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ELECTION DAY IN NEW YORK.

WITH PICTURES BY JAY HAMBIDGE.

ELECTION-DAY morning is the earliest of the year. The polls open at six o'clock—long before daylight in that late and cloudy month of November. At three the policemen who are to serve at the polls (nearly three thousand of them on the last occasion) are aroused and sent to breakfast. An hour later they reassemble, are paraded before the desks of the station-houses, instructed, and despatched to their polls, taking with them all the ballot-boxes, ballots, and other furniture, for the safety of which they are held responsible.

As six o'clock approaches men may be seen plunging in and out of all-night restaurants, where they snatch a hasty breakfast, and then hurry away through the chilly gloom. These are inspectors and other officials who have early work to do.

The polling-place used to be generally some small shop belonging to a faithful adherent of the dominant party, who received fifty dollars from the city for the use of his premises during the four days of registration and one day's voting. The same place was likely to be occupied, and the same inspectors and clerks often served, year after year, partly for the pay (thirty-six dollars), but largely because the service carries with it exemption from jury duty for a year, and gives a man a certain distinction among his neighbors. Cigar shops were favorite places, but shoe shops, barber

shops, undertakers' rooms, and even stables, were taken. In almost every case they used to be too small, and were dark, ill ventilated, and inconvenient. At one place a watcher met with (and stopped) the practice of leading horses in and out through the voting inclosure. The new police board has broken up the old custom of choosing these places for political reasons.

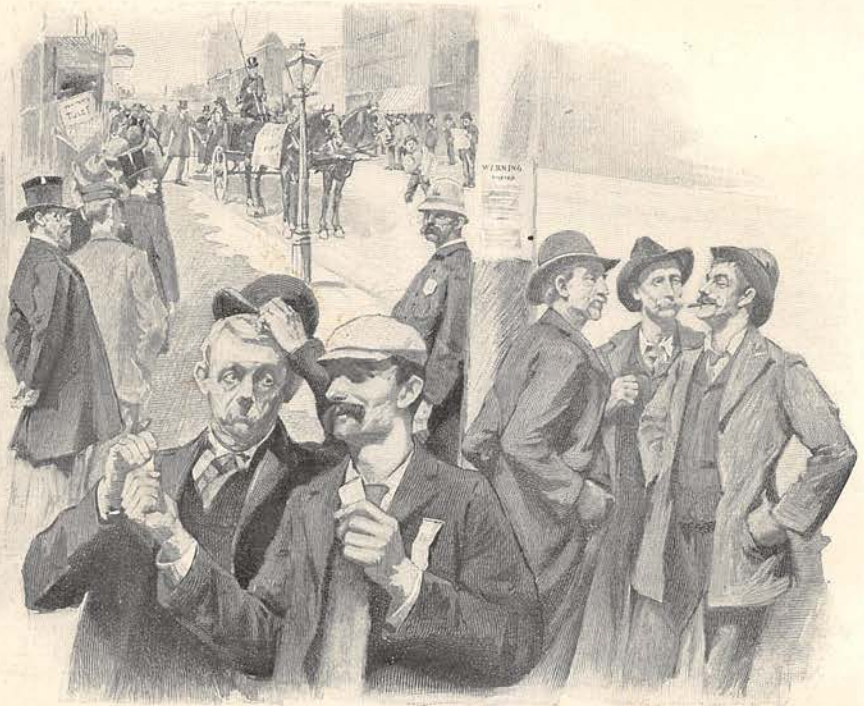
Before the polls open the small closets or "booths" in which the voters prepare their ballots, and which are built of canvas stretched upon light frames, hinged together so as to be collapsible, are unfolded and set up, one being provided for each fifty voters on the list. The ballot-boxes, which have two glass sides and a solid cover perforated by a narrow slit, are opened, proved to be empty, relocked by the chairman of the Board of Inspectors, and then arranged upon tables. Outside of all is set up a "guard-rail," as a legal rather than an actual barrier to the approach within it of unprivileged persons. The ballot clerks set in order their ballots ready to be dealt out, while the poll clerks open their registry books containing the names of men supposed to be electors, and prepare to record each vote. Finally, any watchers present take their places within the rail, where they may scrutinize every proceeding. To the intelligence, vigilance, and courageous protests of these watchers all over

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the city the handsome result against misrule in 1894, and the freedom from illegal election methods, were very largely due, and they will be a regular institution hereafter.

On the stroke of six the poll is declared open, and the voting immediately begins, the name and address of each applicant being called out by the inspector as soon as the voter presents himself. If he is reported as properly registered, and no one challenges his right, the ballots are given him, their number is recorded by the clerks and every one else interested, and he retires to a booth to select in secret the ticket or tickets he

the moment he attempts to vote; but often he is able to show that the supposed falsification is somebody's error, and soon establishes his innocence. In many cases, as where the alleged inhabitants of a low lodging-house are challenged by wholesale, the protester is satisfied by the man taking an oath as to his right to the franchise, since prosecution and serious punishment may follow if subsequent proof of perjury is obtained. Now and then, when there is good reason to believe the applicant a fraud, he will be warned to take care, and told that he will be immediately investigated and punished if he has sworn



DRAWN BY JAY HAMBIDGE.

OUTSIDE THE POLLING-PLACE.

wishes to vote. This done, he returns, hands his ballots to the inspectors, so folded that no one can see their purport, the fact that he has voted is proclaimed and recorded, and he leaves the inclosure. If challenged, he "swears in" his vote, or refuses to do so, according as he is willing or not to take the responsibility of an oath.

Here is where the watchers are of particular service. Registration lists have been scrutinized in advance, and suspected names looked up. Where a doubt remains, the man is challenged as soon as he appears. In a few cases earlier investigation has justified the issue of a judicial warrant, and he is arrested

falsely. As the Police Department issues annually a book containing a full compendium of the election laws, which is spread broadcast, there is no excuse for ignorance. Such a warning usually scares a rascal away, and his tale prevents others trying the same game. Of the twenty-three men registered from one lodging-house known to the writer at a recent election, only sixteen presented themselves, and two of these did not vote. The year before thirty-five had voted from the same house.

Meanwhile the great city is waking up. This is a legal holiday, but the smaller provision stores open their doors for a few hours,



DRAWN BY JAY HAMBRIDGE.

A WARD HEELER.

for thousands of their customers never have eatables on hand for more than one meal at a time. Men are trotting from corner to corner extinguishing the gas-lamps, and the electric lights pale and go out by platoons, street after street. Surface and elevated cars pass with increasing frequency, but are half empty; milk-dealers rattle about. Toward the polling-places come groups of strong, active, but rather seedy men, talking the polyglot slang of the school of the curb-stone.

One, better dressed, cleaner shaved, strides briskly around the corner, and is instantly attended to. He shakes hands with everybody, calling each by his Christian name—or a part of it, for time is precious this morning. Now and then he throws his arm about the neck of a henchman, and whispers a sentence or two in his ear, whereupon the recipient of the favor hurries away. This nabob is the leader of the district on one side, or

perhaps an alderman, or maybe even a candidate, and these others are his "workers," who share his chances, hopeful of recognition if he succeeds, failing which they will desert to the opposition, and possibly "squeal," or betray damaging secrets against him. He is now making a round of the polls in his district to be sure that his representatives are on duty near by, and are properly distributing his pasters to every one who can be induced to take and use them. The use of pasters, by the way, is abrogated under the new ballot law.

Often a small portable closet of rough boards is set up on the sidewalk, in which the paster peddler ensconces himself like an old woman in a French bath-chair; and these little cabins, with three or four party men about each, form a notable feature of election-day scenes. They are made of fresh lumber, yellow, and oozing with amber resin; they are covered with lithographed portraits



DRAWN BY JAY HAMBRIDGE.

A CANDIDATE.



DRAWN BY JAY HAMBIDGE.

THE FLOATING VOTE.

and red-and-blue posters announcing their special candidates; they are the nuclei of groups of gossiping loungers, and often are upset in the rush of a fight which must be concluded before the peddler and his pasters can crawl out. In the worst era of municipal politics they were numerous and close to the polls, but almost disappeared in 1894.

Elsewhere the city has a Sabbath quiet; but if you go to the ferries or to the Grand Central depot an hour or two later, you see there plenty of people—well-dressed women and prosperous, clerky-looking men, especially parties of the younger sort, armed with gun-cases or dress-suit valises, or perhaps both. These are going out of town for a day's pleasure: shooting in New Jersey or up the Hudson; fox-hunting on Long Island; Country Club sports in Westchester County or at Tuxedo; visiting with rural or suburban friends. It is fair to suppose that many of the above have voted, but a similar throng left town on Saturday and won't be back until Wednesday. In 1894 this fashionable irrup-

tion did not enliven the outgoing trains to any noticeable extent, and to the men who stayed in town to vote the Tiger may charge thousands of the flakes that snowed him under in that memorable political blizzard.

Another class rejoice in this holiday as an opportunity to sit at home enjoying domestic comfort, reading in slippers ease the postponed book, or fondling the pet hobby. The «people» call them «silk-stockings,» and have no fear of their beautifully modulated expressions of censure, because they rarely back it up by a vote.

Down at the polls they cannot understand this frame of mind. A certain number of citizens, to be sure, come, deposit their votes as quickly as possible, and go away with an attitude of having performed a disagreeable duty. But to the many who are more or less visible there all day this is the most important occasion of the year, and there is hardly anything they would not rather do than miss it. To be sure, it may be worth a few dollars to them, directly or indirectly; but plainly they look further than this, and



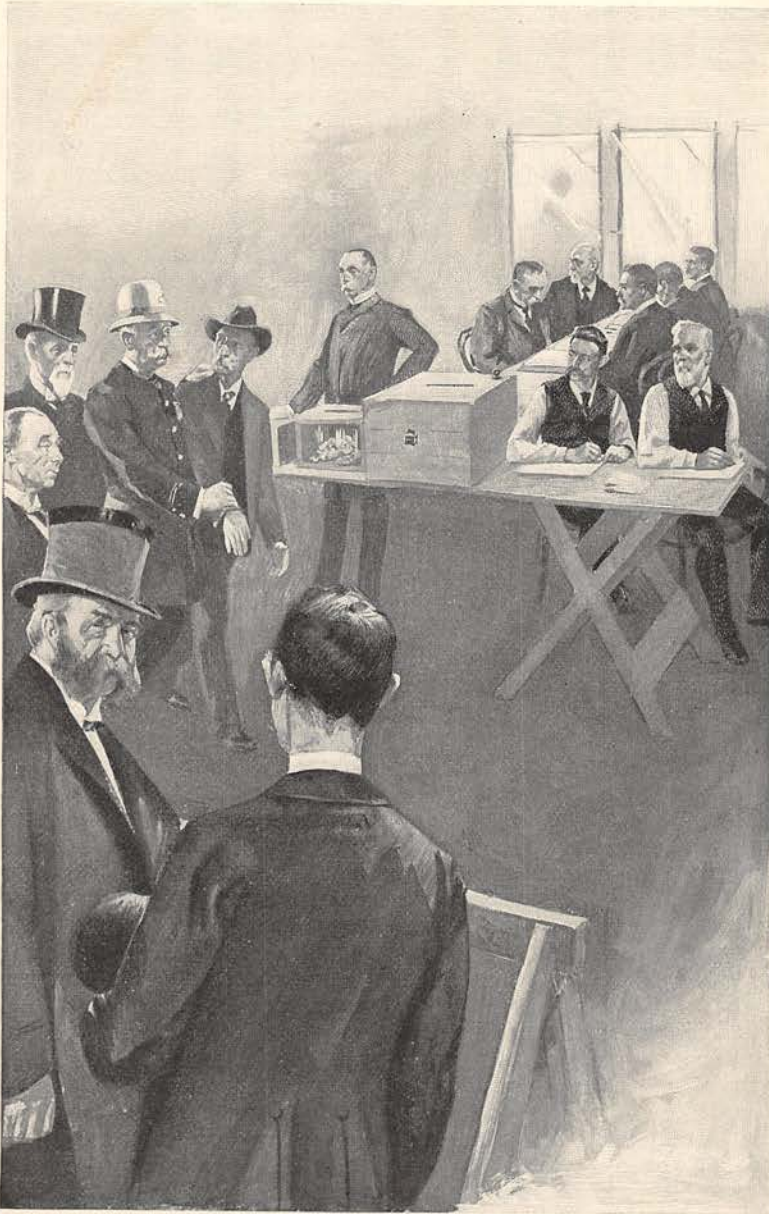
DRAWN BY JAY HAMBIDGE.

THE FLOATING VOTE.

have a hazy sense of the dignity of the act, comparable to the fetish-worshiper's notion of religion. They are not the ignorant, foreign, dollar-a-day laborers, stupid and be-

none, they are wholly devoted to «the cause» as long as they get fair treatment.

It is these men who make the voting-places picturesque. In rough garb and with lordly



DRAWN BY JAY HAMBIDGE.

ARREST OF A REPEATER.

sotted with liquor, but men earning wages enough to enable them to pay their footing in the bar-room club, and having sufficient brains to make them serviceable to their «captain.» Alert with the keenness of the streets, knowing everybody, and feeling above

swagger, they sandwich themselves between neat and dignified lawyers, merchants, and clergymen, proudly sensible of their equality at the polls. Sometimes the motley line reaches out of doors and down the street. As soon as one has voted he joins the loiter-

ers outside, and pompously lights a cigar, scornful of the black pipe more familiar to his teeth.

In the afternoon the brisk captain, who has been dodging all day from poll to poll, obtains an approximate list of those of his side who have not yet voted, and despatches workers to «bring them out.» They search their haunts, and presently return with recruits. Some of these delinquents have simply been tardy, others are sick or lame or blind, and are gently conducted to the polls, perhaps in a carriage, placed in the line, and carefully assisted to the ballot-box. The attention he gets on election day is a genuine comfort to many a poor devil kicked about all the rest of the year. Now and then a henchman seizes a captain and whispers portentously in his ear. A moment later he hurries off, looking very important, and soon reappears with a companion, who is sent on alone, while he himself stays back at the corner. This means that some voter has been ascertained to be out of town or sick abed, and that a willing and thrifty stranger has come to vote (illegally) in his name. This is only one of many tricks election officers and watchers must guard against toward the end of the day, and sometimes at a cost to the latter of no small courage; for whisky emboldens the roughest workers to try to «stand on his head» any one who interferes with them.

The day wears on—Sunday without the churches, a gray day in every sense of the word. In the lower wards, where folk are close enough together to feel one another's warmth, and where it really matters whether Mike O'Farron or Barney Cadigan is to be alderman or coroner, each cross-roads has an excited crowd; but up-town the side streets are deserted, and even Broadway and Fifth Avenue are dead.

The first to break the silence are the boys crying the afternoon papers; but there is nothing in them except clever guesswork, unless the tension of factions at some polling-place, or the wild foolishness of a tipsy worker, has brought on a fight or two. Election-day rows are now remarkably rare in New York.

Loiterers increase about the polling-places, and voters crowd forward, fearful lest they be too late. The weary inspectors and clerks most now work harder than ever, and the watchers watch their very best. This is the time when the schemer gathers results—gets in his fine work, as he would tell you. Men present themselves with specious claims,

politicians bulldoze, and it is only the most determined guardian of the purity of the ballot who in this last hour can withstand the pressure. It happened in several districts, in 1894, when the voter was called upon to fold and select from twenty-three ballots, that there was not time enough in the day for all those entitled to the franchise to reach the ballot-box, and voting twice in one place was out of the question.

The moment the polls close the liquor-saloons open, but the excessive drunkenness and brawling common in former years are not now seen. Five o'clock editions of the newspapers are issued, but have little to tell, for everywhere the clerks are still busily counting the votes. The streets overflow with boys who hardly wait for the earliest darkness to institute their picturesque part of the day's doings. The New York citizen begins to break election-day laws as soon as he can toddle about the block. Bonfires are strictly prohibited, yet thousands of them redden the air and set all the windows aglow before seven o'clock.

Antiquarians inform us that this custom is nothing but a survival in America of the old English celebration of burning Guy Fawkes on the 5th of November, in recollection of the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, which the children have transferred to the movable feast of our election day. Maybe so. At any rate, for weeks beforehand the lads, large and small, rich and poor, have begged, borrowed, or stolen every burnable thing they could lay their hands on, and have kept their treasure as well as they could. Knowing by sad experience the untruth of the aphorism, «There is honor among thieves,» they usually persuade some one to let them store these combustibles in his back yard or still safer cellar. From hundreds of such repositories the lads bring their treasures, heap them up in the middle of the street, and fight off raiders until they are safely blazing. Women and children swarm out of the huge tenements and cluster about the scene, where the youngsters are leaping and whooping and waving brands, like the true fire-worshippers they are. The smallest boys and girls have saved a box and a board or two, or beg some fuel from good-natured big brothers, and start little blazes of their own, with a headless ash-barrel for a chimney. Everywhere are dancing, merriment, singing, and shouting. The great heaps throw out a terrific heat, glare upon the highest windows, and illuminate the whole sky, while showers of sparks whirl up and down the narrow streets



DRAWN BY JAY HARRIDGE.

A CAMPAIGN PARADE AT NIGHT.



DRAWN BY JAY HAMBIDGE.

THE WOLF AND THE LAMB.

in the autumn wind, yet rarely do serious damage. But boxes and barrels are slight, and the flames die down long before the enthusiasm of the boys and their applauding friends is exhausted. Now begins criminal foraging and senseless waste. Lumber-piles, scaffolding, new buildings, kitchen chairs, wheelbarrows, and sometimes even serviceable wagons, are seized by marauders and thrown on the fires, unless carefully guarded, so that each year sees not only a great waste of good fuel among the poor, but the destruction of much valuable timber and household furniture. This work of hoodlums cannot easily be stopped, because just then nearly all the police are in the polling-places watching the canvass.

The counting of the votes has been in the past more fruitful of trickery and falsification than any other part of the election process. In 1893 the canvassers in certain districts reduced the matter to its lowest terms by simply reporting a unanimous vote on their side, and then going out to fling up their hats for the rest of the night. In the subsequent election competent and incorruptible men supervised the canvass so strictly that the percentage of fraud was so small, if any existed, as never to be heard of. This watching

at the count not only prevented intentional lying, but saved accidental mistakes. In one case the board of inspectors confessed they did not know how to count the votes, and submitted entirely to the guidance of a well-informed watcher.

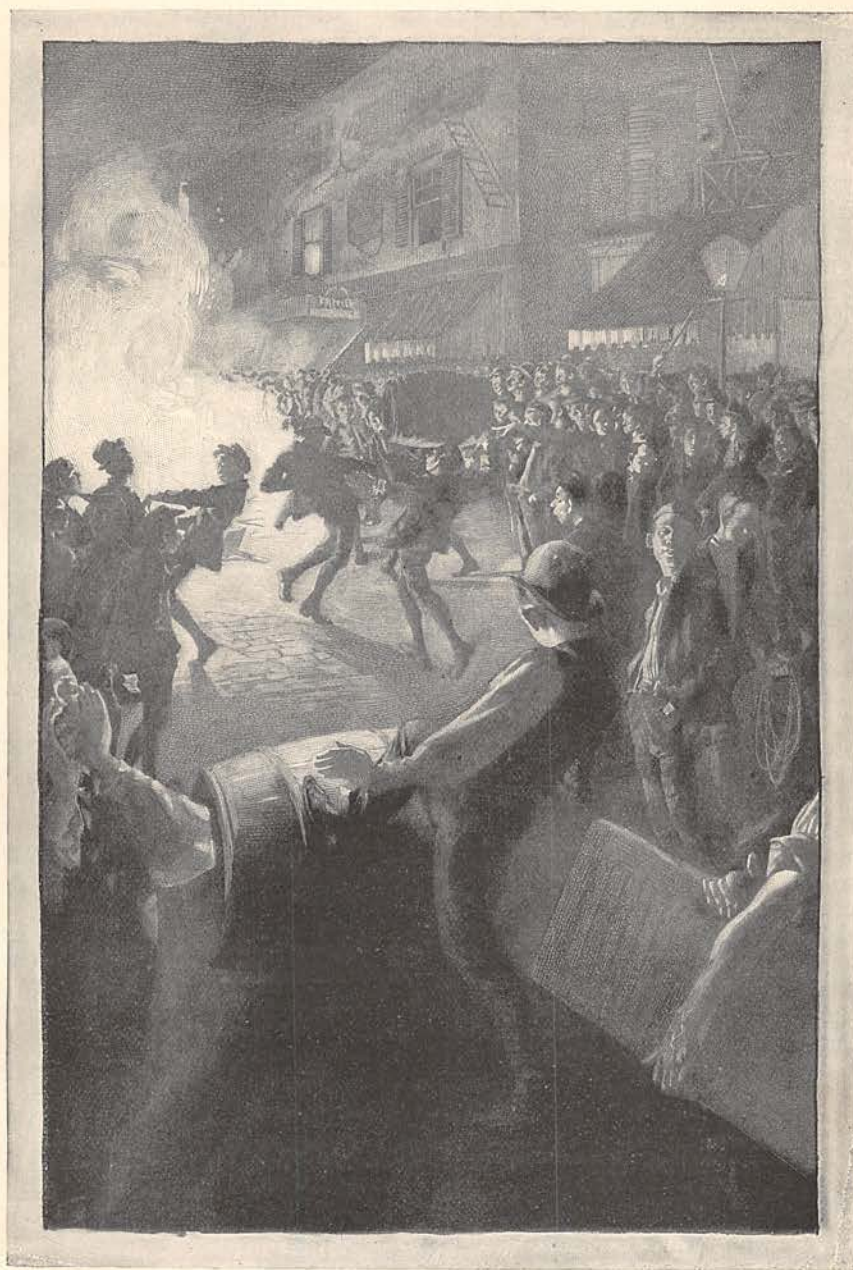
The counting is done in public, and is often an interesting sight. Every organization and each candidate may send a representative to observe it, though nobody but the inspectors is permitted to touch the ballots. The straight tickets are first counted in tens by the four men in succession, and a tally is kept by at least two assistants. Each name is credited with as many votes as there are tickets for his side. Then one inspector reads off those tickets which are «split,» or have pasters attached, or upon which names have been erased or new names written, and each candidate is credited with a vote every time his name appears. When this is finished the most prominent office is taken up, and the sum of the votes for each candidate is ascertained. The result is immediately announced, but the official announcement and record are made in this wise:

The election bureau of the police board is the official recipient of the returns from the



DRAWN BY JAY HAMBIDGE.

EMBLEMS OF VICTORY.



DRAWN BY JAY HAMBIDGE.

BRINGING UP FUEL FOR THE BONFIRES.

voting precincts. This bureau furnishes each poll with blanks for the official record, and also with four sets of small blanks for each office. As soon as the count for any office is finished the four inspectors sign all four blanks, and a policeman takes them to police headquarters, and quickly returns for others. Thus the count goes on until it is completed—sometimes not before midnight.

Meantime there have gathered in a large room at police headquarters all the commissioners, the superintendent, and a great number of newspaper reporters with pencils sharpened at both ends, while the walls are lined with messenger and telephone boys. As soon as a report is brought it is read out by the superintendent, taken down by the newspaper men, and forwarded to their editors

as rapidly as possible. By eight o'clock the returns come thick and fast, and nothing is heard but the scratching of pencils and the footsteps of racing messengers. The commissioners soon go to their private offices, for they know that anxious candidates will speedily be calling to learn their fate, although a very fair idea has spread abroad by nine or ten o'clock as to how the State and city have «gone» on the principal issues. In the case of the election of November, 1894, everybody knew that Tammany was beaten long before that hour.

But the fun of the street, which is now beginning, is not for that band of reporters at headquarters, nor for those other bands of writers in the newspaper offices down-town, who, with almost superhuman diligence and endurance, are tabulating and putting into type and commenting upon these returns for delectation of the public next morning.

The tenement-house districts have been alive with people since sundown, dancing about the fires. They have learned long ago the outlines of the result, and those on the successful side are rejoicing in their tumultuous way, sure of the support of all the boys. As the evening advances the excitement spreads to Broadway and up-town. The newspapers will issue extras every hour or so from 9 P. M. to two in the morning, but they do not hesitate to give all this news away upon their bulletins as fast as they get it.

The crowd knows this, and gathers early in City Hall Park and Newspaper Square to read the messages written upon glass «slides,» and magnified upon broad screens outside the buildings by means of a stereopticon. At first these bulletins are vague and partial, but toward midnight they increase in breadth and importance. At intervals the operator presents a summing up like this:

418 districts out of a total of 600 in Ohio give John Smith, Dem., 117,926, and James Brown, Rep., 180,460.

or:

Georgia elects the whole Democratic ticket by an estimated plurality of 20,000.

When he has nothing to report the operator displays a portrait of a candidate, or an impromptu cartoon, exhibiting in comical allegory the success of his man, or his side, and the discomfiture of the other fellow. Of late a favorite bit of fun has been to throw upon the screen a question like this:

«What 's the matter with Cleveland?»

Promptly comes the answer from ten thousand throats:

«He 's all right!»

Then shines out:

«Who 's all right?»

And the windows rattle with the acclamation:

«C-l-e-v-e-l-a-n-d!»

As the principal dailies are published side by side in Park Row, and include political opponents, the populace is treated not only to the whole truth of the figures, but to all the portraits and both sides of the jokes, and the laughter is gaily impartial. Over all the scene in recent years glow the huge red or white beacons on the summit of the dome of one of these buildings, signaling the probable result to curious eyes miles away across the rivers.

Elsewhere eager minds are seeking the facts. Telephone and telegraph operators find the night a very busy one. At all the theaters the returns are read to the audience between the acts, and variety players bring out fresh laughter by impromptu «gags» at the expense of the losing politicians.

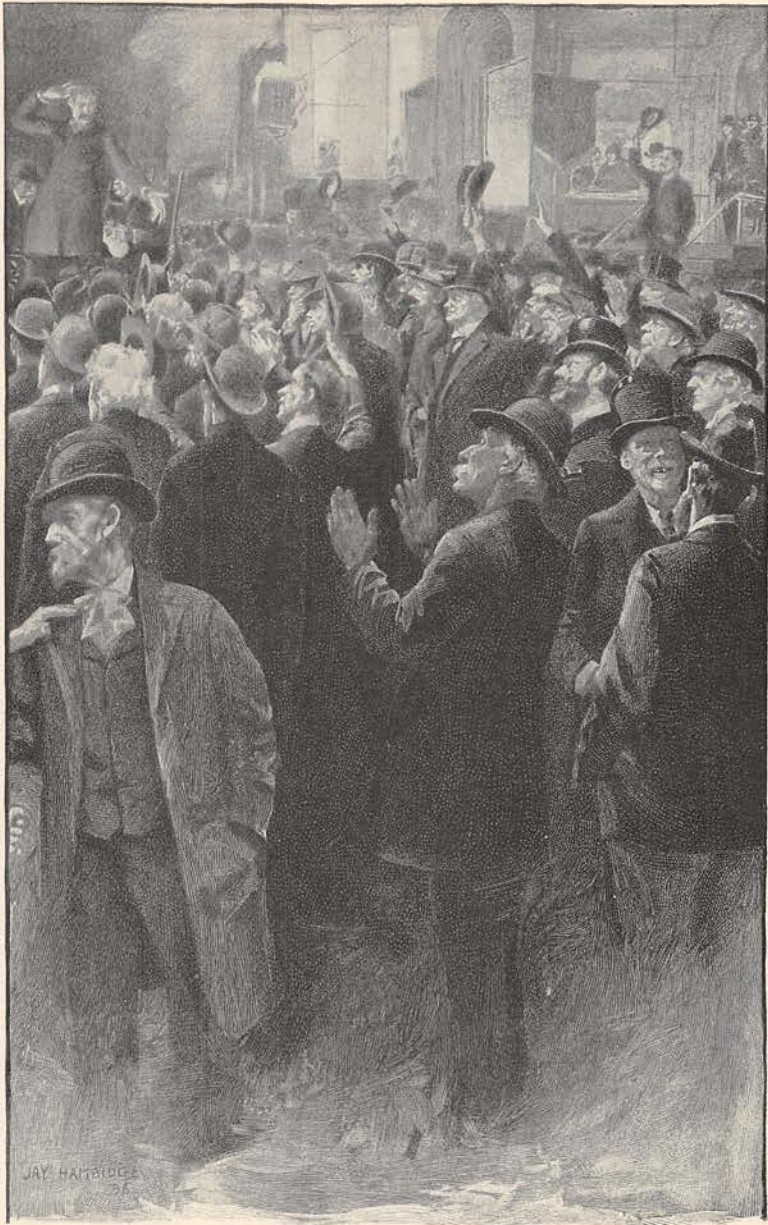
Temporary wires have been extended into the offices of the principal organizations, and there the leaders assemble and receive a constant stream of visitors and telegrams. The Republicans always assemble at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, where a jubilant crowd of substantial citizens soon takes possession of the corridors if that party wins. The Hoffman boils over with equally well-groomed and hilarious Democrats when they are in the ascendant.

But the greatest of these indoor jollifications is that at Tammany Hall. Early in the evening the spacious auditorium becomes packed with tribesmen, a brass band is stationed in the gallery, the wives and daughters of prominent braves appear in the boxes, and the big and little sachems, wiskinskies, and all the rest, gather about a mythical council-fire on the stage. A member with a stentorophonic voice reads telegrams from the district leaders and police headquarters, against a storm of cheerful yells and witticisms when the news is favorable, and of hoots and cat-calls when it is not.



DRAWN BY JAY HAMBROCK.

CAMPAIGN SONGS IN AN ELECTION-NIGHT CROWD.



DRAWN BY JAY HAMBIDGE.

CART-TAIL ORATORY.

In 1894 the society had its special wire, as usual, and a reader, a band, and a big audience, but nothing but failure to report. For a long time no orator was willing to go upon the stage, and when one or two did screw up the courage, their remarks evoked only groans and muttered imprecations. The band struck up at last, but could find nothing better to offer than « Massa 's in the cold, cold ground »; and the gleeful shout that greeted this disconsolate selection showed that the hall had been

captured by enemies, who had come to twist the tail of the Tiger in his inmost cage. At this the wiskinskies retired, the musicians fled, and the discomfited braves sneaked out of side entrances to avoid the derisive crowd in Fourteenth street bent upon taking their scalps.

By ten o'clock Madison Square and upper Broadway are thronged and noisy. A searchlight on the tapering tower of the Madison Square Garden swings its beam north and

south, east or west, with the varying reports, according to an advertised code of signaling. Now and then the light is thrown down, and reveals the stirring thousands of men and women that stand in the plaza, all gazing with upturned faces upon the bulletins displayed at Fifth avenue and Twenty-third street.

The cable cars plow lanes through the shadowy masses, with clangorous gongs, but the horse-cars are simply swallowed up, the people dodging from under the noses of the horses as they wade slowly along, only to close in behind the car. An inarticulate

venders. To hundreds in it the contest may be a matter of serious personal importance, but though there is plenty of badinage, one hears little acrid discussion, and witnesses no rowdyism. As soon as it becomes apparent which side has won, arrive those strange companies of youths who seem preserved from year to year for this single appearance. They are fashionably attired, and look like college students, but are not, and whence they come and whither they go between times is an unsolved mystery. Blowing tin horns in impious disharmony, waving brooms over



DRAWN BY JAY HAMBIDGE.

CONFERENCE OF LEADERS IN A NEW YORK WARD CLUB.

murmur of satisfaction or discontent, and noise of shuffling feet, follow the display of each new bulletin, swelling loud and louder as later and more certain messages are spread upon the huge placard.

The crowd is a good-natured one, and patronizes liberally the «extra» boys, the peddlers of toy brooms and tiny feathered roosters, to be pinned to coat, or buys peanuts, candy, and cheap cigars from itinerant

their shoulders, symbolic of the «cleansweep,» trailing behind a leader in single file or by twos, they dive into the masses of people, wind in and out and round about, singing some campaign song, or shouting in chorus a partizan slogan.

It is stark midnight before the bulletins cease, and the people begin to pack the street-cars, or troop homeward afoot through the moonlit avenues and crossways.

Ernest Ingersoll.