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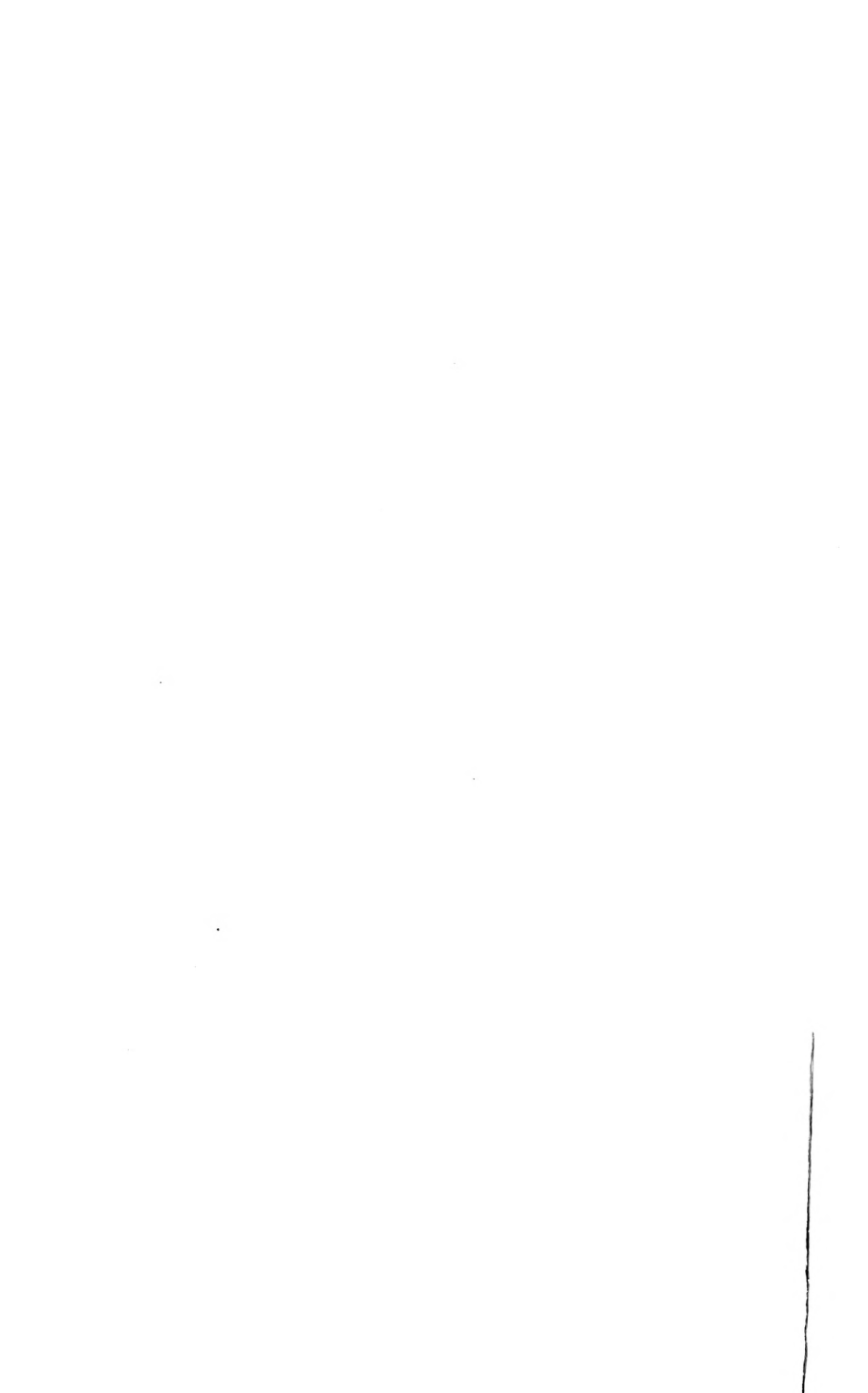
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**THE POPULIST MOVEMENT IN GEORGIA**



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# THE POPULIST MOVEMENT IN GEORGIA

A View of the "Agrarian Crusade" in the  
in the Light of Solid-South Politics

BY

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## PREFACE

IN this study of the causes, manifestations, and results of the Populist movement as they have appeared in Georgia, the writer has been more intent upon illustrating some of the main currents of American life in the past fifty years than upon presenting a fragment of state history. It was a nation-wide movement. Indeed its fundamental causes were to some extent common to the industrialized world, though in large measure its problems were peculiar to the United States. They presented different aspects in different sections of the country and in particular localities. Such variations affected the course and the results of the movement, nationally as well as locally. These must needs be considered at close range before a true perspective of the whole can be gained. Hence the present study.

Doubtless, if the truth were known, the writer was led to select Georgia as a special field because of the natural ties of birth and rearing, and then rationalized his choice as a good one on the grounds that the Southern phases of the movement had formerly received least attention from the historian and that Georgia offered a particularly fertile field for the study of these phases. The home of Tom Watson, the scene of some of the fiercest struggles between the "Bourbons" and the "wool-hat boys," often a strategic factor in Populist national councils, and typical in many ways of the Solid-South group of states, it seems well suited as a point of entrée into the field of special investigation on the subject.

In the hope of avoiding the pitfalls of a nearsighted view

and of contributing more effectively to the development of a larger theme, the writer has frequently reminded himself and his reader of the main outlines of that theme as they now appear. On a basis of the information which others have presented and of his own modest contributions, he has ventured upon tentative interpretation. He has sought to avoid dogmatism as well as bias, but has felt justified in entertaining a sympathetic attitude toward his subject; for in this way one is most likely, it seems, to gain a true appreciation of a great popular movement.

Acknowledgments are gratefully made for the assistance of numerous friends and acquaintances. The largest debt is to Professor Benjamin Burks Kendrick. Of the recognized authorities in this general field, he was the first appealed to for advice and has been the main source of inspiration and practical aid through every stage of the work. Those who have known him as a teacher, and more especially those who have enjoyed his personal friendship, can understand to some extent what this has meant. Professor William A. Dunning, whose great mind has guided so many similar tasks, has given much inspiration and some advice in the present one. Professor Carlton J. H. Hayes, though primarily interested in European rather than American history, has had great influence in broadening the writer's historical outlook. He has also read and helpfully criticized the greater part of the manuscript. Professor Charles A. Beard (formerly of the Columbia faculty) gave stimulating advice in the earlier stages of the work. Other members of the political science faculty at Columbia, though they have contributed less directly to this study, are gratefully remembered for their influence. Senator Thomas E. Watson of Georgia granted the use of his private collection and submitted cheerfully to several interviews. Miss Annie Bell Northen of Atlanta kindly gave access to the scrap-

books of her father, Governor W. J. Northen. Mr. Lucian Lamar Knight, superintendent of the Georgia state archives, was helpful in many ways. Judge James K. Hines, ex-Governor John M. Slaton, Mr. Clark Howell, and numerous others granted interviews. Miss Sarah Conley, of the Wesleyan College faculty, assisted in the reading of the proof. The authorities and assistants in the various libraries in which the writer has worked have been very gracious; none have been more so than Mrs. Maud Baker Cobb, Georgia state librarian. The writer would not close this note of appreciation without alluding to the great inspiration and aid which he has received from his father, Rev. H. J. Arnett, and his wife, Ethel Stephens Arnett.

A. M. A.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK CITY,  
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## CHAPTER I

### THE REGIME OF THE "BOURBON" DEMOCRACY

THE political storms of the eighteen-nineties will long remain memorable in American history. The most turbulent in the modern era, they were also the most significant. Problems of a revolutionized economic life, long obscured by prejudice and outworn issues, were then for the first time pressed into the foreground of national politics. Forces of dissent which had formerly found expression only in minor parties or in more or less impotent factions of the old ones now culminated in the wider Populist revolt and the party revolution of 1896.

The movement was primarily agrarian. Discontent, while affecting various elements of the population, was most widespread and most articulate among the farmers. The modern industrial and business expansion, though it had brought them unquestioned benefits, had not profited them in the same proportion that it had financial, commercial, and industrial interests; on the other hand, it had made them increasingly dependent upon the latter groups. Meanwhile their political fortunes had also declined. Having once enjoyed a prestige unsurpassed in the country and quite pre-eminent in a large portion of it, they naturally felt their fallen estate all the more keenly. Still numerically the largest group, if united in politics, they might be able to restore something of their former influence. The chief obstacle, of course, lay in the fact that they were divided in their party connections; those of the South being inflexibly

Democratic from tradition and local circumstance, and those of the North and West being largely Republican with almost equal strength. Thus divided, they had been unable to secure a standing in either party which seemed to the more thoughtful of them commensurate with the importance of their services to the country. Even in communities essentially agricultural, it seems that, largely by appeals to patriotism and prejudice, régimes had been maintained which were not always duly regardful of their interests.<sup>1</sup> Local revolts, such as those which constituted the Granger movement, had achieved remarkable success for a time, and had accomplished some more or less permanent results in such matters as state regulation of railroads; but the enthusiasm of the farmers had generally waned after a brief period of ascendancy.<sup>2</sup> Similar movements national in scope had been less successful. Their energies had been divided between intra-party struggles and third party movements.<sup>3</sup> In the late eighties and early nineties times became harder for the farmers. It was one of those paradoxical situations in which wealth is produced on all sides in apparent superabundance and yet its producers find themselves in want. It seemed that the more bountifully the farmers brought forth the less they had to enjoy and the more hopelessly they sank in debt. Populism was the voice of their protest.

Other elements were concerned, and many among them were eventually drawn into the movement. The relative scarcity of money and the often unreasonable exactions of creditors and their agents, together with the steady appreciation of the dollar and hence of all standing obligations,

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Solon J. Buck, *The Granger Movement*, pp. 34-36, 80-81; also James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, chs. liii, lxxii.

<sup>2</sup>Buck, *passim*.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 80-81; also Fred E. Haynes, *Third Party Movements*, *passim*, esp. pp. 1-6, 51-65, 91-153.

furnished a grievance to debtors in general. Some of the lesser business interests were likewise aggrieved by the discriminations and other unfair practices of railroads and trusts. Industrial labor, while chiefly concerned with immediate matters of wage reductions and unemployment, was not unaffected by the problems with which the farmers were wrestling; but it was divided in its attitude, especially toward the financial issues. Among these various groups, relatively few, except in so far as the debtors were also farmers, supported the Populist ticket; but many of them were drawn into the Populistic wing of the Democratic party.

Since the West and the South were preponderantly agrarian and debtor, and since their business enterprises were more exclusively of the small, competitive type, they were more responsive to the radical doctrines. Charges that both the old parties had been controlled since the Civil War by the powerful business interests of the East came to be widely accepted in those regions. Hence the movement assumed a sectional as well as a social aspect. To be sure, the lines were by no means sharply drawn in either case. In all sections and among all classes, in addition to the usual party ties, there were naturally questions as to the expediency of proposed measures. The situation varied too in different sections. In the East the farmers were more completely dependent upon the prosperity of business in the neighboring cities, and hence took little part in any of these movements.<sup>1</sup> The rapid progress of industrialization in the Northcentral States had relatively weakened the agricultural element there since the time of the Grangers; consequently that section offered a less fertile field for the Populists and became the storm center in 1896. The Middle West suffered from overexpansion, especially in the arid regions

<sup>1</sup>*Cf. Buck, op. cit., pp. 3-9.*

where settlers had been falsely encouraged by a series of unusually favorable seasons, and from the prevailing tendency to confine attention too exclusively to a single crop.<sup>1</sup> In all the Western country the effects of falling prices and the exactions of loan agents, railways, and middlemen were heavily felt, and brought their harvest of discontent.<sup>2</sup> In the South agrarian conditions were among the most unfortunate, and causes of political dissatisfaction were perhaps the strongest, though the peculiar race situation there made successful revolt most difficult.

The loss of agrarian prestige was more marked in the South than in any other part of the country, partly because in that section there had been more to lose. Probably no other class of people ever dominated the economic, political, and social life of an American community more completely, or exerted a greater influence in national affairs, than did the farmers of the Old South.<sup>3</sup> Prosperity there was almost wholly dependent upon them and the economic order largely subject to their control. A manufacturing class scarcely existed, and such bankers and merchants as there were to constitute a distinct business element were generally quite secondary in importance. In politics the agricultural class was easily supreme in the county seats<sup>4</sup> and the state

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 8; also J. W. Gleed in *Forum*, vol. xvii, pp. 217, *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> See Buck, pp. 9-39. For another viewpoint, see Edw. Atkinson, "True Meaning of Farm Mortgage Statistics," *Forum*, vol. xvii, pp. 310-325, May, 1894.

<sup>3</sup> The contrast between the status of the Southern farmer as it appeared before the Civil War and again in the Populist era was forcefully presented by Professor B. B. Kendrick (Columbia) in a paper read before the American Historical Association in Washington, Dec., 1920. (MS. copies in possession of Professor Kendrick and of Am. Hist. Assn. and will eventually be published in the annual report of the association.)

<sup>4</sup> Exception might be made here in the case of a few urban communities, but even in those the influence of the planter was powerfully felt.



capitals, and was not without a major share of influence at Washington. The standards of polite society emanated from the homes of the planters. Every agency of public opinion—preachers of all denominations, politicians of all parties, professors, journalists, and the rest—upheld their interests and ideals with the most remarkable unanimity. Certainly, the agricultural population was not a unit in all respects. Lines of social demarkation were rather distinctly drawn in the older communities of tidewater Virginia and South Carolina and in southern Louisiana; they were less clear in the piedmont regions; and they quite disappeared in the great stretches of pine barrens and the wide mountain areas.<sup>1</sup> In some states political divisions between the larger and the smaller farmers, and between sections in which these respectively predominated, were as old as colonial times. But in all matters in which the interests of the agricultural class as a whole were at stake there could be little question as to the issue locally or as to the attitude of their representatives at Washington.

How greatly all this was changed! Although every interest in the South was caught up in the general debacle of the sixties, the farmers, both great and small, were most completely and most lastingly ruined. With capital so widely destroyed, credit naturally became the most urgent need of all groups. This was not a new problem, to be sure, but its pressure was infinitely multiplied. Like all agricultural communities since the rise of modern capitalism, the South had always been more or less dependent upon other

<sup>1</sup>In the same paper, Professor Kendrick maintained that only a small part of the cotton belt had developed any marked social distinctions. This contention was based upon rather wide personal investigation, and upon the facts that in by far the greater part of that region pioneer days were too recent and land too plentiful and cheap for a landed aristocracy to have developed.

parts of the country, or of the world, for credit, as for many of its supplies; but at least in the generation preceding the war it had been able to maintain some degree of balance in such relationships: now its status had fallen to that of a tributary province. Credit was obtainable only upon the most unfortunate terms, especially for the farmer. For thirty-odd years agricultural land was largely unsalable, and hence unacceptable as security; so that the iniquitous crop-lien system, described in the next chapter, was resorted to. While some such scheme seemed necessary under the existing circumstances, it was exceedingly onerous to the farmer and tended to place him completely in the power of the merchant or the broker. Even many of the large planters fell into the same plight. Some of the more progressive of them, and of their less prominent brethren, realized the greater opportunities in the business world and either left the farm or came to combine merchandise or some form of industrial activity with agriculture. The common observation that the most ambitious and capable men of rural origin inevitably drift into the cities and towns applies with particular force to the recent South. With the center of gravity thus shifting from country to town, it was natural that the powers which shape public opinion should follow. The transition was less rapid in some regions than others, but the shifting of emphasis among leaders of thought to the ideals of the business world was marked throughout the South. All this, to be sure, went with industrialization, which brought its incalculable benefits to the section as a whole; but many people undoubtedly suffered injustice in the process, and unfortunately too, some of the better ideals of the Old South went down with the antiquated ones.

Such changes were naturally reflected in politics. Much of the best talent had become interested in enterprises other than agriculture; and politicians in general found it easier to

fall into line with the business man's regime. The one-party system simplified the matter of political control. So long as the memories of the despised carpetbag regime remained fresh and the debt of gratitude to the party which had "saved Anglo-Saxon civilization" retained its compelling force, with the presence of the negro as a legal voter still an apparent menace in case of division among the whites, the Democratic party would retain an enormous advantage.<sup>1</sup> Hence it was only a matter of controlling a single machine. It would have been extremely surprising if politicians had not exploited this situation, and if the rising business groups had not found advantages in it. Not that every one who appealed to local tradition and the specter of returning negro domination, or who voted for state endorsement of doubtful railroad bonds or the extension of the lien-law machine or the leasing of convicts to unlimited services at seven cents a day, was consciously exploiting patriotism and prejudice.<sup>2</sup> Many were doubtless entirely sincere in their feelings and honestly seeking to advance the best interests of state and country as they saw them. Some, like the backwoods farmer in the Georgia legislature who boasted<sup>3</sup> that he was a "Bourbon Democrat," naively fell into the current spirit with no thought of forces operating beneath the surface of local and national politics.

The unique political situation in the South lends particular interest to a study of the Populist movement as it appeared in that section. Solid-South politics are seen in the most crucial stage of their history. An uprising of the "wool-hat

<sup>1</sup>Cf. J. W. Garner, "Southern Politics since the Civil War" in *Studies in Southern History and Politics*, ch. xv; C. A. Poe, "Suffrage Restriction in the South," *N. Amer. Rev.*, vol. clxxv, p. 534, *et seq.*; and Mrs. W. H. Felton, *Memoirs of Georgia Politics*, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> See *infra*, pp. 27-28; also Felton, pp. 5-9.

<sup>3</sup>Jas. P. Harrison (editor), *Georgia General Assembly, 1880-81*, p. 55.

boys " against the " Bourbon oligarchy," the movement began as a struggle to oust the latter from control of the " white man's party." and developed, in most of the states of that section, into a more radical revolt against the one-party system itself. While it failed to divide the white vote permanently into separate political camps, or even completely to break the hold of the conservatives, it split the Democracy into factions which have since virtually amounted to parties within a party, and raised up a new type of leadership which has at least held its own with the old.<sup>1</sup> Its effects upon the political status of the negro are also important. Temporarily accorded a prominence which he had not enjoyed since the days of the carpetbagger, he was generally granted " a free ballot " (often several of them) " and a fair count " (sometimes in excess of the possible voting population).<sup>2</sup> The situation thus produced was largely responsible for later efforts to accomplish his disfranchisement.<sup>3</sup> In fact there is scarcely a phase of recent political history at the South which has not been profoundly affected by that movement.

It was during the interval between the restoration of home rule in the seventies and the rise of dissent in the nineties that the " Bourbons " <sup>4</sup> established their system; it was also

<sup>1</sup>Cf. W. G. Brown, *The Lower South*, p. 256; and J. Holland Thompson, *The New South*, *passim*, especially, chs. iii and ix.

<sup>2</sup> See *infra*, pp. 154, 183-184.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 220, 222; also C. A. Poe, *op. cit.*; and Melvin J. White, "Populism in Louisiana," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, vol. v, pp. 3-19.

<sup>4</sup>The term *Bourbon* is employed in this chapter because of its wide usage, though its connotation is not altogether accurate. In so far as it suggests a ruling class, secure in power and essentially conservative, it is applicable; but implications that such an oligarchy was a planter aristocracy, or that it was irrevocably wedded to a past order of things, are not accurate, at least in the case of Georgia; as will appear in the following pages.

during that time that cleavages appeared in the Southern Democracy which largely conditioned the alignments of the latter decade. Hence to that era one should turn for an understanding of the forces which controlled the Democratic party in a Southern State, and those which formed the nucleus of dissent when Populism arose.

Probably too much importance has been attached to the fact that many of the ante-bellum leaders remained prominent in the politics of the South after the war, if from this the inference be drawn that they were still dominant and, at the same time, representative of the formerly ascendant interests. At least, such an inference is not warranted in the case of Georgia. Familiar faces indeed appeared in the new gatherings, but either their glances were less compelling or their countenances had changed.

Of the famous ante-bellum triumvirate, Stephens and Toombs survived,<sup>1</sup> the former until 1883 and the latter until 1885; but they were no longer at the helm.<sup>2</sup> Together they were drawn into a losing struggle for control of the state Democracy within a year after its return to power. They were opposed to fusion with the Liberal Republicans, partly because of their opposition to Greeley and to what they regarded as a sacrifice of principles, and partly because such fusion locally involved a sort of compromise with the former scalawag element, who were distasteful to them, as will appear later, upon other than sentimental grounds. They fought this "New Departure," first in the state convention: when the chairman of that body announced the Georgia

<sup>1</sup>Cobb had died in 1870. (I. W. Avery, *History of the State of Georgia from 1850 to 1881*, p. 454.)

<sup>2</sup>See Johnston and Brown, *Life of Alexander H. Stephens*, chs. xli, xlii; U. B. Phillips, *Life of Robert Toombs*, pp. 264-273; L. L. Knight, *History of Georgia and Georgians*, vol. ii, pp. 885, 868-869, 885-888, 926, 937.

delegation to Baltimore, Toombs exclaimed, "Packed, by God!"—and they carried the contest to the people. Stephens purchased an interest in the *Atlanta Sun*, became its political editor, and with Toombs' support, waged a daily war upon the regulars.<sup>1</sup> They were able, however, to swing only some 4000 votes to O'Connor (presidential candidate of the anti-fusion Democrats). Stephens paid for this revolt a year later by the loss of the U. S. Senatorship, in a contest which turned largely upon the question of regularity. He entered the campaign with the public declaration that either he or the New Departure would die politically in Georgia: General John B. Gordon, a regular and one of the newer type of Bourbons, was elected. Stephens' district then sent him to Congress, where he remained until 1882.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile he seems to have had little connection with the state machine, and to have been more or less in sympathy with the independents.<sup>3</sup> When apparently on the point of becoming the candidate of the latter groups for the governorship in 1882, he was persuaded in the name of harmony to accept the regular nomination, and thus became an instrument for temporarily cementing a long threatening crevice in the "solid" Democracy of the state.<sup>4</sup> Toombs in the meantime was generally at odds with the dominant group in the Democratic party, both state and national. He denounced the latter as a "fraudulent coalition," bent only upon spoils, and also expressed sympathy with local independency. He was especially alarmed at the rising power

<sup>1</sup>Avery, pp. 501, 502; Johnston and Brown, pp. 505-518; Knight, vol. ii, p. 668.

<sup>2</sup>Avery, p. 505; Johnston and Brown, pp. 517, 519, *et seq.*; Knight, vol. ii, p. 873.

<sup>3</sup>*Correspondence of Stephens, Toombs and Cobb*, p. 721; Felton, pp. 298-299, 345-370, 394-395.

<sup>4</sup>See *infra*, p. 44.

of associations of capital, which, though necessary in the new age, presented, he thought, "new dangers to free representative government."<sup>1</sup> Only once in his later years did he rise to something like his former greatness; and that was in the Constitutional Convention of 1877, where after a bitter struggle he secured provisions for state regulation of railroads and against their future abuse of the public treasury.<sup>2</sup> His famous gibes were often hurled at the new leadership. Informed on his deathbed that the Georgia legislature was in session, he murmured, "Lord, send for Cromwell!"<sup>3</sup>

Among this older group of statesmen, Joseph E. Brown was more powerful. While sadly fallen in popular esteem for a time because of his reconstruction record, he became the "hidden power" during the seventies, emerged in the eighties as a member of the new triumvirate, and on into the nineties remained a dominant figure.<sup>4</sup> Against him and his political and business associates were hurled many attacks of the independents in this era, and of the Populists later. If the story of his life were fully known it would probably throw more light upon the history of Georgia in his day than would that of any other person. He was one of those self-made men, not unknown in other sections, who rose from backwoods poverty to political preferment and remarkable business success. His humble origin together with his well-poised and vigorous personality appealed to the plain people and won him a place in the state senate in

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence*, pp. 721, 722, 727; Felton, pp. 250-258, 371-372; Knight, vol. ii, pp. 867-869, 885-888.

<sup>2</sup> Knight, pp. 885-887. See also *infra*.

<sup>3</sup> Pleasant A. Stovall, *Life of Robert Toombs*, p. 374; also *Correspondence*, pp. 721, 722.

<sup>4</sup> Herbert Fielder, *Life of Jos. E. Brown*, p. 505; Avery, pp. 553, 563; Felton, p. 69.

1849, at the age of twenty-eight. He was advanced to the governorship in 1857, again chiefly by the small farmer vote. He retained that post until the close of the Civil War. An able administrator, he showed particular ability in the management of the Western and Atlantic railroad, owned and operated by the state. He was greatly interested in the railroad situation, and became one of the leading advocates of state aid. The policy of direct government construction had been replaced in the fifties by that of encouragement to private corporations in the form of tax exemption and state subscription to their stock. Governor Brown in his first message sought to induce the legislature to extend further assistance by the endorsement on the part of the state of private railway bonds, but his persistent efforts failed to elicit a favorable response. Such a scheme, if wisely and honestly carried out, might have proved desirable; but, as amply demonstrated during the reconstruction era and even under the restored Democracy, it "opened the floodgate of fraud and demoralization." Of such bonds endorsed during the former period, some \$4,450,000 worth were later declared fraudulent and repudiated.<sup>1</sup> The extent to which Brown was implicated in these and other scandals of that era is still an open question. To sum up his known record during the time: he advocated the acceptance of radical reconstruction (perhaps wisely under the circumstances); became a Republican temporarily; was appointed chief justice of the state by the Bullock administration; was at least closely associated with the chief beneficiaries of the financial policies of that corrupt government; and, finally, headed the company which secured a lease of the state road, by means later shown to have been irregular, from the dying

<sup>1</sup> Avery, *passim*, especially pp. 6, 16, 31-46, 70-72, 129, 168, 495-497, 594; Fielder, especially pp. 91-92, 131-141; Phillips, p. 171; Mildred Thompson, *Reconstruction in Georgia*, ch. ix.



Bullock<sup>1</sup> legislature after its Democratic successor had been elected.<sup>2</sup> When the new body convened an effort was made, under Toombs' direction, to break the lease. While the majority report of the investigating committee revealed undoubted crookedness both in the securing of the lease and in the formation of the company, it was not broken.<sup>3</sup> Such questions as that of the disposal of this road, and those of state aid and regulation were destined often to reappear in subsequent times.

Brown became one of the leading railroad men of the state and a prominent promoter and manager of other enterprises. He was at one time president of the Western and Atlantic, the Southern Railway and Steamship Company, the Dade Coal Company, the Walker Coal and Iron Company, and was part owner of the Rising Fawn Iron Works. His mineral interests covered the greater part of several counties.<sup>4</sup> In connection with these, another issue arose which remained prominent through the Populist era and until its settlement in more recent times. It had reference to the leasing of the state convicts to individuals and corporations. The practice had arisen soon after the war, when for the first time considerable numbers of negro convicts had appeared, along with the fewer whites. It was felt that the state was too impoverished to maintain them in idleness, and for some reason they were not employed upon public works. The bulk of them became the working force of the Dade coal

<sup>1</sup>Rufus B. Bullock was the "carpetbag" governor of Georgia.

<sup>2</sup>Avery, pp. 336, 367-400, 406, 477-492; Fielder, chs. ix, xiii; Felton, pp. 66, 72; Thompson, *Reconstruction*, pp. 172-173, 229-254.

<sup>3</sup>Thompson, *Reconstruction*, pp. 247-254; *Report of the Majority of the Joint Committee Appointed by the General Assembly to Investigate ... the Lease of the W. & A. Ry....* 1872; Felton, pp. 62-63, 68-78; Letter by Toombs in *Atlanta Sun*, Jul. 11, 1872 (Copy in Avery, 479).

<sup>4</sup>Avery, p. 606; Fielder, pp. 488-489, 495, 503.

mines, of which Brown was at first sole proprietor and later half owner. For their services the state received \$20 per year each, or less than seven cents per working day, the latter being limited to ten and twelve hours until the legislature in 1876 removed even those limits. The conditions under which they lived and worked remained matters of public shame and protest until the system was abolished in 1908.<sup>1</sup>

Personally, Brown had many admirable qualities, and deserves great credit for his contributions to the development of his state and section. He was thoroughly temperate and devoutly religious, a pillar in the Baptist church, and widely benevolent. As early as 1880 he is said to have contributed well over a hundred thousand dollars to various religious, educational, and charitable institutions. He established a fund of \$50,000, the interest from which was to be used for the education of promising poor boys at the University of Georgia.<sup>2</sup> Such qualities and activities, along with his wide business connections and the momentum of his earlier popularity with the plain people, gave him a prestige which largely overcame the cries that he had sometimes stooped to questionable means.

He seems to have retained an especially strong hold upon the former supporters of the Bullock administration. These had established more or less important business and political connections from which they derived a certain prestige. Some, like Brown, had returned to the Conservative, or Democratic, party even before the Radical government collapsed; others reëntered at the time of the fusion with the Liberal Republicans in 1872. Probably many of them had

<sup>1</sup>Report of Investigating Committee on Convict Lease, Ga. Leg., 1908, in *Ga. Laws*, 1908, pp. 1059-1091; *Report of the Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of 1877*, pp. 434, 440-441; Knight, vol. ii, p. 866; Fielder, pp. 488, 489; Felton, p. 48; *Ga. Laws*, 1908, p. 1119.

<sup>2</sup>Fielder, pp. 91-92, 256-292; Avery, pp. 5-8; Knight, vol. ii, p. 918.

been entirely innocent of the frauds and other scandals which had stained the reputation of the group as a whole. There seems to have been a feeling, however, among such old-timers as Toombs, and such independents as Felton,<sup>1</sup> that the coalition of this "Bullock Democracy" with the rising business-minded conservatives was inimical to popular interests.<sup>2</sup>

The second member of the new triumvirate—though he became probably the first in influence—was one of those leaders whom the war had brought into prominence. Regarded as the most brilliant soldier that the state had produced, characterized by the *London Times* as "the rising military genius of the Southern armies," General John B. Gordon became to Georgians the veritable embodiment of all that was sacred in the Lost Cause. Returning from Appomattox, where according to the editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, he had been "the second figure to Lee in the dismal glory" of that closing scene, he became the leader of the anti-reconstructionists and is said to have been the central figure in the Ku Klux Klan. Handsome, genial, and chivalrous, he had all the appearances of a cavalier, but he was not a planter-aristocrat. Like Brown, he represented the rising commercial and industrial spirit, and became one of the leading promoters of railroads and other corporate activities, though, being always a "simon pure," he commanded a somewhat different political following.<sup>3</sup> He was thus another of those statesmen, so prominent in his day, who combined a laudable desire to advance the common weal with large personal ambitions. On the whole such men in

<sup>1</sup> See *infra*.

<sup>2</sup> Articles by Stephens and Toombs in *Atlanta Sun*, July-Oct., 1872 (in Carnegie Library, Atlanta); Felton, pp. 7-10, 62-66, 141, 161, 288, 289.

<sup>3</sup> Avery, pp. 506, 264, 313, 323, 390; Knight, vol. iv, p. 1850; *Correspondence of Stephens, Toombs and Cobb*, p. 727.

Georgia were doubtless no less honest and public-spirited than their prototypes in other sections. Well rewarded with business success and often with political preferment, they still deserve large credit for the part which they played in the industrial advancement of their state and section.

While he was in the Senate, Gordon became involved in the famous Huntington affair and other Western railway projects. Although he was perhaps innocent of any conscious complicity in matters of actual corruption, he left a record which was regarded by some as incriminating and was used against him politically by those who dared oppose him in his home state. The *New York World* observed that "a careful examination of the [Huntington] letters shows that. . . . Senator Gordon of Georgia, who posed as the representative of everything that was highly respectable in the South, was a servant of the corporations." Some of the Georgia weeklies vainly called for an explanation of his connection with these matters, but the dailies of the state seem to have regarded the whole affair as unimportant.<sup>1</sup>

General Alfred H. Colquitt, third member of the new triumvirate, was the one planter-aristocrat among the leaders of the first magnitude in this era. Heir to the political and social prestige, along with the broad acres, of his distinguished father, Walter T. Colquitt, and a graduate of Princeton, he had received every advantage that culture and wealth could afford. He entered the state senate with Brown in 1849, went to Congress as a States' Rights man in 1853, supported the secession movement in 1860, and distinguished himself as a brigadier general during the Civil War. Like Gordon, unstained with scalawagery, he re-

<sup>1</sup>He introduced the Sinking Fund bill in this connection (*Congressional Record*, 44th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 589). See excerpts from the press, correspondence, etc. in Felton, pp. 79-143.

mained a leader of the "simon pure." As a planter he was one of the few who weathered the storms of the sixties and continued the plantation system without extreme difficulties in matters of labor and credit. He was for a while very near the first among Georgia planters both in the size and in the yield of his estate, raising, among other products, almost a thousand bales of cotton annually. Most of his former slaves remained with him after freedom and are said to have regarded him with something akin to worship. In addition to his agricultural interests, he was a successful business man—for a time a railway promoter. Thus able to retain a large degree of financial independence even in times of greatest depression among farmers, he belonged to that relatively small group of planter-business men, described in the next chapter, whose interests differed in important particulars from those of the average farmer.<sup>1</sup>

Either Colquitt or Gordon held the governorship of Georgia during the major part of the interval between 1872 and 1890; either Gordon or Brown held one of the U. S. Senatorships throughout the period, and Colquitt held the other after the expiration of his term as governor in 1882. Of all the governors, with the single exception of Stephens who served for only a few months, none was personally representative of the interests of the small or the middle-class farmers, and only Colquitt represented the planters.<sup>2</sup> The same was true of the Senators.<sup>3</sup> Among the Congressmen,

<sup>1</sup>Knight, vol. v, pp. 2667-2669; Avery, pp. 17, 25, 635; *Georgia's Gen. Assy.*, 1880-81, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-7.

<sup>2</sup>Jas. M. Smith, 1872-76, was a Columbus lawyer (Avery, p. 466). Colquitt served 1876-82; and Stephens, Oct., '82-Mar., '83. Henry D. McDaniel, '83-86, was merchant, lawyer, railroad director and banker (Knight, vol. iv, pp. 2038, 2079). Gordon served 1886-90. See Lawton B. Evans, *History of Georgia*, pp. 315-335.

<sup>3</sup>Norwood and Hill, the remaining Senators elected after the Democrats regained control of the legislature, were lawyers of Savannah and Atlanta respectively. (*Biographical Congressional Dictionary.*)

thirty were lawyers, business men, or both; three were planters; and one was a combination of small farmer, physician, and Methodist preacher.<sup>1</sup> Even in the state legislature, drawn from counties some ninety-odd per cent of which were overwhelmingly agrarian, the farmer remained an apparently diminishing minority. Collected biographical sketches of the membership in both houses in 1871-72, and again in 1880-81, are available, showing the occupations of c.88 per cent of the former and c.84 per cent of the latter. Of those whose occupations are thus given, some 42 per cent in the former body and 25 per cent in the latter appear as farmers with no other interests stated; some 48 per cent in the former and 38 per cent in the latter appear as interested both in farming and in other activities.<sup>2</sup> Specific data are wanting for the late eighties, but according to the testimony of men who were active in political life at the time, their relative numbers, at least, did not increase.

Thus the new Bourbon regime in Georgia was essentially a business man's regime. To a greater or less extent this was doubtless true of other Southern states. Whether there had been a deliberate plan among reconstructionists, as some have believed, to complete the abasement of agrarian power at the South in order to insure the permanence of industrial, financial, and commercial ascendancy in the nation, gained during the war; their policies at least tended to produce such results.<sup>3</sup> Of course the prosperity of these interests in the South was still largely dependent upon agriculture (probably to a greater extent than was realized in those years); but it was also dependent upon bankers and merchants of the East, and this fact, it seems, was more pressingly felt. Besides,

<sup>1</sup>Compiled from *Biographical Congressional Dictionary*.

<sup>2</sup>A. S. Abrams, *Manual of the State of Georgia, 1872*; Jas. P. Harrison, editor, *Georgia's Gen. Assy., 1880-81* (both in N. Y. UNIV. LIB.)

<sup>3</sup>See, e. g., A. M. Simons, *Social Forces in American History*, ch. xxiii.

the industrial and commercial advancement of the New South aroused a merited enthusiasm in that section, which tended to push aside those who claimed to have a grievance. Then too, Southern politicians must have seen the advantage of maintaining harmonious relations with their powerful brethren in the East. Hence it is not difficult to understand why the former came to accept the hegemony of the latter.

Opposition to such an alliance, and to the local leadership, methods, and ideals of the organized Democracy was more or less ominous in Georgia for a decade or more after its accession to power. Aside from the wrangles within the party organization already alluded to, an Independent movement arose in 1874 which for a time seriously threatened a permanent division in the white vote. This movement was in many respects a forerunner of Populism. The underlying causes of the two were essentially the same, though economic matters were, on the whole, less emphasized in the former case and were probably less widely appreciated. The leadership and following of the two were also identical to a considerable extent, especially in the northern part of the state.

It was in this section that Independency first appeared. A region of small farmers, for the most part isolated and primitive, and always strongly opposed to any "ruling class," it offered fertile soil for the spread of opposition to the town politicians.<sup>1</sup> The percentage of negroes was too small for appeals to the necessity of white solidarity to carry the same force as in other parts of the state. Outside a few of the larger towns such as Athens and Rome, social conditions and standards were too crude for the masses to place much value upon that type of respectability to which unflinching support of the regular Democracy was elsewhere regarded as essential. While the great majority had supported the

<sup>1</sup>Avery, p. 512; Felton, *passim*.

Southern arms during the war, most of them had formerly opposed secession and some had remained Unionists in defiance of state and Confederate governments;<sup>1</sup> hence not even the fetishism associated with the party which had battled for Southern rights was quite as widely effective as it was where planter and urban influences were stronger.

The revolt began in the seventh Congressional district, covering the western half of the mountain area. The Democratic convention there nominated for Congress in 1874 L. N. Trammell, a so-called Bullock Democrat. There was widespread objection both to the candidate and to the method by which he was chosen. It was urged that under the convention system, especially with no effective party of opposition, the entire political life of the state was dominated by a centralized machine, directed from Atlanta and operating through local "court-house rings." The Atlanta clique was said to have selected Trammell largely through the influence of Brown. The latter, it was claimed, in addition to the sources of power mentioned above, controlled the vote of employees on the W. & A. road which traversed the district, and granted passes over it to politicians who met with his approval. Whether it were true that Brown and his followers had made secret deals with the Gordon-Colquitt group, it seems to have been widely believed.<sup>2</sup>

Against the organization candidate, Dr. William H. Felton, the archinsurgent of this era and a leader of the Populists later, came out as an independent Democrat.<sup>3</sup> Dr.

<sup>1</sup>*Georgia's General Assembly, 1880-81, op. cit.*, p. 47; Avery, chs. xiv, xv, xxvi, xxviii, especially pp. 256-257, 261; also Thompson, *Reconstruction*, pp. 34-36.

<sup>2</sup>Felton, *passim*, especially pp. 5-10, 144-145; also *cf.* Avery, pp. 511-512. Local primaries were sometimes held in these years, but they seem to have amounted to little.

<sup>3</sup>Avery says that Felton announced himself as an Independent candidate prior to the regular nomination, opposing the convention system on general principles (512). *Cf.*, however, Felton, p. 144, *et seq.*



Felton was an indomitable fighter—wirey, bold, and highly enthusiastic. Born in Oglethorpe county in 1832, graduated from the University of Georgia and from the State Medical College, he was a combination of farmer, country doctor, and Methodist preacher. He received invaluable aid from his wife, a woman of unusual ability and energy, who seems to have managed his campaigns. With almost no financial backing, and with the active opposition of all the newspapers except two small-town weeklies, he launched upon a campaign which gave to his district the name of the "bloody seventh." Usually traveling in his buggy, he attracted large crowds from the country-sides to applaud his fiery attacks upon the "supreme caucus," the "court-house rings," and the "the developers of resources." Early in the race he disclosed certain "suppressed" testimony, taken by a committee of the legislature, which connected Trammell with some of the fraudulent-bond transactions of the Bullock regime. Trammell, deserted by many of his former supporters, then retired from the contest. A hastily summoned convention presented another nominee, but it was too late to save the election. Felton was reelected in 1876 and again in 1878.<sup>1</sup> To what extent he led his hearers into the mysteries of free silver, the national banking system, trusts, and the like is difficult to say; but his Populistic tendencies along these lines clearly appear in his speeches in Congress.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile in the ninth district, comprising the eastern half of the mountain section, Emory Speer, running as an Independent Democrat, defeated the regular nominee in 1878 and again in 1880. Speer was a more polished man

<sup>1</sup>Knight, vol. ii, pp. 875-876; Avery, pp. 511, 513; Felton, pp. 12-20, 144-182.

<sup>2</sup>*Congressional Record*, 45th Cong., 1st Sess., vol. vi, pp. 403-405; *ibid.*, 3rd Sess., vol. viii, pp. 1355-1357; *ibid.*, 44th Cong., 1st Sess., vol. ix, pp. 173-174, 616; *ibid.*, vol. x, pp. 443, 1482.

than Felton, and was somewhat more conservative; but he was supported with almost equal enthusiasm by the farmers and some of the townspeople, and usually stood for the same principles as Felton in Congress. Thus by 1878 the movement had triumphed in Congressional elections in about a fourth of the state. More or less similar disaffection had split the usual Democratic vote in two other districts and was developing considerable opposition to the Colquitt administration.<sup>1</sup>

Among these dissenting groups in Georgia, the influence of the Grange organization was apparently less potent than among contemporary insurgents in the North and West; yet it seems to have exerted considerable pressure as an undercurrent making for class consciousness among farmers and directing their attention to politico-economic problems.<sup>2</sup> Its spirit was particularly manifest in the movement for state regulation of railroads which culminated in the Constitutional Convention of 1877. Probably the influence of men like Toombs, however, was quite as important in this affair as that of the Grangers. Occurring midway between the fall of the one and the rise of the other, it represented in a sense a blending of the forces of Old-South agrarianism and incipient Populism.

The Grange had appeared in Georgia in 1872. In three years it had some 18,000 members, the largest number in

<sup>1</sup>See Knight, vol. ii, p. 901; vol. v, p. 3114; Avery, pp. 513-514; *Tribune Almanac*, 1879, p. 64; *ibid.*, 1881, p. 46; *Congressional Record*, 46th Cong., 1st Sess., vol. ix, p. 616; *ibid.*, 2nd Sess., vol. x, pp. 749-750; *ibid.*, 3rd Sess., vol. xi, pp. 424, 490.

<sup>2</sup>The W. J. Northern collection (now in possession of Miss Annie Bell Northern, Atlanta) contains a number of clippings which indicate the interest of the Grangers in these matters. Most of them are without indications as to the periodicals from which they were culled. Cf. also Buck, pp. 202-203; E. A. Allen, *Labor and Capital*, section on "The Grange in the South;" and files of the *Southern Cultivator* for the seventies (Atlanta).

any state in the South Atlantic division. Its activities were not essentially different from those in other sections. First attacking the problem of the middleman, its established co-operative stores and wholesale buying the selling agencies. These, despite the powerful opposition encountered in the business world, seem for a time to have saved the farmers considerable sums.<sup>1</sup> Handicapped by rate discriminations on the part of railroads, they stimulated popular interest in questions of this kind. In addition to the various abuses prevailing in other states, the practice of bond-endorsement had continued in Georgia, involving considerable losses from forfeitures; then too, many of the roads were still exempt, by the terms of their charters, from property taxes. Efforts in the legislature to rectify these matters had largely failed, partly because of constitutional limitations. Hence with the growth of popular interest in such matters, a demand arose, as in other states at the time, for a revised constitution.<sup>2</sup>

The elections by which the convention was called, the delegates chosen, and the new instrument ratified largely ignored party lines; hence it was easier for radicals to assert themselves than in regular elections. Even so, stabilizing forces were by no means absent: a goodly number of delegates were ever ready with timely warnings against measures which might impair existing obligations, tend to drive capital from the state, or otherwise to undermine the foundations of returning prosperity. It was in reply to one of these warnings that Toombs uttered his famous re-

<sup>1</sup>Buck, pp. 55-59, 253, 264-265; clippings, Northen collection.

<sup>2</sup>Avery, pp. 593-595; Samuel W. Small, *Stenographic Report of the Proceedings of the Georgia Constitutional Convention . . . 1877*, pp. 104, 466; *Acts of the General Assembly*, 1874, p. 98. (See also Knight, vol. ii, 874, 877-878, 885-886; Avery, 528, 533; Buck, chs. iv-vi, especially pp. 202-203.)

tort, "Better shake the pillars of property than the pillars of liberty."<sup>1</sup>

To sum up the provisions of the new document touching these subjects: The credit of the state was not to be "pledged or loaned to any individual, company, corporation, or association;" nor was the state to "become a joint owner or stockholder in any company, association, or corporation." Its sovereign right of taxation was never to be restricted or surrendered: while this should not be held directly to impair obligations previously made; corporations holding contrary agreements should be, in effect, brought to surrender them, on pain of obtaining no amendments to their charters nor further special legislative aid until such surrender were made. No corporation should be permitted by law to purchase shares of stock in any other corporation or to make any agreements which might tend to defeat or to lessen competition. Regulation of freight and passenger tariffs to insure reasonableness and prevent discriminations was made obligatory upon the legislature; likewise laws to prevent rebates. A fruitless effort was made to abolish the convict-lease system.<sup>2</sup> The measure of success with which these regulatory provisions might be attended in practical operation remained to be seen. But the radicals had scored at least a temporary triumph.

In the meantime the spirit of insurgency and of hostility to the Colquitt administration was growing apace. The forces of opposition were confused, and represented almost every shade of opinion and interest. Disappointed office seekers apparently constituted no inconsiderable element.

<sup>1</sup>Small, *Proceedings*, *passim*, especially pp. 105, 289-290, 294-297, 320-321, 466-467; Knight, vol. ii, p. 886.

<sup>2</sup>Constitution of the State of Georgia (in Small, *Proceedings*, *op. cit.*, appendix), art. vii, sec. v, par. 1; *ibid.*, art. iv, sec. i, par. 1; art. iv, secs. ii, pars. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6; pp. 434, 441, 446.

Besieged in the beginning of his administration by countless requests from his "ardent supporters" in every locality for appointments, often without specification as to the office desired, Governor Colquitt had been able, of course, to satisfy only a small fraction of them. He had also incurred considerable opposition by his endorsement of the bonds of the Northeastern Railroad despite the legislation of 1874 which had sought to put an end to such policies.<sup>1</sup> An investigation of the matter by the general assembly resulted in his vindication on the grounds of promises made to this road prior to the enactment of the law; but this did not allay popular feelings.<sup>2</sup> Suspicions as to the honesty of the administration, doubtless aggravated by the unearthing of scandals in other states and at Washington, finally prompted the legislature to investigate the entire executive department. The comptroller-general was impeached for misappropriation, attempted bribery, illegal discrimination in matters of taxation, and other malpractices: he was convicted on eight counts. The state treasurer was impeached for appropriating to private use interests on state deposits, but upon his confession and apology was permitted to return the money without further penalty. Less important irregularities were discovered in the department of agriculture, and in the office of the state printer; for which the appropriate officials were admonished. Conditions in the convict camps were found to be deplorable, but no solution was reached. Colquitt was not found personally responsible for any of these misdeeds, and was probably guilty of nothing worse than having exer-

<sup>1</sup>Avery, pp. 537-543; Knight, vol. ii, pp. 889-890.

<sup>2</sup>Avery, pp. 543-546; Knight, vol. ii, pp. 890-893. It seems that no loss had been incurred by the endorsement of those bonds; but the public was naturally sensitive on this point, since Colquitt's predecessor, Governor Smith (1872-76), in the face of reconstruction experiences had entailed forfeitures of some half-million dollars by such practices (Avery, p. 594).

cised poor judgment in the selection of subordinates and having yielded too freely to the advice of designing political associates. There was a widespread feeling, however, doubtless egged on by office-seekers, that a clean sweep was needed.<sup>1</sup>

With the political atmosphere thus clouded, the gubernatorial campaign of 1880 was exceptionally stormy. In the midst of the pre-convention campaign, with feeling already tense, the public was startled by the news that Gordon had resigned his seat in the U. S. Senate to which he had recently been reëlected, and that Colquitt had appointed Brown to the place. The cry of "bargain" immediately arose. It was widely believed that Brown, now satisfied with his financial status and anxious to regain political preferment, had offered, on the one hand, to swing his following to Colquitt in the current campaign and, on the other, to insure a place in the business world to Gordon, who was confessedly resigning in order to build up his financial fortunes. It was thought to be significant that Gordon's ambitions were chiefly in the field of railway construction and management in which Brown held a commanding position.<sup>2</sup> Such allegations were of course bitterly resented. Gordon protested that he had just received a very promising offer from one of the Western railroads which depended upon immediate acceptance; though after resigning he decided not to accept that place, opportunities of a similar character in Georgia becoming more attractive. In defense of the Brown appointment, he urged that the latter's course during reconstruction would give him added standing among his colleagues from the North and West, and that his business ability and foresight would be a valuable asset to the state

<sup>1</sup>Knight, vol. ii, pp. 889-897; Avery, pp. 545-552; Felton, pp. 288-311.

<sup>2</sup>Knight, vol. ii, pp. 898-906; Avery, pp. 558-567; Felton, pp. 9, 48, 288-311.

in national councils. He maintained furthermore that Brown's reviving influence in north Georgia could now be employed in recalling that section to party regularity.<sup>1</sup> Amid all this excitement the state Democratic convention assembled. Virtually every delegate was either inflexibly bent upon the renomination of Colquitt or grimly determined to prevent such event. From the outset Colquitt had a majority but not the necessary two thirds. A week's wrangling only intensified feeling on both sides. The heterogeneous opposition, scattering its vote among half a dozen candidates, was apparently ready to unite on Felton, but he decided to continue his fight in the seventh. When the majority finally rejected a proposal to reopen nominations in the hope of agreeing upon a compromise candidate, a youthful delegate, scant, red-haired, and freckle-faced, gave voice to the rising spirit of insurgency in an impassioned outburst recalled by his admirers to the present day. It was Tom Watson. Principles, he said, should always be cherished above party allegiance; and if the Georgia Democracy could be held intact only by leaving it in the hands of the Colquitt forces, then let it be split! Despairing of a two-thirds vote, the majority at last decided to "recommend" Colquitt to the Democratic voters, and adjourned the convention. The minority then held a rump meeting and "recommended" Thomas M. Norwood.<sup>2</sup> Their choice was unfortunate in several ways. Norwood, a Savannah lawyer who had served one term in the U. S. Senate, seems to have been lacking in personal magnetism; he had no war record; he was alleged to have said "hard things" about the negroes, who in the absence of a Republican candidate became a factional balance of power. He was further weakened, it seems, by the fact that he had acted as counsel

<sup>1</sup> Knight, vol. ii, pp. 893-906; Avery, pp. 558-567, especially p. 562.

<sup>2</sup> Avery, pp. 568-588; Knight, vol. ii, pp. 906-918; Felton, pp. 288-311, 349.

for certain holders of contested reconstruction bonds.<sup>1</sup> Colquitt, on the other hand, either directly or through one or another of his powerful supporters, could appeal to almost every element, excepting perhaps the more radically inclined farmers, and Norwood was scarcely the man to exploit the full possibilities of their vote. Gordon was perhaps Colquitt's greatest asset. It is difficult to say whether Brown was on the whole a help or a hindrance. His strength among the voters was never directly tested in this era, but he was returned to the Senate by the legislature for two consecutive terms. Norwood, despite his handicaps, polled about 35 per cent of the popular vote.<sup>2</sup>

Conservatives had been thoroughly alarmed at these ominous cleavages in the party. Even when the revolt had been largely confined to the northern part of the state, they had sent some of their strongest men into those districts to campaign for the regular candidates. They had been charged with many irregularities.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately the experiences of reconstruction had familiarized the people with unfair means at the polls and had led many of the best of them to regard such matters lightly when apparently necessary to preserve the supremacy of the "respectable" element.<sup>4</sup> In regions where the negroes were more numerous the temptation to employ corrupt practices was naturally stronger. Thus when division among the whites became state-wide such evils were greatly increased. During the seventies the colored vote had been largely eliminated or rendered ineffective in the black belt. Now it was eagerly

<sup>1</sup> Avery, *ibid.*, especially p. 591.

<sup>2</sup> *Tribune Almanac*, 1881, p. 46; Avery, p. 601.

<sup>3</sup> Felton, pp. 51-53, 144-182, especially pp. 161-162.

<sup>4</sup> See Mrs. W. H. Felton, *Country Life in Georgia*, pp. 193-197. Also cf. C. A. Poe, "Suffrage Restrictions in the South," *N. Am. Rev.*, vol. clxxv, pp. 534 *et seq.*



sought on both sides. The unwholesome results upon political morality were afterwards used with telling effect as a warning against further divisions.<sup>1</sup> The bulk of the colored vote seems to have been brought by various means to the support of the straight Democracy.<sup>2</sup> Among the whites all forms of insurgency were condemned by the regulars as Republicanism in disguise. Rumors arose that the independent element was contemplating fusion with the Republicans. Whether these were well founded or whether, as the opposition declared, they emanated from Democratic headquarters, they doubtless helped to swell the majority for Colquitt. They are said to have been used with particular force against Felton, who was defeated by a small margin. Speer was reelected. Thus conservative fears were not entirely allayed.<sup>3</sup>

Nor was the opposition discouraged. Felton, attributing his defeat to the overconfidence of his friends on the one hand and to wholesale frauds on the other, determined at once to repeat the race in 1882.<sup>4</sup> Early in the latter year a self-chosen committee of independents and disaffected

<sup>1</sup> See *infra*, pp. 47-48, 148-155, 180-183.

<sup>2</sup>This represents the testimony of many of the older inhabitants in various parts of the state given to the author in response to personal interviews made during the summer of 1918 and 1921. Nearly all of those interviewed agreed that the irregularities were shockingly common; though many of them stated that they were by no means confined to one side. It was usually agreed that the regulars were more successful in gaining the colored vote in most localities. The fact that the vote was unusually heavy in the black belt and that Colquitt's greatest majorities were in this region seems not without significance (*Tribune Almanac*, 1881, pp. 45-46). Also cf. Avery's statement (p. 591) that Norwood had offended the negroes, "whose votes were needed to elect him." Also see Felton, pp. 264-273.

<sup>3</sup>Felton, pp. 288-310, 311-399. Also cf. Benj. H. Hill, Jr., *Senator Benjamin H. Hill: His Life, Writings and Speeches*, pp. 817-823.

<sup>4</sup>Felton, pp. 513-517.

Democrats and Republicans held a conference in Felton's room in a Washington hotel; drew up resolutions condemning both the old parties as corrupt and lacking in vital principles; called for the organization of a new party, North and South, which might adjure sectional and other prejudices; and proposed a platform remarkably similar to those of the Populists in the nineties.<sup>1</sup> This conference gave color to the rumors of prospective fusion. The organized Democracy in Georgia was not slow to recognize this fact and to give it fully publicity.<sup>2</sup> A few months later came the alarming news that Stephens had consented to become the Independent nominee for governor. More or less sympathetic with dissenting groups for years, he had been besieged by Felton and Speer to become their leader at this time. After some correspondence and several conferences on the subject, he gave them such encouragement as might well have been taken as a promise; though he afterwards denied that he so intended it.<sup>3</sup> Acting upon this the state Independent committee formally presented his name to the party. Meanwhile he was hastily besought by the regulars and persuaded, it seems, that, being apparently acceptable to both factions, he should become the straight Democratic candidate, and thus help to reunite the party.<sup>4</sup> From this moment Independency was doomed. The more extreme malcontents declared that Stephens, now quite feeble, had been duped by the regulars, and that he had not acted fairly in the matter.<sup>5</sup> They put out a candidate, but

<sup>1</sup>Felton, pp. 335-340 (platform on p. 340).

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 340 *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 298-299, 352-362, 366-370, 394-398. A number of letters and telegrams which passed among Felton, Speer and Stephens appear in these references.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, especially pp. 369-370.

<sup>5</sup>Felton, pp. 345-399.

the results were as might have been expected. Speer was also defeated in this election, and the majority against Felton was greatly increased.<sup>1</sup> Independency was dead in Georgia.<sup>2</sup>

Thenceforth until 1890 elections were little more than a form. Disaffected leaders either retired from active political life, made their peace with the party organization, or continued to harrass the Bourbons from lesser heights. Speer became judge of the federal court for the southern district of Georgia; Norwood went to Congress as a regular; Felton appeared in the legislature.<sup>3</sup> The Republicans continued to carry a few of the more remote mountain counties and one or two of the black counties on the coast, polled about a third of the presidential vote in 1884, and somewhat less in 1888. The triumph of the national Democracy in 1884 was greeted with wild rejoicing in the state and doubtless appreciably aided the development of party devotion and loyalty. Although so influential a party organ as the *Atlanta Constitution* objected to Cleveland's tariff policy as leaning too far toward free trade at a time

<sup>1</sup>*Tribune Almanac*, 1883, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup>Under various party names, somewhat similar groups had appeared in nearly all the Southern states during this time. They had more or less seriously threatened, if not actually interrupted, Democratic supremacy in several of them. In the light of changing conditions and ideals, further study of these movements would doubtless reveal a number of interesting things. C. C. Pearson has treated the *Readjuster Movement in Virginia*.

<sup>3</sup>In the legislature Felton helped to popularize the most important local issues afterwards taken up by the Populists; such as enlargement of the powers of the railroad commission, abolition of the convict-lease system, other prison reforms, further restriction of the liquor traffic, and improvement of the public school system. When the lease of the state road to the Brown company expired, he was largely instrumental in having it transferred to the N. C. & St. L. Ry. at a 40 per cent higher rental, with all the proceeds (instead of half as formerly) to go to educational purposes. (See Felton, pp. 547-624; Knight, vol. ii, pp. 864, 946-964.)

when the newer industrial regions were in need of protection, there seems to have been no thought in those years of deserting his leadership.<sup>1</sup>

As the Civil War receded, while sectional animosities generally waned, memories of the Lost Cause were held none the less sacred; and the halo surrounding those who had distinguished themselves in its defense grew ever more glamorous. In 1886 General Gordon, in company with Jefferson Davis and "Winnie" officiated at the laying of the cornerstone of a monument commemorating the birth of the Confederacy at Montgomery. His return with the Davis party to Atlanta was marked by a series of splendid ovations. He reached the Georgia capital just as the state Democratic convention was about to nominate a candidate for governor, and apparently had virtually decided upon young A. O. Bacon for the place. Gordon having achieved considerable financial success since leaving the Senate, now decided (or was persuaded) to return to political life, and suddenly announced himself for the office in question. In the midst of all this patriotic fervor, who could deny him anything!<sup>2</sup>

Despite its tendencies toward oligarchy and political stagnation, the Bourbon regime was not without its virtues. After the unwholesome revelations of Colquitt's first administration, the executive departments were reorganized and placed upon a more efficient basis.<sup>3</sup> The public school system provided for in the Constitution of 1868 was established in the seventies,<sup>4</sup> though on a rather modest scale: in 1890 the average school term was three and a half months and the average teacher's salary \$117 for the term.<sup>5</sup> This

<sup>1</sup> *Atlanta Constitution*, Apr. 4, 1888 (ed.).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Knight, vol. ii, pp. 940-946.

<sup>3</sup> Knight, vol. ii, p. 917.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 863-864.

<sup>5</sup> *U. S. Statistical Abstract*, 1891, p. 254.

included the country schools, however, where the term was much shorter and the salary lower than in the cities and larger towns. In the latter, local taxation usually supplemented the state fund. Development along industrial and commercial lines was indeed remarkable. Between 1870 and 1890 the amount of capital invested in manufacturing enterprises more than quadrupled, railway mileage nearly trebled, and total property values rose from 215 to 820 millions.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the great prophet of the New South was giving form to her adolescent ideals. That section has probably not produced in recent years a more lovable man than Henry W. Grady. Managing editor of the *Atlanta Constitution* during the eighties and speaker at many important gatherings, he probably stirred more Southern hearts with his messages than did any other man in his generation. With exquisite lyrical charm, he glorified the "hero in grey with a heart of gold;" and yet made it clear that the cause which his sword had defended was now but a sacred memory, at least in so far as it implied disunion or the perpetuation of human bondage. The South, deprived of her "once splendid but medieval" social order, "had found her jewel in the toad's head of defeat." Her plantation economy was now being supplanted by a marvelously growing industrial system, which challenged the spinners of Massachusetts and the iron-makers of Pennsylvania. "We have sewed towns and cities in the place of theories," he said, "and put business above politics." On the farm, the free negro had proved a greater asset than the slave had been. He was assured of protection, education, and esteem—in his place. But his place was not in politics. And so long as his corruptible vote remained a menace to Anglo-Saxon civilization,

<sup>1</sup> *Twelfth Census*, vol. viii, p. 131; *Sta. Abs.*, 1891, p. 264; U. S. Census Office, *Special Report on Wealth, Debt and Taxation*, 1907, pp. 42-43.

the first duty of the white South was "to close ranks, stand firm, and at any hazard . . . maintain the integrity and supremacy of the Democratic party." He realized that solidarity would tend to weaken the influence of the South in national affairs; but on the other hand there was the much graver danger that "by dividing, it will debauch its political system, destroy the defenses of its social integrity, and put the balance of power in the hands of an ignorant and dangerous class." These sentiments were echoed on Friday afternoons from thousands of school-house rostrums, and became a veritable religion of the New South.<sup>1</sup>

Thus by the close of the eighties the Bourbon Democracy was established upon a rock. Great must be the storm that would shake its foundation. But clouds were appearing.

<sup>1</sup>Joel Chandler Harris (editor), *Henry W. Grady: His Life, Writings and Speeches*, *passim*, especially pp. 25-80, 83-91, 97-105, 124-136; *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 7, 1888.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BASIS OF AGRARIAN DISSENT

THE remarkable development of industry and trade under the Bourbon régime was not paralleled in the case of agriculture. The great bulk of the farmers remained in the toils of a pernicious credit system which devoured their profits and kept them in perpetual bondage to the merchants or brokers who "ran" them.

As mentioned in chapter I, the Civil War had left the farmers without funds with which to begin the work of restoration or to finance their crops, and with a poor chance of securing credit. They could not obtain loans upon real estate mortgages, for their land was a drug on the market.<sup>1</sup> Few of them had such personal property as would constitute acceptable security.<sup>2</sup> Money and credit, as is usually the case when the need for them is most dire, were exceedingly timid and exacting. A small group of local business men and speculators had been rather blessed by the war, but they were not as a rule the kind who would temper their business dealings with charity.<sup>3</sup> Outside capital would of course not come to the rescue until local agents could find a

<sup>1</sup> See R. P. Brooks, *Agrarian Revolution in Georgia*, chs. i and ii; E. M. Banks, *Economics of Land Tenure in Georgia*, ch. iii; Mildred Thompson, *Reconstruction in Georgia*, chs. ii, iii and ix; C. H. Otken, *Ills of the South*, ch. i; M. B. Hammond, *The Cotton Industry*, pp. 120, 141-142.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Otken, pp. 9-10.

satisfactory basis of security and insure a profit deemed commensurate with the risk.

The latter conditions fulfilled, however, the situation might offer no mean opportunity to outside investors and local middlemen. The backward regions of the world, as well as our own Western country, were revealing to the capitalist the possibilities of a community in which large profits or interest might be demanded on the high-risk assumption and the greatest caution possible then taken in regard to security.

A scheme which had been employed to some extent in ante-bellum times, as between planter and factor, seemed to offer some promise. To obtain credit for current expenses, the planter had sometimes given a mortgage, or lien, upon his prospective crop.<sup>1</sup> Now that the price of cotton was alluringly high, this plan found general favor. Extended to cover the account of the small farmer with the village merchant and that of the tenant with his landlord, it might afford a basis for solving the entire problem of rural credit. Bankers and brokers could then obtain backing at the North or in Europe; they in turn could take care of the merchants; who finally could supply the farmers by means of annual accounts, secured if necessary by mortgages upon real and personal property in addition to the expected crops. The plan seemed promising to the distressed planters in more ways than one. It will be remembered that their attempt to reestablish the plantation system with wage labor had been largely a failure from the outset.<sup>2</sup> Aside from the lack of money with which to pay wages, it was not easy to induce the negroes to work in this way: it smacked too much of slavery times. Hence the tendency at once appeared to break up the large estates into small holdings and to rent

<sup>1</sup>Hammond, pp. 107-112, 121.

<sup>2</sup>Brooks, ch. ii; Hammond, ch. iv.



these to the negroes and landless whites, usually for a share of the products.<sup>1</sup> The difficulty of maintaining any sort of effective supervision over the tenants was quickly realized. The negroes, especially, were inclined to neglect their work; to abuse the stock and implements furnished them; and, if not restrained, to consume their portion of the expected yield in extravagant, often foolish, purchases before the crop was half made. Then, if they did not leave for parts unknown, they must have further advances; so that the landlord's profits became very uncertain.<sup>2</sup> Now if the lien system, which had already sprung up in advance of the law, could be so regulated as to reserve to him the exclusive right to take liens from his tenants, it might enable him to control the expenditures of the less discreet among them, and to make his general supervision more effective. If he were able to maintain a store or commissary he might also insure for himself the profits on most of their trade. Thus the first of the modern lien laws in Georgia, passed in 1866 under planter influences, permitted landlords to have liens upon the crops of their tenants to cover indebtedness for stock, farming utensils, and provisions, furnished them for the purpose of making the crop. It further provided that "farmers" (then held to mean proprietor farmers only) might execute similar liens to merchants or factors for the purchase of provisions and fertilizers.<sup>3</sup>

The rising small-town merchants were not slow to appreciate the possibilities of a credit business with this ever-growing body of tenant farms, if the law were fittingly extended.<sup>4</sup> Being well represented in the councils of the

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*; also Banks, ch. v.

<sup>2</sup>*Eleventh Census*, "Farms and Homes," pp. 22-23; Hammond, p. 143.

<sup>3</sup>*Acts of the Georgia Legislature*, 1866, p. 141; Brooks, p. 32.

<sup>4</sup>Brooks, p. 33.

restored Democracy, they secured an amendment in 1873 granting to all classes of tenants the same freedom in executing liens as land owners enjoyed, and at the same time broadening the scope of such credit to cover virtually all human needs, including money.<sup>1</sup> A spirited contest arose in this way between them and the planters.<sup>2</sup> The latter were naturally chagrined at the prospect of losing control over their tenants' accounts. They mustered sufficient strength the next year to pass an amendment specifically prohibiting merchants from taking liens from tenants.<sup>3</sup> But the merchants were not to be permanently outdone. They came back the following year and effected a compromise which gave them practically what they wanted, and yet left it possible for the more able and aggressive planters to share their privileges. Under this final arrangement, tenants, by securing written permission from their landlords, might freely enjoy the blessings of store accounts.<sup>4</sup> The peculiar charm which the town holds for rustics, especially those of the dusky race, together with the natural desire to control their own purchases, led tenants generally to demand this freedom; and, with competition for their services usually keen, a large percentage soon gained it. Only those land owners unusually gifted as administrators and able to command the necessary financial support could now retain or control such accounts.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Acts*, 1873, p. 43; Brooks, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Brooks, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> *Acts*, 1874, p. 18; Brooks, p. 32. Banks is in error (p. 47), as Brooks points out (p. 33), in implying that this phase of the law remained unchanged until 1891.

<sup>4</sup> *Acts*, 1875, p. 20; Brooks, p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> A number of the planters in the black belt supplied their tenants with provisions which they in turn had procured from the merchants. Brooks says that in this way a majority of the planters (not of all landlord-farmers) were able to control such accounts.

The two groups most benefited by the lien system as thus constituted were becoming largely identical. Since almost the only profit in connection with agriculture, as will later appear, was in this matter of extending credit to the less fortunate workers (whether "independent" farmers or tenants), the more able planters were inclined to enter the mercantile business. Some of them were content with modest supply stores or commissaries on their places, others were drawn into the towns where they joined the merchant class.<sup>1</sup> Many of the latter in the meantime, thanks to mortgage foreclosures, forfeitures for taxes, and the general cheapness of land, were acquiring considerable plantations.<sup>2</sup> Some of them in fact came to rival the few remaining one-time aristocrats in the extent of their acres. Such farms were especially attractive to tenants; partly because of the greater freedom which they offered, and partly because of the glamor which came to attach to the town or city dweller, particularly the merchant who was always thought to be exceedingly rich and hence quite superior to the resident farmer.<sup>3</sup> In this way it seems to have been easier for the absentee owners to secure tenants and to control credit patronage.<sup>4</sup> Hence these groups were quite advantageously placed in the new scheme of things.

But what of the great body of "share croppers," renters, and debtor-proprietors? Was it particularly bad to mortgage a crop in advance? The granting of claims upon future

<sup>1</sup>This tendency, or at least the significance of it, seems to have been generally overlooked by other students of this field. The fact is easily confirmed by inquiry in practically any country town in the state.

<sup>2</sup>These merchant-landlords, looking to the supply business for their chief profits, nearly ruined the business of farming itself. See Brooks, pp. 33-36; Otken, ch. iii, especially pp. 39-45.

<sup>3</sup>Otken, p. 41.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 41-43.

goods is not uncommon in the business world. Those planters who had resorted to the practice in the old régime had not found it incomparably burdensome. The new system, however, was quite different in its operation and consequences. The planters in former times had borrowed money at a definite rate of interest.<sup>1</sup> The hapless farmer under the new dispensation procured only the privilege of buying on credit up to a given limit whatever commodities the merchant was able and willing to furnish, and for whatever prices he saw fit to charge.

Early in the year the farmer repaired to his merchant. If he were so fortunate as not to be already in debt he might make his own choice. Very likely, however, he had closed the former year with a balance due; so that under the terms of his old contract he was compelled to continue his account with the same man.<sup>2</sup> In either event he must now make a new bargain. The questions normally arose,—What lands did he expect to cultivate? How much of them would he agree to plant in cotton? This was important. Being the "money crop," the amount of it planted would determine the extent of his credit.<sup>3</sup> In fact he probably could not persuade a merchant to "run" him at all unless he agreed to plant as much cotton as the latter deemed necessary to cover his needs.<sup>4</sup> There was a double advantage to the merchant in this.<sup>5</sup> He was not only concerned with the extent of

<sup>1</sup>Hammond, p. 146.

<sup>2</sup>*Eleventh Census*, "Farms and Homes," pp. 22-23; Hammond, ch. v; by Hammond also "The Southern Farmer and the Cotton Question" in *Pol. Sci. Qty.*, vol. xii, pp. 250-275; Geo. K. Holmes, "Peons of the South" in *Annals of Amer. Acad. of Pol. and Soc. Sci.*, Sept., 1893, pp. 265-274.

<sup>3</sup>Usually from 50 to 75 per cent of the expected yield. See Otken, chs. ii, iii, vi; Hammond, p. 157; *Tenth Census*, vol. vi, pt. ii, p. 174.

<sup>4</sup>Otken, pp. 48-57; Hammond, "Southern Farmer," *op. cit.*; Holmes, *op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup>Hammond, p. 151.

security obtainable, but he was also aware that the more cotton planted the less corn and other supplies could be raised; so that these must be added to the debtor's account. Thus as the price of the staple continued to drop the farmer found it exceedingly difficult to heed the wholesome advice of economists, editors, and government officials to reduce his cotton acreage and raise more supplies.

The crop lien arranged, the farmer would probably be questioned as to the extent of his real and personal property subject to mortgage. If again he was fortunate enough to own anything not already over-burdened with claims, he was likely to have it attached also.<sup>1</sup> This would add to his purchasing power, provided it were not necessary to use it to cover a left-over obligation. Thus before the year's account was opened he might be required to sign away his modest accumulations as well as his future hopes.

And what had he gained? Dr. M. B. Hammond, a leading authority on this and other matters connected with the cotton industry, declares that <sup>2</sup>

When one of these mortgages has been recorded against the southern farmer, he has passed into a state of hopeless peonage to the merchant who has become his creditor. With the surrender of this evidence of indebtedness, he has also surrendered his freedom of action and his industrial autonomy. From this time until he has paid the last dollar of his indebtedness, he is subject to the constant oversight and direction of the merchant. Every mouthful of food that he purchases, every implement that he requires on the farm, his mules, cattle, the clothing for himself and family, the fertilizers for his

<sup>1</sup> See ref. 2, p. 54. It was sometimes necessary in the case of tenants for the landlord to pledge his part of the expected yield also, to induce a merchant to run them. (Hammond, p. 147.)

<sup>2</sup> Hammond, *The Cotton Industry*, p. 149. Cf. W. S. Morgan, *History of the Wheel and Alliance*, p. 57.

land, must all be bought of the merchant who holds the crop lien, and in such amounts as the latter is willing to allow. Except for cash, no other merchant will sell him anything. . . .

He must pay from 20 to 50 per cent more than the prevailing cash price for everything charged to his account.<sup>1</sup> Hammond compiled from the Reports of the State Department of Agriculture the average annual prices as they ran in Georgia during the eighties for corn and for bacon on both the cash and the credit basis. These articles, constituting the chief items of food for the average farmer, bulked among the largest on his accounts, despite the fact that he could have raised all he needed of them at home if he had not been required to plant so much cotton.<sup>2</sup> From these figures it appears that in the case of corn the credit price was in no year less than 25 per cent higher; of bacon, not less than 20 per cent. The averages for the decade were 31 per cent higher for the one, and 29 for the other.<sup>3</sup> Commodities which offered less opportunity for local comparisons and possible competition showed even greater differences.<sup>4</sup> The debtor as a rule did not fully appreciate the greatness of this disparity, for there was often for him no basis for comparison. Many of the merchants did a credit business so exclusively that they set no cash prices.<sup>5</sup> Some commodities, like fertilizers, were so universally sold on

<sup>1</sup>Rarely as low as 10; sometimes as high as 100; in exceptional cases, 200 per cent more. See Hammond, p. 152.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>4</sup>Geo. K. Holmes (*op. cit.*) found at least one Georgia town in which the farmers were paying \$10 a barrel for flour which cost the merchants \$3; a dollar a bushel for corn that cost forty cents. Otken says (pp. 26-29) that flour which cost at the mill from \$2.30 to \$3.00, and which retailed at about \$4.50, was charged to accounts at from \$6.00 to \$7.50.

<sup>5</sup>Hammond, p. 155.

time that credit prices entirely ruled the market. If the farmer had been fully aware of the situation, he might have realized that, since the average item of his account ran not more than six months, he was paying double the difference in price as annual interest<sup>1</sup>—from fifty to a hundred per cent!

When his crop was harvested it was not his own: it must go at once to the merchant.<sup>2</sup> He could not hold it for a better price, nor seek a more advantageous market. He would be allowed the locally prevailing price. Should the total receipts be insufficient to cover his indebtedness, he must find further security upon which to renew his bondage. If happily he came out even (with perhaps enough to buy a little "Santa Claus" for the children), he might try his luck with another merchant next year.

These are not exceptional cases. Nearly all the farmers went at least partially on a credit basis.<sup>3</sup> It is probably safe to say that between eighty and ninety per cent of the cotton growers—proprietors, and tenants, white and black—were normally ensnared by the lien system.<sup>4</sup> To what extent

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 153-154.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>4</sup>"Ninety per cent," said Hammond (writing in 1897), "of the cotton growers of Alabama, it is stated on high authority, make their purchases in this way. . . . Throughout the cotton belt it is probably no exaggeration to say that three-fourths of the cotton planters and their tenants, white and black," do likewise (p. 155). Conditions in Georgia were probably no better than in Alabama. In the older states where more fertilizers were required, and in those which had suffered greater losses from the war, credit was more widely demanded. Thus in states like Georgia and Alabama probably a considerably larger proportion of the farmers were involved than in those like Texas. No exact data bearing on this point were collected by the census takers, but the prevalence of the system was particularly noted in 1890 (*Eleventh Census*, "Farms and Homes," pp. 22-23). The United States Department of Agriculture in 1912 sent out a questionnaire over the cotton belt, inquiring as to the percentage of cotton growers still resorting to the

real and personal property were also involved it is difficult to estimate. The pledging of household effects, live stock, and implements was particularly prevalent among tenants, and not unknown among small proprietors.<sup>1</sup> Pitiful heaps of their rubbish commonly disfigured the court-house squares. Land was still employed less widely as security than in other parts of the country. Except in cases of prospective purchases, or of additional collateral, it was usually left as a last resort.<sup>2</sup> According to the census reports, a little over a fifth of the taxable land in the state was under mortgage in 1890.<sup>3</sup> Three times as much had been staked in the preceding year as in 1880.<sup>4</sup> These figures, however, do not adequately represent the extent to which real estate was used to cover debts. A considerable number of mortgages were never recorded.<sup>5</sup> Besides, it was customary in many cases to grant "deeds to secure debt, with power of sale" instead.<sup>6</sup> These operated in much the same way, but were not

lien; also the proportion who had done so in 1902. On a basis of the replies it was estimated that 42 per cent of the proprietors and 74 per cent of the tenants, were still in the toils; that 52 per cent of the one and 77 of the other had been in 1902 (*Yearbook of the Department of Agriculture*, 1912, p. 27). Again it should be noted that this applied to the entire belt; and also that conditions had materially improved even by 1902. On the strength of these figures and of the results of personal investigations, the writer is convinced that scarcely fewer than four-fifths, perhaps as many as nine-tenths, of the cotton farmers in Georgia were lien victims in 1890. And there were extremely few farmers, of course, who were not cotton growers.

<sup>1</sup>This statement and the one following are based upon years of personal observation and inquiry in a score or more typical counties in the state.

<sup>2</sup>See Brooks, p. 34; Banks, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup>*Abstract of Eleventh Census*, p. 218.

<sup>4</sup>Banks, p. 50; *Eleventh Census*, "Real Estate Mortgages," p. 371.

<sup>5</sup>Banks, p. 50.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 49-50; *Eleventh Census*, "Real Estate Mortgages," p. 11.



so recorded, hence they eluded the census taker as well as the inquisitive neighbor. Such hazarding of property may often represent progress of course. It may be the beginning of a new or larger career as proprietor. Interesting light is thrown upon this question by the census of 1890. The results of a special investigation in 102 representative counties, three of which were in Georgia, indicated that some 80 per cent of the outstanding mortgages on acres in the country as a whole were for real estate purchases and improvements together; only half as many in proportion were for this purpose in Georgia. What is even more significant, 5.4 per cent of such mortgages in the country at large were for farm and family expenses, against 46.3 per cent in Georgia.<sup>1</sup> Similar disparities appeared for the South in general as compared with other sections.

How many farms were wholly or partially sacrificed for debt we are unable to say. Figures on mortgage foreclosures would be of little value, if completely assembled, since there were other legal means of forcing sale, and since farmers not infrequently sold parts of their places voluntarily to ease financial straits.<sup>2</sup> A great deal of land evidently changed hands. Some of the largest plantations crumbled.<sup>3</sup> How many others became merchant-owned "bonanzas" we do not know. Small proprietorships in-

<sup>1</sup>*Eleventh Census*, "Real Est. Mort.," pp. 286-287.

<sup>2</sup>Banks, pp. 49-50.

<sup>3</sup>The extent to which the great plantations were broken into small proprietorships is a subject regarding which there seems to have been a great deal of misapprehension, due perhaps to the fact that the census columns showing the number and average size of farms each decennial year rank tenant holdings as "farms." Thus the growing tendency to abandon the practice of cultivating the large plantation as a unit, letting it out to tenants instead, has swelled the number of "farms," and shrunk their average size far beyond any proportionate changes as to proprietorship. See Banks, p. 33; Brooks, pp. 41-44.

creased in number but disproportionately declined in size.<sup>1</sup> Medium-large estates, among which the bulk of those accumulated by creditors doubtless fell, showed a significant trend toward concentration; that is, those of 175 to 1000 acres became relatively fewer but larger.<sup>2</sup> Thence downward to the little vegetable patches, there was an accelerating trend toward multiplication by subdivision. Of the newly acquired farms, irrespective of size, there is evidence that the great majority went to men who were not directly engaged in agricultural work. It seems, for example, that while the number of farm owners increased about 22 per cent during the eighties, the number of farmers cultivating their own places increased less than 4 per cent.<sup>3</sup> Population in the meantime increased about 19 per cent.<sup>4</sup> Allowing then for a normal division of estates among heirs, not a few of the farmers must have lost their lands entirely. Doubtless some of the more thrifty and sacrificing tenants became small proprietors; but making further allowance for these, still others of the landowning class must have quit

<sup>1</sup>Banks collected statistics on these matters from official sources in 31 typical counties of Georgia. A comparison of the data on pp. 35, 39 and 72 quite confirms the above statement.

NOTE: The author assumes responsibility for the interpretation given these figures, from Banks and other sources, in the above paragraph.

<sup>2</sup>It appears from Banks' figures (p. 39) that for the white proprietorships alone (those for the colored are given under different classifications, but indicate that the points here made would only be emphasized if both could be combined) estates of 1000 acres or more constituted 7.7 per cent of the total number in 1873; 4.8 per cent in 1890. Estates of 175 to 1000 acres in the meantime fell from 51 to 41 per cent as to numbers, but rose from 54 to 56 per cent of the total acreage which itself increased somewhat. The concentrating tendency was most marked in the group of 500- to 1000-acre estates.

<sup>3</sup>Banks, pp. 35, 72; *Abstract of Eleventh Census*, p. 97.

<sup>4</sup>*Abstract of Eleventh Census*, p. 15.

the farming business or sunk into tenancy.<sup>1</sup> Thus the limited statistics available tend to confirm what is much better appreciated by one who is at all familiar with the practical workings of the credit system and the social changes which were evidently in progress during the time in Georgia and in other Southern states; namely, that there was a marked tendency toward the concentration of agricultural land in the hands of merchants, loan agents, and a few of the financially strongest farmers.

While these groups profited on the whole by the credit situation, they were not without a share in its detriments. They were to some extent debtors themselves, and as such were often subjected to ungenerous terms. Then, as creditors, they probably encountered something more than a normal risk. Hence each middleman who passed a credit allowance on was inclined to feel justified in liberally adding to the interest.

Merchants, for example, were usually required by the banks to pay one-and-a-half per cent monthly for discounts or short term loans.<sup>2</sup> The legal rate of interest in Georgia was eight per cent, but the law was easily evaded, and higher rates were often charged. In dealing with customers, on the other hand, the merchants were never quite sure of full collections.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes a thriftless tenant would neglect his crop until it was smothered by the grass, and as harvest time approached would disappear from the community. Other customers would have sickness in the home; or perhaps, for some breach of the law, would face a choice be-

<sup>1</sup>About 57 per cent of the farms in Georgia were cultivated by tenants in 1890, against 45 per cent in 1880. (*Eleventh Census*, "Farms and Homes," p. 286.) The great increase is largely explained, however, by the substitution of tenancy for the wage-labor system.

<sup>2</sup>Hammond, p. 164.

<sup>3</sup>Hammond, p. 164.

tween a fine and a season in the chain gang. To refuse them aid would probably mean the loss of advances already made. For various reasons, then, some accounts would be permitted to approach the safety limit early in the year, and finally to exceed the available security. Perhaps an unusually favorable crop would come to the rescue: perhaps it would not. The accounts might be carried over, but eventually some of them would be lost.<sup>1</sup> In a measure, therefore, hard terms were demanded by the situation. The merchants were no less human than the farmers. Many of them came from the same families. They were simply caught in a system which presented certain drawbacks on the one hand and opportunities on the other, and they sought to make the most of it. And fortune favored them.<sup>2</sup> "The road to wealth in the South," wrote George K. Holmes<sup>3</sup> in 1893, "outside of the cities and aside from manufacturing, is merchandising."

Many people have been inclined to censure the banks for not responding more generously to credit demands. They continued to do almost no business directly with men whose capital was wholly invested in agriculture.<sup>4</sup> One can ap-

<sup>1</sup>On the difficulties which confronted the merchants, see Otken, ch. iii.

<sup>2</sup>It may be wondered why competition did not become so keen as to force more reasonable terms. It should be remembered that not every one could secure the necessary financial backing. Besides a certain business acumen, coupled with considerable knowledge of the community was necessary for success in the business. The number of merchants did greatly increase as is shown by the remarkable growth of towns and villages, most of which were almost wholly dependent upon the business of furnishing the neighboring farms. No reliable statistics showing the growth of wealth among merchants seem to be available. Their tax returns were ridiculously low as a rule (see L. F. Schmeckebier, "Taxation in Georgia," in *Johns Hopkins University Studies*, vol. xviii, pp. 217 *et seq.*)

<sup>3</sup>In "Peons of the South," *op. cit.*

<sup>4</sup>Brooks, p. 34; Hammond, pp. 163-164.

preciate, to be sure, that even as land values gradually recovered, the uncertainty of finding a ready sale for such property if occasion required still remained. And a business which demanded a quick turnover would call for a more fluid security. If they broke their custom in this regard they were almost sure to demand a double interest. They would usually urge, often with truth no doubt, that they did not have the capital to spare and that credit was extremely hard even for them to obtain. As agents, they might be able to negotiate a loan, but it would be necessary for them to deduct their commission from the proceeds. The applicant was fortunate if he were not required in the end to pay more than fifteen per cent.<sup>1</sup> When he counted his money he might have noticed that a considerable part of it was in bank notes, perhaps bearing the name of the institution favoring him with the loan. These might have suggested to him that the banker's actual investment, of which they were a token, was already drawing interest from the government; and hence was now trebling its yield. In other words, if he were a national banker he had purchased bonds of the federal government, upon which he received interest; with them as security, he had obtained from the government, without charge, circulating notes up to ninety per cent of his investment.<sup>2</sup> With these notes he could obtain additional interest on the same investment, and perhaps a "commission" besides. Verily, to him that hath shall be given.

Early in the eighties a number of new loan agencies appeared in the state which seemed to offer great promise of relief. They were hailed by optimists like Grady with much enthusiasm.<sup>3</sup> Largely financed by Northern capital,

<sup>1</sup>Hammond, p. 164.

<sup>2</sup>D. R. Dewey, *Financial History of the United States*, p. 326. He paid a one-per-cent tax on his note circulation.

<sup>3</sup>Hammond, p. 164.

they seemed at first semi-philanthropic. Their plan as announced was to furnish loans to farmers for periods of about five years, secured by mortgages upon real estate up to forty or fifty per cent of its appraised value. The interest was to be seven or eight per cent. Closer investigation, however, revealed the fact that the agent would deduct at the outset some twenty dollars on the hundred as a commission for negotiating the loan; leaving the victim eighty dollars cash in return for a note for one hundred with interest.<sup>1</sup> Alas, they proved to be the same sort of "loan sharks" as those at the time infesting the West. But they did a thriving business. "Nothing shows more clearly," wrote Hammond in 1897,<sup>2</sup> "the need of better credit facilities in the South than the willingness on the part of the more thrifty and industrious farmers to borrow money on such terms rather than to submit to the high prices and dictation of the advancing merchants."

Thus, with virtually the entire economic system of the state conducted after the manner of a huge pawnshop, the paramount problem was that of money and credit. Closely associated with this—in a sense, indeed, a part of it—was the matter of falling prices, and the consequent losses entailed upon producers.

From its eminence of a dollar a pound at the close of the Civil War, cotton had fallen by 1868 to twenty-five cents.<sup>3</sup> The downward trend continued to the end of the century.<sup>4</sup> About eighteen cents in the local markets when the new era of home rule began in December, 1871, it averaged, on the first of that month each year, about twelve cents during the

<sup>1</sup>Hammond, p. 165.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, appendix I.

<sup>4</sup>See chart on p. 66.

seventies, nine during the eighties, and seven during the nineties.<sup>1</sup> The widening of the acreage given over to cotton, the increase in the number of farmers engaged in its cultivation, and the growing use of commercial fertilizers resulted in vastly swelling the output. Yet the total selling price did not greatly increase. In fact, it frequently happened that the larger harvest brought an actually smaller gross return. The following table<sup>2</sup> illustrates this point:

<i>Periods</i>	<i>Average annual production in U. S. (millions of bales)</i>	<i>Average annual selling price (millions of dollars)</i>
1870-74 .....	3.88	267
1875-79 .....	5.00	223
1880-84 .....	6.09	278
1885-89 .....	6.88	335
1890-94 .....	8.37	304
1895-99 .....	9.38	302

As shown in the chart on p. 66 the prices of other products declined on an average in nearly the same proportion. For a generation, therefore, money returns to producers were almost constantly shrinking.

If the farmers had been able to buy for cash, so that they might have avoided the exhausting overcharges of credit accounts, and the appreciation of their debts in terms of their products, they might have found these losses largely offset by the greater purchasing power of the dollar. But not wholly. Some expenditures, not represented in the price curve, increased: real estate, for example, became dearer, and taxes proportionately higher.<sup>3</sup> Fixed charges like interest on loans did not decrease. Such compensation as

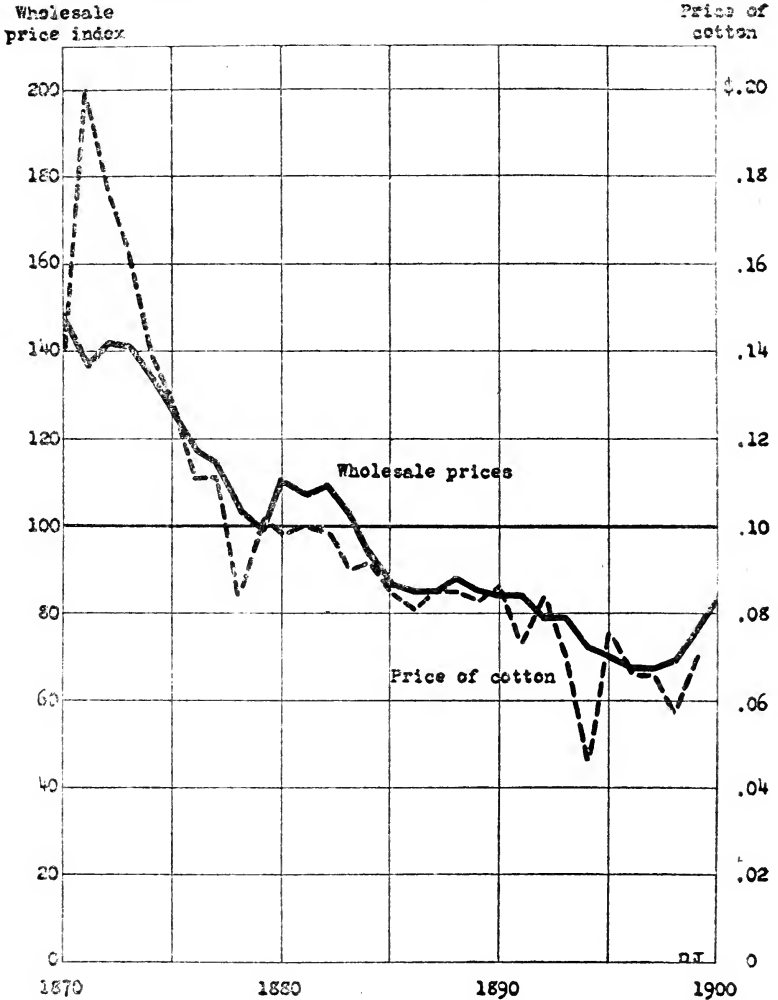
<sup>1</sup> Averaged from figures given for consecutive years in the *Yearbook of the Department of Agriculture*, 1901, p. 754.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> L. F. Schmeckebier, "Taxation in Georgia," *op. cit.*

THIRTY YEARS OF FALLING PRICES

INDEX OF WHOLESALE PRICES (OF ALL COMMODITIES) COMPARED WITH THE FARM PRICE OF COTTON ON DECEMBER 1 EACH YEAR



It may be noticed that the cotton farmer suffered more than the average producer.

The curve for wholesale prices is based on the column for simple averages in the Aldrich Report to 1891, and thereafter on the figures of the Bureau of Labor, reduced by Ralph G. Hurlin, *Annalist*, April 11, 1921. That for cotton is based on the figures of the Department of Agriculture, *op. cit.*



might otherwise have accrued from any decline in the price of fertilizers and other replacements was largely neutralized by the necessity of using them more freely.

Along with the general decline in the price of cotton went the fluctuations during the year. Like other farm products it was usually lowest at harvest season,<sup>1</sup> when the great majority of producers were forced to sell. There was nearly always a recovery in the following spring, the advantage going as a rule to the middleman. This advance, small though it might have appeared, probably represented in most cases, a larger profit than the grower had made. It is estimated, in fact, that the majority of farmers in Georgia made no entrepreneurs' profits during this period.<sup>2</sup> If the grower was chagrined at seeing the rise come too late, he was probably inspired with renewed hope as he broke the soil for another crop. It came to be a rather common belief that the market was so manipulated as to produce a rise around planting season for the psychological effect.

The most serious hardship entailed by the long-continued fall in prices—one that applied to the debtor class in general regardless of occupation—was that of the appreciation of all standing obligations; whether of long-term notes, or of carried-over accounts. Whether measured in terms of the labor and sacrifices required to procure them, or of the wants they would satisfy, dollars grew larger. A debt equivalent to ten bales of cotton in 1871 would have required eighteen bales to cover it five years later.<sup>3</sup> The same proportion over a similar period held for one con-

<sup>1</sup> See prices for December 1 and following May 1 each year in *Year-book*, *op. cit.* The point is better illustrated by comparison of the daily quotations for October–December with those for January–May.

<sup>2</sup> See Banks, pp. 51–52. Cf. also C. W. Davis, "Why the farmer is not prosperous," *Forum*, vol. ix, pp. 231–241 (Apr., 1890).

<sup>3</sup> See chart, p. 69.

tracted in 1889. These were above the average, to be sure, but they illustrate the tendency. What the debtor lost and the creditor gained in the way of purchasing power is shown in the next table.<sup>1</sup> (Five-year periods are used since, according to the Census of 1890, this was about the average term of a real estate mortgage.)<sup>2</sup>

<i>The average 5-year debt contracted during the period</i>	<i>Appreciated (in terms of the purchasing power of the dollar)</i>
1865-1869 .....	35.2 per cent
1870-1874 .....	19.7 "
1875-1879 .....	4.5 "
1880-1884 .....	11.7 "
1885-1890 .....	11.6 "

To this loss was added, of course, the interest and perhaps a commission, or else the premium on time prices. There is little wonder that the farmers came to feel that they were trying to fill a cask that was open at both ends.

There were also considerable differences between the cash prices of the local markets and those of the cities.<sup>3</sup> For this the farmers were inclined to hold the railroads at least partially responsible. In Georgia, as in other states, the earlier efforts to correct the abuses of railway corporations by law had met with limited success. Important as the work of the Constitutional Convention of 1877 had been, it had not solved the problem. Pursuant of its provisions, a railway commission had been established in 1879.<sup>4</sup> Partly as a result of the activities of this body, freight tariffs had been

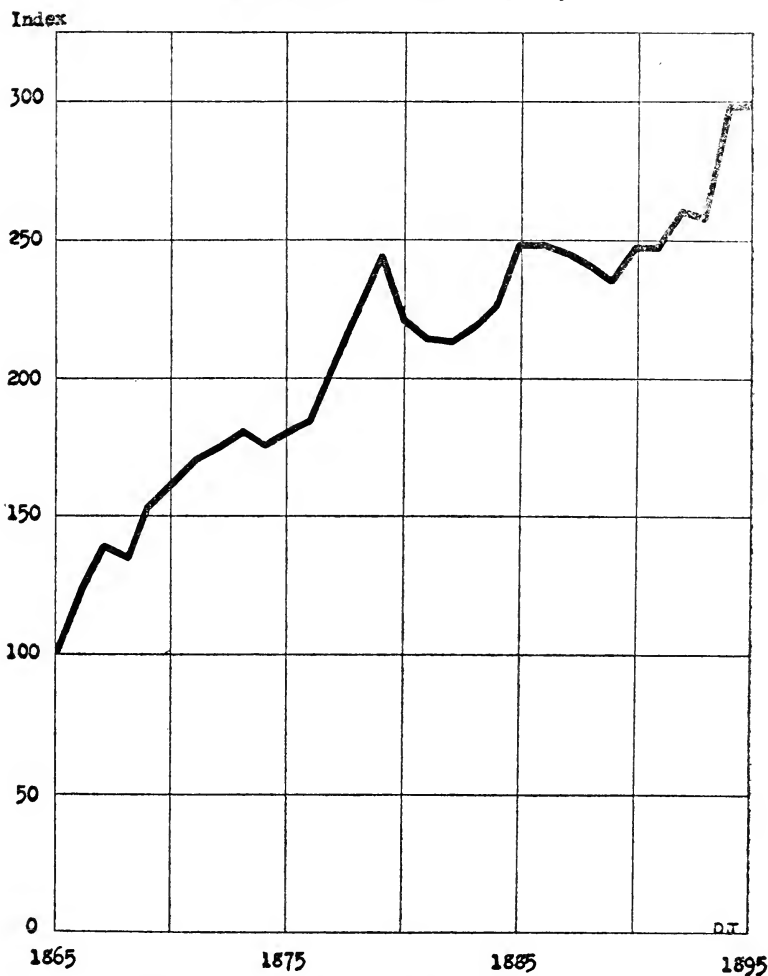
<sup>1</sup>Based on figures in Aldrich Report (vol. i, p. 9) for "all articles averaged according to importance, comprising 68.60 per cent of total expenditure."

<sup>2</sup>*Eleventh Census*, "Real Estate Mortgages," introduction to tables.

<sup>3</sup>U. S. Department of Agriculture, *Yearbooks* for period, sections on prices. Also Georgia State Department of Agriculture, *Reports*, market quotations.

<sup>4</sup>Georgia Legislature, *Acts*, 1878-79, pp. 125-131.

THE DEBTOR'S GRIEVANCE  
THE APPRECIATING DOLLAR, 1865-1895



The sharp rise in the late seventies reminds one of the Greenback movement; that of the early nineties, of the Populist movement.

The index numbers to 1891 are derived from those for prices in the Aldrich Report, column for weighted averages of commodities said to comprise 68.6 per cent. of the total expenditures. Thereafter, they are based on the figures of the Bureau of Labor.

lowered on the whole, but discriminations favoring the cities at the expense of way stations had not been abolished.<sup>1</sup> It was still possible in many cases for the urban dealer to ship his cotton from a greater distance at less expense than could the farmer or the village merchant along the way. The same applied to the goods they purchased. The commission had been able at least to mitigate these inequalities as between points within the state, but had found itself quite impotent in matters of interstate traffic.<sup>2</sup> Many people had counted upon the competition produced by the rapid development of new roads to correct many such abuses. Instead, the well-known tricks of interlocking directorates, secret agreements, common operating companies, and the like only increased the complications of the problem.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the old schemes continued, whereby capital was raised by the sale of stocks to prospective patrons, and general favors were gained on the grounds that this particular line was to be owned and controlled by the people whom it served.<sup>4</sup> Then followed Credit-Mobilier episodes—very lucrative contracts being granted to inside construction companies.<sup>5</sup> Bonds were issued far in excess of the assets, and the proceeds squandered<sup>6</sup> upon excessive salaries to officials, and sometimes upon the most absurd “improvements.” The

<sup>1</sup>Georgia Railway Commission, *Reports*, 1890, p. 61; 1892, p. 18. Also *Ga. House Journal*, 1883, p. 207. A number of complaints of such discriminations appeared in communications to local newspapers and farm journals during the time (clippings in Watson and Northern collections).

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>Ga. Ry. Comm., *Reports*, 1892, pp. 18, 26, 27; 1893, pp. 3-17. Also *House Journ.*, 1887, p. 169; 1888, p. 204.

<sup>4</sup>Ga. Ry. Comm., *Reports*, 1892, pp. 26, 27; 1893, pp. 3-17. Cf. Thos. E. Watson, “People’s Party Appeal,” *Independent*, vol. lvii, p. 829.

<sup>5</sup>Ga. Ry. Comm., *Report*, 1893, pp. 3-17.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*; also 1892, pp. 18, 26, 27.

Central of Georgia road, for example, built elaborate parks with flower gardens and running fountains at way stations where a depot and one or two rustic stores were the only other evidences of human habitation.<sup>1</sup> These were quite desirable, to be sure, but, as later became manifest, were scarcely warranted by the company's assets. The obvious purpose of such business was to force bankruptcy. Innocent investors were thus "frozen out," and the road was bought for a song by those who had effected the wreckage,—themselves acting as tools perhaps of outside capitalists. Reorganization followed. Stock was heavily watered. Much of it again was sold to the public. Then probably the same cycle was repeated.<sup>2</sup> A large percentage of the railway mileage in Georgia, as in other states, was built in this way by the savings of thousands of small investors, and was stolen from them by financiers with the sanction of the courts. The commission was not only powerless to prevent such legalized robbery, but was forced by circumstances to permit sufficiently high rates to yield "reasonable" dividends upon stocks, water and all. With these things in mind, it is not difficult to understand how people finally wrought to a frenzy by accumulating grievances came to look upon the railway companies less as public benefactors than as "public plunderers."

The railroads were not the only sinners. Other large corporations, especially insurance companies, were guilty of somewhat similar offenses.<sup>3</sup> In the country at large, the

<sup>1</sup>One who travels that road between Savannah and Macon may still observe the remains of those station parks. Cf. Watson, *op. cit.*; also Ry. Comm., *Report*, 1892, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>Ry. Comm., *Reports*, 1892, pp. 18, 26, 27; 1893, pp. 3-17. The commission here laments these evils, complains of its impotence to prevent them, and finally asks for legislation regulating the issuance of stocks and bonds.

<sup>3</sup>Knight, vol. ii, pp. 949-964.

trusts were making their appearance. The problems which they brought are too well known to call for elaboration here. Some of them we shall have occasion to illustrate in subsequent pages.

One other local matter of an economic character demands some attention. Upon the backs of the farmers fell the burden of taxation, out of all proportion to the value of their property or their ability to pay.<sup>1</sup> Personal property of all kinds escaped its just share.<sup>2</sup> All the watches, jewelry, and plate in the city of Atlanta, for example, was valued for this purpose in 1890 at only \$173,000.<sup>3</sup> Strange to say, as the city continued its "ricket-like" growth, such valuations declined, dropping to \$108,000 by 1898.<sup>4</sup> One might judge that Atlanta was pawning its watches for skyscrapers. Furthermore, the largest distributing center between Baltimore and New Orleans, it was credited with only about three million dollars' worth of taxable merchandise in 1890.<sup>5</sup> But this was more than a seventh of the total reported in the state.<sup>6</sup> In Macon one small fire destroyed a third as much goods as appeared on the tax books for the entire city.<sup>7</sup> Several counties, containing numbers of towns and villages almost wholly supported by the supply business, reported in some years no merchandise at all.<sup>8</sup> Intangible property, such as stocks, bonds, notes, etc., was "sel-

<sup>1</sup>L. F. Schmeckebier, "Taxation in Georgia," *Johns Hopkins University Studies*, vol. xviii, pp. 217-250.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>Georgia Comptroller-General, *Report*, 1890, p. 119 (figures for Fulton County).

<sup>4</sup>Schmeckebier, *op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup>Ga. Comp.-Gen., *Report*, 1890, p. 109.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>7</sup>Schmeckebier, *op. cit.*

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

dom ever returned by the owners thereof for taxation," according to the comptroller-general.<sup>1</sup> Nearly half the counties in 1890 reported none.<sup>2</sup> Atlanta returned less than \$400,000 worth; the entire state, only seven million.<sup>3</sup> Banks were not taxed on their capital; the holders of stocks were expected to pay instead.<sup>4</sup> Railroads, while generally required to pay state taxes after 1877, paid nothing to the counties through which they passed until the rise of the Farmers' Alliance.<sup>5</sup> Dealers in fertilizers seem to have paid nothing as a rule on their stocks.<sup>6</sup> Throughout the list, those who were most prosperous were most likely to escape the tax gatherer. Land bore the chief burden. If it were mortgaged, its owner received no consideration because of the fact; besides, he and not the creditor must pay the tax on the mortgage.<sup>7</sup> Meantime the state tax rate increased from 2.5 mills in 1883 to 4 in 1890 and 6.2 in 1898.<sup>8</sup>

The indirect taxes of the federal government bore upon the poorer classes generally in ill proportion to their ability to pay. The high protective tariff was particularly burdensome to the great mass of farmers. It tended greatly to increase the prices of goods which they must purchase, but in most cases could not increase the prices of those which they had to sell. Besides by curtailing foreign trade, the high duties tended to hamper the farmer in disposing of his surplus in foreign market. This no doubt was partly

<sup>1</sup> Schmeckebier, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Ga. Comp.-Gen., *Report*, 1890, pp. 108-112.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* (figures for Fulton County, p. 109).

<sup>4</sup> Schmeckebier.

<sup>5</sup> Georgia, *House Journ.*, 1888, pp. 49, 51, 204; *Senate Journ.*, 1889, p. 587; Georgia *Laws*, 1889, p. 29.

<sup>6</sup> Schmeckebier.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Schmeckebier, *Comp.-Gen., Report*, 1890, p. 123.

responsible for the apparent overproduction, and the consequent depression in prices. And the farmer felt this depression much more than did the producer who received the benefit of protection.

What was the reaction of the farmers toward this situation?

From the mid-seventies to the early eighties, as we have seen, there had been a movement of protest, stimulated by the Grange, by statesmen of the old school such as Toombs, and by political dissenters like Felton. This movement had declined. The Grange had reacted from over-rapid expansion. Its coöperative ventures had gone on the rocks, because of the lack of sufficient financial backing, the inability of customers to meet its demands for a cash business, the opposition of the business world, mistakes of management, and the decay of the order itself.<sup>1</sup> Politically, the spirit of dissent had been overwhelmed by a rising tide of patriotic fervor and race feeling.

While a considerable number, not a very large percentage, of the farmers had belonged to the Grange even at its height.<sup>2</sup> Of those who had become dissenters for a time in politics, probably the great majority had had rather vague conceptions of the relationship between their economic adversity and dependence on the one hand, and the prevailing business and political systems on the other. Their candidates in many cases had made little or no effort to stimulate agrarian radicalism. Thus, while discontent with existing conditions had been widespread, it had not been fully articulate.

<sup>1</sup> See *supra*, pp. 36-48. Cf. Buck, *Granger Movement*, *passim*; *Agrarian Crusade*, chs. ii-v.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps 25,000. According to Buck (*Granger Movt.*, pp. 38-59) there were 17,826 members in Georgia on Oct. 1, 1875; but there were a fourth fewer granges than on the first of the preceding Jan.



From the collapse of the Independent movement in 1882 till the appearance of the Farmers' Alliance in the State in 1887, the attitude of the great mass of the farmers seems to have been one of more or less passive submission. They complained of the hard times, to be sure, and often of the hard terms imposed upon them by the business world; but they saw no way out, unless some stroke of luck should boost the price of cotton. Many became thoroughly disheartened, if they were not already so; took less pride in keeping up their places, less scruples about meeting their obligations.<sup>1</sup> "What's the use? All I get out of it's a livin' anyway. I'll go the limit at Walker's store and let him worry about the balance"—seems to have expressed a not uncommon attitude. Others, more conscientious, toiled and sacrificed—and worried! The writer is quite convinced that no small number of them—probably more of their wives—went to premature graves from worry over perpetual debt.

Such as these were likely to be innately conservative, strongly patriotic, loyal to their party and its leaders, and slow to believe ill of those in high places. But once aroused, they were factors to be reckoned with.

<sup>1</sup>*Cf.* Otken, chs. ii and iii; also Hammond, pp. 158-160.

## CHAPTER III

### “ EMBATTLED FARMERS ”

THEN came the Alliance. This order was similar in many ways to the Grange.<sup>1</sup> It differed from the latter, however, in the manner of its origin and development. The Alliance had no single founder. It did not begin as a national organization with well-formed plans for its propagation. Like Topsy, it “ just grew.” In numerous backwoods communities widely scattered over the country, between 1874 and 1886, Alliances, Unions, Wheels, and what-nots sprang up spontaneously.<sup>2</sup> Each of these became a mother order, multiplying into neighboring communities, counties, states, meeting each other, amalgamating, and thus developing almost unconsciously into a great nation-wide movement.

Such organizations had appeared in Texas, Kansas, and New York as early as 1874-76.<sup>3</sup> From two separate origins, both distinctly rural, the Texas State Alliance was formed in 1879 with twelve chapters.<sup>4</sup> These had multiplied ten-fold by 1882. Meanwhile, with apparently no con-

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Buck, *Granger Movement*, pp. 302-306; *Agrarian Crusade*, ch. viii.

<sup>2</sup>W. S. Morgan, *History of the Wheel and Alliance, and the Impending Revolution*, chs. iii, iv; National Economist (publishers), *Handbook of Facts and Alliance Information* (pamphlet, in Lib. of Cong.); F. M. Drew, “The Present Farmers’ Movement,” *Pol. Sci. Qty.*, vol. vi, p. 282 (Jan., 1891). See Bibliography, *infra*.

<sup>3</sup>Buck, *Granger Movement*, pp. 302-303.

<sup>4</sup>Morgan, pp. 91-92.

nection, the Agricultural Wheel was organized in a log schoolhouse in the remote interior of Arkansas. Elsewhere in the state the Brothers of Freedom sprang up about the same time. These two were merged into one Wheel in 1885. By December of the following year the Wheel had rolled into Tennessee, Mississippi, Texas, Kentucky, Missouri, and Indian Territory.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime the Alliance had crossed over from Texas to Louisiana, where it found the Farmers' Union already flourishing. The two amalgamated, and by the end of 1887 had covered all the Southern states except Alabama, which was added in '89. In the process of expansion, several other newly formed local orders were absorbed. The Wheel and the Alliance came together in 1889 and formed the National Farmer's Alliance and Industrial Union.<sup>2</sup> These orders had already spread into several Northern and Western states, where they encountered a similar movement forming the Farmers' Alliance of the Northwest.<sup>3</sup> Together, these bodies had a membership several times larger than the Grange had ever had.<sup>4</sup> The Southern branch alone claimed three million by 1890.<sup>5</sup> What enormous possibilities!

Along what lines were the interests and activities of these groups being directed? Economic questions were paramount from the outset, it seems, with all of them. Inspired by the same or similar conditions, they were inclined to reach the same conclusions as to causes and remedies.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Morgan, pp. 60, 66, 69, 72, 98.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, chs. iii, ix, esp. pp. 75-85, 102-104, 111-147.

<sup>3</sup>Morgan, pp. 113, 131-132. See also Buck, *Agrarian Crusade*, pp. 117-120.

<sup>4</sup>*Cf.* Appleton's *Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1890, p. 301 and Buck, *Granger Movt.*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>5</sup>Appleton's, *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>Morgan, chs. iii, iv.

All realized that to some extent the farmers themselves were responsible for their ills and that improvement in methods of cultivation and business management would aid somewhat in the solution of their problems. Thus round-table discussion, investigations and reports by members, and addresses by outside speakers were mingled with social and ritualistic functions. Later, traveling lecturers with some scientific knowledge of such matters were employed to address the various lodges.<sup>1</sup> Each state organization established a periodical, or else adopted one already in existence. Officials, lecturers, and editors, while not always agreed as to the relative value of this as compared with other phases of their program, urged the importance of:<sup>2</sup> (1) the proper use of fertilizers, improved machinery, seed selection, and the like; (2) reduction of the cotton acreage and raising of supplies; (3) strict economy in business management.

Whatever value the farmers may have placed upon these matters, they were not inclined to regard them as all-important. There were too many greater leaks for which they were not responsible, and which no amount of science, industry, and economy on their part could stop. For these, they were inclined to blame the existing business and political systems. It seemed to them that bankers, merchants, manufacturers, railway directors, and speculators were conspiring together, not only to rob, but to enslave, the "toiling masses;" and that politicians were in league with the oppressors.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, esp. pp. 65, 81, 86, 97; files of the *Southern Cultivator*, 1888-90; also of *Southern Alliance Farmer* (official organ for Georgia).

<sup>2</sup> Articles in *So. Cult.*, 1888-90; esp. Jan., '89; Mar., '89; Apr., '90. Also in *So. Al. Far.*, 1889-90.

<sup>3</sup> See account by one of the founders of the Wheel as to why it was formed, Morgan, pp. 55-71. See also *ibid.*, pp. 13-18, 93-110, 135-146, 148-184. Cf. N. B. Ashby, *Riddle of the Sphinx*, pp. 437-453.

Two general lines of attack were presented—business coöperation and political action. The former was the first employed. Business ventures were rather modest at first. In various localities fertilizers and other supplies were purchased jointly through agents, appointed usually by the county organizations.<sup>1</sup> In some cases crops were sold in the same way. The machinery was quite simple, and little capital was required. It soon became apparent that if the scale of the business were enlarged greater savings might be effected. Thus between 1887 and 1889 state exchanges were organized in most of the cotton states.<sup>2</sup> These were more ambitious, dealing in almost every commodity the farmers bought or sold. Stocks were issued in small shares and sold to members of the order only. Trade advantages were likewise limited to members.<sup>3</sup> The exchanges met with considerable success for a time.<sup>4</sup> In so far as the members were able to break the fetters of the lien and avail themselves of their services, they were saved, it seems, as much as twenty-five to fifty per cent on the purchase of supplies, and considerable sums on the sale of their products.<sup>5</sup> The Georgia exchange was one of the strongest. Organized in 1889, it was said to have saved its patrons over \$200,000 on fertilizers alone during the first year of its existence.<sup>6</sup> Encouraged by the success of these enter-

<sup>1</sup> Morgan, pp. 100-104. Cf. Ashby, pp. 371-387.

<sup>2</sup> Morgan, pp. 115, 117, 122, 123, 125, 127, 216-246; Ashby, pp. 371-387.

<sup>3</sup> Morgan, pp. 115-122; Alliance Department, *Southern Cultivator*, Jan., 1889.

<sup>4</sup> See reference 2, *supra*.

<sup>5</sup> See Alliance Dept., *Southern Cultivator*, 1889-90. Also Morgan, pp. 115, 117, 122, 123, 125, 127; *Public Opinion*, vol. viii, p. 523 (Mar. 8, 1890).

<sup>6</sup> *Public Opinion*, *op. cit.* See also Alliance Department, *Southern Cultivator*, Jan., Mar., Apr., 1889; Feb., Apr., Jun., 1890; Apr., 1891. Also *So. Al. Far.*, Feb. 24, Mar. 3, 1891.

prises, coöperative stores, cotton warehouses, and gins sprang up like mushrooms over the South.<sup>1</sup> Similar institutions, adapted to the needs of each locality, arose in other parts of the country.<sup>2</sup> Georgia seems to have been especially fertile soil in this particular also. Enthusiastic accounts of the progress of such undertakings appear in increasing numbers in the agricultural papers of the state for 1889 and 1890. Benefits were not confined to patrons. Wherever the "co-ops" appeared the merchants were likely to reduce their prices too. In many cases they were said to have cut them below cost, in order to hold, or regain, the farmers' trade.<sup>3</sup>

This was a part of the fight against the intruders. From their inception all such ventures had met with something of the same kinds of opposition that the Grangers had encountered. Innuendo, ridicule, direct charges of dishonesty, dire prophesies of bankruptcy and scandal, price and rate discriminations on the part of wholesalers, manufacturers, railroads, and money lenders, as well as "cut-throat" competition, were brought to bear against them.<sup>4</sup> They were handicapped in such a struggle because of insufficient capital and credit backing. It seems that all of them were doing a much larger business than their modest capital warranted; so that they found it necessary to borrow too heavily at high rates of interest.<sup>5</sup> Besides, they probably overdid themselves in reducing profit margins.<sup>6</sup> Some of them were doubtless betrayed by dishonest managers; though few such

<sup>1</sup>See files of *ibid.*, 1889-90.

<sup>2</sup>Ashby, pt. ii, ch. vi.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* Also Morgan, pp. 87-90, 117, 217, 210; files of agricultural papers, 1889-1893.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>Ashby, pp. 376-377.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*

cases seem to have been proved.<sup>1</sup> It is quite likely that this phase of their difficulties has been often exaggerated because of the numerous slanders circulated by their enemies, not a few of which were shown to have been without foundation.

The first state exchange to go under was that of Texas, in 1889.<sup>2</sup> Charges of dishonest management had abounded before the collapse, and doubtless had something to do with the crash. An expert employed to examine the records, however, found no evidences of irregularities.<sup>3</sup> He attributed the failure to the other causes mentioned above. An effort was made to discredit and disrupt the Georgia exchange in 1890; or rather, a continuous fight against it reached a crisis in that year. But the storm was successfully weathered until 1893.<sup>4</sup> Local enterprises met with similar difficulties. Many of them soon went under. Others were more or less prosperous, as well as helpful to patrons, until the disaster of a general panic was added to political dissensions.

These business experiences tended greatly to strengthen class feeling among farmers, and to emphasize the need for reforms which only political action might accomplish. Both the Wheel and the Alliance had been stimulating thought and discussion in regard to governmental problems, especially those in which economic matters were involved.<sup>5</sup> Thus a program had gradually evolved. As early as 1884 the Arkansas Wheel had called upon the state legislature to repeal the laws permitting crop liens and chattel mortgages,

<sup>1</sup> Ashby, pp. 376-377, also Morgan, pp. 217-219.

<sup>2</sup> See Ashby, pp. 376-377.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Files of *So. Al. Far., So. Cult.*, 1889-1891; clippings, Northern collection; also *Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 17, 1893.

<sup>5</sup> Morgan, bk. i, chs. iii, ix, xi.

and to enact such measures as might afford relief to the victims. Texas Alliancemen were seeking at the same time to influence their legislature "to restrain the railroad corporations of this state from violating the plain provisions of the constitution." They soon developed an elaborate set of demands, resembling in important particulars those of the earlier Grangers and Greenbackers and of the later Populists.<sup>1</sup> So long as these were merely embodied in idealistic programs they seem to have been almost as harmless of producing dissension as they were futile of bringing results. But when a motion was made in the Texas convention of 1886 to appoint a committee to press them upon Congress and the state legislature, some of the delegates, fearing that such a step might lead to the launching of a third party, withdrew from the meeting and threatened to split the order. Harmony was restored a few months later on the basis of an agreement that the Alliance should "labor for the education of the agricultural classes in the science of economical government," but "in a strictly non-partisan spirit." This statement was incorporated in the *Declaration of Purposes* of the "National" order, just then in the process of formation (January, 1887).<sup>2</sup> And for three years the Alliance went a-swimming without getting into the water.

In December, 1889, a monster gathering was held in St. Louis.<sup>3</sup> The Southern Alliance, now come to include the

<sup>1</sup>Morgan, pp. 70-71, 107-110.

<sup>2</sup>Buck, *Agrarian Crusade*, p. 114. See also *National Economist Handbook* (*op. cit.*).

<sup>3</sup>See Morgan, pp. 147-184; Ashby, pp. 415-419, 452-453; Haynes, *Third Party Movements*, p. 230; John R. Commons and associates, *History of Labor in the United States*, vol. ii, pp. 490-492; Appleton, *Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1890, pp. 299-301; *National Economist*, vol. ii, pp. 210 *et seq.* (Dec. 21, 1889); *Atlanta Constitution*, Dec. 5-9, 1889.



Wheel and numerous lesser bodies, assembled with nineteen states represented. The Northwestern Alliance met there at the same time; likewise the National Colored Farmers' Alliance. Representatives were present also from the Farmers' Mutual Benefit Association (of the Northcentral states) and from the Knights of Labor. Consolidation of the agrarian orders and agreement with the Knights upon a program on which the workers of field and factory might unite in politics were contemplated. The chief obstacles in the way of fusion seem to have been (1) that the Southern Alliance was a secret order while that of the Northwest was not, and (2) the Southern whites did not wish to admit negroes on equal terms. The latter was apparently surmountable, on the basis of admitting the "darkies" on condition that they continue their separate lodges; but the former remained unmet. Friendly relations were established, however, and another joint conference was called, to meet in Washington the following February, in the hope that union might still be effected. A political platform was drawn up by a committee of the Southern Alliance in collaboration with the delegates from the Knights of Labor. It was agreed by the representatives of these orders<sup>1</sup> that only such candidates for public office as could "be depended upon to enact these principles in statute law, uninfluenced by party caucus," should receive the votes of their members. This was their first "yard stick":

1. That we demand the abolition of national banks and the substitution of legal tender treasury notes in lieu of national bank notes, issued in sufficient volume to do the business of

<sup>1</sup>The convention of the Northwestern Alliance does not seem to have acted upon this particular platform, but its principles seem to have been essentially in accord with it. The sub-treasury scheme approved by the Southern order later in the session was not acceptable, it seems, to the Northwestern group.

the country on a cash system; regulating the amount needed on a per capita basis as the business interests of the country expands; and that all money issued by the Government shall be legal tender in payment of all debts, both public and private.

2. That we demand that Congress shall pass such laws as shall effectually prevent the dealing in futures of all agricultural and mechanical productions; preserving a stringent system of procedure in trials as shall secure the prompt conviction, and imposing such penalties as shall secure the most perfect compliance with the law.

3. That we demand the free and unlimited coinage of silver.

4. That we demand the passage of laws prohibiting the alien ownership of land, and that Congress take early steps to devise some plan to obtain all lands now owned by aliens and foreign syndicates; and that all lands now held by railroad and other corporations in excess of such as is actually used and needed by them, be reclaimed by the Government and held for actual settlers only.

5. Believing in the doctrine of "equal rights to all and special privileges to none," we demand that taxation, National or State, shall not be used to build up one interest or class at the expense of another. We believe that the money of the country should be kept as much as possible in the hands of the people, and hence we demand that all revenues, National, State or County, shall be limited to the necessary expenses of the Government economically and honestly administered.

6. That Congress issue a sufficient amount of fractional paper currency to facilitate exchange through the medium of the United States mail.

7. We demand that the means of communication and transportation shall be owned by and operated in the interests of the people as is the United States postal system.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>"The list of demands speaks volumes," says Commons (vol. ii, p. 492), "for the mental subjection of the Knights of Labor to the farmers' movement. None of these demands may be called a strictly labor demand, and, even if certain of them tended to benefit labour, such a

It may be noticed that financial questions were most prominent. From the time when Southern Alliancemen first began directing attention to national problems, they were inclined, it seems, to lay chief emphasis on these matters.<sup>1</sup> The influence of their predecessors and contemporaries, the "greenbackers" and "silverites," was obvious. The "heresis" which these represented had been more or less prevalent in the West and South for over a decade.<sup>2</sup> Al-

benefit would be merely incidental and of minor importance. Currency inflation might make for a larger amount of employment, but in 1889, when industry had already recovered from the preceding depression, the matter of employment was a minor problem. The same might be said of the demand for reclaiming the excess of land granted to the railroads with its expected drain-off of the labor market. There remains only one demand that might lead to a tangible benefit to labor, the government ownership of railroads and telegraphs, which although primarily designed to give the farmer cheaper rates, might also considerably improve the condition of railroad labor."

<sup>1</sup>See Morgan, bk. i, introd. chs. ii, iv, v; bk. ii, chs. i-iv. Also Ashby, pt. i, chs. iii, vi, viii; pt. ii, ch. x. Also Dunning, *Economist Handbook*; clippings Northen and Watson collections.

<sup>2</sup>The demand for plentiful money, especially of the paper variety, was as old as colonial times. The idea of a currency controlled by the government, with a view to stabilizing price levels, by means of legal-tender notes interchangeable at will with government bonds, seems to have been first elaborated by Edward Kellogg about 1848, and urged by Horace Greeley in the fifties. It was taken up in connection with the financial problems growing out of the Civil War, being supported at first mainly by organized labor. They hoped in this way to obtain a stable, uniform, and government-controlled monetary system; whereby the undue power of financial interests might be weakened, prices, business conditions, and hence employment, stabilized. Little was accomplished except that the retirement of the greenbacks was halted. The farmers did not become widely interested in this movement until the mid-seventies. Discouraged with the results of their efforts to subject railways and middlemen to government control, they began agitating for an increase in the volume of money, hoping thereby to stay the tide of falling prices and appreciating debts, and to turn the trend the other way. Some advocated greenbacks; others, free silver. Some joined the Greenback party; others sought to control one or the other of the old parties. The Greenbackers seem to have been little active in the

liancemen adopted a sort of composite of such ideas in diag-

South, especially in the Southeast. There were numerous silverites in that section, however, from the beginning of the movement, functioning largely within the Democratic party.

The reader is no doubt familiar with the origin of the silver issue. Until 1873 silver dollars had been freely coined at the mints along with gold, at a ratio of 16 to 1 (except for a brief period in earlier times, when it was 15 to 1). In revising the coinage laws in that year, Congress abandoned the silver dollar except for a limited number of extra-weight "trade dollars" to be used in transactions with certain silver-standard countries. There had never been a great amount of silver coined in the country; since its commercial value had during most of the time been slightly greater than its coin value. About this time, however, the production of the metal began greatly to increase, due to the opening of new mines in the West. Its value soon fell below the old ratio; hence it became profitable to have it coined. What was the chagrin of its producers when they found the mints closed to them! An agitation at once arose to have the time-honored money, "the money of the Constitution," restored to its "legal" place. Farmers—in fact debtors in general—were inclined to join hands with the silver miners; for the resumption of silver coinage would increase the volume of money. Many believed that the act of demonetization ("the crime of '73") had grown out of a conspiracy on the part of the powerful creditor interest of the East in conjunction with those of Europe, to maintain their control over money and credit, and preserve a large and appreciating dollar. Practically all historians and economists have rejected the theory that there was any actual conspiracy; though some have thought that the law did furnish a genuine grievance to the debtor class. To say the least, it was very opportune for the creditors. The silverites were able to marshal sufficient strength, mostly through Western Republicans and Southern Democrats, to pass a compromise measure (the Bland-Allison Act) over the veto of President Hayes in 1878; authorizing the secretary of the treasury to purchase not less than \$2,000,000 nor more than \$4,000,000 worth of silver at the market price each month, and to coin the same into dollars. The volume of money considerably increased for a time, and prices went upward. There was a lull for a while in the agitation for unlimited coinage; but as times grew worse for the farmers, and for debtors in general, in the late eighties and early nineties, it rose again with redoubled strength.

On the Greenback philosophy and movement, see E. B. Usher, *The Greenback Movement*; Sam'l Leavitt, *Our Money Wars*; Jas. A. Woodburn, *Thaddeus Stevens*, chs. xi, xxi, xxii (especially good interpretation); Commons, vol. ii, pp. 119-124; 235-300 (probably the best account

nosing financial ills and in prescribing for their treatment, adding others of their own from time to time.

The volume of money, they urged, was (1) inadequate, (2) inelastic, and (3) controlled by a powerful and heartless money trust.<sup>1</sup> That it was inadequate was evidenced, they said, by the abnormally low and constantly falling prices. They believed that the general level of prices was determined essentially by the volume of money in circulation as compared with the volume of goods to be purchased. The views of J. S. Mill, Francis A. Walker, and other economists were cited in support of the quantity theory.<sup>2</sup> No one could reasonably deny, it was said, an important tendency in that way. Creditors opposed "inflation" as bitterly as debtors denounced "contraction." While there had been no direct policy of contraction on the part of the government since reconstruction times, the per-capita circulation had rather rapidly declined until near the end of the seventies.<sup>3</sup> Prices had dropped in the meantime.<sup>4</sup> Between 1879 and 1883, per-capita circulation had increased: prices had gone up

of labor's attitude). Interesting light is thrown on the movement by Haynes, *Third Party Movements*; Haynes, *Weaver*; Benj. F. Butler, *Butler's Book*. For full titles and further references, see Bibliography.

<sup>1</sup>This diagnosis is common in the literature of the Alliance generally. see *e. g.*, the *The Report of the Committee on the Monetary System at the St. Louis Convention*, Morgan, pp. 176-184; also W. A. Peffer, *The Farmer's Side*, pt. ii; also Ashby, Dunning, and others listed in the Bibliography.

<sup>2</sup>See *e. g.*, Morgan, bk. ii, *passim*, esp. ch. i.

<sup>3</sup>Following are the government estimates of the per capita circulation during the period as found in the *U. S. Sta. Abs.*, 1903, *Frontis.*:

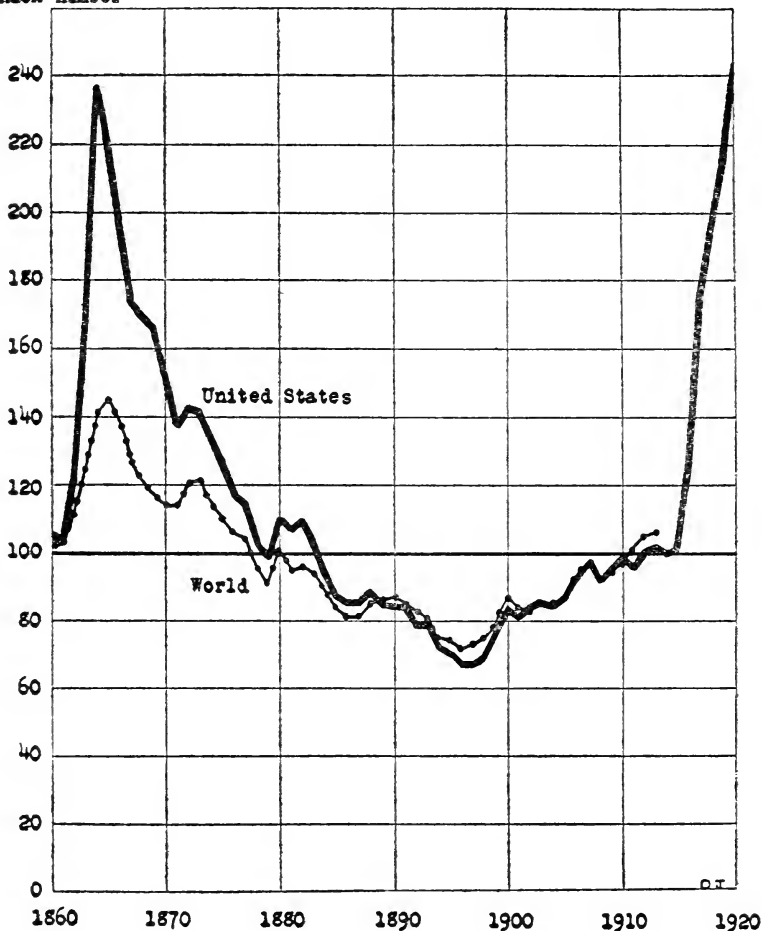
1871 .... 18.10	1876 .... 16.12	1881 .... 21.71	1886 .... 21.82
1872 .... 18.19	1877 .... 15.58	1882 .... 22.37	1887 .... 22.45
1873 .... 18.04	1878 .... 15.32	1883 .... 22.91	1888 .... 22.88
1874 .... 18.13	1879 .... 16.75	1884 .... 22.65	1889 .... 22.52
1875 .... 17.16	1880 .... 19.41	1885 .... 23.02	1890 .... 22.82

<sup>4</sup>*Cf.* price curve on p. 88 with table, *supra*.

## A SIXTY-YEAR SEGMENT OF THE PRICE TOBOGGAN

CURVE FOR THE UNITED STATES AND FOR THE CHIEF COMMERCIAL COUNTRIES  
OF THE WORLD

Index number



The curve for the United States is based on the index numbers compiled by Ralph G. Hurlin from the Aldrich Report and the Statistics of the Bureau of Labor, *Annals*, April 11, 1921. That for the world is based on the computation of Irving Fisher, *Stabilizin the Dollar*, ch. x.

with it. Then it fell off; and so did prices. The parallel was indeed remarkable, though it was not exact. Prices fell more precipitately and rose more slowly each time. Thus by 1890, while the price level was much lower than in 1870, the per capita circulation was somewhat greater. "Sound-money" advocates were thus able to argue that there had been on the whole no real contraction, but in fact an expansion. Agrarians retorted with equal truth that expansion had not kept pace with the growing volume of goods.<sup>1</sup> And this, rather than population, according to the quantity theory, was the other side of the equation. Thus measured, circulation had fallen behind fully as much, it seems, as prices had declined. It was not, however, that the volume of money had grown too slowly, conservatives were inclined to hold; rather, the volume of goods had outgrown the demand: the real trouble was overproduction.<sup>2</sup>

This to the radical agrarians was the height of absurdity.<sup>3</sup> They could not believe that producers were impoverished because they had produced too much. J. S. Mill and others were cited to show that a general overproduction is impossible; that phenomena resembling such may result from a dislocation in the system of exchange produced by an insufficient volume of money.<sup>4</sup> They knew that the market

<sup>1</sup> See *e. g.*, Morgan, pt. ii; Peffer, pt. iii.

<sup>2</sup> See criticism of overproduction theory as applied to agricultural depression at that time by W. A. Coutts, in "Agricultural Depression in the U. S.," *Publications of Mich. Pol. Sc. Assn.*, vol. ii, no. 6, Apr., 1897. See also G. W. Davis, "Why the Farmer is Not Prosperous," *Forum*, vol. ix, pp. 231-241 (Apr., 1890); C. S. Walker, "The Farmers' Movement," *Annals of Amer. Acad.*, vol. iv, p. 790, *cf.* Haynes, *Third Party Movements*, p. 222.

<sup>3</sup> Morgan, pt. ii, chs. v, xiii; *National Economist*, Nov. 2, 1889 (edl.); *People's Party Paper*, Nov. 26, 1891.

<sup>4</sup> See *e. g.*, Morgan, pt. ii, chs. i, v. *Cf.* J. S. Mill, in Palgrave, *Dictionary of Pol. Ec.*, vol. iii, p. 45.

might be glutted for a time with particular commodities as compared with others; but when for long periods there is an apparent excess of goods in general, and when at the same time various groups of producers are inadequately supplied with each other's products, they felt that the explanation is to be sought elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Too much produced? The makers of clothes were underfed: the makers of food were underclad. The mills could not take the farmers' cotton because there was not enough demand for clothes; the farmers went in rags in the meantime because there was not enough demand for their cotton. The Western wheat farmers were scarcely able to get expenses for their crops; yet flour bread was a luxury indulged only on rare occasions by many of the cotton growers. Per capita consumption of the most necessary articles sometimes declined in the face of a greater production and a lower price—"a famine in the midst of plenty."

There was undoubtedly a great deal of loose talk about overproduction.<sup>2</sup> If the term implied that more goods in general were produced than there was need for, it was nonsense. If it merely indicated an excess of a limited group of commodities, it did not cover this situation; for too many commodities were suffering in the same way. If it meant that production in general tended to exceed the *economic demand*, it only stated an obvious fact without explaining anything. Why wasn't there an economic demand? Perhaps because there was under-consumption. Which seems to explain just about as little. To be sure,

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.* See also *Natl. Econ., op. cit.*; *People's Party Paper, op. cit.*; Peffer, pt. ii; speech of T. E. Watson, *Congressional Record*, 52d Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 1250-1253; *Public Opinion*, vol. ix, p. 111 (May 10, 1890); *ibid.*, vol. viii, p. 271.

<sup>2</sup>*Cf.* W. A. Coutts, "Agricultural Depression in the U. S." in *Publications of Mich. Pol. Sci. Assn.*, vol. ii, no. 6, ch. ii.



undue attention to a single crop tended to aggravate the farmers' difficulties by increasing the surplus on a poorly functioning market; but it may well be questioned whether this were the basic cause of their troubles. It seems doubtful also whether the vast increase in production occasioned by the Industrial and Agricultural Revolutions need necessarily have caused a general and long-continued decline in price levels, but for certain faults in the system of distribution, not the least of which, perhaps, was an unresponsive monetary system.

The silverites held that the fundamental cause of the trouble was the maintenance of the single gold standard in face of the fact that the world's supply of the precious metal was not increasing in proportion to the output of other products; so that gold, the measure of values, was growing dearer.<sup>1</sup> Thus it required an ever-increasing number of pounds, yards, or bushels to obtain a dollar or to pay a debt. They pointed to the fact that in gold-standard countries, generally, prices were tumbling in much the same way; while in those on a silver standard they were going up.<sup>2</sup> The output of silver was increasing, had been increasing since shortly before it was demonetized in the United States. They believed that to be the reason why the "Money Power" of this country had "conspired" with similar interests in Europe under the leadership of

<sup>1</sup>The ideas of the silverites, even in these early stages of their agitations, are scattered over innumerable sources. A few references may suffice here. See *e. g.*, Morgan, pt. ii, chs. i-v; Ashby, pt. i, ch. vi; Peffer, pts. ii, iii; Peffer, "Mission of the Populist Party," in *North Am. Rev.*, vol. clvii, p. 665; J. T. Morgan, "Danger of the Farmers' Alliance," in *Forum*, vol. xii, pp. 399-409; *Pub. Op.*, vol. viii, p. 413; F. E. Haynes, *James Baird Weaver*, chs. vii-xiii; speeches of L. F. Livingston, T. E. Watson, and others in Georgia dailies, 1889-90 (also in Northen and Watson collections).

<sup>2</sup>See *ibid.* Cf. Irving Fisher, *Why the Dollar is Shrinking* (1914) ch. x.

British financiers to have their governments restrict the coinage of silver in the seventies, so that the gold basis became fixed for the greater part of the industrialized world.<sup>1</sup> They had come to control, in large measure, the supply of this metal, it was said; and were alarmed lest the growing volume of silver (which at the time the law was passed had about reached a parity with gold, and threatened to sink below)<sup>2</sup> should flow into the mints, and weaken in time their financial supremacy. This they had effectually forestalled, for the time at least, by having silver deprived of the coinage rights which it had held from the beginning of our history. Thus the radicals demanded that these rights be restored on a basis of the old ratio. Free the people from the despotism of the "money kings," they said: throw open the highway of exchange (the circulating medium), which these had so long obstructed, and upon which they had exacted tribute, like the medieval barons from their castle hights.<sup>3</sup> Give both metals an equal chance. Money would then be freer. Prices would recover. Credit would be obtainable on less extortionate terms. If debts became payable in fewer products ("cheaper money"), the debtors would only be obtaining historic justice, in regaining something of the premium they had been paying for twenty-five years.<sup>4</sup>

But the remonetization of silver, it was felt, would not solve the entire problem.<sup>5</sup> It would not regulate the flow

<sup>1</sup>Morgan, pt. ii, chs. i, iv; Watson, *People's Party Campaign Book* (1892) ch. xi. Cf. later platforms of the People's Party, *infra*.

<sup>2</sup>See *ibid.* Cf. *U. S. Statistical Abstract*, 1903, p. 58.

<sup>3</sup>Peffer, pt. iii, ch. xiv, especially pp. 209-210; quotations from J. B. Weaver, the report of the Silver Commission, *et. al.* in Morgan, pt. ii, *passim*, esp. ch. iii. Cf. Haynes, *Weaver*, chs. vii, viii.

<sup>4</sup>Morgan, pt. ii, ch. iv; Peffer, pts. iii, v.

<sup>5</sup>Morgan, pt. ii, chs. iii, vi; Peffer, pt. iii, chs. xiv-xx.

of money and credit to meet the strain at harvest season and in other emergencies. It would not stabilize prices. The scale of values would still be a variable, dependent to a large extent upon the vicissitudes of the precious metal industry. They were inclined to believe that it would help in this regard.<sup>1</sup> Most of them seem to have believed that a parity could be maintained, and both metals kept in circulation more or less freely. The mints would tend to drink up from the markets the surplus of the more plentiful metal. Thus if the amount of one continued to increase more rapidly than the other, it would tend to supply the deficiency in the volume of money. If, as conservatives claimed would be the case, silver became the standard of value, would it not be a fairer measure, since its volume was increasing more nearly in keeping with that of other commodities? It was still felt, however, especially by the Greenbacker element, that stability of values and elasticity of money and credit demanded government control and regulation of all paper money. To accomplish this it would be necessary to do away with national bank notes. And herein lay a problem which to some of the agrarians was no less important than that of the standard.

The laws establishing the national banking system, like many other measures which grew out of Civil War, were regarded as class legislation of the most flagrant type.<sup>2</sup> It was largely by means of the advantages gained in this way, it was said, that a relatively small group of men had obtained so powerful a hold upon the economic life of the country.

<sup>1</sup> See reference 1, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> Again possible references are innumerable. See *e. g.*, Morgan, bk. i, chs. ii-v, bk. ii, chs. i-vi; Peffer, pt. ii, esp. chs. vii, ix, x, xii; Haynes, *Weaver*, chs. vii, xii; Haynes, *Third Party Movements*, pts. iii, iv. Benj. F. Butler, *Butler's Book*, ch. xx; Watson, chs. i, x; *Tom Watson's Magazine*, vol. ii, p. 6.

Already in control of a large part of the free capital, particularly the gold, they had taken advantage of the financial straits of the government during the war, and had dictated the terms on which they would come to the rescue. The abnormal demand for gold had soon placed it at a premium and virtually driven it from circulation. It had become a commodity, bringing twice, and for a time much more than twice, its nominal monetary value, in terms of the paper money in circulation. Under the national banking system, established in this emergency, the bankers had purchased the bonds of the government for paper; had received full interest in gold; had been granted circulating notes up to ninety per cent of their value; had loaned this second edition of the same investment to the people at another interest; and, finally, had had their bonds redeemed in gold at their face value.<sup>1</sup> In this way they had got back what they had loaned to the government several times over, and had had only a portion of it tied up in the meantime. No wonder they had come into possession of so large a portion of the country's wealth, said the radicals, and had gained such power over money and credit. The national banks still drew circulating notes from the government. Controlling this portion of the country's money entirely and no small part of the rest of it, they held a leverage<sup>2</sup> whereby they could, to a very large extent, determine credit conditions; and, to some extent, even price levels. Why should the government continue to borrow from the banks, then create money supposedly based on the loan, and give it to

<sup>1</sup>While often extreme in their language and inclined to exaggerate on particular points, the radicals seem to have been essentially correct in their charges that financial interests had gained enormous advantages under the financial policies in question. See Dewey, *Financial History*, chs. xii-xv; Woodburn, *Thaddeus Stevens*, chs. xi, xxi, xxii.

<sup>2</sup>See, especially, *Report of Committee on the Monetary System at St Louis*, in Morgan, pp. 176-183.

the banks to lend to the people? Why should it not issue its own money directly, lending it to the hard-pressed producers on reasonable terms?

This idea gave rise to a plan of rural credit, which for some reason was not included in the main platform at St. Louis, but embodied in the report of the Committee on the Monetary System, appointed by the Southern Alliance. The report was submitted to this body on the last day of its session, and "after an animated discussion, was adopted by a large majority."<sup>1</sup> The most vulnerable scheme in all their programs, it probably would not have received the support of the committee from the Knights of Labor which collaborated on the main platform. Nor was it supported, it seems, by the Northwestern Alliance;<sup>2</sup> nor by any means unanimously in the Southern body. All of which probably accounts for the manner in which it was introduced. It came for a time to overshadow all other issues, at least in some localities; it was the chief target of the opposition press, the chief pet of a number of radical leaders, and the chief cause of dissension within the order.

Known as the "sub-treasury plan," it provided<sup>3</sup> that the federal government establish in every county that offered for sale in one year as much as \$500,000 worth of farm products, a sub-treasury office, and with it a warehouse or elevator. To this the farmer might bring "nonperishable" products,—such as grain, cotton, tobacco, wool, etc.—have them weighed, graded, and stored, and for them receive a certificate of deposit. He should then be permitted to bor-

<sup>1</sup>Morgan, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup>Ashby, p. 419.

<sup>3</sup>Morgan, pp. 180-181; Peffer, pp. 244-247; Watson, chs. xiv, xvi; C. C. Post, "The Sub-Treasury Plan," *Arena*, vol. v, pp. 342-353 (Feb., 1892); Testimony of Macune and Livingston before the Ways and Means Committee of Congress, in *Atlanta Constitution*, May 15-22, 1890.

row legal-tender notes issued by the "sub-treasury" office up to eighty per cent of the market price of the products he had stored, at a nominal interest—the committee suggested one per cent. He should also pay a small fee "for handling and storage, and a reasonable amount for insurance." The money borrowed should be returned with interest before the products could be removed. The certificate of deposit, bearing a record of the loan, should be negotiable. Thus if the farmer who had stored cotton in October thought the market right for a sale in February, he might transfer his deposit slip to a buyer, receiving in return the market price less the amount of the loan. The buyer could obtain the product direct from the warehouse, or else re-sell the certificate. All products must be removed within a year; otherwise they should be sold at public auction.

Realizing the difficulties which the farmers had experienced in obtaining credit, and in having to sell on a glutted market, often seeing what should have been their profits pass to middlemen or speculators, one can well appreciate the motives behind this scheme. In so far as the principle of government credit to producers is concerned, it is difficult to see wherein this would have been any more "paternalistic" or unfair than the numerous favors constantly accorded to bankers, manufacturers, railroads, and other businesses.<sup>1</sup> That the situation demanded either less favoritism to other groups or basic measures of relief to the agricultural class seems perfectly patent. This particular scheme, however, was open to grave objections. Among other things, it would have given the farmers a power over consumers which might have been much abused.

<sup>1</sup>As was often pointed out by the agrarians. See *e. g.* speeches and communications by Macune, Livingston, Watson, *et al.* in *Atlanta Constitution*, May 14-22, Aug. 30, Oct. 17; also Morgan, pt. ii, chs. i-iii; Peffer, *passim*, esp. pp. 251-264.

In a sense, it was probably unfortunate for Alliancemen that the scheme was put forth, at least in that form; for it enabled their opponents to concentrate their fire upon a particularly vulnerable spot, threw them on the defensive, and tended to divide their councils. The great dailies of the North and some of the lesser ones of the West and South were fully alive to the opportunity. The St. Paul *Pioneer Press* compared it with a scheme to level the Rockies.<sup>1</sup> "The Farmers' Alliance does not want money," said the Philadelphia *North American*.<sup>2</sup> "It wants due bills. It wants pawn tickets; and though its chiefs do not know a mowing machine from a mully grub, they want the earth." The New York *Commercial Advertiser* could not decide which was the wilder, the sub-treasury scheme or government ownership of railroads.<sup>3</sup>

Various other points in their program came in for a greater or less share of ridicule and abuse. "The new lights want to abolish the national banks," said the Philadelphia *North American*, "though but for the national banks most of them would have been in the poor house twenty years ago."<sup>4</sup> The Alliance was regarded as a disease.<sup>5</sup> The farmers were caricatured as bewhiskered cranks, varying between harmless lunacy and something like the more modern conception of Bolshevik viciousness. They were socialists in disguise, led off by unscrupulous, self-seeking politicians into dangerous heresies, which none of them understood.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Public Opinion*, vol. ix, p. 408 (Aug. 9, 1890).

<sup>2</sup> In *ibid.*, vol. x, p. 218 (Dec. 13, 1890).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ix, p. 408. The sub-treasury scheme "verges on imbecility," said the *Minneapolis Tribune*, adding, . . . "There is plenty of money to be borrowed upon good land mortgage security." *Pub. Op.*, vol. ix, p. 168 (May 31, 1890).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. x, p. 218.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

Kansas, where the "disease" was especially malignant, called forth from the New York *Evening Post* the widely quoted commentary, "We don't want any more states until we can civilize Kansas."<sup>1</sup> Not only partisan editors, but the non-farming classes generally,—with a few exceptions,—apparently failed to appreciate rural conditions and problems.<sup>2</sup>

To some extent, no doubt, the extravagant language in which the more radical agrarians were wont to clothe their ideas had a tendency to alienate many liberals who might otherwise have regarded their cause more sympathetically. The most heated utterances of one-time Greenbackers, Union Laborites, and others of unorthodox persuasions were appropriated along with many of their ideas. The country was pictured *a la* Weaver, as "in the grasp of a gigantic, cold-blooded money trust, which . . . usurps the sovereignty of the nation, mocks at the suffering of its victims, and relies upon the painful 'necessities' of the stitution to keep them in subjection."<sup>3</sup> The history of the Alliance officially adopted at St. Louis bore as a part of its title, *The Impending Revolution*; though a perusal of its contents reveals no forecasting of guillotines.<sup>4</sup>

Then too, especially at this stage of the movement, many of their leaders were raw,<sup>5</sup> and their programs were still in the rough. They were not quite sure whether to place the

<sup>1</sup> See article in reply by J. W. Gleed, "Is New York More Civilized than Kansas?" in *Forum*, vol. xvii, pp. 217-234.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. J. M. Rusk (Secy. of Agric. under Benj. Harrison), "The Duty of the Hour," in *N. Am. Rev.*, vol. clii, pp. 423 *et seq.* (Apr., 1891).

<sup>3</sup> Morgan, p. 481.

<sup>4</sup> The full title of Morgan's book, as adopted by the Alliance, was *History of the Wheel and Alliance, and the Impending Revolution*. Resolution of adoption, Morgan (third ed.), p. 158.

<sup>5</sup> For characterizations of chief leaders, see Hamlin Garland, "The Alliance Wedge in Congress," *Arena*, vol. v, pp. 447-457 (Mar., 1892).



greater emphasis on silver or greenbacks; or whether the latter should be based upon products as security, upon interchangeable bonds, or simply upon the wealth of the country and the power of the government. They were undecided on the transportation problem. The majority at St. Louis were of the opinion that regulation had failed; and hence they called for government ownership, though against the advice of their president.<sup>1</sup> The tariff was a particularly delicate question. While the Southerners were almost unanimously opposed to high protection, the Westerners were not so sure about it. Besides, industrial laborers, to whom they appealed for coöperation in politics, were by no means a unit on the tariff question. Thus the word was not mentioned in the platform, but the implication of Plank 5 was clear. The Alliancemen and their successors, the Populists, probably undervalued as a rule the importance of the tariff as one of the causes of the existing depression among farmers. Feeling that it was too often used to becloud other issues, they were afraid of being sidetracked. Their ideas for the more equitable adjustment of taxation in general were not yet fully defined. Nor were they specific as to how the lands held by railroads and other corporations in excess of their needs were to be reclaimed. Speculation in the markets should be prohibited—but how? We shall trace the further evolution of their program in the next chapter.

It may be noticed that the St. Louis convention was essentially concerned with national affairs. So in the main were the farmers back at home. In Georgia, as we shall see, and apparently in other states more or less, even gubernatorial campaigns turned largely upon national issues. Hence some knowledge of these matters is essential to an understanding of the course of events in a particular state.

<sup>1</sup>Morgan, p. 153.

Down in Georgia an already heated contest was only further stimulated by news of the happenings at St. Louis. Organizations of the farmers had proceeded rapidly since the first sub-Alliance had appeared in the state in March, 1887.<sup>1</sup> In less than three years there were well over two thousand lodges in Georgia and more than a hundred thousand members.<sup>2</sup> Rural school houses and other meeting places were periodically filled with eager and indignant farmers. Occasionally barbecues and picnics brought hundreds—even thousands—from surrounding communities to listen to the itinerant “lecturer,” who as time went on, seems to have told them less about seed selection and more about trusts. Some knowledge of these they had already gained. They had had experience.<sup>3</sup> Besides, they were reading agricultural papers, books and tracts written for their special benefit by Alliancemen themselves. Then, too, in most of the lodges some members had at least a fair degree of education, and hence were able to delve into more pretentious works.<sup>4</sup> Some of these seem to have developed unexpected forensic ability. Not a few also developed strong desires to participate directly in reforming the laws of state and nation. Why not? Had not the lawyers and business men had their day? Had not the rule of the “court-house rings” well earned its death? Thus by the summer of 1889 the farmers were planning a general house-cleaning for the following year.

The introduction of politics into the Alliance had naturally met with strenuous opposition. The daily press, many of

<sup>1</sup>Morgan, pp. 116-118; Farmers' Alliance Department in *Southern Cultivator*, 1888-1890.

<sup>2</sup>*Southern Cultivator*, Aug., 1889, p. 408, Sep., 1889, p. 472.

<sup>3</sup>Trouble with the jute bagging trust in particular; see p. 104, *infra*.

<sup>4</sup>Evidenced by the articles from rural correspondents in Northern and Watson collections.

the small-town weeklies, and the more conservative agricultural papers like the *Southern Cultivator* (in fact, some of their own organs) had solemnly warned the order to beware of political activity.<sup>1</sup> It would wreck their organization. Besides, there was danger of its leading to a division of the white vote—and a return of the horrors of reconstruction times! Surely the farmers were too sensible to be duped by scheming politicians. If the current rumors that such interlopers were seeking to "ride the Alliance horse into office" proved true, the members would "withdraw from it immediately."<sup>2</sup> Such advice was not without effect, at least for a time. Notices that certain sub-Alliances had passed resolutions condemning the use of the order for political purposes sprinkled the columns of the press through 1889 and on into the summer of 1890. But opposition from within the order was evidently dwindling.

The chief fear seems to have been that a third party would be launched. It was known that such was contemplated from some quarters as a possible outcome of the St. Louis gathering.<sup>3</sup> Hence the proceedings were eagerly followed, and a sense of relief was in evidence generally when it became known that the scheme had met with a cold response. Georgia Alliancemen—leaders and all—were overwhelmingly against the idea of a third party at this time.<sup>4</sup> There was apparently no need for one. The great majority of the

<sup>1</sup>Editorials and correspondence in Georgia dailies, in *So. Cult., Natl. Econ., Georgia Farmers' Alliance Advocate* (unofficial organ of conservative element): clippings from these and other sources in Northen collection.

<sup>2</sup>Clippings, Northen collection, especially quotation from Talbotton (Ga.) *New Era* in Farm. Al. Dept., *So. Cult.*, Jan., 1888. See also "Alliance and Wheel Politicians," *National Econ.*, Sept. 21, 1889.

<sup>3</sup>Clipping, Northen and Watson collections.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

voters were Democrats, and the great majority of the Democrats were farmers. Besides, the workers of the towns would probably support a popular movement to overthrow the "bosses."

It would thus be a simple matter if the farmers would act together. Make the Alliance platform the "yard-stick." Support only those candidates who would endorse, and who might be counted upon to stand by, its provisions. Demand primaries in every county, and go to the polls *en masse*.

But time showed that it was easier to formulate a program than to carry it out. Candidates were numerous, and each was soon possessed of a following, so that factional divisions became threatening. Friendly advice from the press was conflicting. Even their own organs were at variance.

There were two candidates in the field for governor by the summer of 1889, though the election was more than a year off,—L. F. Livingston and W. J. Northen.<sup>1</sup> Both were planters. Both had war records. Both had considerable experience in politics—having served several terms together, first in the lower, then in the upper, house of the state legislature. After the resignation of Colquitt about 1884, each in turn had been president of the State Agricultural Society, a venerable and conservative body, long possessed of considerable influence in politics.<sup>2</sup> Both were in their fifties, well known and highly respected. The one a Presbyterian and the other a Baptist, they had taken leading parts in the councils of their respective churches.<sup>3</sup> They

<sup>1</sup>Biographical sketches of Livingston in Morgan, pp. 313-316; Knight, p. 967; *Biog. Congl. Dict.* Of Northen, in White's *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. xv, p. 4; Knight, p. 965; others in Northen collection.

<sup>2</sup>Data in Northen collection.

<sup>3</sup>See references to Morgan and White, *supra*.

were destined, no doubt, to further political preferment, even had there been no Alliance. Neither had formerly been regarded as radical by any means, but both had become prominent in the Alliance movement. Livingston at this time was president of the state organization. He was "a born strategist," says Knight, with "no superior . . . in playing the game of politics."<sup>1</sup> A member of the Committee on the Monetary System at St. Louis, he was said to have been joint author (with C. W. Macune) of the sub-treasury plan.<sup>2</sup> He was regarded by some as considerably in advance of the rank and file of the movement at this time. Northen was more conservative. Still president of the State Agricultural Society, he was more at home in that body.<sup>3</sup> He became an active Allianceman, however, addressed a number of its gatherings, and showed much sympathy with its general aims.<sup>4</sup>

In the main, the more radical element in the Alliance opposed Northen and favored Livingston. Northen was said to be "a politician of the Gordon type;" to be secretly in league with the corporations, and subtly scheming with the "silk-hat bosses."<sup>5</sup> Absurd rumors were circulated against him. Though a Georgian by birth, and one of the most successful planters of the state, he was widely reputed to be a Pennsylvania "yankee," and a "fake farmer" who had nothing to offer the toad under the harrow but consolation

<sup>1</sup> Knight, vol. ii, p. 967.

<sup>2</sup> Livingston and Macune defended the plan before the Ways and Means Committee of Congress in May, 1890. See *Constitution*, May 15-23, 1890.

<sup>3</sup> The writer was assured of this by Mrs. Northen (his widow) and Miss Annie Bell Northen (his daughter) in personal interview, July, 1918.

<sup>4</sup> Northen collection.

<sup>5</sup> Excerpts in *ibid.* from *Southern Alliance Farmer*—editorials, and correspondence from rural contributors, especially from one signing himself "Henry County Farmer."

and advice.<sup>1</sup> He did emphasize (quite properly of course) the need for improved methods, diversification of crops, etc., but this was not his entire stock in trade. He had taken a leading part, as he often pointed out, in the fight against the jute trust.<sup>2</sup> The manufacturers of jute bagging, used as covering for cotton bales, had formed a combine and considerably advanced the price of their product. Northen had been one of the prime movers (though Livingston had divided honors with him) in a boycott, conducted with remarkable success by Alliancemen throughout the cotton belt.<sup>3</sup> He believed the attack upon the monetary system to be in the right direction.<sup>4</sup> The volume of money should be increased, made more elastic, and (above all) made available to the farmers on more reasonable terms. He was in no haste to commit himself to the sub-treasury scheme in particular. As to state issues, he favored improvement of the rural schools, thought the government could be more economically administered, and stood for the maintenance of the railway commission.<sup>5</sup> He thought the roads should have the right of appeal to the courts, however.<sup>6</sup> This, said the radicals, would virtually nullify the force of the commission. But Northen contended that it would only insure justice to all parties concerned. He repeatedly urged that, despite his natural sympathy for the farmer, he was "not the candidate of a single class, but the champion of the rights of

<sup>1</sup>Clippings, *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup>See his speeches and writings during this period. Northen collection; also in *Southern Cultivator*, Jan., 1889; Knight, pp. 965-972.

<sup>3</sup>Morgan, p. 118; Knight, pp. 965-972; *So. Cult.*, Jan., Apr., Oct., 1889 article by Northen in Apr. no.) D

<sup>4</sup>See contributions from Northen and reports of his speeches in *Atlanta Constitution*, Mar. 28, 1890; *So. Cult.*, 1889-90, especially Mar., '89 and Apr., '90; others in Nor. colln.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*; also *So. Cult.*, June, 1889.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, esp. speech at Thompson, Ga., May 28, 1890.

all."<sup>1</sup> Abuses should be corrected as far as possible, but with due regard for legitimate business.

Livingston and his supporters thought the "yard-stick" should be rigorously applied, sub-treasury and all.<sup>2</sup> This would not only help to solve the gubernatorial question, but would also draw the line against many of the "ring" politicians, now hastening to "climb on the band wagon" by more or less qualified endorsement of the Alliance program—usually minus the sub-treasury.<sup>3</sup> Reform was in the air. It was surprising how many of the old leaders had long been convinced of the wisdom of much that Alliancemen now demanded. Indeed most of the Georgia Congressmen had supported free silver or else a compromise in that direction, and had opposed a high protective tariff.<sup>4</sup> Various office holders had advocated to a greater or less extent other measures now in the foreground. But they were said to have dallied with party caucuses and submitted too often to ineffective compromises.<sup>5</sup> The emergency demanded men of definite convictions and fixed purpose. Hence let all candidates now stand up and be measured.

All must subscribe to the St. Louis program. In addition, those who stood for state or local offices must pass another test. This came to include:<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup>Contributions from Livingston and others, also editorials, in *So. Al. Far.*, winter of 1889-90 (in Northen collection).

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>See *e. g.*, vote on Bland Bill and Bland-Allison Act, *Congl. Rec.*, 45th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 241; *ibid.*, 2nd Sess., pp. 1112, 1420.

<sup>5</sup>Files of *Southern Alliance Farmer*, 1889-90; speeches of Thos. E. Watson, *et al.*, Watson collection.

<sup>6</sup>*Official Proceedings* of Third Annual Sess. of the Farmers' State Alliance of Georgia, . . . Aug. 19-21, 1890 (in Lib. of Cong.); Proceedings of State Dem. Conv., Aug. 7, 1890 (in *Constitution*, Aug. 8, 1890). See also *Constn.*, Aug. 20-22.

(1) Enlargement of the powers of the railway commission to cover other public service corporations, and strict enforcement of the laws against discriminations, and against interchange of stock, etc., by competing roads;

(2) Abolition of the convict lease system as soon as the existing lease expired, placing the convicts on the public roads; and other prison reforms, including the establishment of juvenile reformatories;

(3) Revision of the tax system with a view to lightening the burden on the masses of the people;

(4) Extension of the public school system;

(5) Laws to insure fair primaries and elections.

The farmers did not do all of the talking, of course, or even all of the planning. Early in the race a good many papers realized the futility of further advice against political action. It was inevitable.

The *Constitution* seems to have been the first of the dailies to embrace the movement. Grady, it may be recalled, was managing editor of this organ until his death in December, 1889. While interested more especially in the industrial development of his state and section, he was by no means indifferent toward agrarian problems. One of his best speeches was made to a gathering of farmers at Elberton, Ga., in June, 1889.<sup>1</sup> In this, as in many of his editorials, he showed that he had come to appreciate their problems and to sympathize with the fundamental aims of their movement. It was through the Democratic party, of course, that he pointed the way to reform. And doubtless extremely few of them questioned the wisdom of this, though they may have felt that a more radical change in leadership and policies was demanded than he would have been ready to admit. After Grady's death, the *Constitution*

<sup>1</sup> See Harris, *Grady*, pp. 158-179.



continued the same general attitude toward these matters; for its editor-in-chief, Captain Even P. Howell, was in essential accord with his late friend and co-partner. Northen was accepted from the first as the gubernatorial candidate.<sup>1</sup> He was regarded as progressive but safe. His principles were believed to be those of the rank and file of the Alliance, and quite in keeping with the traditions of the Democratic party.<sup>2</sup> It was not that Alliancemen would "capture" the state Democracy; it was already theirs.<sup>3</sup> "The Farmers' Alliance is the Democratic party."<sup>4</sup> A number of other papers came to adopt more or less similar positions.<sup>5</sup>

The Savannah *Morning News* and the Macon *Telegraph*, outstanding champions of corporate interests, led the group that opposed compromise. The Democratic party should not be yielded to a single class—a *single organization*, in fact, and that a secret one. Alliance politicians were plotting a third party, and sowing the seeds of a bitter harvest. Warned by other papers that this sort of attitude would tend to force a third party, the *News* replied that compromise with an erratic group of leaders who were dallying with absurd programs and un-Democratic principles would pave the way for future trouble. The great majority of the farmers were still sound in their convictions and loyal to the party: no encouragement should be given those who would lead them astray. A number of the papers taking this position were inclined to support Thomas Hardeman, third candidate in the governor's race. He too was a farmer and had joined the Alliance, but was strongly opposed to any

<sup>1</sup> Clippings and correspondence, Northen collection.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> See *Constitution*, June 6, July 7, 1890 (edls.).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, July 4, 1890.

Northen collection.

participation in politics on the part of that order. His chances seem never to have been very bright. As the campaign advanced conservative organs came in increasing numbers to the support of Northen—despite, and not because of, his Alliance connections. He was not the candidate, they urged, of a single class; he had said so himself.<sup>1</sup>

There were many cross currents. The *Atlanta Journal* questioned Northen early in the race, not because it regarded him as too radical but because it feared he would be too conservative in dealing with the railroad problem in particular.<sup>2</sup> The long rivalry between this paper and the *Constitution*, between Hoke Smith (proprietor of the former) and Clark Howell (son, associate, and later successor of the editor-in-chief of the latter) was already on. Smith was an anti-corporation lawyer, and a leader in the movement for the regulation of railroads; while the Howells seem to have

<sup>1</sup>See editorial debate between the *Constitution* and the *News* during the summer of 1890, especially during late June and July; also excerpts from the *Telegraph, et al.*, in Northen collection. The writer was unable to locate complete files of the *Telegraph*. Those preserved by the publishers were destroyed by fire several years ago. The *Telegraph* was owned by Major Hanson, one of the leading railway promoters and managers of the state.

<sup>2</sup>The managing editor of the *Journal* wrote Northen under date of Oct. 9, 1889: "You ask me how the *Journal* feels toward you. This way: the *Journal* recognizes your clean record and your abilities. You are liked very much personally and admired. We have nothing against you that I know of except that you have not come out on the railroad question, and it is claimed that you are "bottled up." You see we are very much opposed to the existing combination [of competing lines] and it may be an issue next year. I know how you feel, but the people do not... I believe you have not expressed yourself as to legislation—which is the practical aspect of the case. . . . The idea is being circulated that you *cannot* express yourself against the combination and in favor of legislation, and that you are with the railroads in the fight. . . . I think Brown likely to resign. That would put Gordon in the Senate . . . (Signed) Josiah Carter, Managing Editor." (Original in Northen collection.)

felt that regulation was rather bordering on persecution.<sup>1</sup> Smith, the leader of the Cleveland forces in Georgia, was inclined to be "sound" on the money question.<sup>2</sup> The Howells advocated free silver, and even the sub-treasury (subject to some modification in detail).<sup>3</sup> But the railroad problem was more important in connection with the governorship. And the fact that the *Constitution* and other "corporation organs" were coming out for Northen was believed in some quarters to indicate a scheme to miscarry the movement.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Knight, vol. vi, pp. 3202-3205; vol. iv, pp. 1897-1899. Also clippings, Northen collection.

<sup>2</sup>He seems to have found it difficult to maintain such a position in Georgia at that time; and, according to the editor of the *Constitution* (July 14, 1895), he weakened temporarily in 1890 under Alliance pressure.

<sup>3</sup>Editorials in *Constitution*, June-Nov., 1890. The silver-Purchase Clause of the Sherman Act was denounced as an ineffectual compromise, "a Wall St. Measure" (June 8, 1890).

<sup>4</sup>Clippings, Northen colln., especially one signed "Pembroke" from the *Atlanta Chronicle*, Mar. 5, 1890. In so far as Northen's candidacy may have been used to sidetrack, and possibly to wreck, the movement, the writer is not inclined to believe that Northen himself was consciously a party to any such scheme. He was essentially conservative in temperament and convictions, and honest (one feels) in purpose. He did not profess to be a radical. Many farmers doubtless inferred from his sympathetic discussions of their unfortunate plight and his condemnation of existing abuses that he was more radical than he really was. They might have noticed (as some of them evidently did) that in speaking of drastic measures of relief he was uniformly reserved—sometimes indeed quite indefinite, due largely no doubt to the fact he was still wrestling in his own mind (as many others were) with these questions. He felt himself the leader of the less radical element in the Alliance and at the same time the candidate of many in non-agricultural pursuits.

Nor does one wish to impugn the motives of others. Those whose political, economic, or social interests seemed jeopardized, who believed that the measures proposed by the radicals were more dangerous than the disease, may have felt justified in resorting to political tricks to save themselves and the public from such eventualities. If they succeeded, perhaps they would find other remedies that would prove both safe and effectual.

Through the fall and winter of 1889-90, the *Southern Alliance Farmer*, official spokesman for the state organization, carried on a heated campaign for Livingston, bitterly attacking Northen.<sup>1</sup> Its course was denounced from numerous sources as highly unfair, especially in view of the fact that the state Alliance had not committed itself and that the membership was divided into warring factions over the matter. In this emergency an informal "caucus" was called to meet at the executive mansion on the evening of February 5 under the auspices of Governor Gordon.<sup>2</sup> Prominent Alliancemen from various parts of the state were invited to attend with a view to arriving at some understanding whereby harmony might be restored. Nothing of importance seems to have been decided that evening, but certain of the guests reassembled next morning and passed a resolution condemning the use of the columns of the *Alliance Farmer* to further the cause of one member against another. This proved a bombshell rather than a palliative. Among the fiery comments, not a few denounced the governor for meddling in the affairs of an order of which he was not a member. Others urged that as a leader of his party Gordon had a right to interfere in a political quarrel. These felt that Livingston and his allies, the editors of the organ in question, deserved rebuke for what seemed an abuse of their positions.

Perhaps one reason why Gordon was anxious to settle the Alliance quarrel was that Livingston, his paper, and his followers generally seemed likely to cause him considerable embarrassment, with their sub-treasury-yard-stick furor, in his own campaign for the Senatorship.<sup>3</sup> It had been known

<sup>1</sup>Northen collection.

<sup>2</sup>Large number of clippings in Northen collection, representing country weeklies as well as dailies, and both sides of the controversy.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

for some time that Senator Brown, who had succeeded Gordon in 1880, would not stand for reelection in 1890, and that Gordon was a candidate for the place. At first it was thought there could be no opposition of any consequence. But as gubernatorial, Congressional, and county campaigns began to "warm up" it soon became evident that many of those who were bent on a party revolution were unwilling to except even "the hero of Appomattox." Could he pass the test? Well, he was not quite sure about the sub-treasury—But that was essential! The *Alliance Farmer* said so. Likewise a good many others. Before long it was being said that candidates for the legislature would be asked to state whether they would support Gordon. Radicalism was evidently growing. There was sure to be an Alliance legislature as well as an Alliance governor. Which faction would predominate?

On March 12, the *Constitution* announced that there was a probability of an adjustment of differences between Northen and Livingston, and a general binding-up of wounds in the Alliance and the Democratic party. If this announcement was premature it was not, apparently, without foundation. A week earlier, Livingston, as president of the Alliance, had published a statement that the farmers would demand of candidates that they favor the sub-treasury, "*or some better plan.*"<sup>1</sup> The day following the *Constitution's* announcement, however, Northen wrote the managing editor, saying that the trouble in the Alliance was much graver than a mere political quarrel between him and Livingston; there was already a move on foot to prefer charges against certain officials of the order, in which "public morals" were at stake; he had no authority to adjust matters, even if he wished to do so; he had no overtures to make, and no

<sup>1</sup>Atl. *Constn.*, Mar. 6, 1890 (italics mine). Comments from other sources, Northen collection.

conditions to accept.<sup>1</sup> Whether Northen had not been consulted, whether he merely objected to the *Constitution's* manner of presenting the matter, or whatever else may have inspired his communication, there was a hitch. The controversy continued for three months longer. On June 2, Northen received a letter from M. L. Peek, a prominent Allianceman of radical leanings, requesting him to meet with Livingston and others in Atlanta on the ninth.<sup>2</sup>

Let me assure you [read the letter] that this conference means no ill to your race for governor. Please stop anything that tends to divide or distract our people till after the conference. This consultation may end, as I think it will, in entire harmony in our ranks.

A plan was submitted at this meeting, said Northen, which demanded no compromise on his part. A few days later Livingston retired from the gubernatorial race and became a candidate for Congress in his district (the fifth, which included Atlanta).<sup>3</sup> Hardeman soon withdrew from the contest also, leaving Northen a clear field.

But the storm was not over. There were races for Congress, races for the legislature, races for various local offices. In most cases, the real elections were the Democratic primaries, held in the various counties at different times. These were not entirely new: they had been held occasionally in some localities for a decade. It was claimed, however, that they had rarely amounted to much; had been called, if at all, at times when the farmers were busiest; had been given little publicity; and had nearly always resulted in "rubber-stamping" the slate.<sup>4</sup> It was different now that

<sup>1</sup>Carbon copy in Northen collection.

<sup>2</sup>Original in Northen collection.

<sup>3</sup>Knight seems to think that Livingston would have won the race for governor (vol. ii, p. 967).

<sup>4</sup>Watson collection.

"the people" were awake. Primaries were insistently demanded on all hands, excepting some cases in which the incumbents were rather generally acceptable. Almost every issue of the dailies and of the country weeklies carried lists of speaking engagements; often of joint debates between rival candidates. There were glowing accounts of such gatherings—"the largest ever known in the town," "the most enthusiastic audience in years." Farmers drove five, ten, twenty miles over almost impassable roads to hear "lively Lon Livingston" or "the eloquent Tom Watson."

When the decree went forth from the seats of the mighty that Livingston might run for Congress—and expect favor in "the gate city,"—J. D. Stewart, the incumbent, who had scarcely expected opposition, soon found himself strangely deserted by former adherents.<sup>1</sup> He appealed to the people in a series of stump debates with his antagonist; but, under existing conditions at least, he was far from a match for the fiery Allianceman.<sup>2</sup> He finally withdrew from the struggle in advance of the nomination. Livingston easily overwhelmed his Republican opponent in the election.

The most exciting Congressional race was in the tenth district, embracing Richmond county with the city of Augusta and ten country counties. Here Thomas E. Watson, the youthful delegate who had sounded the most vigorous note of revolt in the deadlocked gubernatorial convention of 1880, was now the impassioned advocate of the farmers' cause. Reared on a farm near Thomson, not far from the homes of Stephen and Toombs, he had experienced as a child the privations of war, as a youth the pinch of its aftermath.<sup>3</sup> He had imbibed the wisdom of rustic pedago-

<sup>1</sup>Northen and Watson collections.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, also *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, June 28-Jul. 2, 1890.

<sup>3</sup>See biographical sketch in Thos. E. Watson, *Life and Speeches of Thos. E. Watson*; also L. L. Knight, in *Library of Southern Literature*, vol. xiii, pp. 5681 *et seq.*; also Watson colln.

gues, declaimed from the *Boy Speaker* or Friday afternoons, and fought the town boys who ridiculed his prominent freckles. He had made his way through sophomore class at Mercer University by teaching summer schools in the country. Then for two years he had "read law by the light of pine-knot fires" in the rustic homes where he boarded while teaching in "old-field schools" in Screven county. Admitted to the bar, he had settled at Thomson, bought a part of the old home place on credit, and for years had run the farm and practiced law at the same time, walking three miles to his office each morning and carrying his dinner in a tin bucket. He had served one term in the legislature (1882-84), but had refused reelection. An ardent free trader, he had campaigned for Cleveland in 1888. While his position on the tariff had remained the same, he had come to regard the money question as more important. In state as well as national politics he had long advocated important measures that Alliancemen were now urging. When the movement was still essentially concerned with economic activities, he was said to have been among the first to preach war on the jute trust.<sup>1</sup> Thus when the farmers came to seek a candidate for Congress "in keeping with the spirit of the hour prevailing in the Democratic party in this district," they turned toward Watson.<sup>2</sup> The campaign that followed was "hot as Nebuchadnezzar's furnace." In the primary, the city of Augusta was strong for Barnes, the incumbent, though Watson received considerable support in the working-class wards. While some of the planters were for Barnes, all the country counties gave more or less hand-

<sup>1</sup>See, especially report of speech by Watson in McDuffie (County) *Journal*, Sep. 8, 1888 (in Watson colln.).

<sup>2</sup>Watson colln. The quotation is from a resolution passed by the Democratic convention of the tenth district (press reports, Aug. 28, 1890).



some majorities to Watson. He thus became the nominee of the regular Democracy on a straight Alliance platform. In the election he defeated his Republican opponent nearly ten to one.<sup>1</sup>

A queer situation arose in the seventh district. The Alliance in seeking a candidate for Congress passed over Felton. He seems to have been suspicious<sup>1</sup> of this oath-bound order, controlled by men who wished to proscribe all candidates refusing to indorse their sub-treasury scheme, which to his mind was thoroughly impracticable. He was just as much a friend of the farmers as he ever was, but he believed they were being misled by unscrupulous politicians. It was strange to him that with all their radicalism they had hit upon a candidate in the seventh who was a Gordon man. When first besought to announce as an independent, Felton refused. But he was importuned without rest, it seems, by personal calls and petitions from all over the district. He—or at least Mrs. Felton, who would still be his campaign manager,—apparently felt much flattered that many of his bitterest opponents in former years (among the townspeople especially) were now the most insistent that he enter the race. At last he yielded, accepting the nomination of the Independents, or "Jeffersonian Democrats." Former alignments, while greatly jarred, were not completely reversed. On the whole, the "court-house rings" stood by the regular nominee, it seems, despite the Alliance; and Felton retained a number of his old followers, who, like himself, apparently had a natural proclivity for independence in politics. He was defeated by a large majority.<sup>2</sup>

It seemed for a time that the "Jeffersonian Democrats" might become a state-wide party. As the organized De-

<sup>1</sup>Watson colln.; *Tribune Almanac*, 1891, p. 278.

<sup>2</sup>Felton, pp. 641-651.

mocracy passed, county by county, into the hands of the militant agrarians, candidates for various offices came out under that name. But with "the spirit of the hour" plus the tradition of party regularity against them, they were fatally handicapped in most cases.

In six out of ten Congressional districts, the "Bourbons" lost their seats; in the other four, they made their peace with the "embattled farmers," via the less radical element. The Alliance controlled the state convention, chose the governor, wrote the platform, named three-fourths of the senators and four-fifths of the representatives. The assembly which convened in November was greeted by the press—with mingled emotions no doubt—as THE FARMERS' LEGISLATURE. "As in the days of Jackson," said an ardent Allianceman, "the people have come to power."

## CHAPTER IV

### BLASTING AT THE SOLID SOUTH

BUT "the people" who had come to power were not of one mind. While the *Constitution* and the *Alliance Farmer* had come to speak pretty much the same language, they spoke for constituencies far from identical in purpose. The work of the Farmers' Legislature soon to convene and the records of the Alliance Congressmen-elect would go far toward determining whether the predictions of the *Morning News* that a split in the Democratic party was in prospect would prove true. Already the radicals in several of the Western states had abandoned their traditional Republicanism, and were beginning to urge the Southern dissenters to renounce the name Democracy, abjure the sectional rancor which had so long enabled their common "oppressors" to divide and rule them, and join hands in the new-born "People's party." The great majority in Georgia at this time said *no*; and their brethren in other states of the South who had accomplished similar feats within the party were inclined to agree with them. Flushed with victory, they would test its fruits. However, they were not in accord as to the standards whereby they would judge these fruits. They differed in their opinions of particular measures and men. Some were willing to continue the policy of compromise when necessary for party harmony; others felt that too much compromising had been done already, that the movement was being betrayed and must be saved from its "friends."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Clippings, Northen and Watson collections.

One month after the state election, the new legislature convened. Alliance representatives went into caucus on the question of the speakership. The majority favored Clark Howell.<sup>1</sup> He was elected.<sup>2</sup>

The first important business was the election of a United State Senator. On this matter there was the widest variance. There was strong opposition to Gordon among Alliancesmen, but it was neither unanimous nor coherent. In the midst of the summer campaign, the radicals had besieged the general for a definite statement of his stand on the Alliance program. He had confessed his disbelief in the sub-treasury scheme. This had been seized upon by the extreme elements and made the chief ground of their opposition to him. As a matter of tactics, this was probably a blunder. Too many Alliancesmen shared Gordon's doubts on that point. Northen had said already that the sub-treasury should not be made the test of a candidate's faith. Even Livingston had come, at least for a while, to employ the qualifying phrase, "or some better plan." Gordon urged that free silver and tariff reduction constituted a "better plan." It seemed for a time in the early fall, however, that the sub-treasury was the winning card.<sup>3</sup>

At this point a series of articles appeared in the *Constitution* ably defending the scheme. They were signed, "A Georgian," and were introduced by the editor as coming from the pen of a prominent business man with agrarian sympathies who preferred for the time to remain anonymous.<sup>4</sup> Much interest was aroused, and at the psychological moment it was made known that the author was Patrick

<sup>1</sup>Atlanta *Constitution*, Nov. 5, 1890.

<sup>2</sup>*House Journal*, 1890, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>*Constitution*, Mar. 28, Aug. 20, Oct. 3, 1890. Clippings, Northen collection.

<sup>4</sup>*Constitution*, Oct. 17, 1890, *et seq.*

Calhoun, who would be a candidate for the Senatorship and would have the support of the *Constitution*.<sup>1</sup> He also found favor with Livingston, and induced Macune to leave his post as eidtor of the *National Economist* and lobbyist for the Alliance in Washington and come down to Georgia to electioneer in his behalf. Calhoun was a railroad lawyer, connected, it seems, with the Gould system, which was at that time extending its influence into the Southeast. His sincerity was questioned. It was charged that he had used improper influences in obtaining the support of Livingston and Macune. Some evidence to this effect was later produced.<sup>2</sup> The great majority of the opposition refused to support Calhoun.

Thomas M. Norwood, Colquitt's opponent in the famous gubernatorial race of 1880, also had come out as a candidate favoring the sub-treasury. James K. Hines, a liberal young judge of a rural circuit, later Populist candidate for governor, was also in the race; but he was not well known at this time. Several others were considered.<sup>3</sup>

Gordon had the support of Northen and a number of others prominent in the Alliance.<sup>4</sup> In his message to the

<sup>1</sup>The *Constitution* explained editorially (Nov. 15) that one reason why it opposed Gordon was that he had thrown his influence against Grady, and deprived him of the Senatorship when it was virtually within his grasp in 1886. It was claimed that Gordon was scheming at that time to hold one toga in reserve for himself. A year or two after the Grady affair, it was reported that Senator Brown was dying, and along with this depressing news, which proved to be false, went a "boom" for Gordon to take his place.

<sup>2</sup>See *Reports* (majority and minority) of committee appointed by the convention of the Southern Alliance at Ocala, Dec., 1890 to investigate the conduct of Macune and Livingston in connection with the Senatorial contest in Georgia, in Northen colln. The Georgia legislature also investigated the matter, but exonerated all persons concerned. (*Report* in Northen colln.).

<sup>3</sup>See, especially, *Constitution*, Aug. 30, 1890.

<sup>4</sup>Correspondence between Gordon and Northen, and campaign literature, Northen colln.

legislature as retiring governor he spoke of national as well as state affairs. Referring to the "Force Bill," a measure then being urged by Republicans for extending federal control over elections, he said, "The present Congress has exhibited greater bitterness toward the South than any other federal legislature since the period of reconstruction." But an influence even more to be dreaded was that of "the great, growing, grasping Money Power." It maintained shrewd lobbyists in Washington as well as in the state capitals, and placed its puppets in both houses of Congress<sup>1</sup>. . . . A few days before the vote for Senator was taken, General Gordon addressed the legislature in person, ably defending his record and his stand on the issues of the hour.<sup>2</sup> He had been advocating Alliance principles, he said, for twenty years. His courtly bearing, his persuasive manner of speech, added to the sacred traditions which he represented, clothed him in a shining armor which the clumsy weapons of the opposition found extremely difficult to pierce. The consolidated vote stood: Gordon, 122; Norwood, 43; Calhoun, 25; Hines, 10; Hammond, 9; Hawkins, 1.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile the *cahiers* were pouring in upon "the people's" representatives, and bills of all kinds were being discussed or despatched to committee rooms.<sup>4</sup> There were bills to extend the powers of the railway commission, to prohibit combinations or agreements tending to defeat or lessen competition, to regulate the banking business, to reform the lien laws, to prohibit speculation in farm products, to extend the system of state inspection of fertilizers, to define the liability of farm "hands" and tenants, to regulate the hours and conditions of employment of trainmen, to protect

<sup>1</sup>House Journal, 1890, pp. 36 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup>Constitution, Nov. 11, 1890.

<sup>3</sup>House Journal, 1890.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, *passim*.

the purity of the ballot box, to amend the registration laws, to increase the school fund and the length of the term, to establish a college for colored youth, to regulate the sale of intoxicating liquors, etc., etc.

Some rather important laws were enacted. The power of the railway commission to fix rates which had been called into question, was confirmed, and its jurisdiction was extended to cover express and telegraph companies. Corporations doing a banking business, authorized under the laws of Georgia, were required to publish quarterly statements, made under oath; to maintain reserves of not less than 25 per cent of their call deposits; and were forbidden to make loans to their officers without good collateral, or, likewise, to any one person to an amount exceeding 10 per cent of their capital and surplus. The system of state inspection of fertilizers, which seems to have been quite inadequate, was somewhat extended. Railroads were forbidden to work their employees more than twelve hours in twenty-four except in cases of unavoidable delays. Corporations were prohibited from maintaining a blacklist. With the aid of the federal government, an agricultural and mechanical college for colored youth was established at Savannah.<sup>1</sup>

To some, this record appeared most gratifying; to others, it was disappointing. To the latter, it seemed merely a weak compromise on the major issues.<sup>2</sup> The insistent demand for effective laws to prevent such things as combinations in restraint of competition, robbery of stockholders by reorganization schemes, overcapitalization, and discriminations against the patrons of way stations had not been

<sup>1</sup> *Georgia Laws, 1890-91*, pp. 153, 165, 171, 183, 185, 222.

<sup>2</sup> Copies of *Alliance Farmer*, 1891 (incomplete file in Northen collection). Also clippings in Watson collection; especially reports of his speeches, in the *McDuffie Journal*, Aug. 28, 1891, and the (Atlanta) *People's Party Paper*, Oct. 22, 1891.

met. The anaconda mortgage system remained unscathed. Tax burdens were to be no more equitably apportioned than before. Some of these problems the state government alone could not wholly solve. Had it done what it could? Those who thought not were beginning to urge that "the wool-hat boys" must now part company with the "silk-hat crowd." The *Alliance Farmer* became so outspoken in condemning the latter that another "mansion caucus" was called, to meet in February, 1891, with a view to disciplining the recalcitrant organ and bringing charges before the state organization against certain of its officials. The offending sheet only fired the more heavily upon the "traitors." Its cartoon of "the Alliance Tree," with one of its limbs occupied by "the silk-hat bosses" who were stupidly sawing off their own support, attracted wide attention.<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime the question as to whether the Southern Alliance should join with kindred bodies in support of a national third party was being discussed. In this connection it is necessary to trace the lines of development in other parts of the country.

Elsewhere in the South the campaign of 1890 had brought results more or less similar to those in Georgia.<sup>2</sup> The cleanest sweep was in South Carolina, where the radicals gained complete control of the Democratic organization, elected Benjamin R. Tillman governor, gained an overwhelming majority in both houses of the legislature, elected a Senator and a majority of the Congressmen. In Tennessee, the president of the state Alliance was elected gover-

<sup>1</sup>*Alliance Farmer*, Dec., 1890-Apr., 1891, especially Feb. 24, Mar. 3 (Northen colln.); *Atlanta Constitution*, Feb. 24, 1891.

<sup>2</sup>*National Economist*, Dec. 6, 1890; F. M. Drew, "The Present Farmers' Movement," in *Pol. Sc. Qty.*, vol. vi, pp. 282-310; Appleton's *Annual Cyc.*, 1890 (see under various states and under "Farmers' Alliance"); Haynes, *Third Party Movements*, pp. 236-252.



nor. It was an off-year for state elections in Virginia, North Carolina, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Kentucky; but five out of ten Congressmen elected in Virginia were pledged to the Alliance demands; likewise, eight out of nine in North Carolina, two out of seven in Mississippi, and four out of eleven in Kentucky. The farmers seem to have dictated the platforms, at least, in Florida and Texas. In Alabama, the Alliance candidate for governor, Reuben F. Cobb, had a plurality of the delegates in the state convention, but not quite a majority. Failing to receive the nomination, he ran as an independent, and was defeated. His faction, however, elected about half the legislators. In Arkansas the farmers divided their vote between the Union Labor Party and the regular Democracy. In Missouri, a majority of the assemblymen and all the Congressmen were Democrats pledged to Alliance principles. In the South as a whole, some forty-odd Congressmen and several Senators were thus committed. Divisions among Alliancesmen themselves had brought, not only defeat in some localities, but varying shades of compromise in others. It is therefore difficult to estimate the extent to which radicalism prevailed. But whatever had been gained, it was in nearly all cases through the Democratic party.

In the West, the situation was more complex.<sup>1</sup> In Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, Minnesota, and Indiana, the Alliance put out a third-party ticket, coöperating in some cases with other agrarian bodies and with the Knights of Labor. The People's Party of Kansas, fusing in some localities with the Democrats, elected a majority of the legislature, five out of seven Congressmen, and a United States Senator, but lost the gubernatorial race. The People's Independent Party of Nebraska ran far ahead of

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*

the Republicans, and was narrowly defeated by the Democrats; it obtained platform pledges from two of the Congressmen elected. The Independents in South Dakota outstripped the Democrats, but were defeated by the Republicans. The Alliance came out third in a close triangular race in Minnesota, in which the usual Republican majority was greatly narrowed. The People's Party of Indiana drew heavily upon the normally Republican vote, and the Democrats swept the state. In Colorado and Iowa, the dissenters functioned through the Union Labor party; in North Dakota, through the Prohibitionist.

The net result of the Alliance movement was decidedly in favor of the Democrats. No doubt the general unrest, and the reaction against the McKinley tariff, had much to do with the Democratic landslide of 1890. But the Alliance was clearly an important factor.

In the South, Democrats generally were encouraged. Most of the Alliancemen—even many of those who, like Livingston, were most radical in their demands—seem to have believed, at least for a time, that the party of Jefferson, purged by the popular uprising, offered the surest and sanest means for reform. A growing number, however, disappointed with the record of the first Cleveland administration, and now becoming dissatisfied with the “regenerated” Democracy in their own states, were coming to advocate a complete severance of old ties.

The issue was hotly contested in a series of meetings of the Southern Alliance. The first of these was held at Ocala, Fla., in December, 1890.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the delegates of that order, representatives were present from the

<sup>1</sup> *National Economist*, Dec. 12, 19, 1890; *Constitution and Morning News*, Dec. 3-7, 1890; *Independent*, Dec. 11, 1890; *People's Party Paper*, Oct. 16, 1891. McVey (“Populist Movt.,” in *Economic Studies*, vol. i, pp. 138, 142) seems to have been in error in stating that the sub-treasury plank was dropped at this meeting.

Colored Alliance, the Farmers' Mutual Benefit Association, the Citizens' Alliance, and the Knights of Labor. Ralph Beaumont, spokesman for the Knights, was one of the most active in preaching independent action. In one of his fervent outbursts, he shouted, "When I went out to Kansas and found the farmers raising corn and selling it at fifteen cents a bushel, I told them *they'd better raise hell!*" He agreed with the *New York Evening Post* that they were taking his advice. Some of them were present at this meeting, and they were accompanied by other Populists (as the members of the People's Party soon came to be called). The old parties were hopelessly controlled, they said, by the Money Power, the trusts, the railroads, and other great capitalistic interests. Dally with them, and your cause is lost. Their leaders will flatter you and make fair promises, perhaps with a certain sincerity; but they will go up to Washington, enter the caucus, and leave all hopes behind. Besides, experience has shown that the Western farmer will join a third party more readily than he will the Democratic. The Southerner will not become a Republican. Hence let the farmers of all sections join hands with each other, and with their brethren the urban workers, in a party of the people<sup>1</sup>.

Most of the Southerners, on the other hand, were not only hopeful of success through the Democratic party, but also quite fearful of the race complications in case the white

<sup>1</sup>There was little likelihood that any very large percentage of the industrial laborers would join such a party. The officials of the Knights of Labor pledged the support of that body, but it was easier to make such a pledge than to deliver the vote. Besides, the order was on the decline, its membership at that time being scarcely more than 100,000 (Commons says, 75,000 in 1893—vol. ii, p. 494); and a considerable number of these were farmers, small shop keepers, etc. The rising A. F. of L. was warned against the new party by its leader, Samuel Gompers, who could see little in common between "the employing farmer" and the workingman.

South should divide. Then too, it was urged that the Alliance was forbidden by its constitution from becoming directly partisan: it was permissible to use the influence of the order to bring the old parties to their senses, but not to proselyte members into a strange fold. If it should seek to do this, it would seal its own death warrant.

Between these two groups was a considerable element which counselled delay, biding further results of the recent upheaval and the development of popular sentiment. This advice prevailed. It was agreed to have another meeting on February 22, 1891; but the supreme council refused to make the call for this time, regarding it as too early, hence it was delayed until May.<sup>1</sup>

The Ocala convention made some changes in the St. Louis platform. The sub-treasury plan, extended to cover loans upon real estate, was embodied in the main platform. A number of the delegates, especially from the West, wished to *substitute* land for products as a basis of credit. It is interesting to note how the experiences of the farmers in various regions with crop liens and land mortgages were translated into their respective plans for government aid. The compromise made at this meeting was the beginning of the end of the product-security scheme. The tariff, this time, was called by name, and the removal of the existing high duties on the necessities of life was demanded. Instead of immediate government ownership of railroads, "the most rigid, honest, and just state and national governmental control" was called for, with the proviso that if such control failed to remove the abuses, then government ownership must follow. The southeast was particularly strong for this compromise: Livingston seems to have been its father. It was doubtless a good political move; for, as the sub-

<sup>1</sup> See reference I, p. 124. Cf. Commons, vol. ii, pp. 493-494.

treasury issue grew stale, the anti-Alliance press was turning its fire upon government ownership, denouncing it as socialistic, and the farmers were generally sensitive to this word. One might now hold it up as a last resort only; or the more daring ones, like Watson, might declare that government control was fast proving its ineffectiveness, and hence champion the more radical scheme. On the whole the Ocala platform was much better suited to the situation in the South than was that of St. Louis.<sup>1</sup>

The attitude of the Southern farmers toward the third-party idea was still problematic when the meeting to consider the matter further was held at Cincinnati the following May. Leaders were undecided which way to turn; many remained at home, so that the representation from that section was relatively small. Kansas, Nebraska, Ohio, Indiana, and Missouri furnished 1049 out of 1417 delegates. Livingston—concerning whose future course there had been much guessing—was there, but “only as a spectator.” The majority of the delegates were Populistic, though many of these were in doubt as to whether they should seek at this time to commit their respective organizations to the new party. After much heated discussion, punctuated with songs of “Goodbye, Old Parties, Goodbye,” and the like, a resolution was passed stating that “the time has come for the crystalization of the political reform forces of our country, and the foundation of what should be known as the People’s Party of the United States of America.” This was said to be only a preliminary step. The actual launching would occur at St. Louis on Washington’s birthday following. All organizations of rural and urban organized labor were invited to participate. The Ocala platform was endorsed; also that of a labor conference held at Omaha

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*

shortly before. Planks were included calling for a graduated income tax; direct election of President, Vice-president, and Senators; and expressing sympathy with the movement for an eight-hour day.<sup>1</sup>

The press did not have a very high regard for the apostles of Populism. The *National Economist*, still an organ of the Southern Alliance, and still opposed to independent action, declared that the meeting was inspired by a few men "whose zeal exceeds their wisdom." The *Constitution* said it was the work of "political adventurers" who had sprung from "the ranks of the disgruntled." The *Morning News* capped the climax, as usual,—“Such a lot of cranks, demagogues, small politicians, dangerous theorists, and agitators never before collected anywhere.”<sup>2</sup>

Up to this time few of the leaders in Georgia had come out definitely for independent action. Among those who were thought to be leaning in that direction, Watson was most prominent. He seems to have been greatly concerned lest those Democrats who had been elected as Congressmen on the Alliance platform should accept the dictation of the Democratic caucus in violation of their pledges. Questioned in reference to his alleged third-party leanings, he made several statements during the spring and summer of 1891 to the effect that principles meant more to him than party names; he had been chosen as a Democrat, but chosen because he stood for certain principles; he was still a Democrat, and expected to remain one as long as he could do so consistently. He did not agree that one who had been elected to champion particular measures should merely use his influence to have the party accept those measures, and failing this, should fall in line with the majority of the

<sup>1</sup>*Natl. Econ.*, Mar. 5, May 21, 28, 1891; *Constitution*, Mar. 5, May 19-22, 1891; *Morning News*, May 19-22, 1891. Cf. Haynes, *Third Party Movts.*, pp. 247-248.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

caucus. His duty was to his own constituency, not to the representatives of other constituencies.<sup>1</sup> The conservative press did not accept this view. Party government demanded party loyalty. When one finds that he can not conscientiously act in harmony with the party under the standard of which he has been elected, he should resign.<sup>2</sup> Watson determined to seek a definite statement from the Alliance on this point; and to this end he, along with others of his persuasion, appealed to the supreme council of that order, which convened at Indianapolis, November 16, 1891. The council accepted Watson's view.<sup>3</sup>

The opposing groups were especially concerned about the election of a speaker in the Congress to meet in December. The Democrats would have an overwhelming majority, but would be more or less embarrassed by factions. Charles F. Crisp was widely regarded as the most available man for the speakership. He was one of the four Georgia Congressmen whom the Alliance had not dislodged. Representing a district in the black belt in which the large planters predominated, he was relatively conservative. A man of pleasing address, excellent poise, and great popularity, he was well suited to the task of binding up wounds. But this was the very sort of thing that the Watson element most feared. It would probably result, they said, as it had so often resulted before, in saving the party at the expense of principles and programs. Hence the supreme council especially urged that no Congressman, elected by the Alliance faction, should bind himself to the caucus on the speakership question.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *People's Party Paper*, Nov. 19, 26, Dec. 3, 17, 1891; *Constitution*, Nov. 26, 1891.

<sup>2</sup> *Constitution and Morning News*, Nov.-Dec., 1891.

<sup>3</sup> *People's Party Paper*, *op. cit.*; Haynes, *Third Party Movts.*, pp. 254-255; Watson, *Handbook*, pp. 454, 455.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

When the Solons appeared in Washington a few weeks later, an effort was made to assemble those Democrats who had been elected on the Alliance platform in advance of the regular caucus. Twenty-five members appeared. Eighteen of these, under the leadership of Livingston, favored acting with the party. The other seven, led by Watson, of Georgia, and Simpson, of Kansas, urged that by maintaining a certain solidarity, they would be able to offset the conservative wing, especially from the East, which had controlled the party in former years. In the course of the discussion, Watson declared with some feeling that the old-line Democracy was corrupt, was controlled by the moneyed interests, and would yield nothing to the people's cause unless driven to it. Crisp, he said, was "supported by the machine politicians, the boodlers, and the subsidy hunters." Livingston sprang to his feet, and indignantly denied the statement. Both Crisp and his followers were essentially in harmony with the popular cause, he maintained. Besides, for Alliancemen to hold aloof from the councils of their party would be disloyal as well as futile. "You know," shouted Watson, "that neither you nor I would be in Congress were it not for the farmers. They sent us here to stand for certain principles: if we fail to do so, we betray our trust." Retorts became more heated, and a personal encounter was averted only by the intervention of friends.<sup>1</sup>

This was the culmination of a controversy between the two which had been in progress for several months. Their paths were diverging. Watson, deciding that "the new wine of reform fared badly in old bottles," was soon contributing weekly letters to the *People's Party Paper* (established in Atlanta in October, 1891), and ere long was

<sup>1</sup>Clippings from *Washington Post*, et. al., Northern colln.; *People's Party Paper*, Dec. 3, 10, 17, 1891. Clippings, Watson colln.



advising "the people" to join the new party. He and a few other anti-caucus Democrats met with the Populists and several Alliance Republicans at Senator Peffer's apartment, and Watson was chosen as their candidate for speaker. Livingston and the rest of the Alliance Democrats, including the remaining four from Georgia, went into the regular caucus and helped elect Crisp. They were convinced, at least at this time, that a third party was unnecessary as well as unwise.<sup>1</sup>

These were enthusiastically commended by the dailies of the state and by the great majority of the small-town weeklies. Watson was denounced as a traitor, and was burned in effigy in Augusta. But to thousands of people, especially in the country, he was becoming a veritable god. In almost every community, children were named in his honor. By the irony of fate it sometimes happened that a young "Grover Cleveland" became blood brother to a younger "Tom Watson." Sub-Alliances and mass meetings resolved him the greatest leader of his generation. But not all, even of the farmers, commended him. To those who did not, he was the embodiment of all that was wicked.<sup>2</sup>

Livingston was still president of the state Alliance, and hence appointed the executive committee, which in turn appointed the delegates to the Washington's birthday gathering at St. Louis. The five thus appointed were all opposed to a third party, and were joined by their president as a member *ex officio*. But the Populistic element was not inactive. Three of their number went as representatives of the newly formed Citizens' Alliance, and two others were

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*; also *Constitution*, Dec. 9, 1891; *Morning News*, Feb. 26, 1892.

<sup>2</sup>In the interim between the Indianapolis conference and the opening of Congress, Watson had returned to Georgia and canvassed his district on the caucus questions. His supporters were a unit, he says, in commending his stand, and urging him to maintain it at all hazards. Clippings, Watson colln.; also *Handbook*, p. 454.

conveniently on hand to take the places of two of Livingston's men who were unable to attend. This substitution gave rise to a contest which threw the convention into an uproar, and threatened a split at the outset. After a time the Livingston group agreed to accept the Populist pair, provided they would follow the unit rule. The chair overruled the proviso and put the question of seating them to a vote. This was generally seen to be a straw on the major question of the hour. It was also important in view of Georgia's strategic position. The success of the Populist movement depended largely upon its ability to shatter the Solid South, and an effectual blast in Georgia would be a *coup de main* indeed. Thus it was important for the psychic effect to have the state delegation predominantly Populist. And so it was: the contested delegates were seated.<sup>1</sup>

It was a motley gathering. Some twenty-one organizations were represented, including well nigh every agricultural order in the country, several labor and trade-union groups (all local except the K. of L.), and one or two reform clubs. The radicals predominated, both in numbers and in noise. The press made much of the "wild" and "riotous" scenes—"a comedy of errors," enacted by "cranks and sore-heads."<sup>2</sup> It may well be doubted, however, whether the meeting was any more boisterous than "gatherings of the faithful" have often been—"Armageddon," for example. Wrought to a frenzy by grievances that were real, they were met with abuse and ridicule, which neither lightened their burdens nor softened their spirits. President Polk, of the Southern Alliance, who had formerly opposed a separate

<sup>1</sup>Official Minutes in *Natl. Econ.*, Mar. 5, 1892. See also *People's Party Paper*, Feb. 25, Mar. 3, 1892; *Constitution*, Feb. 24, 26, 1892; *Morning News*, Feb. 24, Mar. 4, 1892. The delegation from the colored Alliance of Georgia was also divided, the majority favoring a third party.

<sup>2</sup>*Constitution*, Feb. 23, 24, 26, 1892; *Morning News*, Feb. 24, 1892.

party, now confessed a change of heart.<sup>1</sup> "We have presented these complaints faithfully and persistently to the two great political parties of the country," he said, . . . "And what has been their answer? 'You don't know what you need. Go home, work harder, live closer, and keep out of politics, and you'll be all right.'" Ignatius Donnelly predicted a political wedding between the old parties. "The ceremony will be performed at the altar of plutocracy. Grover Cleveland and Ben Harrison will act as brides-maids, the devil will give away the bride, and Jay Gould will pronounce the benediction." . . . Their sham combats can no longer deceive us. "We propose to wipe the Mason and Dixon line out of our geography; to wipe the color line out of politics; to give Americans prosperity, that the man who creates shall own what he creates; to take the robber class from the throat of industry; to take possession of the government of the United States, and put our nominee in the White House."<sup>2</sup>

An effusive arraignment of existing economic and political conditions, similar to the one later adopted at Omaha, prefaced their platform. The only important changes made in their demands were that government ownership of the means of transportation and communication was urged without further trial of government control, and postal savings banks were called for. An appeal was made to the workers of all sections and all occupations to join in the movement "to restore the government of the Republic to the hands of the plain people with whom it originated."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*People's Party Paper*, Feb. 25, 1892. Polk made a spirited attack upon Livingston and other Alliance Congressmen who had "deserted" their principles. "I am not so much afraid of the enemies without," he said, "as of the traitors within."

<sup>2</sup>*Morning News*, Feb. 23, 1892.

<sup>3</sup>*Natl. Econ.*, Mar. 12, 1892; *People's Party Paper*, Apr. 21, 1892.

When they came to the question of definitely launching the new party, a number of the delegates who opposed such a step retired from the hall, and protested that neither they nor their respective organizations were bound by the action of those who remained. The majority rump resolved itself into a mass-meeting, declared for the People's Party, and called a convention to meet in Omaha on July 2 to nominate a presidential ticket.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile Congress was getting organized and preparing to discuss some of these matters. In selecting a chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, Crisp passed over Roger Q. Mills of Texas, who had held the place under Cleveland and had drafted the tariff bill of 1888, and appointed Wm. M. Springer of Illinois, who was more conservative.<sup>2</sup> Mills was known to favor the passage of a general tariff measure; while Springer preferred to attack certain of the weakest points in the McKinley Act through separate bills, "thus breaking it down by degrees." In the course of the next two years, several "pop-gun" bills were passed by the House, but were blocked in the Republican Senate.<sup>3</sup> R. P. Bland was made chairman of the Committee on Coinage, and a free-silver bill was introduced in March, 1892. It escaped the table by the casting vote of the speaker, eighty Democrats supporting the move to lay it aside. It finally expired in a filibuster.<sup>4</sup> A similar bill passed the Senate on July 1, supported by 18 Democrats and 11 Republicans, and opposed by 7 Democrats and 18 Republicans, 34 members not voting. The House refused to take up the

<sup>1</sup>*Constitution*, Feb. 26; *Morning News*, Feb. 26, Apr. 4, 1892.

<sup>2</sup>D. R. Dewey, *National Problems*, pp. 181-182.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 232; *Congressional Record*, 52nd Cong., 1st Sess., pt. iii, p. 2543. Cf. Watson, "The Night Free Silver Was Killed," in *Watson's Jeffersonian Magazine*, vol. i, pp. 1128 *et seq.*

question again; a number of Democrats who had been friendly to silver now voting in the negative, on the ground that they could not afford further to emphasize the disagreement within their organization while the campaign was in progress.<sup>1</sup> The question of rural credits was almost ignored at this session.

It was obvious that both the old parties were all but hopelessly divided on the main issues of the time. And there was little indication that the revolt in the South and West was regarded with sufficient concern by the major leaders to force a realignment in the presidential campaign of 1892—except perhaps to make the tariff issue a little sharper.

The Republicans met in convention at Minneapolis, June 7. Their platform was sufficiently Janus-faced to meet the demands of conflicting groups. The tariff was the only important issue on which their stand was quite clear. After the usual reference to the past glories of the party, they reaffirmed "the American doctrine of protection," and especially commended the McKinley Act. "The Republican policy of reciprocity, , , , . executed by a Republican administration," would, it was claimed, "eventually give us control of the markets of the world." The money question was straddled, as follows:

The American people, from tradition and interest, favor bi-metalism, and the Republican party demands the use of both gold and silver as standard money, [but] with such restrictions and under such provisions to be determined by legislation, as will secure the maintenance of the parity of values of the two metals. . . .

They claimed to favor some sort of international agreement under which a parity might be insured, but it seems to have

<sup>1</sup>Dewey, p. 232; *Congl. Record*, 52nd Cong., 1st Sess., pt. vi, pp. 5719, 5774, 5780, 6131-6133.

been understood in conservative quarters that no very serious effort was being made, or was likely to be made, in this direction.<sup>1</sup> Laws to insure a free ballot to every American citizen were advocated, and the "inhuman outrages perpetrated . . . for political reasons in certain Southern states" were denounced, the implication being that something like the Force Bill was demanded. In very general and more or less ambiguous terms, it was declared that our merchant marine should be encouraged, trusts opposed, immigration regulated, arid public lands improved, delivery of mail extended into rural districts, and the old soldiers taken care of. Harrison was nominated for a second term.<sup>2</sup>

The Democrats met in Chicago, June 21. Their platform was almost, if not quite, as indefinite as that of their major foe. The Force Bill received first and fullest attention. It was said to be a dangerous violation of the most cherished principles of the Democratic party, "as formulated by Jefferson, and exemplified by the long and illustrious line of his successors in Democratic leadership, from Madison to Cleveland;". . . namely those of "free popular government, based on home rule and individual liberty." A return to these principles "was never more urgent than now." Two separate tariff planks were proposed; the one a compromise, and the other a vigorous denunciation of "Republican protection as a fraud, a robbery of the great majority of the American people for the benefit of the few." The latter was adopted. Reciprocity was declared to be "a

<sup>1</sup>A conference representing twenty countries met at Brussels in Nov., 1892, to consider plans for increasing the use of silver as money. International bimetalism as such was scarcely considered. No other plan was devised which seemed at all likely to be adopted. The meeting adjourned in Jan., 1893, promising to reconvene the following May, but never reassembled. See A. B. Hepburn, *Hist. of the Currency in the U. S.*, pp. 346-347.

<sup>2</sup>Edw. Stanwood, *History of the Presidency*, pp. 494-497.

time-honored doctrine of Democratic faith," but the Republican brand was a "sham." The money plank was nicely balanced, reading as follows:

We denounce the Republican legislation known as the Sherman Act of 1890 as a cowardly makeshift.<sup>1</sup> . . . We hold to the use of both gold and silver as the standard money of the country, and to the coinage of both gold and silver without discrimination against either metal or charge for mintage: [*presto change!*] but the dollar unit of coinage of both metals must be of equal intrinsic and exchangeable value, or be adjusted through international agreement, or by such safeguards of legislation as shall insure the maintenance of the parity. . . .

It was claimed that the Republicans had given away the great public domain to the railroads and other corporations; that the Democrats during Cleveland's administration had rescued nearly a hundred million acres, illegally held, and proposed to make further restoration to the people. In general again, it was urged that trusts should be further restrained, immigration restricted, waterways improved, and the old soldiers taken care of. Cleveland was nominated on the first ballot.<sup>2</sup>

The People's Party met at Omaha on July 2. Their platform, which they wished to go down in history as the Second Declaration of Independence, was adopted on the Glorious Fourth. A severe arraignment of existing conditions introduced the program. The following is an excerpt:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>This act, which superseded the Bland-Allison Act of 1878, authorized the secretary of the treasury to purchase 4,500,000 ounces of silver each month at the market price, and to issue treasury notes of full legal tender in payment therefor. These notes should be redeemable in either gold or silver coin at the discretion of the secretary.

<sup>2</sup>Stanwood, pp. 498-504.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 508-513.

The conditions which surround us best justify our coöperation. We meet in the midst of a nation brought to the verge of moral, political, and material ruin. Corruption dominates the ballot-box, the legislature, the Congress, and touches even the ermine of the bench. The people are demoralized; most of the states have been compelled to isolate the voters at the polling-places to prevent universal intimidation or bribery. The newspapers are largely subsidized or muzzled; public opinion silenced; business prostrated; our homes covered with mortgages; labor impoverished; and the land concentrating in the hands of capitalists. The urban workmen are denied the right of organization for self-protection; imported pauperized labor beats down their wages; a hireling standing army, unrecognized by our laws, is established to shoot them down, and they are rapidly degenerating into European conditions.<sup>1</sup> The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few, unprecedented in the history of mankind; and the possessors of these, in turn, despise the republic and endanger liberty. From the same prolific womb of governmental injustice we breed the two great classes of tramps and millionaires.

The national power to create money is appropriated to enrich bondholders; a vast public debt, payable in legal tender currency, has been funded into gold-bearing bonds, thereby adding millions to the burdens of the people. Silver, which has been accepted as coin since the dawn of history, has been demonetized to add to the purchasing power of gold by decreasing the value of all forms of property as well as human

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the disorders which had occurred shortly before at Homestead, Pa. The Carnegie Steel Co. had reduced the wages of its employees, and when the Amalgamated union sought to intervene had resorted to a shutdown, hoping to reopen the mills with non-union labor. Anticipating trouble, the managers, instead of appealing to the legal authorities, employed a private "army" from the Pinkerton detective agency. A pitched battle resulted in which seven of the Pinkerton men were killed and a larger number of the workmen. See H. T. Peck, *Twenty Years of the Republic*, p. 300.



labor; and the supply of currency is purposely abridged to fatten usurers, bankrupt enterprise, and enslave industry. A vast conspiracy against mankind has been organized on two continents, and is rapidly taking possession of the world. If not met and overthrown at once, it forebodes terrible social convulsions, the destruction of civilization, or the establishment of an absolute despotism.

We have witnessed for more than a quarter of a century the struggles of the two great political parties for power and plunder, while grievous wrongs have been inflicted upon the suffering people. We charge that the controlling influences dominating both these parties have permitted the existing dreadful conditions to develop without serious effort to prevent or restrain them. Neither do they now promise us any substantial reform. They have agreed together to ignore in the campaign every issue but one. They propose to drown the outcries of a plundered people with the uproar of a sham battle over the tariff; so that capitalists, corporations, national banks, rings, trusts, watered stock, the demonetization of silver and the oppression of the usurers may all be lost sight of. . . .

Assembled on the anniversary of the birthday of the nation, and filled with the spirit of the grand general chief who established our independence, we seek to restore the government of the Republic to the hands of "the plain People" . . . We declare . . . that the Civil War is over, and that every passion and resentment which grew out of it must die with it; and that we must be in fact, as we are in name, one united brotherhood of free men. . . .

The union of the labor forces of the United States this day consummated shall be permanent and perpetual. . .

The platform demanded:

*On Finance*—The issue of all currency by the federal government, to be distributed by means of loans to producers under the sub-treasury or some better system, and by remuneration for civil service; "free and unlimited coinage

of silver and gold at the present legal ratio of sixteen to one;” increase in the circulating medium to not less than fifty dollars per capita; a graduated income tax; limitation of revenues to the necessary expenses of government; postal savings banks.

*On Transportation*—Government ownership and operation of railway, telegraph, and telephone systems.

*On Land*—Reclamation of all lands held by railroads and other corporations in excess of their actual needs, and those owned by aliens, for the benefit of bona-fide settlers.

An additional set of resolutions, not incorporated in the main platform, was adopted “as expressive of the sentiment of this convention.” These called for fair and liberal pensions, further restriction of undesirable immigration, rigid enforcement of the eight-hour law for government employees, abolition of private detective agencies, and a Constitutional amendment providing for a single term for President and popular election of Senators; and recommended to the states the Austrian ballot system and the initiative and referendum.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A number of these issues, on which the major parties had refused to commit themselves, had been advocated before by other minor parties, which were in a more or less real sense forerunners of the Populists. The Labor Reformers of 1872, a group composed mostly of urban workingmen, had called for the issue of all paper money by the government, the preservation of the national domain for actual settlers only, and the eight-hour day for government employees. The Greenbackers had demanded the issue of all currency by the government direct (in 1876, 1880 and 1884), free silver (in 1880 and 1884), a graduated income tax (in 1880 and 1884) and the preservation of the national domain for actual settlers (in 1880 and 1884). The Union Labor party of 1888, which was the immediate precursor of the People’s, had championed all the issues in the main platform of the latter, except that their credit scheme included only land as security; and all those in the supplementary group above, except the single term for president, the Australian ballot system, and the abolition of private detective agencies. See S. C. Wallace, “Influence of Minor Parties,” MS. in Columbia Univ. Library.

The Jeremiahs had spoken : now for a Moses to lead them. President Polk, of the Southern Alliance, had been favorably considered in the South; but he had died shortly before the convention met. There was a boom for Judge Walter Q. Gresham, of Illinois, who had won great favor with the farmers because of his decisions in certain Granger cases. He was also the choice of the delegates from the Knights of Labor. The balloting was held up until an answer could be obtained from him by wire as to whether he would accept the nomination. He replied in the negative. The remaining candidates who had been most widely considered were James H. Kyle and James Baird Weaver. Kyle was a Populist Senator from South Dakota, and was said to represent the "new blood." Weaver had been allied with the farmers' cause since the flood tide of the Granger Movement. Originally a Democrat, he had joined the Republican crusade in the late fifties; had risen to the rank of brigadier general in the Union army; had returned to political life as a Republican; had become convinced in the seventies that his party no longer represented the interests of the plain people, and had joined the Independents; had served three terms in Congress as the representative of the latter, in coalition with the Democrats; had been the Greenback candidate for President in 1880; and was now a leader of the Populists. He defeated Kyle by a vote of 995 to 265. As a matter of political tactics, his nomination was probably a mistake. While to those who understood the situations he had faced, he was by no means as inconsistent as his chequered career seemed to indicate; to many others, he was a political adventurer who "ran with all parties and was true to none." Some writers have deemed it unfortunate in a sense that Judge Gresham refused the nomination. Had he accepted, said the editor of the *Review of Reviews*, "there would have been a great stirring up of

dry bones." Kyle, though less widely known than Weaver, was more distinctly associated with the new movement. The politicians of the old parties are said to have breathed easier when they found themselves confronted with their old familiar enemy. With a Northern general at the head of the ticket, it was quite politic to have a Southern general as his running mate. Hence James G. Field, of Virginia, was selected for second place.<sup>1</sup>

The "riotous scenes" at St. Louis seem to have been transcended by the "delirium" at Omaha. "No intelligent man could sit in that audience," wrote an observer . . . "and listen to the wild and frenzied assaults upon the existing order of things, without a feeling of great alarm at the extent and intensity of the social lunacy there displayed." When the platform was adopted, "cheers and yells . . . rose like a tornado from four thousand throats and raged without cessation for thirty-four minutes, during which women shrieked and wept, men embraced and kissed their neighbors, locked arms, marched back and forth, and leaped upon tables and chairs in the ecstasy of their delirium." Such critics seem to have been at a loss to explain these outbursts. The observer just quoted saw in them "spectres of Nationalism, Socialism,<sup>2</sup> and general discontent." Some

<sup>1</sup>*Natl. Econ.*, July 9, 1892; *Constn.*, July 3-7; *Morn. News*, July 5, 6; *People's Party Paper*, July 8, 15, etc., 1892; *Review of Reviews*, vol. vi, p. 9 (Aug., 1892). Also Haynes, *Third Party Movts.*, pp. 261-264 and *Weaver*, pp. 310-314.

<sup>2</sup>Seeking to show that the new party was Socialistic, Professor F. L. McVey, the first historian of Populism, writing in 1896, collected planks from the Platforms of the Socialist Labor Party, the Central Labor Union of Cleveland, and an American book on *Socialism*, and ranged them in parallel columns with those of the Populists. Numerically, the comparison was striking. Both groups advocated government ownership of railroads, postal savings banks, paper money, abolition of the national banking system, an income tax, enforcement of the eight-hour law for government employees, reclamation of land grants the condition

could see only the work of dangerous agitators; while others dismissed the whole affair as "pure cussedness."<sup>1</sup>

If the party's following proved to be as numerous as it was loud, the campaign would reveal some startling results. The scenes at St. Louis and Omaha were repeated on a small scale in thousands of communities in the West and South during the summer of 1892. In Georgia, the yardstick race of 1890 seemed quite mild in comparison. More than a score of Populist weeklies arose, pouring forth their volleys into "the rotten old parties," while the wool-hat crowds yelled, "Turn the rascals out!"<sup>2</sup>

The Populist state convention sought to induce Watson to accept the gubernatorial nomination, but he preferred to seek a referendum from the tenth district on his record in Congress. The convention then decided upon W. L. Peek, "a real dirt farmer" who had been a strong Allianceman and People's Party advocate. He was a man of some abil-

of which had not been met, a single term for the President, direct election of Senators, the initiative and referendum. The Populist column was blank, of course, opposite the Socialist demands for the abolition of private property in the means of production; also for the abolition of inheritance, the wage system, and the competitive system. Thus, only four out of the fourteen Socialist planks assembled had no equivalent in the other side of the balance. He apparently failed to notice that those four were quite fundamental; and that the others, while some of them smacked of Socialism in the same way that the U. S. Mail does, scarcely constituted its ear-marks. He even fancied that the Populist statement that land "is the natural heritage of the people and should not be monopolized for speculative purposes" was a veiled threat at national ownership of land. Knowing the strong individualism of the American farmer on this point as he must have known it, the historian must have been suffering from a mental complex. (See *Economic Studies*, vol. i, p. 183.

<sup>1</sup>See Haynes, *Third Party Movts.*, p. 263; F. B. Tracy, "Menacing Socialism in the Western States," *Forum*, vol. xv, p. 332; *Morn. News*, Jul. 3-7, Aug. 25, 1892; clippings, Watson, colln.

<sup>2</sup>*People's Party Paper*, Dec., 1891-Oct., 1892. Clippings, Watson colln.

ity, but was not a good campaigner. Northen, of course, would be his Democratic opponent, and would have the support of a number of conservative farmers, as well as the business men, and the "regulars" generally. The Populists put out a full ticket. Their state platform endorsed that of Omaha, condemned the convict lease system, demanded rigid economy in all public matters, and called especial attention to the fact that "producers" were bearing much more than their just share of taxation. Being committed by the Omaha program to government ownership of railroads, they dropped their demands for further regulatory measures.<sup>1</sup> The Democrats endorsed the Chicago declaration, called for economy in administration and extension of the powers of the railway commission.<sup>2</sup> State issues were subordinate to national, even more than they were in 1890, and, in the minds of the Democracy at least, both were subordinate to questions of political expediency, party tradition, and personalities.

Watson held the centre of the stage. Whether as saint or as devil, he was the incarnation of Populism. His letters to the *People's Party Paper*, and the press accounts of his opinions and behavior, were read, reread, and vehemently discussed. Both factions watched his every move in Washington in order to prove him a Moses or a Judas.

Whether for political effect or with the hope that some actual good might come of them, he introduced a number of bills in Congress, most of which, as might have been expected, never came back from committee rooms. Some of these were:—to increase the currency; to abolish the national banking system; to create an income tax; to prevent the

<sup>1</sup>*People's Party Paper*, July 22, 29, 1892. *Constitution*, July 21, 1892; Knight, p. 975. All state-house officers were renominated by the Democrats except one.

<sup>2</sup>*Constitution*, Aug. 9-11, 1892.

payment in advance of interest on government bonds; to establish a system of sub-treasuries; to remove the tariff on jute, jute bagging, iron tires, binding wire, etc.; and to regulate private detective agencies.<sup>1</sup> He was a fiery advocate of free silver and free trade. Perhaps his most notable achievement was in connection with the postal service. Petitions were pouring in upon Congress, urging that the delivery of mail be extended into rural communities. A number of bills and resolutions to this effect were introduced during the first session, but without practical results. At the next session, Watson succeeded in attaching an amendment to the post-office appropriation bill providing for the first experiment in strictly rural delivery. He thus became the proud "father" of the R. F. D.<sup>2</sup>

Watson was greatly perturbed by the dilatory methods of Congress, and the alleged shams and moral laxity of his fellow members. They dawdled and filibustered over vital measures, were suspiciously intimate with lobbyists, hung around the capitol bar, came upon the floor of the House and even tried to speak when in a drunken state. One member from Alabama was alleged to have been so intoxicated while speaking that "in the midst of maudlin ramblings, [he] was heard to ask, 'Mr. Speaker, where am I at?'" These charges appeared in print in July, 1892. The sensation produced in the House may well be imagined. There was talk of expelling Watson. An investigation was instituted which seems to have convinced the majority of the members that the gentleman from Alabama was only weary from his part in a long filibuster, and was sipping some innocent beverage from a cup on his desk. Brought before the bar of the House, Watson seems to have been

<sup>1</sup> *Congressional Rec.*, 52nd Cong., 1st Sess., Index, p. 623.

<sup>2</sup> *Congl. Rec.*, 52nd Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 4769, 4799, 4803, 4927, 4958; *ibid.*, 2nd Sess., pp. 1756, 1759, 1801, 1941, 2014, 2316, 2322, 2370, 2532, 2618. See also *Life and Speeches; Tom Watson's Magazine*, vol. i, p. 412.

rather obstreperous. According to his version, the matter was dropped because he was telling too much. As Georgians viewed the affairs, a great reformer had dared defy the powers that be, and had stirred a wholesome fear among the corruptible; or, else, a crank and a nuisance had been unable to adjust himself to a strange environment, had insulted an honorable Southern gentleman, and had forever lost whatever influence he might have had in Congress.<sup>1</sup>

These charges had appeared in Watson's *Campaign Book*, which bore as its major title, "*Not a Revolt! It is a Revolution*," but which the press referred to as "Tom's Book." It was a manifesto of Populism in Georgia, and to a greater or less extent in other states. Written in a plain, often slangy, but extremely vigorous and catchy style, it traced the "crimson trail" of the corporate interest, and of their "vassals," the old parties, since the Civil War; showing how the Money Power "speculated upon the disasters of the country, and grew rich upon her distress," made the government a means for gratifying their own rapacity, and, whenever the people sought measures of relief, shouted "class legislation!" No class legislation was more flagrant, he thought, than that which created and maintained the national banking system, gave away the public domain to greedy corporations, robbed the plain people of billions through tariff laws, which only filled the coffers of factory owners, while the miserable worker was deluded into the belief that he was

<sup>1</sup>*Constitution and Morning News*, July 30-Aug. 5; *People's Party Paper*, Aug. 5, 1892. T. V. Powderly of the Knights of Labor, who witnessed the investigation wrote (*People's Party Paper*, Aug. 26) that when Watson was called upon to explain, it seemed that the purpose of the House was rather to keep him from explaining. The minority report of the committee, defending Watson, was "misplaced," and hence not printed by the government. The majority report, condemning him, was printed in great numbers, it seems (*ibid.*) and spread over the state by the Democrats. Watson then had the other printed at his own expense, and spread by the Populists.



the gainer. And the crime against silver! All the hypocritical cant about "honest money" simply meant at bottom the maintenance of an appreciating dollar for the creditor class, and the continued robbery of the debt-burdened producers. Wherein lay the honesty of a system which continually narrowed the returns, and appreciated the debts of toiling millions, while it added to the wealth of those already surfeited? How much longer would the poor farmers and factory workers permit themselves to be deceived by the politician who thrilled them with past glories and scared them with spectres of black rule, while he registered the commands of their oppressors in laws which they did not understand! Both the old parties were guilty. The Democrats blamed the Republicans, but investigation showed that their representatives had helped to fasten the chains. Even those whose constituents had been most adversely affected had been accessories to such acts as "the crime of '73;" then when upbraided by the voters had whined that they "didn't know it was loaded." The Democratic machine had come as fully under the sway of powerful business groups as had the Republican. Not that all politicians were conscious tools of such groups: Cleveland, for example, was thought to be honest in purpose, but possessed of the dominant financial theories of his section, and unable to appreciate the situation which the masses of the people faced. The Eastern Democracy as a whole, down to the Tweed ring and its "puppet," David B. Hill, was dominated by the same principles. And as long as it could take the vote of the Solid South for granted, it could swing the party. Hence the South could never have any appreciable influence in national councils until that coalition were blasted.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Similar arguments were employed by the various Populist writers and speakers. See *People's Party Paper*, Dec., 1891-Oct., 1892; also clippings from *Alliance Farmer* and others, Watson colln.

The regulars maintained, on the other hand, that no new party was needed. The Southern Democracy had heard the voice of the farmers, and was fully in line with their demands in essential matters. The party had an excellent chance to gain complete control of the federal government; the Southern wing was stronger than ever before since the Civil War, and could largely shape its policies. It would hence be a great misfortune if in the hour of triumph the party should come to grief because of the desertion of a Southern state.<sup>1</sup> The liberal, or compromise, wing favored Hill as the presidential nominee. Although he was not a silverite, he was thought to be more of a politician than Cleveland, it seems, and hence more likely to bow to the majority. They had accepted Cleveland gracefully, however, hoping he would change his mind on the silver question.<sup>2</sup> In the matter of the platform, they claimed that the South had gained a great victory. "I insisted," wrote the Georgia member of the platform committee, "that for twenty years the Southern states had appeared in the national Democratic convention, and were told what was necessary to carry New York and Indiana for the Democracy; but that the time had come when they were brought face to face with the problem of retaining the Solid South." Hence this section was well represented on the sub-committee; which accounted, he said, for the Force-Bill plank being made the most prominent, and for the definite stand upon the tariff. He claimed that no surrender had been made on the silver question. Admitting that the original

<sup>1</sup> *Constitution*, Jan. 11, 14, 16, 1891, Mar. 25, 31, Apr. 1, June 25, 1892; *Morn. News*, June 5, 1891, March 3, 24, 1892; also clippings from various papers in Watson and Northen collns.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, also Appleton's *Annual Cyc.*, 1892, p. 308. The *Atlanta Journal* (Hoke Smith's organ) supported Cleveland, as did the *Morning News*, and others of the conservative group. Smith was the leader of the Cleveland forces. See Knight, p. 975.

draft had called for "free" coinage, he said that certain members from the North had urged that in their communities a different interpretation was placed upon this term from that current in the South; hence the phrase "without charge for mintage" was substituted. Whether from finesse or from naiveté, he declared that the plank quite satisfied the free-silver element.<sup>1</sup> And the *Constitution* added that since silver and the tariff were the most important issues there was not enough difference between Populism and reformed Democracy to warrant a schism. It deplored the fact that some of the conservative dailies had "sought to read the Alliance out of the Democratic party," and to make it appear that the principles of the two were diametrically opposed. "This is a poor way to conciliate the farmers." Upon the papers which had followed this course rested the responsibility for the existence of a third party in Georgia.<sup>2</sup>

The *Morning News*, the *Augusta Chronicle*, and a number of other papers cast the blame upon those who had humored the whims of the radicals, telling them that the "Ocala fraud" was good Democratic doctrine.<sup>3</sup> Such organs were not quite clear as to their attitude toward free silver at this time, though within the next few years most of them came out against it. They kept up an intermittent fire upon the sub-treasury; but the Populists succeeded to some extent in throwing the Democrats on the defensive in this matter. A number of the latter had embraced the project in 1890,

<sup>1</sup>*Constitution*, June 25, 1892. The states represented on the sub-committee were Va., Tenn., Ga., Mo., Del., Cal., Mich., Ind., N. J., and Mass.

<sup>2</sup>*Constitution*, Mar. 25, Apr. 1, June 25, 1892. This paper also favored a federal income tax and revision of the nat'l banking system (June 8, 1891).

<sup>3</sup>*Morn. News*, June 5, 1891, Mar. 3, 24, 31, Apr. 6, 1892.

while others had accepted its principle. The Populists had called for proposals as to revision, or for a substitute plan which would offer more reasonable credit facilities to the farmers as well as a more elastic currency. The Democrats had not agreed upon any. Some of them thought that repealing the prohibitive tax upon note issues of state banks would help. But many conservative Democrats objected to this. So did the Populists. Watson thought it quite inconsistent in Major Black, his opponent, to denounce government "rag money" and advocate a revival of "wild-cat" bank issues.<sup>1</sup> All the regulars attacked government ownership of railroads. It was "too wild a scheme to be thought of seriously." The roads would cost more money than was possessed by all the governments of the world combined. If they were bought with greenbacks, a dollar would soon be as worthless as a Confederate "shin-plaster." The *Constitution*, wishing no doubt to draw attention away from questions on which the party was divided, sought to make this the chief platform issue.<sup>2</sup>

If the Democrats were not altogether agreed on platform issues, they were in full accord on matters of political expediency and party tradition. And these received greatest attention. "Stand by the old party!" was a headline often seen on the editorial page. "A vote for Weaver is a vote for Harrison." "The People's Party hasn't a ghost of a show to elect a president, and whatever strength it gains in the South will only advantage the Republicans." With the Force Bill pending, "a revival of bayonet rule is threat-

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, Apr. 1, 3, Aug. 7, 1892. Black had been a major in the Confederate army, and was now a brilliant lawyer and able politician. His home was in Augusta. Knight, p. 1723; *Southern Cultivator*, May, 1890.

<sup>2</sup>*Constitution*, Mar. 4, Jul. 6, 26, Aug. 10, 1892; *Morn. News*, Sep. 17, 1892.

ened.”<sup>1</sup> Republicans were said to be rejoicing over the prospect of breaking the Solid South. Their hand was plainly seen in the new movement. Some of their leaders in the state had already turned Populists, while others were plotting fusion. It was the old enemy in a new guise. Surely the white people of Georgia had not forgotten the terrible years of black Republican rule, and the glorious record of the Democratic party in redeeming the state from that infamy. Even now the Populists were courting the negro vote. Watson had an insolent negro friend campaigning in his behalf.<sup>2</sup> What might such an alliance bring forth! The loyal whites must organize, and—teach the darkies that the Democrats are their real friends. Many of them were already very fond of Northen, for he was know to be exceptionally kind to his colored “hands.”<sup>3</sup>

As may well be imagined, the campaign was extremely turbulent. The Populist zealots revived the fires of political dissent of 1880, now greatly intensified by the outburst of economic protest. Long accustomed to having their way, the Democratic leaders were naturally intolerant of opposition. Numerous debates were scheduled as in 1890. Some of these were little short of riots.<sup>4</sup> Weaver abandoned his campaign in Georgia after meeting a few appointments, because of “the spirit of rowdyism” which he encountered at the hands of “the young roughs who infested

<sup>1</sup>*Constitution*, Jan. 11, 14, 16, Mar. 25, 31, Apr. 1, June 24, 25; *Morn. News*, Oct. 9, 1892. Watson declared that the whole argument of the regulars could be “boiled down into one word, NIGGER” (*P. P. P.*, Aug. 26, 1892).

<sup>2</sup>*Morn. News*, Apr. 6, 16, Aug. 13; *Constitution*, Apr. 7, 1892.

<sup>3</sup>*Morn. News*, Mar. 24, 31, Apr. 6, 11, 14, Oct. 28; *Constn.*, Jul. 11, Aug. 9, 10, 1892.

<sup>4</sup>*Morn. News*, *Constn.*, and *P. P. P.*, Aug.-Oct., 1892. Campaign literature in Northen and Watson Collns.

the towns," egged on, he thought, by others who kept in the background.<sup>1</sup>

Except in some of the factory settlements, the townspeople were almost all Democratic, and were inclined to look upon the Populists with great disdain. Here and there a professional man—perhaps with thwarted political ambitions, though not necessarily so,—dared to counter the dominant opinion and feeling of his community. Among the white farmers, probably a majority were Populists, the proportion being greater among the poorer groups. Relatively few of the great planters were radical. The "yeomanry" divided, often brother against brother and father against son.<sup>2</sup> Watson's brother was secretary of the mass meeting in Thomson which read him out of the Democratic party when he "deserted" the caucus.<sup>3</sup>

Sub-Alliances debated the question of political action with much vigor; many of them passed resolutions indorsing the new party, though some passed contrary ones declaring that the order had no right to interfere with the politics of its members. Even where the former type prevailed, conservatives did not regard themselves as bound.<sup>4</sup> In the state convention, resolutions were introduced indorsing the People's Party, and commending the course of editor Irwin of the *Alliance Farmer* who had been an ardent third-party advocate. A compromise was agreed upon whereby the former was dropped and the latter was passed. The order had become predominantly Populist, it seems; but as the

<sup>1</sup> See Haynes, *Weaver*, pp. 324-325; *Constn.*, Oct. 1; campaign circulars bitterly denouncing Weaver, Northen colln.

<sup>2</sup> See *infra*, ch. v.

<sup>3</sup> *People's Party Paper*, Mar. 3, 1892.

<sup>4</sup> The *Alliance Farmer* claimed as early as Mar. 22, 1892, that 1600 out of 2200 sub-Alliances had reported resolutions passed indorsing the action of St. Louis. Cf. *Constn.*, Apr. 12, 1892; *Morn. News*, Apr. 8, May 5, Aug. 20, 1892.

membership had begun to decline the radicals wished to avoid an open breach.<sup>1</sup>

It became evident early in the campaign that the negroes would hold the balance of power. The Populists sought to enlist their support through the Colored Alliance. They would have had better success no doubt had they been willing to effect a general fusion with the Republicans, but they were evidently afraid of injuring their cause with the whites. In reply to an inquiry from Republican leaders as to whether he would accept the nomination of their party, Peek said that he would welcome their votes, but would make no compromise of Populist principles. They placed him on their ticket as gubernatorial nominee, but named separate candidates for other state offices. They made no nominations for Congress, and apparently their leaders rather generally supported the Populist candidates, but they were unable to swing the negro vote *en masse*.<sup>2</sup> The Democrats had had experience in dealing with the colored vote. They had learned how to eliminate it in reconstruction times, and how to utilize it in the years of party schism a decade later. Tradition, custom, and election laws were all in their favor. A supremely desirable end was thought to justify questionable means, especially in the face of a situation which had been forced upon them at the bayonet's point. Thus intimidation, bribery, ballot-box stuffing, and manipulation of the count, while deplored, were thought to be lesser evils than the loss of political control by the "respectable" elements and the jeopardizing of the social order.

<sup>1</sup>*Morn. News*, Aug. 20; *P. P. P.*, Aug. 26; *All. Far.*, Nov. 24, 1892. There had been a strong effort to keep the Alliance from taking any action favorable to the new party. Gordon had joined the order in Mar., 1891 (*Constn.*, Mar. 7), and had added his influence to that of Northen, Livingston, and others toward this end.

<sup>2</sup>See correspondence, clippings, hand-bills, etc., Northen and Watson colls.

Grady's predictions came true. "With intelligence and property divided," the negro vote did "invite the debauching bid of factions" and make "corruption and cunning the price of victory." By no means all of the negroes were corruptible, nor were all of the whites incorruptible; but the very large element of the former who were, played the most conspicuous role in the solemn farce of election day. Many of the planters and owners of turpentine stills took their "hands" to the polls and voted them in gangs. In some of the towns and cities, all-night revelries were held for the darkies on the night before the election. Barbecue was served, with whiskey and beer by the barrel. Next morning the dusky revelers were marched to the polls by beat of drum, carefully guarded lest some desert in search of another reward. In some cities bands of them were said to have been taken from one polling place to another and voted under different names. According to the testimony produced in the Watson-Black contested election case, negroes were brought over from South Carolina in four-horse wagon loads and voted at various precincts in Augusta.

At one precinct there were three ballot boxes, separated by a temporary wall, apparently to facilitate repeating. In this way the vote of Augusta seems to have been double the number of legal voters—eighty per cent of it being Democratic. The evidence further indicates that the "job-lash" was used by at least one of the Augusta mills to force employees, white and black, to vote "regular." Some who refused to heed the warning were discharged, and were told, according to their testimony, that this was the sole reason therefor. One of these was a white man 54 years old. Somewhat similar methods were employed, it seems, in the smaller towns. In the country, a considerable number of precincts with Populist majorities were thrown out on technicalities. In some cases a man had been appointed as one



of the election holders who proved not to be a free-holder or a magistrate, or not to have been properly sworn in, or else to be illiterate—any of which was contrary to law. In others one of the election holders neglected, or refused, to sign the returns, which likewise rendered them void. The Democrats were not the only sinners, to be sure; but they were more resourceful, and hence more successful at the game.<sup>1</sup>

The results showed a sweeping Democratic victory.<sup>2</sup> Northen defeated Peek two to one. Cleveland, Harrison, and Weaver stood in a proportion of about 3:1:1 in Georgia. Only fourteen counties, and none of the Congressional districts, went Populist. In the country at large, Cleveland received 380,000 plurality over Harrison, with 277 out of 444 electoral votes. The Democrats gained possession of both houses of Congress, as well as the Presidency, for the first time since Buchanan's election in 1856. But Weaver surprised the country. He polled 1,040,886 votes, carried four states (Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, and Nevada), and gained one electoral vote in each of two others (North Dakota and Oregon), giving him a total of 22 electoral votes. The radicals were not discouraged.

<sup>1</sup>See "Contested-Election Case of Thos. E. Watson vs. James C. C. Black." ... (report of Congressional Committee, pamphlet, Lib. of Cong.); letters, clippings, pamphlets, etc., Watson colln. These things are matters of common knowledge among Georgians, especially in the black belt, who remember the Populist campaigns.

<sup>2</sup>Georgia, *House Journal*, 1892, pp. 54 *et seq.* Copy of official count in detail in *Constitution*, Oct. 28, 1892. Presidential vote in Stanwood, 157; Congressional vote in *Tribune Almanac*, 1893, p. 270.

## CHAPTER V

### “THE HEART-BREAKING NINETIES”

ECONOMIC conditions in the nineties greatly favored the growth of dissent. The most disastrous panic in our history occurred in 1893, and was followed by a general depression, unusually prolonged and severe. In one year, 642 banks closed their doors, the liabilities of mercantile failures amounted to \$374,000,000, and 29,340 miles of railway went into the hands of receivers. The “currency famine” became so acute that all sorts of illegal substitutes for money were resorted to. Interest rates soared, and for a time credit could scarcely be obtained at all. “Unemployment assumed vast proportions, and reacted in a most distressing fashion upon the demand for goods.” There was a brief revival in the spring of 1895, followed by a renewal of the money stringency, and then of the gloomy depression which continued with little abatement for nearly three years longer.<sup>1</sup>

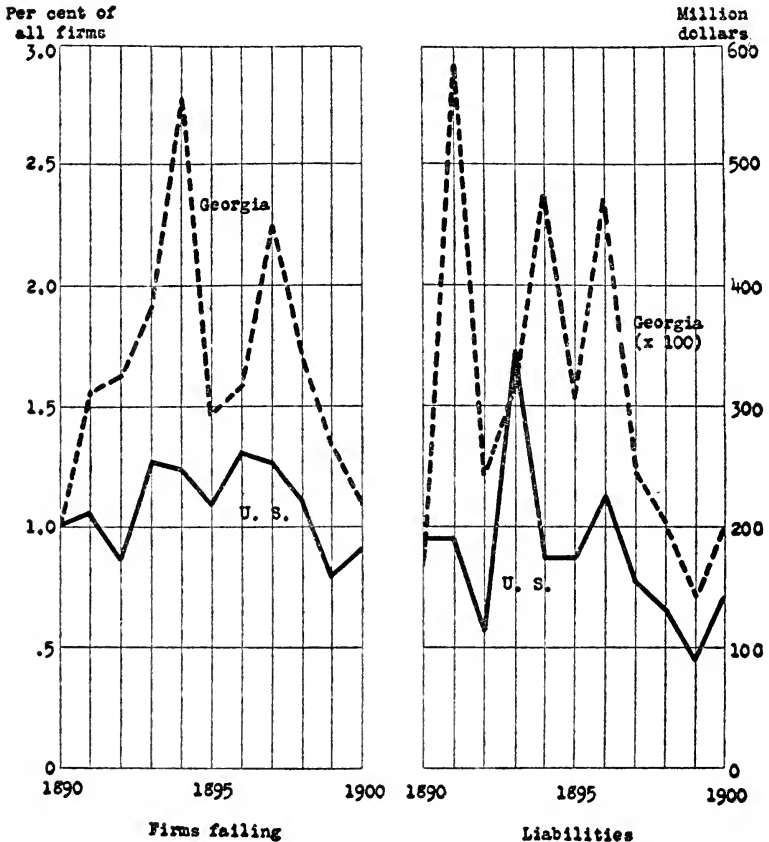
Agrarian and other debtor interests in the West and South were the worst sufferers. Prices, already at the lowest point of the century up to that time, continued to drop until near the close of the decade, farm products going lowest.<sup>2</sup> Wheat went below fifteen cents a bushel on the farm, and cotton below five cents a pound.<sup>3</sup> This was

<sup>1</sup> Wesley C. Mitchell, *Business Cycles*, ch. iii; D. R. Dewey, *National Problems*, pp. 253-266; Harry Thurston Peck, *Twenty Years of the Republic*, chs. vii-x; W. Jett Lauck, *Causes of the Panic of 1893*, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> Ralph G. Hurlin, “Course of U. S. Wholesale Prices for 100 Years,” in *Annalist*, Apr. 11, 1921; *U. S. Stat. Abs.*, 1915, pp. 525-526.

<sup>3</sup> Dept. of Ag., *Yearbook*, 1899, pp. 759-765, 1901, p. 754.

COMMERCIAL FAILURES IN THE NINETIES  
 PER CENT OF FIRMS FAILING AND TOTAL LIABILITIES IN GEORGIA AND THE  
 UNITED STATES



Based on figures in the United States *Statistical Abstract*, 1894, pp. 346, 365; *ibid.*, 1900, pp. 389, 396.

clearly below the cost of production; hence the farmers sank more deeply in debt, and the dollars in which their debts were measured grew still larger in terms of their products. Tenancy increased.<sup>1</sup> In the South the anaconda mortgage

<sup>1</sup>*Abs. of 12th Census*, p. 218.

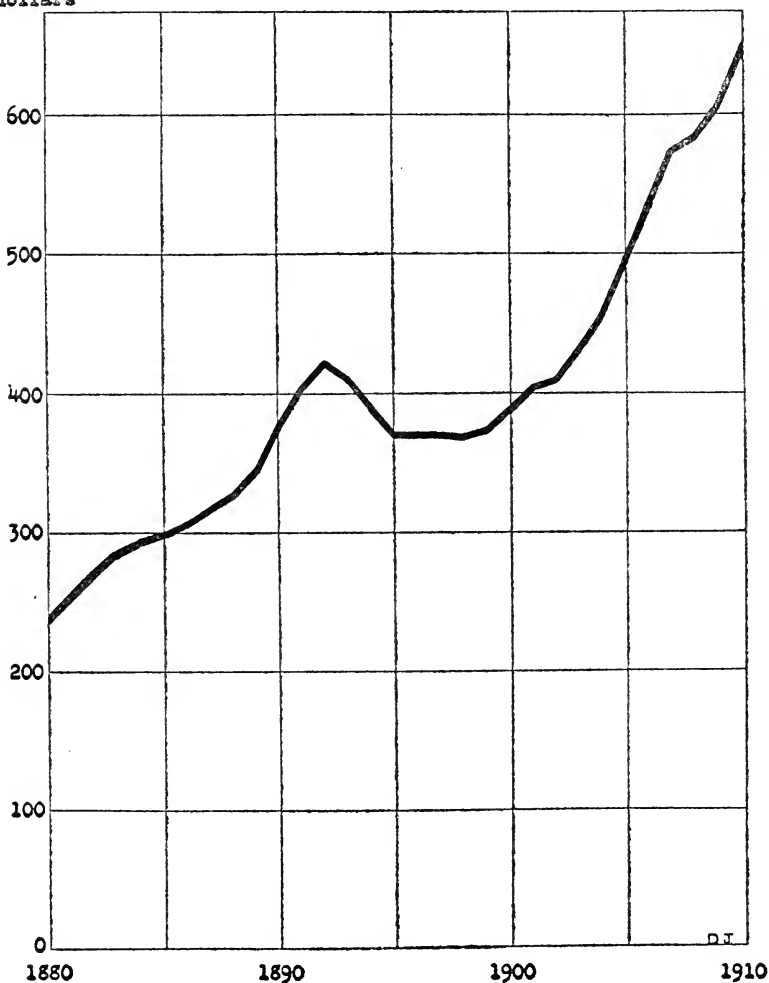
system broadened its sway and tightened its grasp. But in spite of all precautions thousands of merchants went under. The percentage of business failures went higher in the South and West than in the East—more than twice as high in Georgia as in the country at large.<sup>1</sup> In one Georgia town, merchants were said to have made full collection on about three per cent of their accounts in 1892, and to have gotten less than fifty cents on the dollar on most of the remaining.<sup>2</sup> Total property values in the state, according to the tax returns, fell from 421 millions in 1892 to 411, 338, and 371 millions, respectively, in the three succeeding years. They did not show any appreciable recovery until 1900.<sup>3</sup>

It is difficult to describe the conditions which prevailed among the farmers without seeming to exaggerate. Credit accounts were so reduced that many commodities formerly regarded as necessities became luxuries, either dispensed with altogether or indulged but rarely. Despite the low price of flour, for example, many farmers in regions where wheat was not grown had to content themselves with corn bread, except perhaps on Sundays when the neighbors were invited home with them from church. To a greater or less extent the same was true of other commodities not produced on their farms. "Our country is in a terrible condition," wrote the president of the Burke county Alliance to Watson in 1892. He thought most of the farmers would have been better off if they had not planted a seed, except for such products as they needed for home consumption. They had run up accounts beyond their ability to pay, in order to produce

<sup>1</sup>*U. S. Stat. Abs.*, 1894, pp. 346, 365; *ibid.*, 1900, pp. 389, 396.

<sup>2</sup>Letter from W. C. Stanford, President Burke County Alliance, to Watson (original in Watson collection, excerpts in *Congressional Record*, 52nd. Cong., 1st Sess., pt. i, p. 600).

<sup>3</sup>Ga. Comptroller-General, *Reports*, 1899, p. 4; 1916, p. 14. (Figures are exclusive of railroads.)

THE DEPRESSION OF THE NINETIES IN GEORGIA AS REGISTERED IN THE  
TAX RETURNSMillion  
dollars

Based on the returns for all taxable property except railroads. *Report of the Comptroller-General, 1910, p. 4.*

goods which when sold left them without money or credit to supply their own needs. Even in the homes of the better-to-do, living became very close. Old clothes were patched and re-patched. Santa Claus became so poor that a handful of candy was the limit of his annual blessing to many a country child. Gloom and discouragement were mingled with discontent.<sup>1</sup> Housewives sang in melancholy tones to the air of "the Bonnie Blue Flag":

My husband came from town last night  
As sad as man could be,  
His wagon empty, cotton gone,  
And not a dime had he.

Huzzah! Huzzah!  
'Tis queer, I do declare;  
We make the clothes for all the world,  
But few we have to wear.

It was the song of the Populists, and each hard year increased the volume of the chorus.

In the factory towns there was much unemployment.<sup>2</sup> Marginal mills, which included nearly all the mills in this section, were among the first to succumb and among the last to recover. In Augusta, Macon, Columbus, and other Georgia towns where factories had newly appeared there was a great deal of suffering. And with the general spirit of unrest abroad in the land, labor was less inclined to accept a fatalistic view of its troubles.

Various explanations of the panic were given by contemporaries. "Republicans, like Speaker Reed, assigned as cause the fear of tariff reductions aroused by the sweeping

<sup>1</sup>Again we are dealing with matters of common knowledge in Georgia. See letter from Stanford, reference 6 *supra*.

<sup>2</sup>Statistical data are very meager on this point in the United States, but in the case of the one industry for which they are available for the entire country, that of coal mining, the employment curve shows a great slump in the nineties. See Mitchell, pp. 268-269.

Democratic victories in the autumn of 1892. Democrats, like Governor Russel of Massachusetts, retorted that Republican legislation and extravagance were responsible."<sup>1</sup> The prevailing opinion among conservatives was that doubt concerning the maintenance of the gold standard was at least very largely to blame. Silverites believed, on the other hand, that the desperate efforts to cling to the gold standard in the face of the fact that the world's supply of the yellow metal was not increasing in proportion to the demand for it, was responsible for the appreciation of the dollar and for the corresponding fall in prices with the general disaster to producers. Some economists regarded it as "an economic crisis of the common sort produced by speculation, over-production, and under-consumption."<sup>2</sup> Regarding it as a phase of the modern business cycles, one still has to take into account numerous factors which tended to intensify the crash and to prolong its aftermath. "

On questions of remedial legislation, the Democrats were badly divided when they came into power in March, 1893. There was a strong demand from the South and West for unlimited coinage of silver, but Cleveland was determined to prevent any such move, and he had the support of the Eastern wing of his party. Liquidation had already set in before the inauguration, and the panic stage was approaching. The finances of the government were in a precarious condition. In order to appreciate this situation and the developments which followed, we should recall some of the important events of the preceding administration.

When Harrison succeeded Cleveland as president in 1889 he found a surplus of some one hundred million dollars in the Treasury, over and above the hundred million in gold

<sup>1</sup> See Mitchell, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Mitchell (p. 51) gives a number of references to periodical literature bearing on this subject.

regarded as a necessary reserve for the redemption of greenbacks. This surplus had been a source of embarrassment to protectionists; for Cleveland and other tariff reformers had pointed to it as an evidence that the tariff was needlessly high. Hence the Republican Congress of 1889-91 launched upon a policy of reckless appropriations for pensions, rivers and harbors, public buildings, etc. The Democratic Congress which followed was likewise extravagant. As a result, the surplus rapidly disappeared. In order further to provide against such an embarrassment in the future, the McKinley tariff of 1890 was framed with a view to reducing revenues while at the same time increasing the measure of protection to favored interests. This was done by making the schedules on some of the protected commodities so high as virtually to prohibit their importation, and by reducing the duties on, or placing upon the free list, certain raw materials which had formerly yielded large revenues. The duty on sugar was removed and American producers were given a bounty, so that the government incurred a double loss. The operation of the silver-purchase clause of the Sherman Act had likewise proved a drain upon the Treasury. Under it, twice as much silver was taken by the government as under the Bland Allison Act; the metal was now deposited in the treasury in the form of bullion, government notes were issued in payment for it, and the Secretary who was authorized to redeem these either in gold or in silver at the market price used his option to redeem them in gold. Thus the reserve was called upon to perform a double duty. Before Harrison left the White House the income of the government had become less than the outgo, and the reserve, now being drawn upon to pay current expenses, had fallen to the danger point.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mitchell, pp. 51-54; Dewey, chs. iv, xi, xiv; Hepburn, chs. xvi, xx; Peck, pp. 197-198, 202-215.



Meanwhile the situation abroad had an important bearing upon affairs in this country. The long and gloomy depression had already settled down upon Europe. A crisis had occurred in France in 1889, in England in 1890 and soon had spread to other countries. There had been a minor crisis in the United States in 1890, but the process of liquidation had been halted and a superficial prosperity restored the following year because of a bountiful harvest in this country coincident with a shortage of crops in Europe. We thus received a welcome flow of gold in payment of trade balances. But the relief was only temporary. The cloud of depression hung over Europe until 1895. Gold was in great demand everywhere. A considerable tendency among Europeans to sell American securities developed in 1892.<sup>1</sup> To what extent this was due to apprehensions in reference to our sinking reserve, to fears that we might adopt a silver standard, or to the general scramble for gold among the nations and the money stringency which characterized business rather generally at the time, is an open question. It might be mentioned in this connection that all the important commercial countries of Europe had by this time actually or virtually demonetized silver, some of them throwing considerable quantities of it out of circulation, and at the same time increasing the demand for gold for coinage or reserve purposes.<sup>2</sup> In 1892 Austria-Hungary decided to resume specie payments and went into the markets of the world to obtain a gold reserve to this end. Russia was at the same time collecting a great store of gold for a purpose then unknown.<sup>3</sup> Yet the world's output of the yellow metal had fallen off from 64 million ounces during the fifties

<sup>1</sup> Mitchell, pp. 46-62; Dewey, pp. 255-256; Lauck, chs. iii-vi.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* The mints of India were closed to silver in June, 1893.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

to 61 million during the sixties, 56 million during the seventies, and 51 million during the eighties.<sup>1</sup> Thus the supply was not increasing in proportion to the demand.

Whatever the cause for the unusually great outflow of gold from this country in 1892 and '93, the result was increasing embarrassment in business and government circles. To meet the demands upon them, bankers drew upon the government reserve by presenting paper for redemption. Harrison had persuaded some of them to accept paper in lieu of gold when the latter was not especially needed, and thus had been able to keep the reserve from falling far below the danger point in the last months of his administration. Cleveland followed the same policy for a few months, but with declining success. It was obvious that unless there were some turn of affairs it would soon become necessary for the government to redeem its paper in silver.<sup>2</sup>

This, according to the silverites, was the logical thing to do. The world's supply of gold was clearly inadequate, they said, to maintain the single standard. As the precious metal grew dearer in proportion to other commodities, prices kept falling and debts appreciating. The hardships thus entailed upon the great mass of debt-ridden producers and the advantages afforded to capitalists were outrageously unfair, they thought. There was nothing particularly sacred about gold. It was said to be desirable as a standard because of its stability of value. But *was* its value stable? Any commodity would be stable if measured in terms of itself. If gold were measured in terms of commodities it would show an enormous rise in value in their generation. And that rise represented a colossal legal robbery of the poor by the rich. If the remonetization of silver should afford an era of cheaper money; instead of being dishonest, as the

<sup>1</sup> *U. S. Stat. Abs.*, 1903, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Mitchell, pp. 46-62, 278-322; Dewey, pp. 252-261.

gold-bugs pharisaically shouted, it would be just recompense. Most of the silverites believed that both metals could be kept in circulation on the basis of the old ratio. If silver were no longer in a "begging" position, and the surplus of it were drunk up by the mints its relative value would increase; if the strain upon the gold supply were relaxed, and the psychic effect of the government preference for it done away, its relative value would decline. The fiat of the government would make all dollars *dollars*. If, however, Gresham's law should operate and gold should become a mere commodity bought and sold like diamonds, was it any better to become a commodity than silver? There was little of it in circulation among the people anyway. Its real place in the financial scheme at the time was to measure values; and if it had proved to be a bad measure, either supplement it or let it go.<sup>1</sup>

Cleveland saw matters in a different light. He had the view of the business men and the conservative economists. To his mind too much had already been done for silver. The purchase clause of the Sherman Law and the agitation for unlimited coinage were the fundamental causes of the country's troubles. Repeal the one and silence the other, or at least convince the business world that there would be no dallying with the standard; confidence would then be restored and prosperity would return. Hence just as the panic cloud was bursting he called an extra session of Congress to convene in August to repeal the purchase clause.<sup>2</sup>

There was considerable doubt for a time as to whether Congress would accept the President's advice in the matter

<sup>1</sup>W. J. Bryan, *The First Battle*, *passim*, esp. pp. 80-95; Hepburn, chs. xv-xx; Peck, pp. 339-345; *Constitution and People's Party Paper*, 1893, esp. Aug.-Oct.

<sup>2</sup>See Cleveland's second inaugural address and his message to Congress in extraordinary session, in J. D. Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, pp. 5821, 5833.

of repeal without enacting a substitute measure providing for "inflation" in some form. The summer months were marked by an acute "currency famine." A week before Congress met, the savings banks announced that depositors would not be permitted to draw money except on sixty days' notice. Other banks refused to pay out currency except under extreme circumstances. It soon became almost impossible for the ordinary person to get a cheque cashed, even at his own bank. He was told that he had made his deposits by cheques in most cases, and he must now employ the same medium for purposes of exchange. He was granted a certified cheque if he wished it, or else clearing-house certificates.<sup>1</sup> Actual currency was at a premium ranging from  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 per cent. "The money-brokers, who had foreseen the action of the banks, had for several days been quietly accumulating a stock of cash; and they now proceeded to cash the certified cheques at the discount mentioned. An enormous business of this sort was done." By the middle of August such transactions are said to have aggregated \$1,000,000 daily. "A well-known brokerage firm near the head of Wall Street bought currency at a premium of  $\frac{1}{2}$  of one per cent and sold it at a premium of 3 per cent. Great bundles of paper money were stacked up behind the counters." Even government cheques drawn in payment of pensions were not accepted at face value. "Oddly enough, silver was now taken as readily as gold, while paper money was preferred to either. On August 5th, a firm of money-brokers advertised for silver dollars, offering a premium of \$7.50 per thousand."<sup>2</sup> Under these circumstances it was difficult to persuade the "inflationists"

<sup>1</sup>Mitchell, p. 56; Dewey, pp. 260-261; Hepburn, pp. 251-252; Peck, pp. 335-339.

<sup>2</sup>Quotations from Peck, pp. 338-339. See also Dewey, pp. 260-262; Mitchell, p. 56; Hepburn, pp. 351-352; Lauck, ch. vii.

to approve the repeal of the purchase clause, and thereby eliminate from the currency the forty-odd million dollars annually issued under it, without providing some other means of increasing the circulation. To their minds, unconditional repeal would mean placing the country all the more completely in the power of the "Shylocks." Various substitute measures were proposed, such as free coinage of silver at the legal ratio of 16:1, free coinage at a higher ratio, or repeal of the law which imposed a prohibitory tax of ten per cent on state-bank notes.<sup>1</sup> But Cleveland called for immediate repeal and clearly implied that he considered it no time to consider compromise. Thus Democratic Congressmen and Senators from pro-silver communities of the South and West were in a quandary. Should they obey their leader and risk the wrath of their constituents, or disobey and widen the breach in their party?

In Georgia the Democratic press became very uneasy. At first the silver organs were inclined to praise the gallant fight being made under the leadership of "Silver Dick" Bland of Missouri, aided by the eloquent young Bryan, in behalf of free coinage. But as it became more apparent that all amendments were likely to be lost in the House, some papers began to prepare their readers for such an outcome: they suggested that it might be wiser in the existing emergency to hasten repeal, relieve the strain upon the treasury, and then take up the question of further legislation.<sup>2</sup> "They're weakening: we told you they would!" said Watson. "On every stump in Georgia, the Democratic orators said that their national platform meant free silver. Again we say, they are bound by the construction which they themselves put upon it."<sup>3</sup> Two days before

<sup>1</sup>Dewey, pp. 262-264; Georgia Press, Aug., 1893.

<sup>2</sup>See, e. g., Constitution, Aug. 7-28, 1893.

<sup>3</sup>People's Party Paper, Aug. 25, 1893.

the vote was taken in the House, the *Constitution* announced that prominent men in the state had advised Governor Northen to call an extra session of the legislature to authorize state banks to issue circulating notes without regard for the federal law, which was believed to be unconstitutional. It was a desperate disease, and if Congress would offer no remedy the state must act. The governor did not think it wise to take such a step, however,—at least until Congress had acted.<sup>1</sup> On August 28 the House rejected all amendments and passed the bill for unconditional repeal by votes that badly mutilated party lines. The representatives from Georgia voted seven to three for unlimited-coinage amendments, and when these were lost voted six to four for repeal.<sup>2</sup> In close proximity to these events came a series of by-elections in several counties which were very disconcerting to the Democracy of the state. In every case a safe Democratic majority of the year before was turned into a Populist victory. Democratic leaders held a council of war, as a result of which Governor Northen on September 15 addressed the following letter to Preskident Cleveland:<sup>3</sup>

*Mr. President:* Profoundly impressed with the unusual conditions in this State—political and financial—arising from the long-continued delay in helpful legislation by Congress, I respectfully but earnestly urge upon you the expediency of some public expression, somewhat more comprehensive than your recent message, as to the proper policy to be pursued by Congress upon questions affecting the stringency of the times and the needs of the people.

The conditions of this State are fearful and threatening. The people have confidence in your ability and your leadership,

<sup>1</sup>*Constitution*, Aug. 26, 1893.

<sup>2</sup>*Congressional Record*, 53d Cong., 1st Sess., pt. i, pp. 1003-1008; McPherson, *Handbook of Politics*, 1894, p. 155.

<sup>3</sup>Carbon copy in Northen collection.

and no one thing, in my candid judgment, would go so far towards restoring quiet as a clear statement made to the public by you.

I agree with you fully in believing that: "It may be true that the embarrassments from which the business of the country is suffering arise as much from evils apprehended as from those actually existing." The result of such apprehension with us begets a lack of confidence in the party in power, and we are rapidly losing strength in this State. Every election held in this State for the past three (3) months has gone against the Democratic party and in favor of the Populists. Ex-Congressman Watson, the leader of the Populists, has taken advantage of the conditions, and is speaking over the State to assemblies never less than 2,000, and sometimes as many as 5,000 people. . . . [Here several of the election reversals are described.]

Another reason calling for such a statement from you as I ask affects the sale of our farm products and our business relations. Our cotton is now ready for market. There is no sufficient money to handle it. Farmers are compelled to sell, and the price is necessarily reduced. The cotton must be given in settlement of obligations entered into during the early spring. If the stringency remains until these obligations are canceled, and business improves after the crops have been taken from the control of our farmers and fortunes are made by speculators upon the fruits of their labor, while their poverty continues, there can be no hope of holding them to the Democratic party in the next election. If by any means conditions can be improved, and the farmers receive nine or ten cents for their cotton, the party will get the benefit of the advance, and the farmers will remain Democratic.

I beg to assure you of my sympathy in the responsible position you hold before the people and the obligations put upon you by the political party whose leader you are. You have had my earnest advocacy and enthusiastic support from the beginning of the conflict, because I have had unquestioned confidence in your statesmanship and your courage. I write you

now because of what I know to be your power to aid us in this state in perpetuating good government as found in the principles of the Democratic party, and especially in relation to the distressed condition of an unsettled and oppressed people.

I have written this letter after consultation with leading Democrats in this State, who agree with me in the views expressed.

If you see fit to take the action suggested, I shall be gratified. If it is not consistent with your views, simply say so to me, and there shall be no public notice of this correspondence.

A number of clippings from the press of the state were inclosed, which testified to the alarming growth of Populism. A few days later came Cleveland's reply, as follows:<sup>1</sup>

I hardly know how to reply to your letter of the 15th instant. It seems to me that I am quite plainly on record concerning the financial question. My letter accepting the nomination to the presidency, when read in connection with the message lately sent to Congress in extraordinary session, appears to me to be very explicit.

I want a currency that is stable and safe in the hands of our people. I would not knowingly be implicated in a condition that will justly make me in the least degree answerable to any laborer or farmer in the United States for a shrinkage in the purchasing power of the dollar he has received for a full dollar's worth of the product of his toil.

I not only want our currency to be of such a character that all kinds of dollars will be of equal purchasing power at home, but I want it to be of such a character as will demonstrate abroad our wisdom and good faith, thus placing upon a firm foundation our credit among the nations of the earth.

I want our financial conditions and the laws relating to our currency so safe and reassuring that those who have money will spend and invest it in business and new enterprise, instead of hoarding it. You cannot cure fright by calling it foolish

<sup>1</sup>Original in Northen collection.



and unreasonable, and you cannot prevent the frightened man from hoarding his money.

I want good, sound and stable money, and a condition of confidence that will keep it in use.

Within the limits of what I have written, I am a friend to silver, but I believe its proper place in our currency can only be fixed by a readjustment of our currency legislation, and the inauguration of a consistent and comprehensive financial scheme. I think such a thing can only be entered upon profitably and hopefully after the repeal of the law which is charged with all our financial woes. In the present state of the public mind this can not be built upon, nor patched in such a way as to relieve the situation.

I am therefore opposed to the free and unlimited coinage of silver by this country alone and independently; and I am in favor of the immediate and unconditional repeal of the purchasing clause of the so-called Sherman law.

I confess I am astonished by the opposition in the Senate to such prompt action as would relieve the present unfortunate situation. My daily prayer is that the delay occasioned by such opposition may not be the cause of plunging the country into deeper depression than it has yet known, and that the Democratic party may justly be held responsible for such a catastrophe.

Governor Northen's letter was never published. He sent a copy of it to Clark Howell, of the *Constitution*, authorizing him to print a synopsis of it, along with Cleveland's reply. This was done. Referring to his own letter, Northen said, "It is based upon facts that, whilst they are facts, I fear would be hurtful to the general good of the party if they should be published."<sup>1</sup> The feature editorial in the next issue of the *People's Party Paper* was entitled "Blind Stagers." This disease, once confined to horses, had now siezed upon "the dear old Democracy . . . .Don't

<sup>1</sup>Carbon copy in Northen collection.

laugh at the patient. He didn't go to do it. Last summer he forgot there was any hereafter in politics. He fused with everybody he could dupe. He promised different things to different sections. He read his platform to suit the listener . . . . Now pay day has come!" He staggers. He talks. "Some of his talk gets into the papers. Some of it does not. Cleveland's letter to Northen goes all over America and does not rest its heavy feet till it reaches London. But no man knoweth what Billy said to Grover." The *Journal* was in full accord with Cleveland.<sup>1</sup> The *Constitution* thought he was "trifling with the people."<sup>2</sup>

The question of repeal was taken up in the Senate. Also the question of a substitute measure. The silver forces were stronger there than in the House, but they were unable to marshal a majority for unlimited coinage, or even for a compromise, in the face of the President's opposition. They were able, however, to maintain one of the longest filibusters in history, lasting until October 30. It was finally broken, and the House bill passed, apparently by concessions from Cleveland in reference to the patronage. Including those who were paired, the Democratic Senators were evenly balanced. The Republicans, though divided, afforded the necessary majority. Gordon and Colquitt were paired, the former favoring and the latter opposing unconditional repeal.<sup>3</sup>

The results of repeal did not fulfill the expectations of the President. Business remained prostrate, prices continued to fall, and the gold reserve kept sinking until by the end of the year it was below seventy million.<sup>4</sup> Against this

<sup>1</sup>*People's Party Paper*, Oct. 6, 1893.

<sup>2</sup>See Giles, Aug.-Oct., 1893. Quotation from *Constitution*, Oct. 24.

<sup>3</sup>*Congres. Record*, 53rd Cong., 1st Sess., pt. ii, pp. 2928-2958; Peck, pp. 345-349.

<sup>4</sup>Lauck, p. 93.

fund were \$346,000,000 worth of "greenbacks," redeemable by law in gold. There were also about \$150,000,000 worth of silver certificates, redeemable in "coin," either silver or gold; but the administration still thought that, to maintain the soundness of our financial system and the faith of the people in the government, gold should be offered as long as there was any to offer. As notes were redeemed they were re-issued, as required by law, and thrown back into circulation; whence they might return for redemption again: thus the "endless chain."<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile the Treasury was bursting with silver dollars, which had been as eagerly sought during the money famine as any others. The silverites thought it criminal that these were not thrown into circulation. Conservatives, on the other hand, wished Congress to authorize the Treasury to retire the government notes as they were brought in for redemption, but the "People's" representatives did not dare further to contract an already inadequate currency in the face of the popular clamor.<sup>2</sup>

Cleveland's position became pathetic. In January, 1894, the pressure upon the Treasury developed into a "raid." Silverites thought the bankers were seeking to force the permanent retirement of government notes, or else to force a sale of bonds to replenish the gold supply; and perhaps to frighten the Democracy away from its program of tariff reform, lest it further increase the embarrassment by curtailing the government's income.<sup>3</sup> Without asking specific authorization from Congress, the President on January 17, directed an issue of \$50,000,000 in bonds to be sold for

<sup>1</sup> See Cleveland's message to extraordinary session, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Bryan, *op. cit.*, Peck, pp. 341-346, 391-392.

<sup>3</sup> Dewey, pp. 266-274; *People's Party Paper*, Jan. 26, Feb. 2, *et seq.*, 1894.

gold.<sup>1</sup> Had the plan worked as he expected it to work, the reserve would have been placed in safety. But the bankers brought in sufficient paper for redemption to draw out as much gold as the bonds yielded, and by summer the reserve was down to fifty million. In November bonds were issued again, but their yield met with a similar fate. Here was another "endless chain." By February, 1895, the reserve was down to forty-one million. In desperation, Cleveland made an appeal to Belmont and Morgan to take another issue of bonds, under contract that they would obtain at least half the gold abroad and would exert their influence to prevent any of it from being drawn from the Treasury. There was better success this time.<sup>2</sup>

These events "stirred millions of Americans to a pitch of acrimonious frenzy for which there are few parallels in our history."<sup>3</sup> That Cleveland was either woefully stupid or viciously corrupt, if not both, became the settled conviction of thousands in his own party. He was said to have "sold out to the ruthless exploiters of a suffering people." The unprintable epithets applied to him in the South and West were almost as common among Democrats as among Populists.<sup>4</sup> In the sober light of history one is inclined to exonerate him from moral culpability. In a very trying situation, he acted, no doubt, according to his own best judgment, but he saw the question from one angle only. He would not be "answerable to any laborer or farmer . . . for a shrinkage in the purchasing power of the dollar;"<sup>5</sup> but he did not seem to realize that some one

<sup>1</sup>The administration had asked Congress for such majority; and failing to receive a favorable response, it had acted under a clause of the resumption act of 1875. See Dewey, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup>Dewey, pp. 268-274.

<sup>3</sup>Peck, p. 389.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*; Georgia press, 1894.

<sup>5</sup>See letter to Northen, *supra*.

was answerable for an accelerating inflation of obligations, and that the "honest-money" system was bringing loss to those who were least able to lose, and gain to those who had held the places of advantage for a generation. Exactly what would have been the results if he had accepted the advice of the silverites, no one can say. The adoption of a silver standard would doubtless have brought a great shock to business. But if the gold-hungry world had not soon been relieved by the discovery of new supplies of the precious metal, some kind of radical change in our currency system might have been forced upon us.

The stakes were large, and each class and section was inclined to play for its own advantage. As the powerful financial interests were joined by many of the lesser capitalists, especially in the East, so the debt-burdened farmers of the South and West were allied to the great silver interests of the Far West. Urban labor was in doubt as to which way to turn.<sup>2</sup> "Inflation" would bring higher prices, perhaps without a corresponding increase in wages; but depression had brought unemployment to them, and greater relative strength to employers. As the hard times continued, the sectional cleavage became sharper. Agrarian adversity reacted distressingly upon merchants and other business men in the South and West. Unless something could be done to relieve the situation, these were likely to join with the farmers against the Eastern wing in a struggle for definite control of the Democratic party.

With the purchase clause out of the way, and the country assured that no further concessions that might endanger the gold standard were likely to be made, at least for a time,

<sup>1</sup>The American Federation of Labor was inclined to favor free silver, as was the Knights of Labor. Many local unions supported the People's Party; but representatives of the Federation, in conference with the Knights in 1894, declined to go on record as favoring official endorsement of that party. See Commons, vol. ii, pp. 511-514.

Cleveland was able to turn his attention to tariff reform. This was the main feature of his constructive program. The high protective tariff was undoubtedly one reason why our markets were being glutted with our own goods, why prices were falling, industries closing down, revenues declining, why gold was flowing out of the country, and the surplus sinking. But the fall in prices abroad and the depression in business in other industrial countries indicate that it was not the only reason. A sane revision of the tariff, however, probably would have helped materially. To this the Democratic platform had solemnly pledged the party. A bill providing for duties about as high on an average as those in force before the introduction of the McKinley Act was passed by the House on February 1, 1894. Under the pressure of Populistic elements, provision was made for an income tax to compensate for the anticipated loss in customs receipts. The measure was far from a free-trade document when it left the House, and when the spokesmen for special interests had had their say in the Senate it was little better than the act it was designed to supplant. Cleveland was so disappointed that he refused to sign it, permitting it to become a law without his signature.<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime the widespread suffering among industrial laborers had given rise to a series of threatening disturbances. Hundreds of thousands of able-bodied men were out of work through no fault of their own, and many in desperation became tramps, beggars, or thieves. Large numbers were stranded in abandoned railway-construction camps and other collapsing enterprises far away from their former abodes in the East. As these began to tramp their way across the countrry they congregated in battalions in various towns. It was this situation which produced the

<sup>1</sup>Peck, pp. 353-372; Dewey, ch. xvii.

famous "Coxey's Army." Various groups came under the leadership of "generals," the most conspicuous of whom was J. S. Coxey. In December, 1893, he had launched a movement to demand of Congress the inauguration of a system of public improvements to provide work for the unemployed, meeting the expenses of the project by an issue of half a billion dollars of fiat paper money. The following spring he assumed command of the "army," and directed its feet toward Washington with a view to urging this demand. At first the march was regarded by the press as a huge joke, but it came to arouse considerable apprehension when it appeared that along with the mass of honest and peaceful unfortunates were some who were inclined to lawlessness. When the motley throng appeared on the capitol grounds, the government authorities saw no better solution than to have them dispersed by the police and a number of them jailed for treading on the grass.<sup>1</sup>

A few days after the collapse of this movement, the famous Pullman strike began. The Pullman Palace Car Company, which was paternalistic and autocratic in dealing with employees, had dismissed a large number of workmen, and lowered the wages of others about 20 per cent. A committee appealed to the president of the company for a restoration of the old wages. It was rebuffed and three of its members were discharged from work. A strike followed. As some 4000 of the Pullman employees were members of the American Railway Union, which included about 100,000 trainmen, the union declared a boycott against the Pullman cars. This resulted in a sympathetic strike among trainmen which for a time almost paralyzed transportation in the greater part of the country. The situation seemed promis-

<sup>1</sup> Jacob S. Coxey, *Coxey: His Own Story of the Commonwealth*, Massilon, Ohio, 1914 (pamphlet). Also Peck, pp. 373-375; E. Benjamin Andrews, *The United States in Our Own Times*, pp. 719-722.

ing for the strikers until a group of men in Chicago, the center of the trouble, interfered with a "scab-run" train carrying the United States mail. Prior to this time troops had not been employed. Governor Altgeld of Illinois, who was in sympathy with labor, insisted that they were not needed. But now that the mail service had been involved, President Cleveland ordered federal troops to the scene and issued a proclamation demanding the immediate dispersal of all "unlawful" gatherings. Then, for the first time in our history, the "blanket" injunction was employed against strikers. Under it men were imprisoned by court martial for disobeying the order of a judge. The strike was broken. Thousands of people throughout the country came to feel that all branches of the government were in the hands of the "plutocrats," a feeling which was greatly intensified a year later when the Supreme Court declared the income tax unconstitutional. Populism was given renewed strength.<sup>1</sup>

The failure of the Democratic Congress to provide adequate measures of relief for the distressful conditions in the country or to live up to the campaign pledges of the party was strongly reacting, as we have seen, against the Democracy. "Two years ago," said Watson in the opening speech of the Populist convention in Georgia, "we were fed upon the ambrosia of Democratic expectations. Today we are gnawing the cobs of Democratic reality."<sup>2</sup> As editor of the *People's Party Paper*, chairman of the Populist state executive committee, and recognized leader of his party, he conducted a campaign which surpassed in vigor and excitement that of 1892. The Democracy was given no rest from one campaign to the next. A relentless searchlight was turned upon the records of Congressmen, Senators, legislators, and even minor office-holders. Watson was

<sup>1</sup> Andrews, pp. 722-735.

<sup>2</sup> *Constitution*, May 17, 1894.



supported by a growing body of leaders many of whom were almost as vigorous and politically gifted as their chief. His paper had satellites in nearly half the counties of the state. Thus from stump and press a discontented electorate was constantly reminded of the short-comings—real and apparent—of their chosen representatives. Called into question, the radicals often documented their assertions with excerpts from the *Congressional Record* and other government publications. Speeches and votes in Congress were often presented in full in the Populist press with editorial emphasis upon the divisions and inconsistencies in the old parties, especially as they appeared among the representatives from Georgia.

Senator Gordon was among those most rigorously watched and mercilessly satirized, the main object being to combat the old-soldier-simon-pure arguments of the Democrats. As early as September 8, 1893, it was reported in the Populist press that he had had a conference with Cleveland; that in the name of party harmony and for the sake of the Georgia patronage, he had agreed to lend his influence in favor of unconditional repeal. Along with this report went the following commentary:<sup>1</sup>

No man has played the old-soldier game to more purpose than John B. Gordon. Ever since the war he has been claiming high office on account of his military service. . . . Maimed and ragged ex-Confederates have followed him with a devotion which was pitiable in its blindness. . . . [When seeking the Senatorship in 1890] he endorsed every plank of the Alliance platform except the sub-treasury, and is a sworn member of the Georgia Alliance; but he has done in Washington just what his previous record (to those who knew it) promised. . . . Honest people are growing sick and tired of men who speak upon one side and vote upon the other.

<sup>1</sup>*People's Party Paper*, Sep. 8, 1893.

Gordon accepted the administration view that it was wiser first to repeal the obnoxious law and then to consider further legislation. The opposition held that by this policy the professed silverites threw away their bargaining power, and that those who followed such a course in the face of pledges to stand for unlimited coinage could not rightly defend their broken promises on the ground of expediency. The three Congressmen who voted against the silver amendments and the six who finally supported the original bill for unconditional repeal found it extremely difficult to appease their restless constituents.

As the Senate filibuster was nearing an end, the Georgia legislature assembled. "Governor Northen's message to that body," said the *People's Party Paper*, "dealt largely with the federal tariff system. The legislature is somewhat puzzled to know how they are to tackle that question. In the meantime, they have tackled the cigarette nuisance . . . . Would that the legislature would deal with three or four matters which it really can settle: <sup>1</sup>

1st. Give us a state income tax, for the benefit of the public schools, so as to perfect that most imperfect system.

2nd. Abolish our infamous convict lease system, and put the convicts on the public roads and bridges.

3rd. Give us an election law which will insure honest elections. (To these the Populist state convention added): <sup>2</sup>

4th. Free primary school books, and the payment of teachers' salaries monthly (instead of irregular payments, delayed sometimes for almost a year).

5th. A movement to stop the granting of railroad passes to public officers.

7th. Introduction of the Australian ballot system.

If the Democratic legislature had inaugurated a thorough-

<sup>1</sup>*People's Party Paper*, Nov. 3, 1893.

<sup>2</sup>*Constitution*, May 18; *People's Party Paper*, June 2, 1893.

going program of reform along the lines demanded by Populists and sanctioned by a large element in the old party, it might have largely offset the unhappy record of Congress and made it less necessary to resort to unfair means to carry the approaching election. A number of bills of that kind were introduced, but few were passed. Perhaps the most important measure, from this viewpoint, that was enacted was one making it a felony for a director or other official of a railroad company to seek, himself, or to conspire with others, to bring about the wreckage of such company. This practice had become common, and involved some of the largest roads in the state. Another act was directed against the larceny or destruction of election returns, ballot boxes, etc. Provision was made whereby indigent Confederate veterans, formerly aided only in the Old Soldiers' Home, might receive outdoor relief in the form of state pensions.<sup>1</sup>

The state Democratic platform declared: "We demand the immediate passage of such legislation as will restore silver to its constitutional position as a money metal, and will secure at once the free and unlimited coinage of gold and silver on a parity and give every dollar in circulation the same debt-paying and purchasing power." It also called for a tariff for revenue only, and for repeal of the ten per cent tax on the issues of state banks. In local matters, it advocated the maintenance of the system of public schools, "increasing appropriations as far as business conditions permit;" declared the adherence of the party to the principle of local self-government; and condemned lynch law. Finally, it denounced "the socialistic, paternalistic, and centralizing ideas now sought to be propagated in our midst, as dangerous and destructive heresies, which if successful would dethrone liberty and enslave the people."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ga. Laws*, 1892, pp. 111, 113, 124. See also Knight, vol. ii, pp. 985-986.

<sup>2</sup> *Constitution*, Aug. 3, 1894.

In seeking a standard bearer in the gubernatorial race, a number of the Democratic leaders were at first inclined to support General Clement A. Evans. A brigadier-general in the Civil War, he was a preacher by profession, and had served for a time in the state senate. He was a man of lofty ideals and keen sensibilities, but "knew nothing of the game of politics, and was not at home on the hustings."<sup>1</sup> Although he was widely supported at first by the Democratic press, even by such rival organs as the *Journal* and the *Constitution*, there soon developed a feeling among some of the politicians that he was not a suitable man to conduct the kind of campaign that was necessary to insure Democratic success. Hence early in January, 1894, W. Y. Atkinson, one of the younger leaders, then speaker of the house and chairman of the state executive committee, announced himself as a candidate subject to the Democratic primary. A series of debates was arranged. In these the issues failed to clash, but Atkinson showed himself much more gifted in the arts that bring applause. Evans soon retired from the race.<sup>2</sup>

The Populists nominated Judge James K. Hines, who had been one of the opposition candidates for the United States, Senatorship in 1890. Judge Hines had risen rapidly from a small-town lawyer to an important member of the Atlanta bar. He had been an advocate of Alliance-Populist principles since the beginning of the movement. Endowed with a personality that commanded respect, he conducted "a clean and effective campaign."<sup>3</sup>

In the Congressional races, while Watson's district, "the

<sup>1</sup> Knight, vol. ii, p. 987. See also *Constitution* and *Journal*, Dec., 1893-Jan., 1894.

<sup>2</sup> *Constitution* and *Journal*, Jan.-Mar., 1894, esp. Mar. 22-23; also Knight, vol. ii, p. 987.

<sup>3</sup> *Constitution*, May 18, Aug. 5, 29, 1894; Knight, vol. v, 2488.

terrible tenth," was the greatest storm center, others were not far behind. Felton's "bloody seventh" was a close second. The battle-scarred veteran of Independency was again in the race for Congress. Now that the sub-treasury, to which he had objected, was no longer an issue; that the national Democracy had "betrayed" free silver and tariff reform; and that the radical movement, since 1890, had broken all connection with "the ring;" he had become one of the most ardent of Populists. In the fifth, Livingston fought valiantly against charges of apostasy. Even Crisp, who was still speaker of the national House, was not without bitter opposition.<sup>1</sup>

The throngs that flocked to the numerous "rallies" had long since overflowed the largest available halls, and had taken possession of the court-house squares, parks, or picnic grounds. They were no longer stirred as they once had been with panegyrics of past glories, but were inclined to hold the speakers to the issues of the hour and current records of parties and politicians.<sup>2</sup>

The election was the most exciting as well as the most degrading since the overthrow of the "carpet-bag" government. The methods employed in 1892 were repeated on a grander scale. The negroes again held the balance of power, each party seeking their votes while at the same time denouncing the other for catering to them. In many cases bargains were first made with their leaders; many "darkies" were then attracted to the all-night revelries held on the eve of the election; and the next morning they were paid the usual price of a dollar apiece for their votes, and marched to the polls under guard. Repeating and ballot-box "stuffing" were, apparently, common. In addition, all kinds of irregularities seem to have been practiced in counting

<sup>1</sup> Felton, pp. 654-677. See also Georgia press, July-Nov., 1894.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

ballots and consolidating returns. Numerous precincts were thrown out on technicalities. Fearing legal contests, the victors in a number of cases hid or destroyed the ballot boxes. "We *had* to do it!" declared a veteran officeholder. "Those d—— Populists would have ruined the country!"<sup>1</sup>

On the face of the returns, the Populists polled 44.5 per cent of the vote in the state election, carried 46 out of 137 counties, elected 5 state senators and 47 representatives. They lost all the Congressional contests. In the country at large, they polled 1,471,590 votes, elected six United States Senators, seven Congressmen, 153 state senators, and 315 representatives. The Democrats lost control of both houses of Congress, the Republicans gained a large majority in the lower house and a plurality in the Senate, with the Populists holding the balance of power in the latter.<sup>2</sup>

The shocking methods to which the politicians had resorted stimulated a loud protest in Georgia, not only from the Populists but from thousands of loyal Democrats. Some of the strongest dailies declared the election a reproach to the state.<sup>3</sup> Evidently such practices could not continue indefinitely. The national Democracy must be won to the cardinal Populistic principles and the state organization further regenerated; else the Solid South might not survive the campaign of 1896.

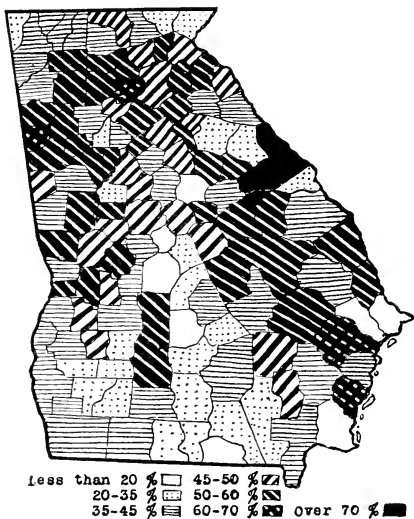
<sup>1</sup>This statement was made to the writer by a prominent Democrat in Sylvania, Ga. Scores of prominent men representing both sides, in various sections of the state, have testified in personal interviews to the prevalence of these practices. See Felton, pp. 654-677 (account is obviously biased, but includes published statements of prominent Democrats as well as Populists. See also *Constitution*, Nov. 9, 1894; *People's Party Paper*, Oct.-Nov., 1894.

<sup>2</sup>*Ga. House Journal*, 1894, pp. 47-48; McVey in *Economic Studies*, vol. i, p. 197.

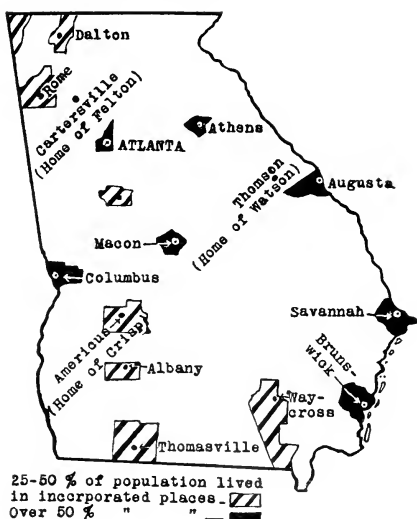
<sup>3</sup>See, *e. g.*, *Constitution*, Nov. 11, 1894; Felton, *op. cit.*

## WHO WERE THE POPULISTS ?

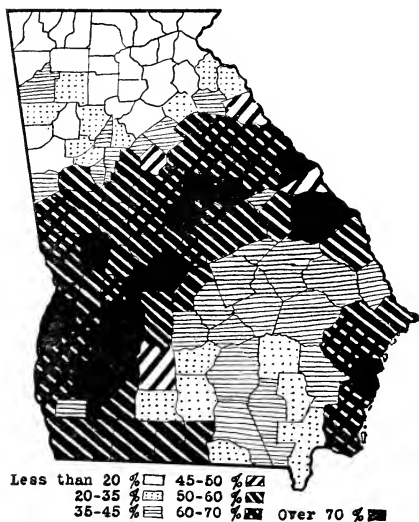
Distribution of the Populist vote in Georgia by counties in the state election of 1894



Distribution of urban population by counties (1900), and location of important towns



Distribution of negro population by counties—Census of 1900



Average size of farm proprietorships—1903. (Banks, p. 135.)



Note the *contrasts* between the first map and each of the others. It is obvious that the Populist vote was light as a rule in the cities and towns; and that it varied in the rural districts, to a considerable extent, in inverse proportion to the prevalence of the negroes and the large plantations. The chief exception to this was in Watson's district.





## CHAPTER VI

### THE PARTY REVOLUTION OF 1896

THE capture of the national Democracy by the Populistic element would not be a simple task. It would involve the extraordinary and embarrassing procedure of a party in control of the Presidency and recently in full political power repudiating its own administration. Such a course would tend to alienate many of the strongest leaders and perhaps a third of the usual followers. The densely populated East would doubtless be lost entirely, and with it such representatives of wealth and power as had supported the Cleveland Democracy. Besides, even in the South, and to some extent in the West, there were elements still powerful in party councils who would bitterly oppose such a move.

The fight made by these elements in the South during the year or two preceding the party revolution does not seem to have been fully appreciated by historians. As late as the summer of 1895 the majority of the Democratic dailies in Georgia and fully half the small-town weeklies still defended Cleveland and were at this time outspoken for the gold standard.<sup>1</sup> These were in the main the same organs that had opposed the Alliance movement in 1890. Next to the *Constitution*, they included the three strongest papers in the state—the *Atlanta Journal*, the *Savannah Morning News*, and the *Macon Telegraph*. Hoke Smith, proprietor of the *Journal* and a member of Cleveland's cabinet, was still the

<sup>1</sup> See poll of Georgia press in *Constitution*, Aug. 12, 1895.  
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leader of the administration forces in the state. Though not a candidate for office, he conducted a strenuous campaign for the gold standard through the columns of his paper and finally on the stump.<sup>1</sup> A few months before the national conventions met he engaged in a series of joint debates in Augusta, Atlanta, and Macon with ex-Speaker Crisp.<sup>2</sup> About the same time the Georgia Bankers' Association in convention assembled adopted unanimously a set of resolutions condemning inflationist heresies and solemnly warning the people and the politicians against them. They maintained that the bankers had a greater knowledge of financial matters than other people, just as the doctors knew more about medicine and the farmers about farming, and certainly in this grave crisis the advice of experts should be taken.<sup>3</sup> The conservative dailies presented the current arguments against the "free-silver craze" and other "diseases" infecting the body politic. Some of the weeklies seem to have accepted the generous offer of the William Street Reform Club by which they received each week without charge plates for one page of general news and one of "sound money" literature.<sup>4</sup> The pamphlet propaganda of the silverites was answered in kind. Never has there been such another "campaign of education" dealing with matters so recondite.<sup>5</sup> Inconsistencies appeared among conservatives as well as radicals. Some of the "gold bugs" declared,

<sup>1</sup> See files of *Atlanta Journal*, 1895-96.

<sup>2</sup> Crisp was a candidate to succeed Gordon in the Senate. His leading opponent, DuBignon, was a "gold-bug." Crisp died in the summer of 1896, shortly before the election. A. S. Clay, a silverite, was elected. For accounts of Crisp-Smith debates, see *Constitution* and *Journal*, Apr. 1-5.

<sup>3</sup> *New York Financier*, June 1, 1896.

<sup>4</sup> *Constitution*, July 20, 1895.

<sup>5</sup> The press was flooded with advertisements of such literature.

for example, that the six hundred million dollars in gold coin and certificates said to be in circulation would be driven into hiding under the operation of Gresham's law if free silver were adopted, so that there would be a further decline of prices and appreciation of dollars.<sup>1</sup> Others held that the purchasing power of money would be cut in half; the United States would become the dumping ground for the world's oversupply of silver, and soon there would be no gold left in the country with which to pay foreign balances. A depreciating dollar would be dishonest; an appreciating one was unfortunate, but there seemed to be no sound or safe remedy other than to stop the agitation for silver and restore confidence in the business world.<sup>2</sup> On the political side, it was said that the Democrats had made a noble fight against the Populists, and that to adopt their principles now would be "a cowardly surrender."<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand it was evident that the great majority of the normally Democratic voters in the country were Populistically inclined, and that a very large percentage of these could not be held in the party except by a radical change in its leadership and policies. In fact it was altogether possible that if both the old parties remained conservative or sought to straddle the issues again the Democrats would come out third in the race. Populism was at once a menace and a promise. Already the Bimetallic League and other pro-silver organizations were arousing immense enthusiasm for a union of all the silver forces in one party.<sup>4</sup> From the standpoint of political strategy, the Democratic politicians would have been stupid indeed not

<sup>1</sup>Quotations from Hoke Smith in *Constitution*, Aug. 1, 1895.

<sup>2</sup>See *Atlanta Journal*, 1895-96, especially Apr. 1-5, 1896.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*; also *Morning News*.

<sup>4</sup>*Constitution*, July 16, 1895. See also Haynes, *Third Party Movement*, pp. 271-272.

to perceive the possibilities of embracing such a movement, especially in view of the fact that the Republicans were almost sure to gain the bulk of the conservative vote. In the West it would doubtless be an easy matter to arrange coalitions with dissenting groups. In several of the states of that section Democratic-Populist fusion had been the regular thing since the movement began. In some of them the Democrats and the radical agrarians had been chronic fusionists since the time of the Grangers. Leaders like Weaver had regularly advocated such a course.<sup>1</sup> In the South actual fusion might not be so easy. There the Populists constituted the only effective party of opposition. They were engaged in a crusade against the local "oligarchies" which meant almost if not quite as much to them as their national program. Fusion, many of them feared, would mean that they would largely lose whatever they had gained or hoped to gain in this fight. Then too, there was the matter of the spoils of office; Populist politicians were human. But whether a definite fusion with the People's Party were arranged or not, if the national Democracy came out squarely for unlimited coinage of silver and other reforms and accepted the leadership of men whom the advocates of such measures could trust to stand by them, it would probably have a better chance of success in the country at large, and certainly a much better one in the South, than if it continued to dodge and straddle and defend its record of the past four years. By "stealing the Populist thunder" the Southern Democracy would probably recall a sufficient portion of its straying flock to save the Solid South. It might also regain many of the "loaves and fishes" which had slipped from its hands in the past few years. And, what was more important still, it might be permanently rid of the "menace" of the People's Party.

<sup>1</sup>Haynes, *Third Party Movements*, and *Weaver, passim*.

In July, 1895, the state Bimetallic League convened in Griffin with delegates from 104 out of 137 counties and proxies from others. The chief leaders and the great majority of the delegates were Democrats, but the Populists were invited and a considerable number of them attended. The conciliatory attitude of the Democrats toward these was significant. One ardent Democrat from Pike county, who evidently failed to appreciate the full purpose of the organization, raised an objection to admitting the prodigal sons, but he was quickly "squelched." Democratic speakers condemned the Cleveland administration almost as strongly as did the Populists. The convention called upon the people to spread the organization of the league into every community and to bring pressure to bear upon politicians to heed the cries of the aggrieved masses. The order seems to have flourished and to have brought forth fruits. Among other things it demanded primaries for the selection of delegates to the state conventions which were to choose the delegations to the national ones. There was evidently a fear that the politicians if left to themselves might not register the will of the people.<sup>1</sup>

Various other organizations sprang up having more or less similar purposes. In some localities the Young Democrats were active. In the colleges both silver and gold clubs were organized and lively debates were staged. As the movement was becoming less distinctly agrarian, and as the hard times and political dissensions had greatly weakened the Farmers' Alliance, this order seems to have played little part in the campaign.<sup>2</sup>

Many of the Populist leaders, including Watson, frankly distrusted the fusion movement. Replying to a letter from

<sup>1</sup> *Constitution*, July 16, 1895 and subsequent issues; *People's Party Paper*, July 26, 1895.

<sup>2</sup> Files of *Constitution* and other papers, 1895-96.

a Louisiana Populist asking his advice as to whether a local organization should accept a fusion proposition from the silver Democrats, Watson stated editorially in the *People's Party Paper*:<sup>1</sup>

In our judgment Populists should keep in the middle of the road, should make no coalition with either old party, and should avoid fusion as they would the devil. To meet Democrats or Republicans, acting in their individual capacities, in a free-for-all mass meeting, where a principle upon which we all agree can be discussed, and where no man need be bound by any action which he disapproves, is *one* thing; to make a barter and a trade as Populists with the official managers of either of the old parties to swap a certain number of votes for a stipulated price in Democratic patronage or Republican spoils, is quite *another* thing. . . .

This may be an honest transaction; lots of good men in Kansas, Nebraska, North Carolina and elsewhere have gone into it. . . . It seems to agree very well with the fellows who squat near the flesh pots. But our observation has been that the People's Party never grows a single vote after that flesh pot feast begins, . . . but wilts and dwindles away.

We therefore advise our friend to meet and talk with all men—but to fuse with no enemy, compromise no principle, surrender no vital conviction.

An editorial note in the same issue said of the fusion movement in Georgia. "The Alliance lamb agreed to lie down in the same pen with the Democratic lion. Result: lamb soon dissolved in the gastric juice of said lion. Does the wily old trickster, Lon Livingston, think he can play that game on *us*?" Of the convention of the Bimetallic League at Griffin, it was said:<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>July 26, 1895.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

The Populists who were lured into the meeting went away with the dry grins. It was dinned into their ears that the meeting was a non-partisan affair, a meeting into which no politics would be admitted. This made the Populists feel good, but when the time came to make up committees, the Populists looked a little foolish, as not a member of their party appeared on the committee on program. . . . It looks as if they might have struck some of the Populists by accident in appointing the committees. . . .

But we are glad this convention was held; glad our men went there; glad we showed a willingness to harmonize on principle; glad the meeting failed through the greed and insincerity of professional wire-pullers and not through the fault of the Populists.

The Populists made much of the "family rows" among the Democrats. The latter were classified into "gold-bugs," "silver bugs," "straddle-bugs," and "humbugs." The "straddle bugs" would "teach that the world is round or flat, as the majority of the school trustees might seem to desire." The "humbugs" would "make silver speeches and write silver letters previous to elections, and vote to stop silver coinage after the elections." In Cordele, Ga., the "gold-bugs" had arranged to have Hoke Smith address them; the "silver-bugs" then sought to have Lon Livingston speak there on the same day. A bitter quarrel ensued. "We note the fact with pleasure," wrote the editor of the *People's Party Paper*.<sup>1</sup> Such quarrels, he thought, would emphasize in the public mind the futility of seeking radical reforms through the mongrel Democracy. This point was further emphasized a few months later by the following editorial in the same paper: <sup>2</sup>

It is becoming more certain every day that the people have

<sup>1</sup> July 26, 1895.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 21, 1896.

nothing to hope from the free-silver Democrats. . . . Mr. Bartlett of Georgia was making a free silver speech in Congress the other day, and the following dialogue took place:

Mr. Skinner [of North Carolina]: I should like to ask my friend from Georgia a question. . . . If the Democratic party should adopt a gold-standard platform, and nominate a gold-standard candidate for President, will you vote for him?

Mr. Bartlett [of Georgia]: I will vote for any man whom the majority of the delegates who may be sent by the masses of the Democratic party of this Union to Chicago shall select as our standard bearer, though I may differ with him. Applause.

Mr. Skinner: Then you are willing to sacrifice the interests of your people upon the altar of your party.

Mr. Bartlett: I am willing to forego temporarily my views and the consummation so devotedly hoped for, which must eventually come, and can only come through the Democratic party, in order to preserve the organization of that party. . . .

What have Populists to hope [asked the editor] from such men as these?

The first of the state conventions of 1896 in Georgia was that of the Republicans, on April 29. It was characterized as "a howling mob." About 600 delegates were present, some seven-eighths of whom were negroes. At the close of the meeting one of the reporters present declared he had no idea what had "officially" transpired. He was informed that "Boss" Buck had "officially" carried his McKinley slate, despite the fact that several chairmen were putting different questions at the same time and shouting different results against a deafening uproar.<sup>1</sup>

It may be remembered that McKinley had begun his pre-convention campaign at Thomasville, Ga., or, rather, that Mark Hanna had begun it there for him. Hanna had rented a house in Thomasville, in 1895 and had retired thither

<sup>1</sup>*Constitution*, Apr. 30, 1896; *People's Party Paper*, May 1, 1896.



“for his health.” McKinley had joined him as a guest of honor soon afterward, and together they had entertained visitors from various parts of the South. The house party had proved a “great success.” The support of Southern Republican “bosses” was assured. And the results of this preliminary work later proved an important factor in frustrating the schemes of the anti-McKinley forces at the North, though not without further raids on Hanna’s “money barrel.”<sup>1</sup>

Thanks to the work of this “Western Warwick,” the nomination of McKinley was assured some time before the Republicans met. As to the platform, McKinley preferred that the money question be subordinated to the tariff. His own record in reference to the former had not been consistent. He had supported the Bland free-silver bill, and had helped to pass the Bland-Allison Act over the veto of President Hayes. Many of his warmest supporters at this time were Western silverites, and he did not wish to estrange them if he could avoid it without hurting himself with the larger and more powerful conservative wing. On the tariff question his party was united. Himself one of the authors of the Act which bore his name, he had consistently advocated protection, and had made the arguments in support of it his chief stock-in-trade. But the prevailing opinion among leading Republicans was that the party must declare itself unreservedly for the gold standard. By this time it seemed certain that the Democratic convention would be controlled by the silver element, would adopt a silver plank and select a silver candidate. The issue could not well be evaded. Conservatives were anxious to have it settled, believing it would be settled “right” and the agitation quieted. Overwhelmingly predominating at the St. Louis convention, they

<sup>1</sup> Herbert Croly, *Marcus Alonzo Hanna*, pp. 175-183.

adopted a plank definitely committing the party to the maintenance of the gold standard, opposing free coinage of silver "except by international agreement with the leading commercial nations, which we pledge ourselves to promote." The Democratic party was held responsible for the hard times. Its policies had "precipitated panic, blighted industry and trade with prolonged depression, closed factories, reduced work and wages, halted enterprise, and crippled American production while stimulating foreign production for the American market." The tariff plank was the most prominent. Protection was declared to be "the bulwark of American industrial independence and the foundation of American development and progress." There were demands for a vigorous foreign policy, generous pensions, a literacy test for immigrants, a free ballot and a fair count, a national board of arbitration for the settlement of disputes between employers and employees engaged in interstate commerce, and a free-homestead policy. The only plank to which objection was raised was that on the currency. A substitute calling for unlimited coinage of silver was submitted by Senator Teller. It was rejected by a vote of 818½ to 105½, and the one submitted by the platform committee was accepted by nearly as large majority. The silverites, led by Senator Teller, then withdrew from the convention.<sup>1</sup>

The Democratic conventions of thirty states had already endorsed free coinage, and only ten had declared for the gold standard.<sup>2</sup> The vote in the Georgia convention was more than five to one for silver. The platform recommended by the latter condemned "the financial policies which necessitated the issuance of bonds," and called for the repeal of the law "clothing the Secretary of the Treasury with

<sup>1</sup>Croly, chs. xiv, xv; Peck, ch. xi; Stanwood, pp. 532-538.

<sup>2</sup>Peck, p. 491.

the imperial power to issue bonds at pleasure," for repeal of the tax on state-bank issues, for a tariff for revenue only, and for a constitutional amendment providing for a graduated income tax. It closed with an invitation to "all voters irrespective of party to join us in the fight to give relief to the people."<sup>1</sup>

Unlike the Republicans, the Democrats went to their national convention leaderless. "The silverites will be invincible," wrote a correspondent of the *New York World*, "if united and harmonious; but they have neither machine nor boss. The opportunity is here; the man is lacking."<sup>2</sup> The national committee, still controlled by conservatives, submitted the name of Senator Hill of New York for the temporary chairmanship. One of the silverites nominated John W. Daniel of Virginia. The latter was elected by a vote of 556 to 349. The South and West were in the saddle. The platform specifically condemned every important policy of the Cleveland administration bearing on economic matters except the tariff and the income tax. It set forth a program which was remarkably similar to that which the Populists were developing. The discussion of the platform called forth various types of oratory from various types of leaders. At the mention of Cleveland's name, "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman of South Carolina burst into a tirade of abuse so furious that the audience recoiled. Senator Hill, on the other hand, with cold defiance condemned the revolutionary spirit there manifest and presented the current arguments for the gold standard. He was preaching Islam to the armies of Peter the Hermit. The radical reaction thus stimulated made the moment opportune for the advent of the right man. He appeared. Little known prior to that time and scarcely thought of as a possible standard

<sup>1</sup>*Constitution*, June 24, 26, 1896.

<sup>2</sup>Peck, p. 492.

bearer, William Jennings Bryan then gave such eloquent and fitting expression to the feelings of that gathering as to place himself at once in command of the new Democracy. A striking personality, endowed with powers of oratory such as few men in our history have possessed, he stilled that turbulent audience into rapt attention, and plead with marvelous effect "the cause of humanity" against those who would "crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."<sup>1</sup>

If the nomination of Bryan was fortunate for the cause of fusion with other free-silver parties and factions, the choice of his running mate was unfortunate. Arthur Sewall, nominee for Vice-President, was a New England ship builder, railroad president, and national banker.<sup>2</sup> His selection was doubtless inspired by a desire to counteract the charge of sectionalism and to save as much as possible of the moderate Democratic vote. But to many it looked like the time-old policy of "straddling" to nominate a national banker on a platform which called for the abolition of the system which he represented, and to choose a railroad president to help direct a movement for the restriction of his own interests. The Populists were not slow to appreciate this inconsistency. It played into the hands of the more radical element and made complete fusion impossible.

A few weeks earlier, the Populist executive committee of Fulton county (embracing Atlanta) had agreed to defer action until after the meeting of the national Democracy. If the latter should "return to its old-time principles," said a member of that committee, and embrace the Populist cause, there would be no issue, and nothing for the Populists to do but return to the fold.<sup>3</sup> Watson quickly dissented. The radicals had been "fooled" before. If they should go

<sup>1</sup> Stanwood, pp. 541-550; Peck, pp. 490-505; Dewey, pp. 321-325.

<sup>2</sup> *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. x, p. 502.

<sup>3</sup> *Constitution*, June 21, 1896.

back into the Democratic party now they would "return as the hog did to its wallow."<sup>1</sup> The anti-fusion, or "middle-of-the-road," faction controlled the state delegation to the national convention at St. Louis. W. L. Peek who headed the group wired to national headquarters, "Tell the boys I'm coming—in the middle of the road."<sup>2</sup>

As the vanguard began to appear in St. Louis about the twentieth of July, it was seen that the bulk of the Westerners would favor fusion, while most of the Southerners would oppose it. Weaver was in charge of the Bryan headquarters. A consistent advocate of fusion, he had declared that "nothing grows in the middle of the road." "We have constantly urged through good and evil report," he said, "that our principles were more important than party associations, were above all considerations of private fortune or the petty and feverish ambitions of men." He thought that the Populists should say to the new Democracy, "We have been fighting for years for the principles which you incorporate in your Chicago platform, but there is no jealousy; God bless you, we welcome you. Take the lead, and if you can plant the flag one foot nearer the citadel of plutocracy than we did, do it, and we will help you."<sup>3</sup> "Sockless" Jerry Simpson was with him. "I care not for party names," said Simpson; "it is the substance we are after, and we have it in William J. Bryan."<sup>4</sup> Senator Peffer who had formerly opposed the fusion movement now declared, "No matter what they do here, the North-west is going to vote for Bryan."<sup>5</sup> Senator Allen of Nebraska made a similar

<sup>1</sup> *People's Party Paper*, June 26; *Atlanta Journal*, July 10, 1896.

<sup>2</sup> *Constitution*, July 21, 1896.

<sup>3</sup> Haynes, *Weaver*, pp. 357-381.

<sup>4</sup> *Constitution*, July 21, 1896.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, July 23, 1896.

statement.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the great majority of the Southern delegates went to St. Louis fully determined, it seems, to prevent any sort of compromise with the Democracy. The latter, according to Watson, had "found itself in a dying condition," had "realized that its only chance was to desert the Republican policies which it had already enacted into law," and to "accept the Populist creed which it had so bitterly denounced." Thus, "with a public confession of political guilt and an earnest assertion of change of heart," it sought to save itself by sacrificing the People's Party. And who could say that it would keep faith any more than it had done in the past? Its selection of Sewall was not a hopeful sign.<sup>2</sup> "Cyclone" Davis, an anti-fusionist from Texas, said to a reporter of the *Constitution* on the eve of the convention, "There have been three Presidents killed, by which the government passed into the hands of the Vice President. Elect Bryan and Sewall, and before March is over Sewall will be made president through the assassination of Bryan accomplished by the money power, and thus you will have a national banker for President."<sup>3</sup>

We can better appreciate the force of this conflict between West and South if we recall the fact that representation in this convention was based, not upon the electoral vote, but upon the strength of the People's Party in each state as indicated by the most recent elections. In this way the eleven Eastern states from Maine to Maryland, inclusive, had less than twelve per cent of the total vote. On the question of

<sup>1</sup>*People's Party Paper*, July 31, 1896.

<sup>2</sup>Quotation is from Watson's Letter of Acceptance (of Vice-Presidential nomination)—see *Constitution*, Nov. 12, 1896. Similar expressions occurred in signed editorials by him in *People's Party Paper*, Jul.-Oct., 1896.

<sup>3</sup>*Constitution*, July 21, 1896.

complete fusion their delegates seem to have been divided, 94 to 69, in favor of it.<sup>1</sup>

Before the convention opened a considerable number of the Southern anti-fusionists, convinced that unless Bryan were accepted the party would be split, decided to yield on this point with the reservation that a Populist must be named for second place.<sup>2</sup> Some of them declared at the close of the convention, and have maintained to the present day, that they were assured by Democratic "lobbyists," including Chairman Jones of the National Democratic Committee, that in case this were done, the Democrats would bring about the resignation of Sewall in favor of the Populist nominee.<sup>3</sup> The later conduct of these "lobbyists," however, indicates that they were misunderstood or misrepresented, or else that they were very perfidious. Senator Marion Butler of North Carolina, leader of this compromise element, was made temporary chairman. Senator W. V. Allen of Nebraska, a Bryan man, was made permanent president. Thus by the end of the first day's session Bryan's nomination seemed assured.<sup>4</sup>

When the session adjourned the irreconcilables held a caucus, at which 21 states were represented, and decided to put out a "straight" Populist ticket headed by S. F. Norton of Illinois and Frank Burkitt of Mississippi.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *People's Party Paper*, July 31, 1896.

<sup>2</sup> *Constitution*, July 20-24; *People's Party Paper*, July 31.

<sup>3</sup> Card from W. L. Peek to *Atlanta Journal*, Aug. 1, 1896; *People's Party Paper*, Aug. 7, 1896; Letter from Jno. I. Fullwood, of Georgia delegation, to Watson, in Watson collection; personal testimony of Peek and Fullwood. Mr. Watson declared to the writer in a recent interview that Jones never denied making such a promise. Jones seems to have ignored the charge.

<sup>4</sup> *Constitution*, July 23, 24, 1896; Stanwood, p. 550.

<sup>5</sup> *Constitution*, July 23 (lacks details); Watson's Letter of Acceptance, *op. cit.*

Meanwhile representatives of the compromise group wired Watson, who had remained at home, briefly stating the situation as they saw it (though without reference to the caucus of the irreconcilables) and inquiring whether he would accept a nomination for the Vice-Presidency on a ticket with Bryan. He agreed. He later declared that if he had known all the circumstances he would not have done so.<sup>1</sup>

An amendment was offered to the report of the committee on rules to the effect that the convention depart from the usual order and select the candidate for Vice-President before naming the one for President. It was carried by a vote of 738 to 637.<sup>2</sup> In the interim before nominations were made there was a strenuous effort on the part of the Democratic "lobbyists" and some of the Populists to insure the nomination of Sewall as well as Bryan. Chairman Jones of the Democratic committee telegraphed to Bryan as follows:<sup>3</sup>

The Populists have decided to nominate the Vice-President first. If it is not Sewall what shall we do? I favor declination in that event.

Bryan replied:<sup>4</sup>

I agree with you fully. If Sewall is not nominated have my name withdrawn.

These messages failed of the desired effect. Watson was nominated after the first ballot. He received 539 $\frac{3}{4}$  votes against 257 for Sewall, the remainder being scattered among four other candidates, all from the South. A sufficient

<sup>1</sup>Watson collection; Letter of Acceptance, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup>*Constitution*, July 26, 1896; Stanwood, pp. 550-551.

<sup>3</sup>*Augusta Chronicle, et al.*, July 25, 1896.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*



number of votes were changed to give Watson a majority.<sup>1</sup> Fear that the extreme "middle-of-the-roaders" would carry out their threat of placing another ticket in the field probably had something to do with these results. On the vote for President, Bryan received 1042; Norton, 321; Eugene V. Debs, 8; Ignatius Donnelly, 3; J. S. Coxey, 1.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting to note the similarity between the Democratic and the Populist platforms. Both demanded the unlimited coinage of silver "at the present legal ratio of sixteen to one without waiting for the consent of foreign nations." Both demanded legislation to prevent the "demonetization" of any lawful money by private contract. Both denounced the national banking system and demanded that all circulating notes be issued directly by the government. Both denounced the Cleveland bond sales. Both condemned the decision of the Supreme Court which held the income tax unconstitutional. On this point the Democrats were the more explicit, declaring it to be "the duty of Congress to use all the constitutional power which remains after that decision, or which may come from its reversal by the court as it may hereafter be constituted, so that the burden of taxation may be equally and impartially laid, to the end that wealth may bear its due proportion of the expenses of the government." The clause "as it may hereafter be constituted" was thought in some quarters to be an implied threat of a radical reorganization of the court.<sup>3</sup> It was probably intended, however, to refer only to the normal changes in personnel. The Democrats advocated a tariff for revenue only, but promised to make no further changes in schedules until the money question was settled,

<sup>1</sup> Stanwood, p. 554; *Constitution*, July 26, 1896.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Peck, p. 508.

“except such as are necessary to meet the deficit in revenue caused by the adverse decision of the Supreme Court on the income tax.” The Populists dodged the tariff. Both parties condemned the use of the injunction in labor disputes. The Democrats in this connection denounced “the arbitrary interference by federal authorities in local affairs,” evidently referring to the use of the troops at Chicago at the time of the Pullman strike. The Populists called for government ownership of railroads, while the Democrats advocated further measures for government control. The Democrats did not parallel the Populists’ demands for (1) postal savings banks, (2) reclamation of lands granted to railroads and other corporations “in excess of their actual needs,” (3) jobs on public works for the unemployed, (4) direct legislation through the initiative and referendum, and (5) direct election of President, Vice-President, and Senators.<sup>1</sup>

Now came the problem of making such a “fusion” actually “fuse;” or, as the “middle-of-the-roaders”—and even the Democrats in some localities—preferred, preventing it from “fusing.” Unless the Bryan Democrats and the Populists voted for the same man for Vice-President or for the same group of electors in each state, there would be no advantage so far as determining the electoral vote of the state was concerned in their having nominated the same candidate for President. The Republicans would profit by the division of the silver vote the same as if some other man had been named as the Populist standard bearer. The “middle-of-the-roaders” realized this. Many of them still felt that it was more important ultimately to preserve the integrity and permanence of their party than to elect a silver President in 1896. This feeling was particularly strong in the South. In a signed editorial which appeared in the first issue of the

<sup>1</sup>Stanwood, pp. 542-547, 551-554.

*People's Party Paper* after the Populist convention adjourned, Watson said:<sup>1</sup>

There will be disappointment throughout the ranks of the People's Party at the failure of our national convention to nominate a "middle-of-the-road" ticket.

The position of this paper upon that subject has not changed. We thought before the convention met, and we think now, that the welfare of our party, and of the principles it represents, demanded that we nominate our own ticket, and put upon that ticket two Populists, tried and true. . . .

He then explained how the situation which developed at St. Louis made the course there followed seem the only alternative to complete fusion—short of a party split. It was thus to save his party intact that he consented to accept a place on the ticket, despite his former pronouncement that he would not consider a nomination. The Democrats must now make some concessions. Otherwise, "they will prove to all the world that their object in adopting our platform was not so much to get free silver as to bury the People's Party."<sup>2</sup>

Watson demanded that Sewell resign or be "taken down." Sewall would not resign, and the Democratic committee evidently had no idea of "taking him down." If any advantage were to be gained from "fusion," then, it would be necessary to arrange for a bi-partisan set of electors in each state. This problem was left to the local managers. In twenty-six states, nearly all of which were in the North and West, such agreements were reached, the proportions in most cases being based on the votes in the preceding election. Of the Southern states, only Arkansas, Louisiana,

<sup>1</sup>July 31.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

and North Carolina made such arrangements.<sup>1</sup> In Georgia the Populists offered to grant six—later seven—out of thirteen places on the ticket to the Democrats, but with the understanding that the entire electoral vote of the state should go to Watson. This the Democrats regarded as unreasonable. Hence “fusion” failed to “fuse” in Georgia.<sup>2</sup>

Much bitterness was manifested on both sides. Senator Jones, Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, gave out an interview soon after the Populist convention in which he said:<sup>3</sup>

I found while at St. Louis that the Populists of the North and West were generally broad minded and patriotic men. There were some of the same sort among the representatives from the South, but as a general rule the Southern delegates were not a creditable class. They practically admitted while in St. Louis that they were out for nothing but spoils. They said that there was “nothing in it” for them to indorse the Democratic nominees, and this same spirit will probably dominate their actions in the future. They will do all they can to harrass the Democracy and create confusion, and in the end they will do just as they are doing now in Alabama, fuse with the Republicans and vote for McKinley. They will go with the negroes where they belong.

Watson thought this a “clumsy effort to create discord” between the Populists of the North and West and those of the South. It was designed also, he said, “to invoke a bitter reply.” But it would fail of this purpose as it would of the former one. In the same article he declared that the Democratic idea of fusion was “that we play Jonah while they play whale.” He characterized Sewall as “a corpora-

<sup>1</sup>Not counting the border states. Stanwood, pp. 564-565.

<sup>2</sup>*Constitution and Journal and People's Party Paper*, Sep.-Nov., 1896.

<sup>3</sup>*People's Party Paper*, Aug. 7, 1896.

tion plutocrat." No Populist, he said, should vote for any elector who supported Sewall.<sup>1</sup>

Although nearly all the Democratic editors and politicians denounced the course of the Populists, a few of them commended it and urged that the Democracy was morally bound to accept Watson in place of Sewall. The *Atlanta Commercial*, Democratic at the time of the conventions, declared that whether Jones and others of his party actually made the promise attributed to them by the Populists or not, their course in urging the nomination of Bryan as a "fusion" proposition after Watson had already been selected for second place made it their duty to yield on the question of the Vice-Presidency. This paper afterwards threw its support to the Populists.<sup>2</sup> Thomas R. R. Cobb, a prominent Democrat, took a similar position and organized Bryan-Watson clubs.<sup>3</sup> The "gold-bug" organs on grounds of party loyalty, remained regular. Some of them were much more liberal in their attitude toward the Populists than were the Democratic silverites. The *Journal* and the *Constitution* were at odds as usual. The former, while it accepted decisions of the Democracy which it did not like, was much more favorably inclined toward the Populist contentions.<sup>4</sup> John Temple Graves, a rising young journalist who had been a gold Democrat, came out squarely for Bryan and Watson. To this mind the question of gold or silver was being overemphasized. He doubted the wisdom of free silver, but he was in sympathy with the fundamental aims of the Populists and the Bryan Democrats. "I support Watson," he said,

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.* It should be noted that despite the quarrel over the Vice-Presidential question, Watson "stumped" several of the doubtful states in the West for Bryan.

<sup>2</sup>Excerpts in *People's Party Paper*, Aug. 7 and subsequent issues; clippings, Watson collection.

<sup>3</sup>*People's Party Paper*, Aug. 21, 1896; clippings, Watson collection.

<sup>4</sup>Files, Aug.-Nov., 1896.

because I feel that the Democratic party is bound in honor to support him—bound by the contract, solemn and honorable—implied in the presence and attitude of Jones and Bland at the Populist convention at St. Louis. . . .

I support Watson because he represents a party that has educated our Democratic party to a due consideration of the welfare of the common people. I say it fearlessly, and it can not be denied, that reforms for which the masses have been clamoring for years—whether it be silver or labor or income tax or popular rights or resistance to government by injunction—had never been written, and might never have been written, into a Democratic platform, until the Populist party, 1,800,000 strong, thundered in the ears of Democratic leaders the announcement that a mighty multitude demanded these reforms. And among the men who have molded, through storm and struggle, the party that has educated ours to popular liberty, Tom Watson of Georgia stands easily first and foremost of them all.

Of the political situation in Georgia in particular, he said:

I am fighting a system, and men only as they represent it. I will grant you that the men of the machine have grown up so naturally under its shadow, and have prospered so signally by its workings, that they may sincerely believe in the propriety of a system of politics which I know to be pernicious and baneful to the state. . . . While this system lasts there are no pure politics, and no free men, in Georgia. . . . It is rotten to the core, and there is no remedy for it but destruction.

There are 180,000 voters in Georgia—maybe more. But there are 150 politicians who rule the state and hold its offices as absolutely in fee as if they had received a title to the property! This is unspeakable shame in a liberty-loving commonwealth, and the people are getting ready to wipe it out in October.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Card to *Constitution*, Aug. 27. See also *People's Party Paper*, Sep. 11, 1896.

Indeed "the People" were preparing for another battle against the machine. Disconcerted but not discouraged by the fact that the Democrats had "stolen" their national platform, the People's Party of the state met in convention August 6. Their platform was the same as in 1894 with one important exception—they came out for prohibition. Ever since the Alliance movement first went into politics, there had been considerable pressure upon it to embrace this cause; and it had yielded a time or two to resolutions, apart from the main platforms, expressing sympathy for the fight against the liquor traffic. But heretofore its leaders had been afraid, it seems, that an out-and-out stand against the saloon might hinder the advancement of other reforms which seemed to them more important. Now that they had forced upon the Democracy the major portion of their old platform, state as well as national, they decided to adopt this new plank. It called for "an anti-barroom law which shall make secure the local prohibition already obtained, abolish the beverage sale of intoxicating liquors, and provide for the sale for other purposes under public control." The gubernatorial nominee was "Seab" Wright. He was a prominent lawyer of Rome, and "one of the ablest men in the state."<sup>1</sup> An ardent prohibitionist from his youth, he had been a candidate for public office only once before: and that was in 1878 when at the age of twenty he won a seat in the legislature as an Independent Democrat, favoring local option for the restriction of the liquor traffic. His race had been a part of a general movement which had in the course of the late seventies and eighties resulted in prohibition for nearly all the counties except those which embraced the larger towns and cities. Wright had also been a consistent advocate of independency in politics and a sworn enemy of

<sup>1</sup> *Atlanta Journal*, Aug. 8, 1896.

the machine. He had been a supporter of Felton in the earlier movement against the "court-house rings," and was a strong advocate of Populism.<sup>1</sup>

The Democrats renominated Governor Atkinson.<sup>2</sup> They accepted the challenge of the Populists on prohibition as the major issue. Local option was working well, they said, and was more in keeping with the time-honored Democratic principle of local self-government. Already 105 out of 137 counties had prohibition.<sup>3</sup> Banish the saloon from the state, and "blind tigers" would present a worse evil. Besides, the "dispensary" system favored by the Populists, under which liquors would be sold in limited quantities for non-beverage purposes, with state supervision, was capable of great abuse. It is doubtful whether the Populists gained many votes on this issue. With few exceptions, Democrats who espoused the cause of temperance seem either to have objected to the particular plan which the Populists advocated, or to have felt that they should work for the acceptance of their cause in their own party.<sup>4</sup>

The Democrats were able to "point with pride" to several reforms in line with Populist demands, accomplished since the last election. An anti-trust law had been passed in 1895 making illegal all arrangements or agreements, "made with a view to lessen, or which tend to lessen, free competition in the importation, sale, or manufacture" of commodities; and providing, in addition to other punishment, for the forfeiture of charters or franchises held by violators of this law. Another measure, designed to protect farmers against frauds on the part of agents handling their

<sup>1</sup>*Constitution*, June 9, Aug. 7, 8, 9, 19; *Journal*, Aug. 8; *People's Party Paper*, Aug. 7, 14, 1896.

<sup>2</sup>*Constitution*, June 26, 1896.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, Aug. 19.

<sup>4</sup>*Constitution, Journal, et al.*, Aug.-Oct., 1896.



produce, made it illegal for these to direct consignments to irresponsible persons, or to dupe the farmers in reference to the sale of such products. The offices of state school commissioner and justices of the supreme court were made elective. Provision was made for a school-book commission, to select uniform text books and to arrange with publishers and dealers so that they might be distributed at a lower price. The election laws were amended; but, despite the loud praise with which these amendments were greeted, they proved of little advantage to the cause of "a free ballot and a fair count."<sup>1</sup>

The state election, which came in October, was very much like the two preceding ones. The same kinds of irregularities, corruptions, and frauds were practised, with apparently little or no abatement.<sup>2</sup> The returns gave the Democrats 120,827 votes, or 222 fewer than in 1894; and gave the Populists 85,832, or 11,056 fewer than in '94. The Populists carried 31 counties as against 46 two years before.<sup>3</sup>

The Democrats seem to have felt that the Populists "menace" was passing. Their executive committee became more positive in its refusal to accept the proposition of the Watson group for fusion on the Presidential ticket. The Watsonites, who had formerly offered to concede only six out of thirteen electors, now offered seven, but they still maintained that the entire vote of the state should go to Bryan and Watson. They declared that if this proposition were rejected they would probably withdraw from the Presidential contest and leave the voters to choose between the Democrats and the Republicans. While they claimed that this was

<sup>1</sup>*Georgia Laws*, 1895, pp. 15, 65, 69, 356; *Code*, 1895, sects. 47-51, 70, 72, 77, 622-636.

<sup>2</sup>Georgia press, Oct.-Nov., 1896; clippings and correspondence, Watson collection.

<sup>3</sup>*House Journal*, 1894, 1896; *Constitution*, Oct. 24, 1894, Oct. 30, 1896.

not intended as a threat to throw the Populist influence to McKinley, it was naturally so interpreted. But the Democrats did not yield. The Populist Presidential ticket was withdrawn.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the Watsonites evidently refrained from voting for President. The total vote of the state was 58,000 smaller than in 1892. In one or two communities the Bryan-Watson ticket was released—apparently by a misunderstanding,—and thus polled 440 votes. A considerable number of Populists seem to have voted for McKinley, as the Republican vote was 12,000 larger than in 1892. The bitter political dispute, the desire to rebuke the local Democracy, and doubtless in some cases the scramble for offices tended with these to overshadow the national issues. The Prohibitionists polled 5,716 votes, as against 988 in 1892. John M. Palmer, the candidate of the “gold” Democrats, received 2,708. The majority for the Bryan-Sewall ticket was 25,717.<sup>2</sup>

The national campaign and its results are too well known in their broader aspects to call for more than passing mention here. Party lines were shattered as never before since the Civil War. The “silver” Republicans supported Bryan, while the “gold” Democrats put out a separate candidate. The Prohibitionists were split; the Populists were demoralized. In August and early September the chances seemed to favor Bryan. In a speaking tour unparalleled in history, he is said to have addressed altogether some 5,000,000 people. But the McKinley forces put forth a supreme effort to elect their candidate. They were fortunate in having the great combinations of wealth on their side. Between \$3,000,000 and \$6,000,000 were raised and spent by the Republican

<sup>1</sup>Georgia press, Aug.-Nov., 1896.

<sup>2</sup>Stanwood, p. 567. All the Democratic nominees for Congress were elected.

managers. Of this sum \$250,000 came from the Standard Oil Company. A flood of campaign literature, aggregating about 120,000,000 documents, poured forth from the McKinley offices in Chicago and New York. Thousands of speakers were sent into the doubtful states to warn the people against the business calamity which it was said would surely follow if Bryan were elected. Republican speakers, editors, pamphleteers, and even preachers, gave way to extravagant and abusive language equal to that which they had formerly condemned in the Populists. Employers told their employees that if Bryan were elected they need not report for work. Contracts were given with the understanding that they were to be filled only in case McKinley were elected. When the storm was over it was seen that McKinley had won by an electoral vote of 271 to 176, with a popular plurality of 602,555. The new Democracy was beaten; the People's Party was wrecked.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Croly, ch. xvi; Peck, ch. xi; Dewey, ch. xx; Haynes, ch. xviii.

## CHAPTER VII

### AFTERMATH

THE People's Party was never again a serious factor in the nation's politics, but Populism in one form or another remained a vital force. The middle-of-the-roads continued to put out a presidential ticket until 1908, but the largest vote polled in this period (that of 1904) was little more than a tenth as large as the vote for Weaver had been in 1892. State and local organizations hung on for several years—in Georgia until 1902,—carrying a few scattering counties. In the meantime Populism was becoming less and less synonymous with the People's Party. Its leaven was working in all parties. The immediate sequel of ninety-six was a period of political reaction, a "return to normalcy" as it were; but this in turn gave place to another movement for reform. Stimulated by the "muck-rakers," directed in some of its milder phases by Roosevelt, championed more fully by men like LaFollette and some of the Bryan Democrats, it found expression in a series of political and economic reforms in various states in the early years of the new century, in the Insurgent-Progressive revolt of 1910-12, the domestic policies of the first Wilson administration, the more radical Nonpartisan League, the Farmer-Labor party, and the present "farmers' bloc" in Congress. All these have been in a sense an aftermath of the Populist movement.

In the South the results have been more or less unique. State-wide primaries of the white Democracy have in most

cases become the real elections. In these the old guard of the People's Party has usually played an important role, either as a balance of power or as the main body of the more radical or popular faction. The lines have not been sharply drawn: new issues have arisen, new voters have appeared, and with the growth of industry a wider opportunity has been presented to the politician by the vote of the poorer classes in the towns and cities. To the arguments of the old-time Populists have too often been added unfortunate appeals to race, religious, and other prejudices. On the other hand it has not infrequently happened that "Simon-pures" have become bedfellows of once despised "Pops." Then too, the wires have been crossed at times on the issues. In the main, however, for good or for ill, the popular faction has advocated reforms along the general lines of those urged by the Populists in the nineties. In some states political power has passed back and forth between the "Bourbons" and the "wool hat boys." Thus despite the misfortune of the one-party system the South has not been as solid or as stagnant politically as might be inferred from the face of the election returns.

There were several reasons for the political calm of the late nineties and early years of the present century. The defeat of the radicals had been decisive. The people were tired of the long agitation. The Spanish war tended to draw attention away from "family quarrels," and to direct the pugnacious instinct against a common "foe." In its wake came the issue of imperialism to overshadow for a time domestic questions.

But more important was the fact that prosperity was returning. The demand for more money was met from unexpected quarters. The discovery of gold in Alaska in 1897, the development of the Rand mines in South Africa about the same time, together with the perfection of the

cyanide process of gold extraction, resulted in a great increase in the world's output of the yellow metal. The gold famine was ended. The Spanish-American war brought new issues of government bonds, and hence an expansion of bank notes. The volume of money considerably increased; likewise the demand for goods: prices rose. The long winter of economic adversity gave place to the spring of reviving prosperity.

It was unfortunate for the cause of reform that the silver issue had assumed such prominence as to typify in the minds of many the whole movement. For, as the change in the financial situation made this demand less defensible, there was a tendency to cast the whole program into the same shadow.

The reactionary drift of the time was clearly manifested in the campaign of 1898 in Georgia. The Democratic candidate for governor, Allen D. Candler, declared in his opening speech that "the greatest peril that now threatens us is the growing tendency to depart from old landmarks and venture upon untried seas . . . . Much of our progress is progress in the wrong direction." We must adhere more strictly to "the Constitution of our fathers," and especially check the tendency toward concentration of power in the government. He favored free silver, "but would not exclude from the party those who differ on this question. And if time should demonstrate that they were right and I wrong, I would be quick to get in line with them." He did not doubt the sincerity of the rank and file of the Populists. They had simply strayed after false gods, and now were returning home.<sup>1</sup> The platform on which he ran scarcely alluded to state affairs. It affirmed the righteousness of our cause in the Spanish war, endorsed the Chicago platform

<sup>1</sup>*Constitution*, Aug. 21, 1898.

of 1896, declared for a Nicaraguan canal, and favored the preferential primaries for candidates for the United States Senate.<sup>1</sup> In the pre-convention contest, Candler was generally supported by the more conservative papers, and by such men as Joseph M. Brown, son of the late Joseph E. Brown and, like his father, prominently connected with railroads and other corporate enterprises. Thus Candler was said by his Democratic as well as Populist opponents to represent the corporate interests. This seems to have been true in no dishonest sense, however. He was a man of excellent reputation, conservative by nature, and inclined to view the problems of his day in the light of the business man's ideals. He had been a Confederate colonel, and had been in public life continuously since 1872—first in the Georgia legislature, then in Congress, then as secretary of state under Governor Atkinson.<sup>2</sup>

The Populists first nominated Watson for governor, but he refused to run. They afterwards named J. R. Hogan, a strong middle-of-the-roader. Their platform again condemned the inequitable tax system, called for the abolition of the convict lease, demanded popular election of all public officers, anti-pass legislation, improvement of the public schools, the Australian ballot system, and the initiative and referendum. Hogan emphasized in his campaign the need of a permanent and effective opposition party. He declared that the Populists had forced the Democrats to give over to the people the election of supreme and superior court judges and solicitors, to collect interest on the state's funds formerly deposited without interest in "pet" banks, to make some advance in the regulation of corporations, and to accept the Populist position on the money question. More important features of their state program, however,

<sup>1</sup> *Constitution*, June 30, 1898.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, June 5, 1898.

had been persistently blocked. If these were to be accomplished, the Populists must be given full power.<sup>1</sup>

The vote stood: Candler, 117, 455; Hogan, 50,841. The Populists carried only eight out of 137 counties. Candler was reelected in 1900, the Populist vote falling this time to 21,622.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile in national politics, though the cause for which Populists and Bryan Democrats had battled in 1896 had lost much of its compelling force, the hold of the "Great Commoner" on the Democracy had remained secure. He was unanimously chosen as the standard bearer in 1900. In full accord with his party in its opposition to the imperialistic policies of the McKinley administration and willing that this be regarded as the "paramount issue," he insisted, nevertheless, on retaining the obsolescent demand for unlimited coinage of silver. At first the prevailing sentiment of the convention seems to have been that this question should be dropped, or at least obscured. Bryan maintained, however, that the position of the party in the preceding campaign was still right, and that thousands of his supporters would regard him as a traitor if he were to accept a nomination on a platform less explicit than that on which he had formerly run. He finally had his way: the entire program of 1896 was endorsed. But first came the question of imperialism, followed by that of government regulation of business. The Republicans were denounced for their "dishonest paltering with the trust evil." They had virtually cast aside the Sherman Act and had permitted monopolies to flourish with renewed vigor, nourishing them with another high protective tariff. Strict enforcement of existing laws and the enactment of more stringent ones

*Constitution*, Mar. 17, May 19, July 13, 1898.

<sup>2</sup> *Georgia House Journal*, 1898, pp. 26, 27; *ibid.*, 1900.



were demanded. The Republicans, on the other hand, stood upon their record, pointing with pride to the evidences of returning prosperity for which they assumed full credit. They named McKinley for a second term, with Roosevelt as his running mate. The Silver Republicans again supported Bryan, as did the Fusion Populists. The Supreme Council of the dying Southern Alliance pledged the support of that order to the Democratic candidate in advance of the nomination. The "middle-of-the-roaders" put out a separate ticket, headed by Wharton Barker and Ignatius Donnelly. Under existing conditions, McKinley would probably have been elected even though the silver question had not figured. As it was, he won by a somewhat greater margin than before. The campaign was far less stormy and the total vote was smaller than in 1896. The Populists polled only 50,599 votes.<sup>1</sup>

Bryanism seemed dead. In the course of the next four years it lost control of the Democratic party. In 1904 Alton B. Parker, a representative of the conservative wing, was nominated for the Presidency on the first ballot. Many of the leaders who had been enthusiastic supporters of Bryan were now strongly favorable to Parker. In a sense the two parties had reversed their positions. Roosevelt, who became President after the assassination of McKinley in 1901 and who was now the Republican candidate for another term, was spokesman for a newly arising reform movement. Though more conservative in his attitude toward such questions as government control over business, he was regarded as more "progressive" than Parker. As a protest against the reactionary turn of the Democracy, the Populist party was revived with Watson as its standard bearer. Watson polled 114,546 votes, or more than twice

<sup>1</sup>Stanwood, vol. ii, pp. 1-76.

as many as his predecessor had received in 1900. The Socialist vote rose from 128,296 in 1900 to 436,385 in 1904. The Democrats failed to carry a single state outside the South. There the popular protest against the change in Democratic leadership was expressed mainly by abstention from voting: the total vote of the section was more than half a million smaller than in 1900, whereas in the rest of the country it was a hundred thousand larger. It was a time of transition.<sup>1</sup>

In Georgia, not since the eighties had there been such political calm as reigned in 1904. Joseph M. Terrell, a thoroughgoing conservative who had been elected governor in 1902, was reelected without opposition. The People's Party put out no state ticket. The state Democratic convention was "a unit for Parker," instructing its delegates to vote for him as long as there was a chance for his nomination. While a considerable group of the old-guard Populists voted for Watson for President, there was unusually small interest manifested in the elections.<sup>2</sup>

But it was the calm before the storm. Before another year had passed, the state was plunged into a campaign which almost rivaled the struggles of the nineties in popular interest and excitement. This time the contest was within the Democratic party. In the spring of 1905, Clark Howell, who had been a sort of power behind the throne in Georgia politics since the time when he became spokesman for the conservative faction of the Alliance, announced himself as a candidate for the gubernatorial nomination more than a year in advance of the election. Hoke Smith, his old-time rival, who had been in political retirement since the silverites gained control of the Democracy, regarded the time as opportune for another attack upon the abuses of railroads and

<sup>1</sup> Stanwood, vol. ii, pp. 77-140.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Knight, vol. ii, pp. 1045-1046.

other corporations which Howell was said to represent, and at the same time for a revival of his own political fortunes. The apparent reversal in the positions of the two men may be explained by the change in emphasis upon the issues. Always more conservative on the money question, Smith, an anti-corporation lawyer, was more radical in his attitude toward government regulation. Through the editorial columns of the *Atlanta Journal*, he now launched a spirited attack upon corporate abuses and upon the failure of the railroad commission and other political agencies to curb them; while Howell replied through his paper, the *Constitution*. The chief point of the attack was the Southeastern Freight Association. This body, with headquarters in Atlanta, was said to represent a combination among "competing" roads to do away with competition in violation of both state and federal laws. As a result of its activities, exorbitant and discriminating rates were maintained. For hauls of 300 to 500 miles, for example, it was pointed out that Georgians paid about a third more than did shippers in neighboring states. The advantages which ocean transportation might otherwise have afforded were largely nullified by inordinate charges between interior stations and the ports. Such "port rates" were maintained, it was said, as a part of the general scheme for eliminating competition. When efforts were made to correct such abuses, it was found that the roads apparently controlled the various agencies which the people had established for protection against them. They were directly represented in places of power in the government—even on the railroad commission. They granted passes to legislators and other public servants and their families, contributed freely to campaign funds, maintained powerful lobbies in the state capitols and at Washington, and thus were able to violate the laws against combinations, discriminations, watered stock, etc. with impunity. "A few

financiers," said the *Journal* editorially, "through their control over the railroad systems of the country, are able to control the entire industrial situation." Thus the old issue of "the rights of the people against the corporate interests" was revived.<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime another issue was being emphasized—that of negro disfranchisement. This seems to have been brought in to further insure the support of the Populistic element, as Watson had become a strong advocate of such a measure. Lamenting the fact that the white South could not divide in politics "without the fear of a negro umpire," Watson had declared before an Atlanta audience in 1904 that if the Democrats would put up a candidate pledged to a program of disfranchisement he would swing to him every Populist whom he could influence. Remembering this promise, the opposition to Howell sent an emissary to Watson in the spring of 1905, and they agreed together to call for disfranchisement along with railroad regulation, and to put forward as their candidate Pope Brown (not to be confused with Joseph M. Brown). A few weeks after Brown's announcement appeared and it became known that he had the support of Watson, he suddenly withdrew in favor of Hoke Smith. Watson was nonplussed. He and Smith had been political enemies. Smith had denounced him in rather severe terms. But Watson was anxious to see the opposition program carried through: hence he agreed that, if the new candidate would publicly retract certain statements formerly made concerning him, he would not withhold his support. Appropriate amends were made and the Populist backing was retained.<sup>2</sup> The program included: reorganization of the railway commission; enlargement of its powers

<sup>1</sup> *Atlanta Journal*, April 30, May 26, 29, June 4, 1905; *Constitution*, June 24, 1906.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Mr. Watson to the writer, April 25, 1922.

to cover other public service corporations; laws to prevent lobbying, the free-pass evil, and contributions from corporations to campaign funds; also legislation to eliminate the ignorant negro vote and to regulate primaries.”<sup>1</sup>

For more than a year the campaign raged. Thrown on the defensive, the Howell forces maintained that the corporations had no greater influence in the government than their importance warranted and their rights entitled them to; that the policies of the opposition would tend to drive capital from the state. Negro disfranchisement was unnecessary, unwise, and unconstitutional. Smith was declared to be a demagogue and a “muck-raker” who was being “run by Tom Watson.”<sup>2</sup> An effort was made to prevent the participation of the Populists in the primary. The executive committee of the Democratic party, being under conservative influences, required that all ballots, to be considered valid, bear the following inscription:—“By voting this ticket, I hereby declare that I am an organized Democrat, and I hereby pledge myself to support the organized Democracy, both state and national.”<sup>3</sup> But this ruse proved of little avail. The primary was a landslide for Smith.<sup>4</sup>

Whether for good or for ill, rarely have as many important laws been enacted in so brief a time as were passed in Georgia during the two ensuing years. The railway commission was reorganized to include five, instead of three, members, and was given supervision over street railways, docks, terminals, telephone, gas, water, electric light and power companies. Violators of the rulings of the commission or of the state's corporation laws were to be punished

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*, June 4, 1905, June 29, 1906.

<sup>2</sup> *Constitution*, April 3, 26, May 5, 6, June 14, 17, 24, July 1, 1906.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, May 1, 1906.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Aug. 23, 1906; *Georgia House Journal*, 1907, pp. 86-87.

like other criminals. In case laws or rulings were appealed to the courts, they must be obeyed pending a decision. A special state's attorney was provided to press prosecutions of offending companies. James K. Hines, Populist candidate for governor in 1894, was appointed to this place. As a result of these changes, freight and passenger rates were materially reduced, discriminations were to some extent eliminated, and other reforms were accomplished. The granting of free passes was prohibited except to railroad officials, employees, and their dependents. Corporations, their officers and agents were forbidden to make contributions to campaign funds, "or for the purpose of influencing the vote, judgment, or action of any official of this state." Candidates were required to file with the comptroller-general for publication itemized statements of their campaign expenditures and of the sources from which contributions had been received. State primaries were brought under government supervision in much the same way as elections were. A law was passed designed to disfranchise the bulk of the negroes by indirection. While the question of prohibition had not been regarded as an issue in the campaign, the temperance forces took advantage of the general wave of reform and secured the passage of a law prohibiting the manufacture or sale of intoxicating liquors in the state. This, it will be remembered, marked the rise of the recent wave which culminated in the Eighteenth Amendment to the federal Constitution. It is an interesting fact that Seaborn Wright, who had led the Populists of the state in the campaign of 1896 when prohibition had been their chief issue, was floor leader for the measure in the House when the Georgia law was passed. Before the reformers completed their work they dragged from the closet that ancient skeleton, the convict lease, and in an extra session called for the purpose they abolished the iniquitous system. Thus a leg-

islature which had been elected to no small extent by the old Populist vote and which contained a number of ex-Populist members had enacted a considerable part of the program of the People's Party.<sup>1</sup>

Reaction was almost sure to follow such a tidal wave of reform. Many and powerful were the interests that had been antagonized. Opponents of prohibition declared it unfair that the Smith legislature had "put over" this law when it had not been an issue in the campaign. Those interested in railroads or other public utilities were incensed that their enterprises had been "put in a strait-jacket." Simon-pures were outraged that the prodigal sons had partaken of the fatted calf and all but usurped the family mansion. A powerful argument was afforded the reactionaries by the bursting of the panic of 1907 in the midst of the reform administration. Times suddenly became very hard. The railroads greatly reduced their train service, and thousands were thrown out of employment. Many of the more ignorant people were easily led to believe that "Hoke Smith caused the panic." Even more intelligent ones declared that there was an element of truth in such a statement; that Smith and scores of other "demagogues" like him throughout the country in their "muck-rake movement," had so persecuted corporate enterprises as to throw the whole business system into a panic. The bolder reformers retorted that recalcitrant enterprises, under punishment for their sins, were simply fighting back; and that, if the people yielded, these creatures would become more completely their masters than before.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Knight, vol. ii, pp. 1067-1087; *Constitution*, Aug. 16, 1907; *Georgia Laws*, 1907, pp. 72-83; *ibid.*, 1908, pp. 53-82, 65-66, 1029, 1049, 1059-1091, 1119-1130. See also under "Aftermath" in Bibliography, *infra*.

<sup>2</sup>*Cf.* Knight, vol. ii, pp. 1077-1095.

Strangely enough, the man who was destined to turn the landslide for Smith of 1906 into a signal defeat two years later was one whom Smith had discharged from the railway commission for opposing "the popular will." Smith had declared in his campaign that if elected he would remove Joseph M. Brown from that body. Son of a prominent railroad promoter and official, virtually reared in the council chambers of such corporations, and still directly interested in their financial well-being, Brown was said to be incapable of judging impartially the questions which came before the commission. He opposed Smith's program, not only in official meetings, but also in a series of published cards addressed to the people. The latter course seemed to the governor to be an act of insubordination. For some reason, he waited until three days after the legislature adjourned in 1907 before demanding Brown's resignation, thus giving him no opportunity to defend himself before that body at the time. To many this seemed a blow beneath the belt. The conservative press took up Brown's cause with great vim and he soon became a "martyr." When he announced himself as a candidate for governor, Smith made the tactical blunder of treating his candidacy with contempt. Brown was very small and homely: Smith was large and handsome. Brown had been a "goat;" Smith, a popular idol. But the latter seems to have presumed too far upon his own popularity and his opponent's physical defects. His attitude stimulated the wrong reaction from thousands of the plain people. "Little Joe stepped into pa's shoes." As the campaign advanced in the midst of the hard times and unemployment, the opposition made much of the slogan, "Hoke and hunger: Brown and bread." To add to Smith's embarrassment, Watson withdrew support from him. The reason for this is a matter of controversy. Watson's enemies have held that he was influenced by political jealousy and personal



spleen. He himself maintains that he supported Smith in the first instance reluctantly, especially in view of the manner in which his support had been gained; that he became offended because, during his absence from the state in 1907, Smith had sought to abolish the county-unit plan, which gives greater relative voting strength to the country counties and hence is one of Watson's greatest political assets. This move he regarded as a stab in the back by one whom he had befriended. While Watson never came out for Brown, his estrangement with Smith caused many of his followers to vote for "Little Joe." The latter was borne into the governorship on a flood tide, but found himself stranded with a "Smith" legislature.<sup>1</sup>

Two years later "the people" again changed their minds. Brown went out and Smith went in. Before the end of his second term as governor, Smith was sent to the United States Senate. Brown took his place in the governor's mansion. Back and forth went the pendulum.<sup>2</sup> Smith remained in the Senate until defeated by Watson in 1920.

Watson in the meantime has gained new followers in a number of ways. Through his various publications he has not only continued his attacks upon bossism, railroads, trusts, and money power, but has also "exposed" the "Catholic menace;" taken the popular side against Leo Frank, a Jew accused of the murder of a Christian factory girl; opposed the draft, "Palmerism," "Burlinsonism," the Versailles treaty and the League of Nations. He was narrowly defeated for Congress in his district in 1918 and was overwhelmingly elected to the Senate in 1920. In the latter

<sup>1</sup> Knight, vol. ii, pp. 1077-1095; *Constitution*, June 9, 1906; *Constitution and Journal*, June, 1907-Aug., 1908; Letter from Mr. Watson to the writer, April 25, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> Knight, vol. ii, pp. 1108-1123, *et esq.*

year his faction gained complete control of the state government.<sup>1</sup>

While the reigns of power have thus passed back and forth between the two factions, other advances have been made in the way of correcting old grievances. In 1910 the tax system was revised so as to provide for "equalization boards." These have helped, it seems, to distribute the burden of taxation somewhat more equitably over the various kinds of property. Important advances have been made in the public school system. During Brown's first administration a law was passed authorizing county boards to borrow funds when necessary to pay teachers' salaries promptly. During the second term of governor Smith the school system was reorganized and placed upon a much more efficient basis. Rural schools have profited especially by the reorganization.<sup>2</sup>

Agrarian conditions in general have greatly improved since the time of the Populists. Liens have become much less common and the exorbitant differences between cash and credit prices seem largely to have disappeared. Twenty years of rising prices and freer money, appreciation in the value of real estate, improvements in transportation conditions, the Federal Reserve System with its provisions for rural credit, a somewhat more equitable adjustment of taxation, the parcel post, the rural free delivery, postal savings banks, improved educational advantages, better roads, along with Ford cars, telephones, and the like, have conspired to advance the conditions of the masses.

Some of these things have had no connection with the Populist movement, and others may have been only remotely

<sup>1</sup>*Tom Watson's Magazine*, 1905-06; *Watson's Jeffersonian Magazine*, 1907, *et seq.*; *The Jeffersonian* (weekly)—suppressed during the war, supplanted by the *Columbia Sentinel*.

<sup>2</sup>Knight, vol. ii, pp. 1106-1113 *et seq.*

influenced by it, but those which represent reforms in line with its demands have come as a tardy fulfillment of its program. Add to these the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Amendments to the federal Constitution, providing for a graduated income tax and popular election of Senators, and it appears that a great portion of that program, once denounced by conservatives as absurd and iniquitous, has been realized.

But one should not be unduly optimistic. While much has been accomplished, the fundamental problems with which the Populists were concerned have not been solved. The supply of money has become more plentiful and more elastic, and credit is generally obtainable on more reasonable terms, but both are still largely controlled by a relatively small group of financiers. Prices have risen, but they have not been stabilized. A downward swing of the curve brings back the old grievance of producers and debtors, while an upward slant injures creditors and those on relatively fixed incomes.<sup>1</sup> Seasonal and regional fluctuations in prices and money supply, though they have been somewhat mitigated by the Federal Reserve System, have not been eliminated. Only a meager beginning has been made in the matter of rural credits. Transportation problems are still pressing. The trust question is unsolved. The system of taxation leaves much to be desired. Problems of industrial labor are still with us. While the people may have gained somewhat more effective control over their government, they have not eliminated the boss, the demagogue, and the corruptionist. They are still too often swayed by tradition and prejudice.

It may be true, as some maintain, that reform is now

<sup>1</sup>Various plans have been proposed in recent years to meet this situation, such as that of Irving Fisher and that of Ford and Edison. The similarity of the latter to the sub-treasury scheme of the Farmers' Alliance is very interesting.

racing with catastrophe. Or perhaps, as others hold, reform has proved its inadequacy, and more radical changes in the social order (to them more hopeful ones) are inevitable. In so far as the advocates of change in the United States are still liberal or progressive rather than radical, they are aiming in the same general direction as were the Populists. For the latter, despite the red glare in which some of their contemporaries fancied them, were not radical in the present sense of the word. Indeed they were battling in behalf of the competitive system against tendencies themselves subversive of it. These they regarded as abuses rather than inherent defects. They believed that the government could and should correct them. It should extend its control over business, restrain the oppressor and aid the oppressed; it should even own and operate such public utilities as the railroads; but all this was to give the honest individual freer play and a fairer chance under the existing order. Whatever hopes such ideals may hold for the future, their prevalence among the masses today is due to no small extent to the Populists.

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## PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

Ex-Governor W. J. Northen left a large collection of clippings and correspondence which is now in the possession of his daughter, Miss Annie Bell Northen, Atlanta. The clippings are drawn from a wide variety of sources, including daily and weekly newspapers, agricultural journals, Alliance and Grange publications, and the like. Most of them are carefully identified, but, unfortunately, some are undated. Not all of the correspondence has yet been placed at the disposal of the student.

Senator Thomas E. Watson also has preserved a large collection. It is of much the same character as that of ex-Governor Northen. The volume of correspondence accessible to the student is larger, but some documents are still in the sanctum sanctorum.

Mrs. W. H. Felton, Cartersville, Ga., has kept voluminous scrap-books which have formed the basis of her *Memoirs* and other writings.

As these and other collections become more fully available, new light will doubtless be thrown upon some phases of the subject by the future historian.

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