

to seize this moment for dropping him and coming over to the winning standard. Or the aspirant himself, who, hundreds of miles away, sits listening to the click of the busy wires, is told how matters stand, and asked to advise forthwith what course his friends shall take. Forthwith it must be, for the next ballot is come, and may give the battle-field a new aspect, promising victory or presaging irretrievable defeat.

Any one who has taken part in an election, be it the election of a pope by cardinals, of a town-clerk by the city council, of a fellow by the dons of a college, of a schoolmaster by the board of trustees, of a pastor by a congregation, knows how much depends on generalship. In every body of electors there are men who have no minds of their own; others who cannot make up their minds till the decisive moment, and are determined by the last word or incident; others whose wavering inclination yields to the pressure or follows the example of a stronger colleague. There are therefore chances of running in by surprise an aspirant whom few may have desired, but still fewer have positively disliked, chances specially valuable when controversy has spent itself between two equally matched competitors, so that the majority are ready to jump at a new suggestion. The wary tactician awaits his opportunity; he improves the brightening prospects of his aspirant to carry him with a run before the opposition is ready with a counter move; or if he sees a strong antagonist, he invents pretexts for delay till he has arranged a combination by which that antagonist may be foiled. Sometimes he will put forward an aspirant destined to be abandoned, and reserve till several votings have been taken the man with whom he means to win. All these arts are familiar to the convention manager, whose power is seen not merely in the dealing with so large a number of individuals and groups whose dispositions he must grasp and remember, but in the cool promptitude with which he decides on his course amid the noise and passion and distractions of twelve thousand shouting spectators. Scarcely greater are the faculties of combination and coolness of head needed by a general in the midst of a battle, who has to bear in mind the position of every one of his own corps and to divine the positions of those of the enemy's corps which remain concealed, who must vary his plan from hour to hour according to the success or

failure of each of his movements and the new facts that are successively disclosed, and who does all this under the roar and through the smoke of cannon.

One balloting follows another till what is called "the break" comes. It comes when the weaker factions, perceiving that the men of their first preference cannot succeed, transfer their votes to that one among the aspirants whom they like best, or whose strength they see growing. When the faction of one aspirant has set the example, others are quick to follow, and thus it may happen that after thirty or forty ballots have been taken with few changes of strength as between the two leading competitors, a single ballot, once the break has begun, and the column of one or both of these competitors has been "staggered," decides the battle.

If one Favourite is much stronger from the first than any other, the break may come soon and come gently, *i.e.* each ballot shows a gain for him on the preceding ballot, and he marches so steadily to victory that resistance is felt to be useless. But if two well-matched rivals have maintained the struggle through twenty or thirty ballots, so that the long strain has wrought up all minds to unwonted excitement, the break, when it comes, comes with fierce intensity, like that which used to mark the charge of the Old Guard. The defeat becomes a rout. Battalion after battalion goes over to the victors, while the vanquished, ashamed of their candidate, try to conceal themselves by throwing away their colours and joining in the cheers that acclaim the conqueror. In the picturesquely technical language of politicians, it is a Stampede.

To stampede a convention is the steadily contemplated aim of every manager who knows he cannot win on the first ballot.<sup>1</sup> He enjoys it as the most dramatic form of victory, he values it because it evokes an enthusiasm whose echo reverberates all over the Union, and dilates the party heart with something like that sense of supernatural guidance which Rome used to have when the cardinals chose a pope by the sudden inspiration of

<sup>1</sup> To check stampeding, the Republican convention of 1876 adopted a rule providing that the roll-call of States should in no case be dispensed with. This makes surprise and tumult less dangerous. (See Stanwood's useful *History of Presidential Elections*.) With the same view, the Republican convention of 1888 ruled that no vote given on any balloting should be changed before the end of that balloting.

the Holy Spirit. Sometimes it comes of itself, when various delegations, smitten at the same moment by the sense that one of the aspirants is destined to conquer, go over to him all at once.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes it is due to the action of the aspirant himself. In 1880 Mr. Blaine, who was one of the two leading Favourites, perceiving that he could not be carried against the resistance of the Grant men, suddenly telegraphed to his friends to transfer their votes to General Garfield, till then a scarcely considered candidate. In 1884 General Logan, also by telegraph, turned over his votes to Mr. Blaine between the third and fourth ballot, thereby assuring the already probable triumph of that Favourite.

When a stampede is imminent, only one means exists of averting it, — that of adjourning the convention so as to stop the panic and gain time for a combination against the winning aspirant. A resolute manager always tries this device, but he seldom succeeds, for the winning side resists the motion for adjournment, and the vote which it casts on that issue is practically a vote for its aspirant, against so much of the field as has any fight left in it. This is the most critical and exciting moment of the whole battle. A dozen speakers rise at once, some to support, some to resist the adjournment, some to protest against debate upon it, some to take points of order, few of which can be heard over the din of the howling multitude. Meanwhile, the managers who have kept their heads rush swiftly about through friendly delegations, trying at this supreme moment to rig up a combination which may resist the advancing tempest. Tremendous efforts are made to get the second Favourite's men to abandon their chief and "swing into line" for some Dark Horse or Favourite Son, with whose votes they may make head till other factions rally to them.

"In vain, in vain, the all-consuming hour  
Relentless falls —"

The battle is already lost, the ranks are broken and cannot be rallied, nothing remains for brave men but to cast their last votes against the winner and fall gloriously around their still

<sup>1</sup> Probably a Dark Horse, for the Favourite Sons, having had their turn in the earlier ballotings, have been discounted; and are apt to excite more jealousy among the delegates of other States.

waving banner. The motion to adjourn is defeated, and the next ballot ends the strife with a hurricane of cheering for the chosen leader. Then a sudden calm falls on the troubled sea. What is done is done, and whether done for good or for ill, the best face must be put upon it. Accordingly, the proposer of one of the defeated aspirants moves that the nomination be made unanimous, and the more conspicuous friends of other aspirants hasten to show their good-humour and their loyalty to the party as a whole by seconding this proposition. Then, perhaps, a gigantic portrait of the candidate, provided by anticipation, is hoisted up, a signal for fresh enthusiasm, or a stuffed eagle is carried in procession round the hall.

Nothing further remains but to nominate a candidate for the vice-presidency, a matter of small moment now that the great issue has been settled. This nomination is frequently used to console one of the defeated aspirants for the presidential nomination, or is handed over to his friends to be given to some politician of their choice. If there be a contest, it is seldom prolonged beyond two or three ballots. The convention is at an end, and in another day the whole host of exhausted delegates and camp-followers, hoarse with shouting, is streaming home along the railways.

The fever heat of the convention is almost matched by that of the great cities, and indeed of every spot over the Union to which there runs an electric wire. Every incident, speech, vote, is instantly telegraphed to all the cities. Crowds gather round the newspaper offices, where frequent editions are supplemented by boards displaying the latest bulletins. In Washington, Congress can hardly be kept together, because every politician is personally interested in every move of the game. When at last the result is announced, the partisans of the chosen candidate go wild with delight; salvos of artillery are fired off, processions with bands parade the streets, ratification meetings are announced for the same evening, "campaign clubs" bearing the candidate's name are organized on the spot. The excitement is of course greatest in the victor's own State, or in the city where he happens to be resident. A crowd rushes to his house, squeezes his hand to a quivering pulp, congratulates him on being virtually President, while the keen-eyed reporter telegraphs far and wide how he smiled and spoke

when the news was brought. Defeated aspirants telegraph to their luckier rival their congratulations on his success, promising him support in the campaign. Interviewers fly to prominent politicians, and cross-examine them as to what they think of the nomination. But in two days all is still again, and a lull of exhaustion follows till the real business of the contest begins some while later with the issue of the letter of acceptance, in which the candidate declares his views and outlines his policy.

## CHAPTER LXXI

### THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

A PRESIDENTIAL election in America is something to which Europe can show nothing similar. Though the issues which fall to be decided by the election of a Chamber in France or Italy, or of a House of Commons in England, are often far graver than those involved in the choice of A or B to be executive chief magistrate for four years, the commotion and excitement, the amount of "organization," of speaking, writing, telegraphing, and shouting, is incomparably greater in the United States. It is only the salient features of these contests that I shall attempt to sketch, for the detail is infinite.

The canvass usually lasts about four months. It begins soon after both of the great parties have chosen their candidate, *i.e.* before the middle of July; and it ends early in November, on the day when the presidential electors are chosen simultaneously in and by all the States. The summer heats and the absence of the richer sort of people at the seaside or mountain resorts keep down the excitement during July and August; it rises in September, and boils furiously through October.

The first step is for each nominated candidate to accept his nomination in a letter, sometimes as long as a pamphlet, setting forth his views of the condition of the nation and the policy which the times require. Such a letter is meant to strike the keynote for the whole orchestra of orators. It is, of course, published everywhere, extolled by friendly and dissected by hostile journals. Together with the "platform" adopted at the national party convention, it is the official declaration of party principles, to be referred to as putting the party case, no less than the candidate himself, before the nation.

While the candidate is composing his address, the work of organization goes briskly forward, for in American elections