

menced the outside world was led to believe that Mr. BRYAN had not a possible chance and that the affair would be a 'walk-over' for Mr. MCKINLEY, and that of course helped to make the prospect lame and unexciting. And finally, public interest in the contest has been deadened by the difficulty—the chronic difficulty—which non-Americans have in getting anything like a clear or definite idea as to what are the actual issues which divide the two candidates and their parties. Generally speaking the names of political parties give at last a rough indication of the special policy or principles which they profess to uphold. Thus the terms Liberal and Conservative, Freetrader and Protectionist, Moderate and Prohibitionist, explain themselves, and, at least in a general way, serve to indicate the special viewpoint of the respective parties. But the names of the two great parties in America—Democrat and Republican—do not in themselves suggest any essential difference or distinction and only help to further confound and befog the uninitiated. In spite of all this, as the time of the crisis draws near public interest in the struggle is becoming greatly quickened and all the more so as Mr. BRYAN'S chances of success have of late very appreciably increased. We propose therefore to explain as clearly and simply as possible the present differences between the two parties and the actual issues involved in the great contest now pending.

Before doing so it may be interesting to our readers to have a brief description of the personal character of the two candidates. So far as Mr. MCKINLEY, the present President and leader of the Republican party, is concerned, the accounts are very conflicting. His opponents in the Democratic Press, with the vigor and picturesqueness peculiar to American political papers, describe him in terms ranging from a 'carpet-bagger,' a 'marionette,' and an 'invertebrate,' up to 'England's cub' and 'fetch-and-carry poodle.' His friends in the Republican Press, on the other hand, laud him to the skies as almost a second WASHINGTON. The truth lies, of course, between these two extremes. All impartial reports agree in crediting him with personal honesty, even temper, and when roused—but only when roused—considerable force of will. He listens to advice, but, like less exalted beings, he is slow to take it. He has an exceptional skill in the judgment of men, and his choice of colleagues and of subordinates has helped, far more than his own gifts, to carry him safe and secure through his Presidential term. He has two notable defects which will always prove a source of weakness to him. The first is that he is by no means a brainy man, his thinking capacity being very little, if any, above the average. As a Democratic Congressman rather caustically put it, the difference between Mr. MCKINLEY and Mr. BRYAN is, that Mr. BRYAN'S convictions are so strong that it is hard for him to let go of them, and Mr. MCKINLEY'S so weak that it takes him all his time to hold on to them. The other defect is that he seems to have very little independence of character. Even thoroughly unbiassed writers have declared that if popular opinion demanded it he would be willing to sacrifice his most fundamental political principles, and it is generally admitted that on all great questions and critical occasions he is almost entirely in the hands of his very able chief adviser, Mr. HANNA, thus almost justifying the taunt of his opponents, who persistently refer to him as 'HANNA'S marionette.' It should be added that his experience as President, while it has served to show up his defects, has also had the effect of deepening his character, and he is certainly a better all-round man to-day than when, four years ago, he was first nominated for the Presidency.

Mr. W. J. BRYAN, the Democratic candidate, though perhaps less widely known than his opponent, is certainly a much more interesting personality. He is a Western lawyer who began life on a farm and left it, at the age of 15, to get education. After passing from one academy to another he finally entered Illinois College, Jacksonville, and after a four years' course there graduated with the highest honors in 1881. He then studied law, and in 1889 he went to Nebraska, where he became a member of the firm of TALBOT and BRYAN. He never held any office until he was elected to Congress, and his career as a congressman has shown that he possesses exceptional shrewdness, ability, and tact. Mr. BRYAN is only 40, though if the pictures published of him are like the original he must look old for his years.

The picture shows a very powerful head, with square brows and chin, and a large and well-shaped nose. The whole face expresses great keenness and determination. It is emphatically the face of a man who knows what he means and who will insist that his audience shall always know what he means. As is very generally known, Mr. BRYAN is a great popular orator, and indeed it was by sheer power of oratory that he first forced his way to the front. When the Chicago Convention met in 1896 for the nomination of a candidate Mr. BRYAN'S name was not even seriously mentioned for the position. But on the second day he was given an opportunity of speaking in defence of the platform, and he delivered an address of such surpassing eloquence that the whole gathering was completely carried away. The Convention was adjourned in order to allow the effect of the speech to evaporate and to give other candidates a chance, but to no purpose. The first impression remained, and the orator was nominated for the presidency by an overwhelming majority. It was on this occasion that Mr. BRYAN uttered the striking metaphor which, of itself, proved almost sufficient to make him famous: 'You shall not set on the brow of labor a crown of thorns; you shall not crucify mankind on a cross of gold.' The words produced an effect that was simply electrical. They seemed in a subtle way to sanctify the Democratic cause, and from that time forth the members of the party were made to feel that they were engaged not in a mere political faction-fight but in a great and holy crusade. The hold which Mr. BRYAN then gained on the Democracy of the nation he still retains, and we venture to think that, whether he be successful on the present occasion or not, the time will certainly come when the highest honor which the Republic can offer will be his.

The issues involved in the present struggle have been defined in elaborate 'platforms' published by the Conventions of the respective parties. The platform published by the Republican Convention, though very lengthy, is at the same time very vague. Stripping it of its generalities one finds that the only two planks that are clearly and definitely stated are the continued allegiance of the party to the Gold Standard and the re-affirmation of its faith in the policy of Protection. The platform approves Mr. MCKINLEY'S course in regard to the Philippines, but does not venture on a defence of his action which certainly constituted a departure from the MONROE doctrine and from the traditional policy of the United States. The Democratic platform is much more definite and outspoken. It contains a great many planks, the most important of which are, unqualified opposition to Imperialism, by which is meant the policy of acquiring and holding sovereignty over large areas of territory and large numbers of people outside the bounds of the United States, the special reference being to Cuba and the Philippines; a scathing denunciation of 'trusts' or monopolies, and a demand for their suppression; and a reiteration of the demand for the free and unlimited coinage of silver and gold at the ratio of 16 to 1. Both platforms contain a reference to the Transvaal trouble. The Republican platform expresses an 'earnest hope that a way will soon be found honorable to Great Britain and the two Republics to terminate the present strife,' an aspiration which a Democratic editor describes as being nothing more than 'a pious hope that a speedy peace may be arrived between the wolf and the lamb without too much injury to the mutton trade.' The Democratic utterance on the same subject is as follows:—'Believing in the principles of self-government, and rejecting, as did our forefathers, the claim of monarchy, we view with indignation the purpose of England to overwhelm with force the South African Republics. Speaking, as we do, for the entire American nation, except its Republican office-holders, and for all free men everywhere, we extend our sympathies to the heroic burghers in their unequal struggle to maintain their liberty and independence.'

The main issues, then, which divide the two parties in the present struggle are: (1) The question of Imperialism; (2) the treatment of 'Trusts,' which the Republicans dare not suppress, since it is on the owners of 'Trusts' that they depend largely for their support; and (3) the money question—i.e., the question whether there is to be a gold and silver standard or a gold standard only. We have not space to go into the very interesting question of Bimetallism involved in this last issue, but we may state very briefly