tilden and for them the election of 1876 was an issue of momentous and present concern. But even Tilden was a source of disunity. The Old Man of Gramercy Park loathed Honest John Kelly and he had publicly branded Bayard as a traitor to the Democratic Party.¹

¹Clancy, S.J., p. 54.

What is more, Tilden's diffidence in regard to the convention and the part that he would play in it complicated an already difficult situation.

The New York Tribune stated the point clearly when, speaking of the possible Democratic nominee, it said, "The first and main question will be what Mr. Tilden proposes to do."² Ever since his defeat in 1876 by the decision of the Electoral Commission, Samuel J. Tilden had charged the Republicans with fraud. They were accused of installing as President a man whom the people had rejected at the polls and of rejecting the man who had been the people's choice. Like the "corrupt bargain" charge of 1824, this idea persisted to the point of becoming a Democratic obsession. The Democrats were determined to avenge the supposed wrong done to their candidate in 1876. It was only natural, therefore, that they should turn to Tilden in 1880 as the man who was wronged and should be rewarded for his "martyrdom" by receiving the Party nomination once again. But the "Old Man" took refuge in obscurity. From Gramercy Park there came neither affirmation nor denial concerning his availability as a candidate. Tilden's failure to speak led to much speculation among party leaders. Those who chose to interpret his silence as a consent to be nominated set themselves to work for him. Those to whom

² New York Tribune, June 5, 1880.

his policy of silence indicated a refusal to enter the race began grooming other candidates for the nomination at Cincinnati. Thus Tilden's failure to resolve the doubt of party leaders led to a most understandable confusion within the party ranks.

In searching for a candidate the Democratic Party was forced to choose a man who could defeat Garfield by carrying the important State of New York. Without the Empire State the Democrats were doomed to defeat in November. The Republican press reminded them of this fact with a note of cynical triumph.³

Horatio Seymour, former Governor of New York and the Democratic candidate in 1868, was one of those mentioned for the nomination. Although he was no longer Party Leader in New York State, the anti-Tilden faction proposed his candidacy to defeat Tilden.⁴ As early as January, 1880, Seymour declined to run because of his poor health and his age. He was seventy. Also he did not believe that he could carry his own State.⁵ In fact, Seymour doubted that any Democratic candidate could win in New York.⁶ About the only support of which he could be certain

³Ibid., June 10, 1880.

⁴The New York Times, June 16, 1880.

⁵Robert S. Mitchell, Horatio Seymour of New York (Cambridge, Mass., 1938), p. 538.

⁶Tansill, p. 226.

was from Kelly's Tammany Hall.⁷ Seymour was a political anachronism. As in 1876, he kept his word and did not run. Speaking with a tone of finality he said, "I am not a candidate for any nomination . . . nor could I accept such nomination."⁸

Two potential nominees came from Ohio: Senator Allan G. Thurman and Henry B. Payne. The former was a southerner by birth and originally a "hard" money man. He had turned "soft" to satisfy the inflationist wing of the Party, and therefore had enemies on both sides of the Party's financial fence.⁹ Payne was a risk, as any Ohio candidate would be, because Garfield was almost certain to carry his own State. Besides Payne was not well known and his nomination would alienate the Thurman supporters in Ohio.¹⁰ Furthermore, Payne had been approached by the Tilden faction and had been asked to take second place on the ticket with Tilden if the latter should run. Payne had agreed.¹¹

The former Governor of Indiana and Tilden's running mate in 1876, Thomas A. Hendricks, was groomed by his own State for the nomination. His views on the money question, however, were doubtful. Furthermore, he disliked Tilden because he believed

⁷New York Herald, June 12, 1880.

⁸Ibid., June 22, 1880.

⁹The New York Times, June 19, 1880.

¹⁰Ibid., June 20, 1880.

¹¹Ibid., June 16, 1880.

that the New York leader had stolen first place from him on the 1876 ticket. This enmity was a matter of public knowledge and precluded any support of Hendricks by Tilden.¹²

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Samuel J. Randall of Pennsylvania, was a potential nominee, but his high tariff views were repugnant to the South. Moreover, Randall would never run as long as there was a possibility that his intimate friend Tilden might enter the race. He supported Tilden actively because the latter had lent money to Randall's friends at various times.¹³

The movement to nominate the veteran of Gettysburg, General Winfield Scott Hancock, moved slowly at first. He was popular only in the northeastern section of his native Pennsylvania and there had been no "boom" for his candidacy, at least not in the beginning.¹⁴ His supporters had to combat the Randall faction which was working for Tilden throughout the State. Tilden's refusal to clarify his position led the Pennsylvania State Convention at Harrisburg to elect delegates who were split among Hancock, Tilden and Bayard. Hancock however had a slight lead.¹⁵

¹²Ibid., June 11, 1880.

¹³Tansill, p. 227.

¹⁴Hancock MSS, Archives of Montgomery County Historical Society: Hancock Collection, Case 75.

¹⁵Tansill, p. 266.

The Atlantic Monthly believed Hancock to have been the best candidate since he had no political enemies, because he had never been in politics and he could, moreover, match Garfield's record as a Union soldier.¹⁶ But northern Democratic leaders felt that there was a possibility that the South would refuse to accept a Union General as the Party's standard bearer. Their fear was not grounded, however, for Hancock's conciliatory rule in Louisiana during the Reconstruction period had made him popular throughout the South.¹⁷

The most logical candidate in many ways was Senator Thomas F. Bayard of Delaware. His record in the Senate would satisfy the independent voter in either major political party. Bayard favored a gradual reduction of the tariff so that a surplus in American markets might be avoided.¹⁸ He favored the restriction of Chinese immigration, an important labor plank in both party platforms.¹⁹ He had spoken against the Bland Silver Act of 1876. As Chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance he consistently opposed the "soft" money mania and the Greenback movement in Congress.²⁰ His financial views had won him the

¹⁶"The Democratic Presidential Nomination", The Atlantic Monthly, XLV (May, 1880), 662-69.

¹⁷Caldwell, pp. 174-79.

¹⁸Tansill, p. 230.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 206-08.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 206-11.

admiration of many Republicans.²¹ His record as a conservative Democrat might have been an asset in the campaign to capture the Independent Republican vote.²² His views would, of course, fail to conciliate the inflationist wing of the Party in the South but he refused to placate them by changing these views.²³ However, there was little danger of a Southern defection over economic issues for several reasons. First, the South was firmly Democratic and would support the Party candidate. Second, the inflationist wing in the South was vocal but not extensive. Third, Bayard was a Southerner by birth. This last point caused a difficulty.

It was asked in some quarters whether the North would accept a southerner and a man who had favored the repeal of the Federal Election Law in 1879.²⁴ It seemed that Bayard lacked national appeal and though the South might be counted on to support him he was definitely opposed in sections of New England. Sectional interest played an important role in determining who would be the candidate but perhaps even more importance was attached to the financial views of the potential nominees. The

²¹ Ibid., pp. 234-36.

²² New York Herald, Nov. 8, 1879.

²³ Tansill, p. 237.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 230.

New York Times maintained that it was chiefly Bayard's money views that eliminated the possibility of his nomination at Cincinnati.²⁵

Finally, there was the question of whether Tilden would support the Senator from Delaware if he were nominated. Without Tilden's support New York would be counted in the Republican column and without New York's thirty-five electoral votes the Democrats could not gain the White House. Tilden disagreed with Bayard's financial views and had bitterly castigated him for the part he had played as a member of the Electoral Commission of 1876.²⁶ Before the convention Tilden used his ample means in the South against Bayard.²⁷ The Senator's only chance of influence in New York was through "Honest John" Kelly, and the Sachem of Tammany, though he had promised his support to Bayard, was more of a hindrance than a help because this only solidified Tilden's opposition to him.²⁸

In California a movement was under way to nominate Lincoln's appointee to the Supreme Court, Justice Stephen J. Field. His

²⁵The New York Times, June 21, 1880.

²⁶Tansill, p. 213.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 223-24.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 219; 251-53.

brothers, Cyrus and David Dudley, political enemies of Tilden, groomed their brother to defeat the New York Democrat for the nomination.²⁹ His state's rights views, his strict constructionist approach to constitutional questions, his court opinions on Chinese immigration and his support of Tilden on the Electoral Commission of 1876, all recommended him to the Party. However, his railroad decisions favorable to corporations and his "hard" money views had made him unpopular in California and among some segments of the Party.³⁰ It was reported that Tilden held no animosity towards Field nor did the South in general.³¹ But the California delegation had already pledged a majority of votes for Thurman and other Western States showed little interest in his candidacy. His supporters would conduct a noisy campaign at Cincinnati, but Field would be ignored by most of the delegates.³² The Tribune noted that the Field family could supply copious campaign funds to the Party.³³ His very close friends knew of his ambition for the nomination but they were also aware of his inability to fulfill the Presidential office.³⁴

²⁹ Carl B. Swisher, Stephen J. Field, Graftsman of the Law (Washington, D. C., 1930), p. 284.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 288.

³¹ New York Herald, June 16, 1880.

³² The New York Times, June 20, 1880.

³³ New York Tribune, June 22, 1880.

³⁴ Swisher, p. 298.

Other candidates mentioned were Judge David Davis of Illinois, Colonel William Morrison of the same State and Senator Randolph of New Jersey. All of these numerous candidates wondered whether Tilden would run. A. C. Flick explains Tilden's hesitancy to enter the race by maintaining that his age and his consistently poor health gave him serious qualms about his ability to conduct a vigorous campaign if nominated and to serve if elected. However a hope lingered in the "Old Man" that he would be the unanimous choice of the convention. Such a situation, however, was not likely to arise.³⁵

The opposition to Tilden was not entirely on a personal basis on the part of many party members. There were certain aspects of his candidacy that would have been very disadvantageous to the Party's interests. First, the so-called "cipher dispatches" concerning the election of 1876, made Tilden's charges of fraud somewhat of a boomerang to himself and the Party. His popularity suffered from this scandal and his position as a public "martyr" was held up to ridicule.³⁶ Second, with the exception of Missouri and Louisiana, Tilden was not popular in the South, a fact which the New York Herald kept reprinting with obvious glee during the

³⁵ Alexander C. Flick, Samuel Jones Tilden: A Study in Political Sagacity (New York, 1939), pp. 455-57.

³⁶ Originally published in the New York Tribune, October, 1878. cf. Mark D. Hirsch, William C. Whitney: Modern Warwick (New York, 1948), pp. 177-18.

critical pre-convention months of May and early June.³⁷ To win this indispensable southern support Tilden gave financial assistance to several newspapers in that section, especially, Watterson's Louisville Courier Journal.³⁸

Besides these disadvantages Tilden had bitter political enemies. The Field brothers so loathed him they were grooming the third Field brother, Samuel, about whose ability they had no illusions, merely as an anti-Tilden candidate. Hendricks of Indiana and Bayard of Delaware nursed personal grudges against the man. But of all his enemies the most dangerous was "Honest John" Kelly because, in a certain sense, he was an enemy in his own household. Kelly had already demonstrated in the New York gubernatorial election of 1879 the lengths to which he would go in his opposition to Tilden. It was this bitter Tilden-Tammany feud that prompted Bennett to claim that if Tilden were nominated he could never carry his own State.³⁹

When the New York Democratic Convention met at Syracuse in April, 1880, Tilden and the Irving Hall Democracy had complete

³⁷There is not an issue of the New York Herald from May 16, 1880 to June 22, 1880 that does not contain mention of this fact.

³⁸Tilden MSS, New York Public Library, Henry Watterson to Samuel J. Tilden, Nov. 5, 1877 and Henry Watterson to Samuel J. Tilden, August 2, 1880. cf. Flick, p. 463; Tansill, p. 223; Clancy, S.J., p. 54.

³⁹New York Herald, May 29, 1880.

control of the Party machinery. Tilden imposed the unit rule on the convention and informed the delegates that if they refused to be bound by the unit rule they would be deprived of their seats in the convention.⁴⁰ The majority candidate was, of course, Tilden. The Tammany faction who wanted the delegation unpledged refused to support Tilden and walked out of the convention to a man. "Honest John" Kelly had split the Party again, held his own convention of the Tribe and selected good Tammany men pledged to Bayard as delegates to the National Convention.⁴¹ The Kelly newspapers opened fire on Tilden and "Honest John" blasted away at the "Old Humbug of Cipher Alley" as a man "unfit for the Presidency" whose nomination "would be a national calamity."⁴² One of the most difficult tasks before the convention would be to quiet the feud in New York. Kelly had made his point, however, and Tilden would never be nominated.

Some very practical politicians, though, were almost willing to overlook these liabilities of Tilden because they remembered that Tilden had money to influence the press of the nation and besides having a fortune he was willing to spend his millions for that purpose. Only one other aspirant, Field, had such financial resources. There was also fear in the minds

⁴⁰Proceedings of the New York State Democratic Convention, Syracuse, April, 1880 (New York, 1880), p. 22.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 14.

⁴²The New York Times, April 21, 1880.

of many Democrats that if Tilden were not nominated to avenge his defeat in 1876, he might consider the Party ungrateful, or, what would have been worse, convinced of his complicity in the "cipher dispatches". He would then, they reasoned, refuse to support the nominee chosen by the convention. In that case New York would surely be lost. The dilemma of the Party was neatly summarized by Curtis who wrote that "the Democratic cry of fraud is meaningless without Mr. Tilden as the candidate, and ridiculous with him."⁴³

As the convention approached there was much speculation on the confused situation. The New York Times claimed that Tilden would have to be nominated by the Democrats. To reject him was to lose the issue that had been pending for four years, the "fraud" of 1876. To ignore Tilden, furthermore, was to lose New York since only he could hope to carry it.⁴⁴ The Tribune accused Tilden of misleading his Party and selfishly seeking the nomination by secretive methods. It estimated that a strong anti-Tilden faction would go to Cincinnati.⁴⁵ Despite its strong opposition, the paper maintained that Tilden would certainly dictate the nomination.⁴⁶ The Herald urged Tilden to

⁴³Harper's Weekly, June 5, 1880, p. 354.

⁴⁴The New York Times, June 18, 1880.

⁴⁵New York Tribune, June 17, 1880.

⁴⁶Ibid., June 18, 1880.

Tilden to speak rather than allow all this confusion by acting "with a mask."⁴⁷ According to Bennett's estimate, although only one third of the delegates going to Cincinnati favored the "Old Man", he would surely lead on the first ballot.⁴⁸ The followers of Tilden claimed over three hundred votes for him before the start of the convention.⁴⁹ Actually the confused situation within the Party made predictions meaningless. In reality, despite the so-called inside stories in the newspapers, there was no unity on any one candidate. Most of the delegates were unpledged.

On the eve of the convention three conclusions could be drawn from the confusion in the Democratic Party. First, Tilden either wanted the nomination himself or else he wanted to influence the election of the nominee. Second, the Democratic standard-bearer would have to appeal to both northern and southern Democrats and the "hard" and the "soft" money men. Most important of all, though, the candidate had to be acceptable to both Tilden and Kelly or face certain defeat in New York. If the Democrats did not carry New York in November, the White House would not be theirs.

⁴⁷ New York Herald, June 17, 1880.

⁴⁸ Ibid., June 18, 1880 and June 20, 1880.

⁴⁹ The New York Times, June 20, 1880.

The delegates began arriving at Cincinnati on June 20, two days prior to the opening of the National Convention. It was then that the "Sage of Gramercy Park" decided to break his long silence. The New York delegation received a letter from Tilden in which he said that he was laying down "even quasi-party leadership" and returning to private life.⁵⁰ Although the New York delegation accepted the letter reluctantly as Tilden's withdrawal from candidacy, some thought the letter a clever bid for the nomination.⁵¹ The letter of declination was couched in such artful language as to be capable of several interpretations. It left the "fraud of 1876" as the main Party issue and Tilden as the legitimate heir to that issue. It seemed essentially to be a bid for the nomination, clothed in the language of a modest but dramatic withdrawal. The New York Times chose to accept it as "a complete withdrawal", but kept urging the Tildenites to nominate Tilden in spite of the letter.⁵² This Republican organ viewed the entire Democratic nomination in mathematical terms. For the Times the election was like an equation. The South was the known factor in the political equation: one hundred and thirty-eight electoral votes for any Democratic candidate. The

⁵⁰ What Tilden meant was quasi-leadership of the Party. cf. Flick, p. 456 for full text of letter.

⁵¹ New York Tribune, June 21, 1880.

⁵² The New York Times, June 23, 1880.

North was the unknown factor, the battle ground where forty-seven electoral votes had to be obtained for a Democratic victory in November. Only Tilden could obtain these necessary votes since other candidates were not national figures or else they held financial views which handicapped them. According to the Times, then, Tilden was the unknown quantity who could solve the equation.⁵³ Bennett believed that with Tilden removed from the race, the Democrats were in a hopeless situation, a Party without a leader, a convention without a powerful candidate.⁵⁴

The New York delegation named no successor to Tilden immediately, but the "Old Man" was known to favor Henry B. Payne of Ohio. When the Ohio Congressman did become Tilden's political heir, Speaker Randall was furious since he had expected that legacy himself.⁵⁵ As anticipated, Tilden's withdrawal paved the way for the many other candidates already discussed. An active campaign for each of them ensued. The Tribune believed that with Tilden out of the running Bayard was the strongest candidate in the convention because he had votes from all sections of the country.⁵⁶ But so did most of the candidates:

⁵³ Ibid., June 23, 1880.

⁵⁴ New York Herald, June 22, 1880.

⁵⁵ The New York Times, June 20, 1880.

⁵⁶ New York Tribune, June 23, 1880.

that was precisely the difficulty.

The Democratic convention opened on June 22, 1880.

The Honorable George Hoadly of Ohio, a Tildenite, was named Temporary Chairman.⁵⁷ Immediately there came the expected trouble from the separate Tammany delegation. "Honest John" Kelly attempted to address the convention but was refused recognition by the Chairman.⁵⁸ The Committee on Credentials, following the rule established by Tilden at Syracuse, refused to seat the Tammany delegation and they were excluded from voting in the convention by a two-thirds vote of that body.⁵⁹ The Tribune saw in this elimination of Tilden's opponents an indication that the Tildenites were planning to nominate their candidate despite his withdrawal. At least the move to oust Tammany had kept the "Old Man's boom going."⁶⁰

The usual business of the convention was disposed of in

⁵⁷ Official Proceedings of the National Democratic Convention, Held in Cincinnati, Ohio, June 22-24, 1880 (Dayton, Ohio, 1882), p. 5.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 7-8.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 11-15.

⁶⁰ New York Tribune, June 24, 1880.

a remarkably short time and the second day of the convention witnessed the presentation of candidates for the nomination. The delegates waited anxiously lest the New York delegation would nominate Tilden. If this happened, the already infuriated Tammany delegation would surely bolt the ticket and destroy the Party in New York State as had been done in the gubernatorial race in that State in 1879.

California's J. E. Mc Elrath nominated Justice Stephen Field in a tiresome speech replete with the Judge's legal record.⁶¹ Delaware then presented Senator Bayard. His close friend, George Gray, made a most adroit speech of nomination.⁶² Veteran Congressman William R. Morrison was nominated by Samuel Marshall as Illinois' choice.⁶³ Senator Donald Voorhees presented Thomas A. Hendricks as Indiana's favorite son.⁶⁴ When New York was called, the chairman of the delegation rose and informed the chair, to the visible relief of all the delegates, that he had no nomination to make. Yet this surprised the convention since the delegates expected New York to nominate Tilden's successor, Henry Payne of Ohio. There were a few cries

⁶¹ Official Proceedings of National Democratic Convention, p. 6.

⁶² Ibid., pp. 71-73.

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 74-76.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 76.

of "Tilden" and some demonstrations for the former ticket of Tilden and Hendricks.⁶⁵ Tilden had ordered the New York delegation not to present his name. If there was to be a dramatic bid for the nomination on his part, it would be more effective if a State other than his own presented his name.⁶⁶ John McSweeney of Ohio nominated Senator Thurman in a most dramatic speech.⁶⁷ It was significant that Payne's own State had failed to nominate him. The last nomination was made by Daniel Dougherty of Pennsylvania acting not for the delegation as a whole but as an individual delegate. He presented General Hancock to the convention in flamboyant language as the "soldier-statesman with a record as stainless as his sword."⁶⁸ Dougherty appealed to the crowd and he stirred up a great demonstration for Hancock in the galleries. The seven hundred and thirty-eight delegates, each having one half a vote, had to give one of the nominees four hundred and eighty-six votes or two thirds of the convention before he would be the official candidate of the Democratic Party.

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 77-8.

⁶⁶The New York Times, June 24, 1880.

⁶⁷Official Proceedings of National Democratic Convention, pp. 83-84.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 85-86.

The first ballot was significant. It was taken right after the demonstration for Hancock and proved that Dougherty's speech had been most successful. Hancock led with one hundred and seventy-one votes. Bayard had one hundred and fifty-three and a half: Payne, eighty-one: Thurman, sixty-eight and one half: Field, sixty-five: Hendricks, forty-nine and one half: Tilden, thirty-eight. In all, there were nineteen nominees on this ballot, thirteen of whom had not been formerly nominated. This revealed the lack of unity in the convention and the Party.⁶⁹

The distribution of votes failed to indicate any strong sectional support for any one candidate. Hancock's vote was scattered through New England and the South and fell three hundred votes short of the nomination. Tilden's small vote came from Pennsylvania, Missouri, Kentucky and Nevada. California gave her nominee, Field, only half of her votes and his support in the South and West was small. His nomination was almost impossible and would have been "superfluous folly".⁷⁰ For the moment, Hancock and Bayard shared the South evenly. As expected New York gave her seventy votes to Payne, but he received scant support elsewhere in the convention. Ironically, The New York Times believed that Hancock would be the "last man"

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 99.

⁷⁰ Swisher, p. 296.

whom the convention would nominate.⁷¹

What the first ballot did was to eliminate the minor candidates and reveal the strength of the major ones. Hancock, who had generally been considered hardly a serious contender, showed surprising strength to the amazement of many a political analyst. Contrary to expectations the South had failed to support Bayard. This was a realistic attitude since Bayard was unacceptable to Tilden and the South, no matter how solid, without New York, could not carry the Party to victory. It was clear to political observers that the delegates were looking for a compromise candidate and Hancock seemed to be their choice.⁷²

All hope for Tilden's nomination was lost when, after the first ballot, the New York delegation received and read to the convention a letter from the New York leader definitively declining the candidacy. Poor health was the reason given in this second letter of declination.⁷³ The convention took the letter in good part and his own followers were relieved since he could not possibly have been nominated.⁷⁴

⁷¹The New York Times, June 24, 1880.

⁷²Clancy, S. J., p. 138.

⁷³Official Proceedings of National Democratic Convention, pp. 102-03.

⁷⁴A. B. Paine, p. 430.

The New York delegation now conferred on the wisdom of continuing its support of Payne. Payne's own State of Ohio had failed not only to nominate him but to support him, and his following outside of the pledged New York delegation was negligible. The New York delegation, after its brief caucus, announced that it would support Tilden's second choice, Speaker Randall of Pennsylvania.⁷⁵ This announcement only added more confusion and chaos to the already disorganized convention. The delegates were looking to New York for leadership and all the New York delegation was doing was rigidly adhering to a set of predetermined instructions which had been drawn up weeks before the convention without any knowledge of Hancock's strength. What the convention wanted from the New York delegation, which controlled almost twenty per cent of the votes necessary to nominate, was a definitive reply on the acceptability of Hancock to New York. The only possible interpretation of the New York manoeuvre was that it was the action of an instructed delegation whose leader was a thousand miles away. Furthermore, Randall had not even been formerly nominated in the convention, was disliked intensely by the anti-Tilden forces, had not been supported by his own State and had received only six votes on the first ballot. It

⁷⁵ Official Proceedings of Democratic National Convention,
pp. 104-05.

was reasoned that New York could not have been serious in its choice because Randall was the only candidate who was totally unacceptable to the South owing to his espousal of the high protective tariff. New York, then, was stalling for time but the convention would not wait with her. A motion to adjourn was tabled and the second ballot began immediately.

When the roll call for the second ballot began, Illinois gave her entire forty-two votes to Hancock. Kansas then transferred her ten Bayard votes to Hancock. New York remained with Randall as she had announced. Pennsylvania divided her vote between Randall and Hancock, but dropped Bayard. Ohio and Indiana remained with Thurman and Hendricks respectively. The totals showed Hancock to be in the lead with three hundred and thirty-six votes, almost double his original count. Randall had one hundred and twenty-eight and one half and Bayard had dropped to one hundred and twelve.⁷⁶

Randall's strength had increased slightly as a result of New York's support, but it was insignificant compared with Hancock's. On the other hand, Bayard had lost strength in the South, except in Florida, South Carolina, Delaware and Maryland, while Hancock had gained heavily in that section. Although the General was far ahead of any other candidate, he still lacked one hundred and fifty votes necessary to gain the nomination.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 108-09.

When the roll call for the second ballot ended and while, the returns were being tabulated, Wisconsin brought the noisy galleries to order by requesting permission from the chair to change its vote.⁷⁷ Permission was granted and Wisconsin gave twenty votes to Hancock. Amid wild excitement, New Jersey and Pennsylvania shifted their entire vote to Hancock. In an awful din of shouting and cheering the stampede had begun. New York then changed her seventy Randall votes to Hancock. Ohio rejected Thurman for the Pennsylvania General and he then had the necessary two-thirds of the convention to give him the nomination. So confused was the vote with these changes that the chair called for a new ballot.⁷⁸ When the totals were computed on the third ballot, Hancock had seven hundred and five votes; Bayard had two; Tilden, one; Hendricks, thirty. Indiana had stayed with Hendricks to the end.⁷⁹

The Hancock stampede, although it occurred suddenly, is not too difficult to explain. After the first ballot all the candidates except Bayard and Hancock had actually been eliminated.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 111.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 113.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 114.

On the second ballot Bayard's strength had declined in the South, and New York, in keeping with Tilden's active opposition to the Senator from Delaware, had given him no support whatever. Since Bayard would be a risk, delegates deserted him in the hope that Hancock could reconcile the Tildenites of the Irving Hall Democracy and John Kelly's Tammany Hall. Furthermore, what better way to confound Republican critics than to have the solid South, but lately in rebellion, endorse a Union General from Pennsylvania. It was the common opinion among Democrats that with such a nominee Republican cries of sectional hate and the waving of the "bloody shirt" would pass from the political scene. Hancock had proved popular with the galleries and this public adulation did not go unnoticed by the delegates. Whether or not the galleries nominated him as was frequently stated after the event is of really little importance.⁸⁰ The fact remains that the convention was visibly stirred by the cheering and demonstration that followed Dougherty's speech and that accompanied the mention of Hancock's name. In short, Hancock's nomination was an expedient and popular compromise.

It was moved to make Hancock's nomination unanimous and this was done at once.⁸¹ The minute this was accomplished the

⁸⁰ Tansill, pp. 280-83.

⁸¹ Official Proceedings of Democratic National Convention, p. 118.

convention went wild. Amid all the din and in the hope of getting some sort of order the Chairman motioned to the organist and he played, with all stops out, the hymn "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow". When the organist finished several bands struck up the hymn and the delegates filed slowly back to their seats. When order was restored, state after state sent representatives up to the platform to address the convention. The speeches were wordy eulogies on the virtues of Hancock and on the sureness of victory in November. After forty long minutes of this, and just as Breckenridge of Kentucky was coming to the close of his well received address, he caught sight of the burly form of an old friend whom he had not met since both were serving in the House of Representatives almost a quarter of a century before. Breckinridge stopped his speech and in a daring gesture said, "I yield the floor, Mr. Chairman, to the Honorable John Kelly of New York."⁸² The convention sat in stunned silence. This was the first time that Kelly whose Tammany delegation had been refused a voice in the convention had spoken to the assembly. Kelly took his time getting to the platform and the tense silence provided a most dramatic setting. All realized that if Kelly disapproved of the choice of Hancock and refused to support him the election was lost. Half way up the aisle leading to the

⁸² Breen, p. 599.

platform Kelly stopped. He motioned to his associates who were standing at the rear of the hall to join him. As the seventy Tammany delegates wound up the aisle to where Kelly was standing the Chairman motioned the band to play and in seconds the then popular war melody "We're Coming, Father Abraham, One Hundred Thousand Strong" rang through the hall.⁸³ All the delegates, except those from the New York delegation, rose and sang the words of the song. By the time the singing had died down Kelly, with his Tammany Indians behind him, was standing quietly in the center of the speaker's platform. He waited for perfect silence and then began.

Gentlemen of the Convention, your Chairman has told you that, by your action today, in nominating General Hancock, you have united the Democracy of the State of New York. He has told you truly. While I and my brethren on the right have been fighting each other politically for the last five years, they will no doubt agree with what I am going to say---let past differences be banished from our midst. I am not going to speak to you now of what has occurred since we came to the City of Cincinnati. I have nothing in the world to say against what has been the action of the Convention, in relation to the organization which I, in part, represent. Let all that pass away. I promise the Convention in my humble way, and with my poor services, to do all in my power, from this day forth until the day of election, to help elect the Democratic ticket. And now, let me repeat to my friends here on the right from the State of New York (turning to the Irving Hall delegation) let us once and for all take each other by the hand, and say this in common---that we have a nobler duty to perform than to be fighting each other politically in our own State. Let us unite; let us look on each other kindly and favorably; and when we act together,

⁸³Ibid., p. 600.

united as we must be, let me pledge to the Convention that there can be no question whatever as to the result.⁸⁴

The demonstration after Kelly's speech was enthusiastic and prolonged. It was not a wild fracas. It had no artificiality about it; rather, it was the expression of profound relief. In answer to the shouts of the delegates Irving Hall sent Colonel John R. Fellows to the platform to tell the convention that all differences in the Democratic Party in the State of New York were over. Fellows sounded a confident note when he concluded by saying that the Democrats "shall march through that State as though we were sweeping it with a tornado."⁸⁵

Finally, the convention moved to the business of selecting the nominee for the second place on the ticket. It was a very brief affair for as soon as the Chairman mentioned the nature of the business at hand the delegates shouted for William H. English of Indiana and the Chairman declared him the nominee by acclamation.⁸⁶

At the close of the Cincinnati convention it appeared that the Democratic Party could look forward to victory at the polls in November. On the surface and in the public eye at least, the dangerous split in Party ranks in New York seemed to be

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 600.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 601.

⁸⁶Official Proceedings of Democratic National Convention, p. 137.

healed. The Tildenites of the Irving Hall Democracy and Kelly's Tribe of Saint Tammany had come to a public understanding before the assembled delegates. The State of New York, so vital to Democratic campaign strategy, now seemed safe. Indiana was the other northern State needed to secure the White House and the Vice-Presidential candidate had been a former Governor of that State. All seemed well since the convention appeared to have accomplished not only its major purpose of providing candidates for the Party to offer to the country but had selected men who by their unique qualifications had restored Party discipline within the ranks of the Democracy and were almost certain to carry the Party to victory at the polls in November. At least, so the enthusiastic observer believed.⁸⁷

This, however, was a very superficial view. A careful reading of John Kelly's speech to the convention does not contain any hint of surrender. As a matter of fact, Kelly had actually won his point. Tilden did not receive the nomination and neither did Payne or Randall, Tilden's chosen successors. Kelly's speech must be read in the light of the fact that Irving Hall was now, for all intents and purposes, leaderless. Tilden had retired from political life. With Tilden gone, Kelly in his speech was actually appealing to the Irving Hall Democracy

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The New York Times, July 19, 1880. This was quite a change from the first blast of disappointment in Hancock's nomination. cf. The New York Times, June 25, 1880 and June 29, 1880.

to return to the Tribe of Saint Tammany. Kelly made no mention of compromise. His whole concern was with cooperation and if "Honest John" were running true to form, cooperation meant total agreement with the Sachem of Tammany Hall. Furthermore, the whole dramatic situation lent a note of farcical exaggeration which could be appreciated by anyone with an Irish sense of humor. Kelly "had been put on the spot" and rather than ruin his political future he simply "turned on his Irishman's charm". This is not to accuse Kelly of insincerity for he sincerely believed that Hancock's nomination and Tilden's retirement had been a complete vindication of his politics.

Breckinridge had forced the situation and this was most unwise. It was indeed a foolish thought to expect that the animosities and deep-seated antagonisms born of political rivalry could all be sung into oblivion led on by a convention of Pied Pipers blaring a Civil War tune. To bring together enemies amid fanfare and ask them to make a public alliance to settle their difficulties was only to create an agreement which was to be honored more in the breach than in the observance. This was a completely natural result because none of the underlying causes of the New York split had been done away with. It is true that many people had followed Tilden in his famous exodus from Tammany Hall but they had not done so out of blind loyalty to the Sage of Grameroy Park. Those who had left Tammany were mostly political discontents who were angry at Kelly, disagreed

with the way he distributed patronage and felt themselves without access to the clique which determined the Tribe's policies.

These men had gained power and stature in Irving Hall and they were in no way whatever prepared to yield the power and prestige they had acquired, and come, hat in hand, begging for admission into the Tribe of Saint Tammany. Bands might play and delegates applaud but New York was in reality as severely split as ever.

Breckinridge's move, in fact, was actually dangerous because it gave to the Democrats a false spirit of well-being and confidence while at the same time it alerted the Republicans to do everything in their power to get real unity in New York State. To achieve this end would require a masterful display of intra-party politics.

The second element of apparent strength which was in reality weakness was the selection of William English of Indiana as the Vice-Presidential nominee. It was expected that he could carry his native Indiana. This hope was poorly founded. English had been out of politics for several years and as President of the First National Bank of Indianapolis he was committed to a "hard" money policy. Indiana was a "soft" money State and the fact that English was a millionaire, although it was good for the Party treasury, was no asset at the polls.

This analysis of the situation was, in substance, recorded by the most astute commentator on the political scene of the day,

Henry Watterson of the Louisville Courier Journal.⁸⁸ Watterson knew that peace had not been achieved in New York and was in no way deluded about the possible success of the Democratic ticket. Fierce as had been the intra-party struggles within the Republican and Democratic ranks before and during the conventions, Watterson realized that the part which intra-party politics would play in the coming campaign to secure the White House would be of even more significance, more ferocity. The open inter-party conflict which would be waged with gusto before the voting public on issues which would be chosen for their propaganda value would actually be of secondary importance to the campaign. Success in the Presidential election depended on two factors: the issues brought before the public during the campaign and the degree of efficiency achieved by the Party machinery in mustering the vote. Both of these factors were determined by intra-party politics. Some significance, of course, was attached to the campaign but far more important was the choice of the issues. It was of greater value to avoid a dangerous issue than to take a firm stand in regard to it. Furthermore, New York was still split and it was essential to the success of both the Democrats and the Republicans to secure a united front in that troublesome but pivotal State. It was for these reasons that the intra-party politics of the campaign and not the rather sensational public

⁸⁸ cf. Clancy, S.J., p. 151.

tactics of the major political parties was the crucial point determining success in the Presidential election of 1880.

CHAPTER IV

THE CAMPAIGNS

At their conventions both of the major political parties adopted platforms, and the press anticipated that the forthcoming campaign was to be waged in the traditional fashion by debate on the relative merits of the stands taken by each Party on the important issues of the day. But for a debate to take place it is always necessary that there be a difference of opinion on major issues in clearly defined terms. An investigation of the platforms of the national political parties revealed a unanimity which was alarming to the campaign managers and a vagueness which was irritating to the press.¹

There were seven main planks in the platform passed by the Republican convention. The Republicans called for the preservation of the Union with the Constitution as the supreme and final arbiter of issues upon which the States were divided. There were planks advocating veterans' pensions, the restriction of Chinese immigration and the prohibition of subsidies and land

¹ The New York Times, July 5, 1880; July 14, 1880; July 28, 1880 and New York Tribune, July 11, 1880.

grants to business enterprises. Civil Service reform was called for in the vaguest of terms in a plank that stated "that fitness, ascertained by proper practical tests, shall admit to the public service." The Republicans were asking for a constitutional amendment to forbid federal or state aid to sectarian schools. Most important of all, however, was the plank on the tariff which affirmed the "belief, avowed in 1876, that the duties levied for the purpose of revenue should so discriminate as to favor American Labor."²

The Democratic platform was substantially the same as the Republican. There were planks for Civil Service reform, for the exclusion of Chinese immigration and for the discontinuance of discrimination which favored monopolies.³ In the section of the platform devoted to the financial policies of the Democratic Party there was a divergence from the Republican viewpoint. The Democrats called for the unlimited coinage of silver and the issuance of paper currency for the alleviation of the debtor classes.⁴ It was the tariff question which was to provide the only really serious intellectual clash of the campaign and the Democrats advocated a tariff for revenue only.⁵

²Proceedings of Republican National Convention, pp. 160-63.

³Official Proceedings of Democratic National Convention, pp. 120-28.

⁴Ibid., p. 122.

⁵Ibid., p. 128.

In general, the Republican and Democratic platforms were statements of an identical political ideology applied in the vaguest possible terms to peripheral concrete situations that had only emotional value. There were real issues in 1880 which were brought before the people but not by the national political parties. The United States was in the throes of the Industrial Revolution with its manifold problems growing out of the tensions between capital and labor, wealth and poverty, organized industry and decentralized government. These problems were judged "too hot to handle" by national political parties whose one aim was the power and prestige which could be achieved only by success in a nation-wide effort to capture the White House. The real issues were left to the splinter parties and especially to the Greenback Party which had nominated General James B. Weaver for the Presidency. Weaver ran on a platform that met head-on the vital problems affecting the destiny of the nation at a time when the United States was emerging as a great industrial power in the world.⁶

Apart from its unsound inflationary plank the Greenback platform was realistic and called for true anti-monopoly legislation, a graduated income tax, genuine Civil Service reform,

⁶ Frederick E. Haynes, James Baird Weaver (Iowa City, Iowa, 1919), pp. 159-61.

federal regulation of interstate commerce, the abolition of contract labor, the enactment of child labor laws, the eight hour day and federal inspection of working conditions in factories.⁷ Lacking a national organization, however, Weaver was doomed to defeat even before he began his campaign. Though victory would not be his, General Weaver and the Greenback Party would achieve two very important things. Over the course of the campaign his ideas would spread throughout the Middle-West and gain so many adherents that in a few years the Greenback creed would become part of the Democratic platform and eventually would pass in large measure into law.⁸ The immediate effect of Weaver's Greenback Party would be to take large segments of the vote, especially in the key State of Indiana, away from the Democratic Party.⁹ In a very real sense the failure of the Democratic Party to draw up a platform which was distinct from that of the Republicans or at least at odds with it cost the Democrats the support of precisely that element to which the Greenback Party's platform appealed.¹⁰

The political scene in the period immediately prior to the

⁷The New York Times, July 14, 1880.

⁸Clancy, S.J., p. 163.

⁹Ibid., p. 243.

¹⁰Ibid., p.162.

conventions was complex and during them the subtle pressures of intra-party politics had heightened that complexity. Yet, as intricate as was that situation, the time during the campaign is in comparison with it a total maze of crosscurrents. If the campaign had proceeded along the path laid out by tradition the situation would, no doubt, have been less involved. Debate on the differences in the Party platforms would have developed adherents to different interpretations of the platform, and these schools of thought would have tried to influence both the candidates and the voting public to adopt their programs to put the platform into practice. Nothing like this occurred in the campaign of 1880. The reason was quite simple: the Republican and Democratic platforms made the traditional campaign technique of debate impossible for the platforms were too similar for disagreement to develop and too vague for dialogue to be possible.

For several months the Republicans contented themselves with presenting the first plank of their party platform to the American people. They did little more than wave the "bloody shirt", light bonfires, attend clambakes and organize torch light parades.¹¹ The Democrats were slow to organize their

¹¹Typical propaganda is "Political Attitude of the South", The Atlantic Monthly, XLV (June 1880), 817-23. For the oratory of this stage of the campaign cf. Matthew Josephson, The Politicos 1865-1896 (New York, 1938), p. 289.

counterattack and when their campaign chairman, W. H. Barnum, delivered the first salvos it became apparent that the Democrats would not base their campaign on the platform but were going to use the "Fraud of 1876" as a campaign issue. On the whole, the newspapers thought the campaign ridiculous and the public lost interest. It was foolish to wave the "bloody shirt" at the hero of Gettysburg, General Hancock, and the "Fraud of 1876" was meaningless without Tilden as the Democratic standard bearer.¹²

After two months of attempting to arouse the public the national political parties realized that they would have to try a new attack. Garfield took personal charge of the Republican campaign and with the sureness of the good General that he was he decided that first it was necessary to visit his troops. The troops wanted him but in the beginning the General was reluctant to go for he knew he had to visit his weakest regiment first and he knew that the meeting with the New York Stalwarts, though essential, was full of danger.¹³ Hayes had been warned against a similar encounter with the New Yorkers, during the campaign of 1876, by Carl Shurz, who assured him that he would be exposed to all sorts of embarrassments. But Garfield's position was

¹²Clancy, S.J., pp. 175-79.

¹³T. C. Smith, vol. II, p. 1008.

desperate, and at the urgent request of Senator Stephen W. Dorsey, Secretary of the National Committee, of Marshall Jewell, its Chairman, and of William E. Chandler, the close associate of Blaine, Garfield started east from Mentor Farm, Ohio, on August 3, 1880.¹⁴ The conference to which he was going was to be of the utmost importance. It would change the entire picture of the campaign, galvanize the quiescent New York machine to feverish activity and present a classical example of intra-party politics.¹⁵

Garfield's train made about twenty stops between Buffalo and New York City, at each of which the candidate made short speeches and acquired more traveling companions. Among the men who boarded the train were Governor Cornell and Chester A. Arthur.¹⁶ Upon arriving in New York, Garfield was taken to the Republican stronghold, the Fifth Avenue Hotel. The evening of August 4, 1880 was spent "at a private residence" where he met a group of New York Republicans of wealth and standing among whom were Jay Gould and Levi P. Morton.¹⁷ Garfield explained the critical aspects of the campaign and designated New York

¹⁴ Caldwell, p. 300.

¹⁵ Chidsey, p. 307.

¹⁶ T. C. Smith, vol. II, p. 1012.

¹⁷ It was the home of Whitelaw Reid who had written Garfield on July 19, 1880 not to come to New York. cf. Josephson, p. 291 and T. C. Smith, vol. II, p. 1012.

as "the darkest Spot."¹⁸ It was agreed that a special fund be raised to carry New York and that Levi P. Morton be made its treasurer. The meeting and the decision were kept entirely secret; the funds were to be administered completely apart from those of the Republican National Committee, of whose finances Morton also agreed to take charge. This first conference was unknown to the papers of the day and was revealed only years after the event by Morton's biographer, Robert McElroy.¹⁹

The better known conference opened at noon on August 5 in the parlors of the Fifth Avenue Hotel, with speeches from Blaine, Logan, Sherman and Curtis. There were over two hundred people present but Roscoe Conkling was conspicuously absent. He was insulted that Curtis had been invited and Garfield wrote in his diary of Conkling's absence:

His friends were embarrassed and somewhat indignant. If he intends to take actively hold of the campaign, it is probably best that he does not call on me here. I think his friends are showing zeal and enthusiasm and will work whether he does or not. There shall neither be nor appear to be, if I can prevent it, any mortgaging of my future freedom.²⁰

On August 6 Garfield "had in the afternoon a long interview

¹⁸Howe, p. 117.

¹⁹Robert McNutt McElroy, Levi Parsons Morton (New York, 1930), pp. 109-11.

²⁰Garfield to his diary, August 5, 1880 quoted in T. C. Smith, vol. II, p. 1012.

with Morton, Cowles, Arthur and Platt," and left the next day for home, stopping over Sunday, August 8, at Chautauqua, New York.²¹ On Monday he arrived at Mentor, "very weary but feeling that no serious mistake had been made and probably much good had been done. No trades, no shackles, and as well fitted for defeat or victory as ever."²²

It is interesting to note the four men who were in conference with Garfield on the afternoon of August 5, 1880. Morton controlled the purse strings of the Republican Party; Cowles was the editor of the Cleveland Leader who has supported Garfield for the nomination since early January and was in constant communication with him; Arthur was not only the Vice Presidential nominee but the Republican boss of New York City; Platt was, like Conkling, Senator from New York and even a closer friend than Arthur or Lord Roscoe. These men accomplished much. The Republican campaign strategy was radically altered and the policy of waving the "bloody shirt" was abandoned. They chose to attack the Democrats on the weakest point of their platform, to create an issue out of the unfortunate wording of the Democratic plank on the tariff which was to be "for revenue only."²³ It

²¹Garfield to his diary, August 6, 1880 quoted in Howe, p. 118.

²²Garfield to his diary, August 9, 1880 quoted in Howe, p. 118.

²³Clancy, S.J., pp. 196; 220-22 and New York Tribune, September 2, 1880 and Hancock MSS, case 75.

seems likely that Arthur received from Cowles the idea of making the Republican stand on the refusal to give government financial aid to sectarian schools a major issue in the New York City mayoralty contest. Edwin Cowles and his O. A. U. were bitterly opposed to the Catholic school system and believed that if Catholics ever got into authority they would loot the public treasury to support "those institutions which teach Political Romanism." This was precisely the point that Arthur would use to woo and win Irving Hall's support for the Republican candidate for Mayor of the City of New York against Tammany's Catholic candidate, William R. Grace.²⁴ These were all important decisions, but did anything else happen at this private conference? Did Garfield strike a bargain with the New York Stalwarts?

Most historians agree that a bargain was made by Garfield concerning patronage with Conkling's lieutenants.²⁵ T. C. Smith, G. F. Howe, and R. G. Caldwell accept the testimony of former

²⁴Breen, pp. 632-46 gives a most intricate account of the mayoralty campaign.

²⁵Ibid., p. 607; Caldwell, pp. 300-02; Chidsey, pp. 306-07; Clancy, S.J., pp. 190-91; Conkling, pp. 612-13; Howe, pp. 117-20; Josephson, pp. 297-99; A. B. Paine, p. 487 and T. C. Smith, vol. II, pp. 1012-18.

Senator Platt in regard to what occurred at the meeting. Platt wrote in his Autobiography:

There were three primary motives for the consultation: one to pacify Garfield for Conkling's absence; another to have an understanding with General Garfield as to his future relations to and intentions toward the controlling power in the State of New York, viz., the Grant-Conkling machine; and thirdly, if the former were arranged to the mutual satisfaction, to adopt ways and means for procuring money to carry on the canvass for the latter purpose.²⁶

Exactly what Platt means here is difficult to determine but Smith, Howe and Caldwell all maintain that these lines refer to a bargain concerning patronage. If the passage is taken at face value all Platt is saying is that if Garfield could be pacified in respect to Conkling's absence the conference would move on to discuss strategy to secure victory in New York State for the Grant-Conkling machine candidates. The vagueness of "have an understanding with General Garfield as to his future relations to and intentions toward the controlling power of New York State" need not be taken in a sinister sense at all. It is very possible that all this means is whether Garfield will endorse the Stalwart candidates in New York State. Garfield explicitly stated in his diary four days after the meeting took place that there had been "no trades", that there were "no shackles" binding him and that he was "as well fitted for defeat or victory as ever."²⁷ Platt was writing thirty years after

²⁶platt, p. 128.

²⁷Garfield to his diary, August 9, 1880 quoted in Howe, p. 188. cf. Caldwell, p. 132.

the event took place and was trying in his Autobiography to explain why he had resigned from the Senate after Garfield's appointment of Judge Robertson to the post of collector of customs for the Port of New York without first consulting Roscoe Conkling.

Platt continues his exposition of the conference a few pages later in his Autobiography. Garfield is supposed to have said that if the New York Stalwarts "worked hard for him" and "his election resulted",

the wishes of the element of the party we represented should be paramount with him, touching all questions of patronage. While it should be his duty to give such decent recognition of and show proper gratitude to the rebellious element [of the New York delegation, led by William H. Robertson] at Chicago that had rendered his nomination possible, yet, in dispensing favors, he would consult with our friends and do only what was approved by them. These assurances were oft repeated, and solemnly emphasized, and were accepted and agreed to by all those present.²⁸

This is, of course, a clear contradiction of Garfield's notation in his diary.²⁹ Can the contradiction be resolved?

T. C. Smith maintains that the key to the solution rests in the interpretation of the phrase, "he would consult with our friends". It is Smith's opinion, with which Howe agrees, that

²⁸ Platt, p. 131.

²⁹ The entry for August 9, 1880 already twice referred to.

Garfield understood "consult" to mean inform the New York machine of his decisions once they had been made.³⁰ Such a solution is convenient but not quite logical. If the entire phrase in Platt's testimony is looked on as a grammatical unit, the phrase contains a compound verb and is grammatically a restrictive clause in which the second verb specifies the meaning of the first: "yet . . . he [Garfield] would consult . . . and do only what was approved by them." It is clear that consultation is to come before any decision. Since Garfield has left no written record concerning mention of consultation with the New York Stalwarts either before or after decisions affecting patronage in that State, Smith and Howe have not only espoused a faulty theory but have based that theory on an assumption that need not be made.

The theory is faulty for three reasons. First, it ignores Garfield's testimony which he wrote immediately after the event to the effect that no trade had been made. Garfield did not write his diary to record his self-deception.³¹ Second, it stands to reason that the concept of consultation after a decision has been reached is useless for patronage. The real

³⁰T. C. Smith, vol. II, pp. 1016-17; Howe, pp. 119-20.

³¹Garfield often records thoughts, sentiments and actions which put him in a bad light. Caldwell values the diary highly. cf. Caldwell, p. 357.

power in dispensing patronage is the ability to suggest men who should be rewarded and to limit the nominations for patronage to those who are considered worthy and faithful. This power is antecedent to decision and Chester Arthur was too shrewd a politician to agree to consultation without having it specified just what this vague word meant. Third, the notion is almost contradictory in itself. Consultation after decision implies that no real decision had been made, or, if the decision is a real one, consultation implies only the giving of time to acquiesce. It is impossible to believe that Garfield imagined that Conkling would acquiesce in all his decisions. If a promise "to consult our friends" had been made, the only logical interpretation of that pledge would have been Platt's. The interpretation of the pledge by both Smith and Howe is, therefore, faulty; but, what is more, their interpretation rests on the unwarranted assumption that Platt's testimony is accurate. There is, however, no adequate reason to accept Platt's testimony.

There are several reasons why Platt's testimony would not be accurate. First, Platt was writing thirty years after the event. Second, it was Platt's interpretation of the conference and the supposed bargain made during it that led to the most spectacular act of Conkling's and Platt's political lives, their resignation from the Senate after President Garfield refused to withdraw from the floor of the Senate Robertson's nomination for the collectorship of the Port of New York.

It is precisely Platt's resignation that causes doubts. Conkling resigned immediately after the President's refusal to withdraw the nomination of Robertson which had not been approved by Conkling beforehand and which, in fact, the Senator found most distasteful.³² Platt submitted his resignation one day after Conkling.³³ Vice President Arthur, who had been present at the conference and would have been a party to any bargain made there, did not resign. He had consulted Platt first concerning the President's refusal which had been handed to him on the Senate floor by a special messenger in the presence of both Conkling and Platt.³⁴ It was usual procedure for Arthur to consult first with Conkling in any matter regarding New York. Hence, it is indeed likely that Platt, with Arthur's knowledge, exaggerated Garfield's compliance with the Stalwart demands at the conference in the hope of appeasing Conkling.³⁵ When the crisis resulting from Platt's misinterpretation of the supposed bargain arose, Arthur, who knew of the misinterpretation and dared not risk alienating Platt or Conkling by explaining what

³²Breen, pp. 665-68.

³³Ibid., p. 668. Both resignations were formally submitted on the same day. This priority is vehemently denied by Platt. cf. Platt, pp. 139-58.

³⁴Breen, p. 665.

³⁵Platt and Arthur had hoodwinked Conkling before. Cf. Chidsey, p. 306.

he thought had happened at the conference, gave to Platt as much advance notice as he could. Fear of Conkling dictated Platt's resignation which was reluctantly submitted to the Senate. It is significant to note that Arthur did nothing to prevent Robertson's nomination.

It seems more than likely that there was no bargain made at the conference on August 5, 1880. Garfield knew that the New York Stalwarts would work for him, with or without Conkling.³⁶ Platt, out of loyalty to his leader, heard at the conference what he wanted to hear and gave a distorted picture of the happenings to Roscoe Conkling as the only way to get Conkling to work for Garfield. If Conkling had not worked for Garfield he would have lost control of the Republican organization in New York State.

To reject Platt's account of what occurred at the conference on August 5, 1880 is not to level the charge of duplicity at him. The passage of years could actually have made him believe that a bargain concerning patronage had been struck. This was, after all, the official explanation of the resignation of his Senate seat which was given to the Party in New York. This explanation, however, was not acted on by the Republicans in New York State.

³⁶ Garfield to his diary, August 5, 1880 quoted in Howe, p. 117.

Arthur and Morton, both of whom were present at the conference did not exert themselves in Platt's behalf during his attempt at reelection.³⁷ Thus it appears that Platt's testimony, although his character need not be assailed, is not reliable since contemporaries who were in a position to judge its accuracy did not believe it. Furthermore, the testimony is given in an autobiography whose general spirit is hardly derogatory to the subject of the book. The book repeats an "official" explanation of Platt's resignation and, in general, enshrouds the former Senator in the heroic afterglow of martyrdom.

Though it seems reasonable to state that no bargain had been made on August 5, 1880, the Fifth Avenue Conference was the turning point of the campaign. From this time on the Republicans led on by the New York Stalwarts, hammered away at the tariff issue and Hancock could not answer. His knowledge of even rudimentary economics was negligible and Bayard was called to silence the Republican assault.³⁸ So ludicrous was the situation that Thomas Nast drew one of his most famous cartoons which depicted Bayard whispering into Hancock's ear while the General muttered, "Who is Tariff and why is he for Revenue only?" It was a masterful piece of satire and was reprinted thousands of times

³⁷ Cf. Conkling, p. 642 for the strained conference which took place immediately before Conkling's trip to Albany to attempt reelection to the U. S. Senate.

³⁸ Clancy, S. J., pp. 210; 219.

throughout the country.³⁹ The interest of the public had been caught and the Democrats lost ground quickly.

Kelly and other prominent Democrats were utterly disgusted with the way that Barnum had handled the campaign.⁴⁰ The Democrats were caught on the tariff issue and recriminations flew from faction to faction as the Party leaders blamed one or the other of their number for the obvious mistake in the wording of the Party platform. Barnum tried to divert attention from the tariff plank by pouring a stream of ad hominem arguments from the Democratic press to drown Garfield in scandal. The DeGolyer and Credit Mobilier scandals were brought once more to light and the part that Garfield had played in them was magnified out of all proportion. Little children delighted in chalking the side-walks or fences with the number 329, the amount of money that Garfield supposedly realized from his role in the Credit Mobilier affair.⁴¹ But in the public eye Credit Mobilier stood for the biggest swindle of the century involving millions of dollars. Garfield's meager profits looked just like what they were: a last minute effort to blacken a man's reputation. The children enjoyed it but they didn't have a vote and the adults who did were unimpressed. To all of this vilification Garfield, on the advice of

³⁹A. B. Paine, p. 438.

⁴⁰Clancy, S.J., p. 222.

⁴¹Caldwell, pp. 219-232 is the best account of Garfield's involvement in this scandal.

Cowles, maintained a policy of icy silence.⁴²

Two States held early elections in 1880, Maine and Indiana. Maine was the Half-Breed stronghold, the home State of James G. Blaine, the Plumed Knight. William E. Chandler assured the National Committee that Maine was "safe" and that the Plumed Knight would deliver many Congressmen for the G.O.P.⁴³ The Republican machinery was working smoothly. Conkling and even Grant had come to a giant Republican rally at Warren, Ohio, and had stumped that State for Garfield.⁴⁴ Senator Stephen Dorsey was busy working in Indiana which was considered "very doubtful" but recognized as vital to the success of the campaign.

The Democrats took advantage of the over-confidence of the Republicans and poured men and money into Maine. To the utter consternation of the Republicans Maine went Democratic. Blaine was flabbergasted and wrote meekly to the National Committee that he had underestimated the strength of the Democrats and claimed that they had flooded the State with tens of thousands of dollars, had used repeaters and colonized thousands of voters, some of them even Canadians, in their successful drive to capture Republican seats in the House.⁴⁵

⁴²Ibid., pp. 296-97.

⁴³Clancy, S.J., p. 194.

⁴⁴Cf. Conkling, pp. 619-20 for the text of Grant's speech.

⁴⁵Clancy, S. J., p. 195.

This might have been a pardonable exaggeration but it spurred the Republicans on to a fury of activity in their work to capture Indiana. Garfield finally received the funds he had asked New York to send to Dorsey but he was not content with merely passive leadership. He secured funds from the Wisconsin machine that had helped him get the nomination and urged Rockefeller and other prominent Republican businessmen to exert pressure on their employees to support the Republican ticket.⁴⁶ Large numbers of negroes appeared in Indianapolis and Terre Haute immediately before election day and disappeared right after it.⁴⁷ The Republicans won a handsome victory in Indiana. In a very true sense their victory in Maine had cost the Democrats strategic Indiana.

There was another effect of the Democratic victory in Maine. Chester A. Arthur decided that if the Blaine machine, which had never before been beaten in Maine, could succumb to the onslaught of the poorly organized and disgruntled Democrats the Conkling-Grant machine could most certainly not hold New

⁴⁶T. C. Smith, vol. II, p. 1025.

⁴⁷This is Henry Watterson's contention. Cf. Clancy, S.J., p. 199. For Arthur's famous remarks admitting sharp tactics in Indiana at a testimonial dinner for Senator Dorsey given on February 11, 1880 at Delmonico's in New York City cf. Howe, pp. 129-30. Over \$400,000 was spent by the Republicans in Indiana alone during the campaign of 1880. Cf. Josephson, p. 300.

York by mere organizational tactics. Arthur jumped into the New York Mayoralty contest and stirred up the embers of religious bigotry. The Republican press in New York City rolled out reams of accusations against the Catholic Democrat candidate for Mayor of the metropolis, William R. Grace. Catholics were accused of plotting to seize the public treasury to support their parochial school system.⁴⁸ Every effort was made to blacken John Kelly's name. The fact that "Honest John" had married the niece of Cardinal McCloskey was offered as sure proof of the political allegiance between the Roman hierarchy and the Democratic Party.⁴⁹ Arthur's unscrupulous propaganda was marvelously effective with the non-Catholic voter even within the ranks of the Democratic Party itself. Thompson, revolting at Kelly's dictatorial rule of Tammany Hall and striving to keep control of the Irving Hall Democracy swung Irving Hall's Protestants solidly behind the Republican candidate.⁵⁰ Having split New York City's Democrats, Arthur felt more secure about a Republican victory in New York State.

Not to be outdone in unethical campaign tactics, the Democrats published, with Barnum's consent, two weeks before the

⁴⁸This is Whitelaw Reid's charge made in the New York Herald November 3, 1880. Cf. Clancy, S. J., p. 288 and Breen, p. 620.

⁴⁹This is Tilden's charge which Kelly answered too late in The New York Times, December 20, 1880. Cf. Clancy, S. J., p. 238 and McLaughlin, pp. 299-302.

⁵⁰Clancy, S. J., p. 247.

nation would go to the polls, the infamous Morey Letter. This poor forgery was purported to have been written on January 23, 1880 by Garfield to H. L. Morey, a recently deceased resident of Lynn, Massachusetts. It was written on the official stationery of the House of Representatives, carried Garfield's signature and read as follows:

Yours in relation to the Chinese problem came duly to hand. I take it that the question of employes [sic] is only a question of private and corporate economy, and individuals or companys [sic] have the right to buy labor where they can get it cheapest. We have a treaty with the Chinese Government which should be religiously kept until its provisions are abrogated by the action of the General Government and I am not prepared to say that it should be abrogated until our great manufacturing interests are consulted in the matter of labor.⁵¹

The circumstances surrounding the appearance of the Morey Letter were most suspicious. Less than a week after the Democratic debacle in Indiana, Joseph Hart, the publisher of the New York Truth found the letter placed prominently on his desk. That same day, October 18, 1880, Hart showed the letter to Abram S. Hewitt who pronounced the signature to be genuine.⁵² On October 19 the New York Truth announced to its readers that it would publish a sensational letter of Garfield's that would greatly influence the forthcoming election. On October 20 the letter was

⁵¹ Facsimile in Caldwell, p. 306a.

⁵² Clancy, S. J., p. 233. Father Clancy, S. J., provides the best treatment of the Morey Letter incident.

printed.⁵³ Joseph Medill, the publisher of the Chicago Tribune, secured a reprint of the letter and sent it to Garfield on October 21.⁵⁴ The next day the New York Truth published a facsimile of the letter and the envelope.⁵⁵ Barnum had the facsimile run off by the hundreds and sent one copy of it along with a printed message from himself to every newspaper in the country. Barnum's blurb which accompanied the facsimile appeared with the Morey Letter on the front page of every Democratic newspaper. Barnum's message was as follows:

The following was published in Truth this morning. The letter is authentic. It is General Garfield's handwriting. Denial is worse than useless. It should have the widest circulation among all classes, as it unmasks the Republican hollowness and hypocrisy on the labor question through their chief.⁵⁶

As soon as the copies of New York Truth were on the streets, J. W. Simonton telegraphed the contents of the Morey Letter to Garfield. Charles A. Dana, even though no friend of Garfield, accused the Truth of cheap sensationalism and declared the letter a forgery.⁵⁷ Garfield took the incident with surprising calm

⁵³Ibid., pp. 233-34.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 236.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 234.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 234.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 235.

and confided to his diary that it was evidently the purpose of the Democrats "in their desperation" to seek to wrest the Pacific coast from the Republicans in the coming election.⁵⁸ On October 22, Garfield was awakened shortly after midnight by a messenger who bore a telegram from James Gordon Bennett who reported that the excitement created in New York over the Morey Letter demanded an immediate reply since Abram Hewitt had that evening publicly pronounced the letter to be genuine.⁵⁹ Garfield, however, was not to be rushed. He actually feared a trap because the Morey Letter expressed his sentiments on the Chinese immigration question fairly accurately.⁶⁰

During the morning of October 22 a copy of the facsimile arrived at Mentor, and Garfield, who was waiting for word from his secretary in Washington as to whether he had ever communicated

⁵⁸ Garfield to his diary, October 20, 1880 quoted in T. C. Smith, vol. II, pp. 1039-40.

⁵⁹ Garfield to his diary, October 22, 1880 quoted in T. C. Smith, vol. II, p. 1040.

⁶⁰ Garfield was warned of a trap by Whitelaw Reid. Cf. Clancy, S. J., p. 235. Garfield to his diary October 23, 1880 quoted in T. C. Smith, vol. II, p. 1040 is as follows: "I had the fear that there might have been a letter from Morey and that Nichol might have answered it without my seeing the letter or answer." No less a person than Rose, the banking partner of Levi P. Morton, was entrusted with the searching of Garfield's Washington files for evidence of correspondence with Morey. Cf. T. C. Smith, vol. II, p. 1040 and Josephson, p. 290.

with a Mister Morey in Lynn, immediately recognized the forgery. He telegraphed Marshall Jewell of the National Committee at once and Medill and Bennett published the denial.⁶¹ On Monday, October 25, five days after the publication of the forgery, the Republican National Committee sent to all the newspapers a facsimile of a letter written by Garfield in which he declared the Morey Letter a forgery. Republican newspapers across the land printed side by side the facsimiles of the genuine Garfield letter and the Morey Letter. The juxtaposition aided an easy comparison which readily showed how inept the forgery had been.⁶²

It was a disastrous mistake for the Democrats. The Morey Letter backfired and instead of winning votes for the Democrats it actually hurt their chances. Some historians believe, though, that the Morey Letter cost Garfield the State of California.⁶³ This is hard to believe. Garfield had already made his stand on Chinese Immigration very clear. He was for restriction but insisted that the United States negotiate a new treaty with the Empire of China and not merely abrogate in a unilateral action the existing pact between the two countries. This stand, already known and unpopular in California, was what gave the Morey Letter

⁶¹T. C. Smith, vol. II, p. 1040.

⁶²Clancy, S. J., p. 237.

⁶³Ibid., p. 242. This was Garfield's own opinion. Cf. T. C. Smith, vol. II, p. 1042.

credibility. Those Californians who were opposed to Garfield because of his views on the Chinese question had made up their minds, long before the Morey letter, not to vote for him. The Morey Letter did not cost Garfield California, but what it did do was violate the American spirit of fair play. Mudslinging was expected in an election campaign but the perpetration of a forgery was looked on as a blow below the belt and public indignation against the Democrats ran high.⁶⁴

Even so, the election was a close one. Arthur's campaign of religious bigotry had succeeded in reducing the Democratic majority in New York City from an anticipated 65,000 to 37,877.⁶⁵ Garfield carried New York by a majority of only 21,033 votes.⁶⁶ The Democrats had already lost Indiana to the Republicans in October and although the faithful South delivered its 138 electoral votes for Hancock, the Democratic plan which had looked so foolproof on paper and so easy to accomplish in convention speeches had failed to materialize. Of all the potential votes, 78.4% were cast, a record that has yet to be equaled in any American presidential election.⁶⁷ In the popular vote Garfield led by the narrowest of margins, 7,018 votes.⁶⁸

⁶⁴Caldwell, pp. 308-11.

⁶⁵Breen, p. 621.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 621.

⁶⁷Clancy, S.J., p. 242.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 242.

In the Electoral College, however, Garfield had 214 votes to 155 for Hancock. New York's thirty-five electoral votes, as had been predicted time and time again, made the difference between victory and defeat for Hancock.

In four years, however, there would be another election and all the masters of intra-party politics would be gone from the public scene, save one. Garfield would be dead, killed by an assassin's bullet; Conkling, his political machine in ruins, would have ended his career in bitterness and disgrace; Arthur, would be ill and on the verge of death. John Kelly, though, would be much in evidence. He would bolt the Democratic Party and his action would be the ruin of the old Tammany Hall but it would be the opening of a new political era dominated by a new master of intra-party politics, Richard Croker.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Stoddard, p. 66.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by **Herbert J. Ryan, S.J.**,
has been read and approved by three members of the Department of
History.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the
thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact
that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the
thesis is now given final approval with reference to content,
form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Nov. 14, 1959
Date

Charles H. Metzger, S.J.
Signature of Adviser