

The Daily Astorian

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THE SECRETS OF A NOMINATING CONVENTION.

As a general rule the candidates who have planned in advance for a nomination to the office of president, have been defeated. There are exceptions, just enough to sustain the rule. The last president who "laid the wires" for his own nomination was James Buchanan. It is a curious fact that for the last twenty years the nominating machinery has been, for the most part, disregarded by national conventions. It was respected to some extent in the nomination of Tilden. But Hayes, his Republican competitor, was not prominent as a candidate before the convention met at Cincinnati. His nomination was an afterthought, although there was a reserved force who had been secretly working for that result a short time before the convention met.

Four years later the Republican convention met at Chicago. There were three candidates who had become conspicuous in the preliminary work which had been done in their behalf, as well as by the personal efforts which each had made to secure the nomination. These were Grant, Blaine and Sherman. But these were all defeated, and Garfield was nominated, who had not made any effort for his own nomination, but was understood to be a strong Sherman man. General Hancock, who was nominated by the Democratic convention, had not been conspicuous as a candidate. At any rate he had not attracted public attention by working the political wires in his own behalf. In both instances there was a spontaneity of action which went far to override the machine work done in advance. These facts belong to the political history of the times. The moral is already apparent. It is now only three months to the time when both national conventions will assemble to make nominations for the presidential office. There is not to-day a stereotyped candidate in the foreground. Not a single candidate who is conspicuous by any known use of machinery, or other means, to bring about his own nomination. Indeed, there is not an explicit declaration on the part of any man that he is a candidate for the high office of president. Neither Grant, Blaine, Sherman nor Edmunds admits that he is a candidate, or is known to be working for the nomination. No one has made a great deal of silent work, or gone on. But no slate is made up. No names are conspicuous, and it cannot to-day be guessed who the nominees will be in either party. It is reasonably certain that they will not be prominently mentioned in advance of the sitting of the conventions. Reducing the proposition to the lowest words, the political aspirants who are most conspicuous workers for the nomination never get it. They will not get the nomination three months hence.

Some interesting facts are brought out touching the nomination of Abraham Lincoln for a second term, by W. O. Stoddard in the last number of the *North American*. Previous to his first nomination Lincoln was not a conspicuous candidate. No doubt he had presidential aspirations. Garfield at a later day was not without them. But Lincoln was not so prominent a candidate as Seward, Chase and one or two others. It could not be affirmed in advance that he would receive the nomination. Seward had done a great deal of work in his own behalf, and his friends had done a great deal for him. Chase had been active. He was known to have powerful backers. The merits of both these men were extensively canvassed in the eastern states. Lincoln was not much talked about. The least conspicuous candidate before the time of the convention carried off the nomination. So much was pretty well known. But it was not so generally known that a powerful opposition just on the eve of the convention which met four years later came near defeating his second nomination. Lincoln did little or nothing to secure the nomination. He did many things calculated to secure his defeat. He removed McClellan from the command of the army of the Potomac. He broke many idols, but never one on account of any personal prejudice or animosity. Gen. McClellan's removal actually secured his nomination, by the opposition party, to the office of president.

As early as 1862 the Union League was formed. It grew out of the efforts of less than a dozen men. Its purpose was to sustain the Union cause and to foil the secret hostility of foes at home and at a distance, who were working for disunion. It became the most powerful secret political organization ever known in this country. There was not much secrecy about it beyond the fact that its deliberations were not made known at the time. It did a great deal of work preparatory to the national Republican convention which met in 1864. On the eve of that convention the Union League congress met, containing many senators and representatives in congress, a large number of delegates to the national convention, and a very large radical element of the republican party. Lincoln, by the removal of McClellan, had made a candidate for the democratic party. In fact, he had insured his nomination. But he had done nothing for himself, beyond the honest discharge of his duties in one of the most trying emergencies ever known in the history of the country.

The Union League congress which assembled on the day before, held its session far into the night, held the nomination of Lincoln's successor in its hands. All the hot headed and turbulent spirits who had grievances, or who supposed they had, were given full play. The "undertow" was very strong. It looked for a time as if the defeat of Lincoln was certain. For some hours none of his friends came forward in his defense. Grant, Chase and Fremont were freely mentioned as acceptable candidates. The nomination might fall to one of these men. There were some sore spots. The compulsory draft of men for the army had produced riots in New York, and had been very unpopular in other places. It was as true then as now

that Mr. Lincoln had not removed a single man from office with any reference to its effect on his second nomination. He had conferred office on a large number of men who were not Republicans. This fact was an additional ground of complaint by the more radical members of the Union League. All that was said and done in that connection will never be known. The doors were closed against all reporters and agents, all persons not members of the council. Had the complaint and charges which were made in the first hours of that memorable session been allowed to go into the public prints, Abraham Lincoln would have failed of a second nomination. "There were not many faults possible to a ruler of a free people whereof Mr. Lincoln was not accused before the excited patriots made an end of these 'speeches for the prosecution' of the public criminal whose career in office they were denouncing." It was not a convention of sore heads, but rather one in which there were many sore hearts. Finally there came a lull in the storm when "Jim" Lane of Kansas arose in the middle of the hall and was instantly recognized by the chairman. He waited a moment for silence, and then spoke nearly as follows:

Mr. President, Gentlemen of the Grand Council: For a man to produce pain in another man by pressing upon a wounded spot requires no great degree of strength, and he who presses is not entitled to any emotion of triumph at the agony expressed by the sufferer. Neither skill nor wisdom has been exercised in the barbaric process. For a man, an orator, to produce an effect upon another man by means of his words, and wear weary hearts, grieved with manly wounds, and with many sacrifices, sick with long delays, broken with bitter disappointments, so stirring them up, even to passion and folly, demands no high degree of oratorical ability. It is an easy thing to do, as we have seen this evening. Almost anybody can do it.

For a man to take such a crowd as this now is, so sore and sick at heart and now so stung and aroused to passionate folly; now so infused with a delusive hope for the future, as well as with false and unjust thoughts concerning the past; for a man to address himself to such an assembly and turn the tide of its passion and its excitement in the opposite direction; that were a task worthy of the highest, greatest effort of human oratory. I am no orator at all, but precisely that task have I now set myself, with absolute certainty of success. All that is needful is that the truth should be set forth plainly, now that the false has done its worst.

Making then a rapid sketch of the leading features of Mr. Lincoln's administration, he proceeded as follows:

"I am speaking individually to each man here. Do you, sir, know, in this broad land, and can you name to me, one man whom you can or would trust, before God, that he would have done better than Abraham Lincoln has done, and to whom you would be more willing to entrust the unforeseen emergency or peril which is next to come? The unforeseen peril, that perplexing emergency, that step in the dark, is right before us, and we are here to decide by whom it shall be made for the nation. Name your other man!"

"I am dwelling at some length on the faithfulness, toil and unselfish character of the administration, he closed with these words:


"We shall come together to be watched, in breathless listening, by all this country—and if the civilized world—and if we shall seem to waver as to our set purpose, we destroy hope; and if we permit private feeling; as to-night, to break forth into discussion we discuss defeat; and if we nominate any other man than Abraham Lincoln we nominate ruin! Gentlemen of the grand council of the Union League, I have done."

There was no reply to that speech. The Union League had been welded almost to a unit. The resolution which was immediately passed approving the administration made the nomination of Lincoln a few hours later a certainty. Had the Union League ruled otherwise, it is held that there would have been no re-nomination of Abraham Lincoln.

The *Chronicle*, San Francisco, Cal., publishes a letter from Col. D. J. Williamson, an Army officer and Ex-U. S. Consul, affirming, that after long years of intense suffering from acute rheumatism, after using all other known remedies, the baths of St. Jacobs Oil, and spending \$20,000 without relief, he was cured by St. Jacobs Oil, the conqueror of pain, and has thrown away his crutches.

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