

THE TAFT-ROOSEVELT FEUD

By WILLIAM J. BRYAN

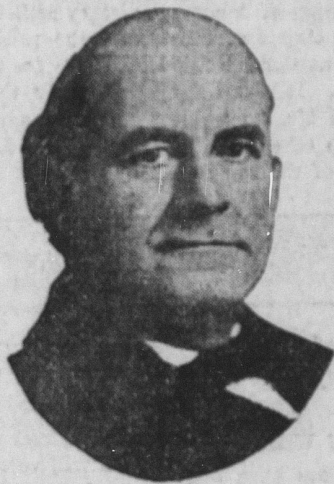
That there is a natural and inevitable division in the Republican party is evident to all. It is in its essentials like the division which took place in the Democratic party sixteen years ago, and is in fact, a result of the stubborn fight made by the Democratic party against the predatory interests. In the beginning, the democracy lost permanently the aristocratic and plutocratic elements of the party, and it lost temporarily many who did not understand the real character of the struggle. In the course of sixteen years those have returned who were misled—those whose mistake was of the head rather than of the heart—and the party is now practically united. A few representatives of the favor-seeking class still call themselves Democrats, but among the rank and file of the party there is entire harmony—they are militantly progressive.

The Republican party, even before 1896, had a much larger percentage than the Democratic party had of those who profited by privilege or were in sympathy with those who were the beneficiaries of governmental favoritism. After 1896 the percentage was still greater because the worst of the Democratic party went over to the opposition.

The same great wave of reform, however, that created the Populist party and thus aroused the Democratic party to resistance to the plunderbund's program has now stirred the Republican party to its very depths. But here the parallel ends. The progressives won their fight in the Democratic party and though once since then the organization has fallen into the hands of Wall street the mass of the party has left no doubt as to its fidelity to the people's side of the questions at issue. But in the Republican party the result was different; the Wall street element retained control of the party machinery and nominated the ticket. It is true that the methods employed were indefensible but Mr. Roosevelt could not well complain because he had employed the same methods four years before to nominate the man of his choice.

The second difference between the Democratic situation sixteen years ago and the Republican situation now is that the fight in the Democratic party was waged entirely on principle, while personalities have played a large part in the Republican contest. In 1896 the gold Democrats, after being defeated in the convention, put up a separate ticket, but there was no charge of "fraud" or "theft," and there was no personal feeling between the gold ticket and the regular Democratic ticket. In the Republican party, however, the contest over principles is almost lost sight of in the feud which has developed between President Taft and ex-President Roosevelt. Nothing like it has ever been seen in American politics and, for the sake of the nation's reputation abroad, let us hope that nothing like it may ever be seen again.

Mr. Roosevelt, when President, took up Mr. Taft and made him the nominee of his party, using the patronage of his high office to accomplish his purpose. He then violated precedent by the extraordinary activity which he manifested in behalf of his candidate. Mr. Taft won, and from subsequent developments it is quite certain that he understood that he was to have the office for two terms, and that Mr. Roosevelt was then to be a candidate again. Mr. Roosevelt's son-in-law inadvertently intimated as much during the campaign of 1908. But it seems that, for some reason—some think because of pride and ingratitude, others believe as a result of promises made for him during the campaign—but for some reason, Mr. Taft cast Mr. Roosevelt off and failed to consult him about the formation of his cabinet. Such conduct upon the part of one so obligated as Mr. Taft was is hard to account for, and



Mr. Roosevelt is not the man to bear such a slight in silence. He evidently felt that Mr. Taft's violation of the implied agreement released him, and since his return from Africa his chief ambition seems to be to prevent the President's re-election. Whatever may have been the cause of Mr. Taft's change of front it is natural that his anger should be aroused by Mr. Roosevelt's biting accusation. He has, however, gone far beyond what might have been expected from one of his disposition. The speeches made by him and Mr. Roosevelt in the contest for delegates pained the friends of both—so lacking were they in the dignity that is supposed to attach to the highest office in the land. The newspapers in foreign lands have used the

speeches made by the President and by the former occupant of the White House as a basis for the comparisons unfavorable to republics.

At the convention the interests of the party were lost sight of and each side seemed more anxious to win out against the other than for the success of the party or for the triumph of any set of principles. Usually when feeling is excited between two candidates the party puts them both aside and takes some one who has not aroused antagonisms, but Mr. Taft was not willing to stand aside and Mr. Roosevelt was not willing to compromise on any other Progressive. So we have this pot and kettle campaign. While Mr. Roosevelt's friends condemn Mr. Taft for ignoring the ex-President and his close friends, the supporters of Mr. Taft point out that Mr. Roosevelt, instead of seeking to make the President's administration a success, laid in wait for sins of omission and commission. Thus the situation went from bad to worse and the two men, once bosom friends, have become implacable enemies, and the voters of a great party are unable to consider campaign issues on their merits.

"Did Mr. Taft treat Mr. Roosevelt fairly?" and "Did Mr. Roosevelt act justly toward Mr. Taft?"—These questions absorb attention to the overshadowing of principles and policies. Had some pioneer reformer like Senator La Follette been pitted against Mr. Taft the line could have been drawn with clearness and the contest could have been conducted without resort to personalities, but it is difficult to make a definite issue between Mr. Taft and Mr. Roosevelt when Mr. Taft is now what Mr. Roosevelt was until very recently, and Mr. Roosevelt is now what Mr. Taft, as the Progressive Republicans insist, promised to be! It would be unfortunate for the Republican party for either Mr. Taft or Mr. Roosevelt to be elected; it would simply continue the feud—as bitter as any blood feud among mountaineers. If both are defeated the party can be reorganized and made useful as one of the great parties of the country. If both are defeated each side will be satisfied—it will have won half a victory and reconciliation will be possible along reform lines.

The Republican party can not hope to rival the Democratic party as a reform party—it will remain, relatively speaking, the conservative party, but one defeat will make it progressive enough to draw back most of those who now follow Mr. Roosevelt's standard. The Republican party is not going to fall to pieces, as the more sanguine members of the new party seem to think. There is little difference between Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Taft except as to leadership, and leaders can be changed more easily when we secure presidential primaries. On essentials Mr. Taft and Mr. Roosevelt are not far apart. They agree on the tariff; if either one will write out his views on the subject the other will have no difficulty in indorsing them. They both take the side of the trusts against the people,