Campaign Buttons.

By George Dollar.

CONTESTS for the Presidency of the United States — in American parlance, "Presidential campaigns"— take place every four years. They begin in June or July, when the different parties meet in convention to "nominate" or choose their candidates, and end at an early date in November, when the election is held. The campaign is entered into with great enthusiasm by the people. The Press pays little attention to any topic except the issue of the day, and partisan papers are filled with accounts of the merits of their own candidate and the demerits of all others. Citizens march thousands strong in torchlight processions to the music of countless brass bands; gay banners, with portraits of the candidates and the catchwords of the campaign, are hung across the principal streets; and "campaign buttons" adorn the lapels of voters all over the land.

These buttons are circular bits of ornamented or cloth-covered tin. Sometimes they are embellished with the portraits of the candidates, as in the button at the right, which represents Governor William McKinley, of Ohio, the candidate of the Republican party; or in the button at the beginning of this article, which shows the clean-cut features of William J. Bryan, the Nebraskan orator, who has sprung from obscurity to fame, as the nominee of the Democratic party. Sometimes, as in 1888, when election buttons first caught the popular fancy, a button simply shows the name of the candidate, printed in plain lettering, on a pretty background of stars and stripes. At other times, it shows the issue between the parties. In the elections of four and eight years ago, for instance, when the parties were divided on the tariff question, many of the buttons had "Free Trade" or "Protection" printed on the surface. This year the parties are in bitter controversy over the currency question, and several of the buttons reproduced in this article give evidence that this question, at the moment of writing, is absorbing the attention of the United States, to the exclusion of all other issues.

The so-called "silver-bug button," reproduced at the left, will serve as a hook upon which to hang a brief exposition of the abstruse question which has stirred the Americans to fever-heat. The noticeable thing about this button is not the bug itself, but the lettering on its spacious back. It is a Democratic button, for the words "Free unlimited" represent what the Democrats are fighting for in this campaign, namely, the coinage by the United States mints of all silver offered, free of charge to the owners of the bullion, into legal tender money. The "16 to 1" expresses the Democratic desire that the ratio between silver and gold should be legally maintained by the Government in the proportion of sixteen grains of silver to one grain of gold; or, in other words, that sixteen ounces of silver should always be equivalent in value to one ounce of gold. The designer of this button has tried to express the troublesome point in a graphic manner, by silvering the entire bug, with the exception of the small patch upon which the figure 1 stands, shown in our reproduction. This patch, in the original, is done in gilt, and probably if one had the time to measure the relative quantities of silver and gilt shown on the surface, including the feelers and the legs, one would find sixteen parts of silver to one of gilt. It may be remarked that, in the United States, the word "bug" is used in a general way to express any insect, and conveys no special meaning, as it does in England. Its use in the catchwords "silver-bug" and "gold-bug" may be taken as an evidence that Americans have not yet forgotten Edgar Allan Poe, from whose famous story, "The Gold-Bug," the current expression is probably derived.

The "silver-bug" also figures in a less attractive button, which, besides the inevitable "16 to 1," contains the words "No Com-

promise." Here is one just below. "No Compromise" expresses the determination of the "silverites," or Democrats, to resist to the last any attempt to make the ratio between silver and gold anything but sixteen to one. It can easily be seen that the use of these expressions on campaign buttons forms an appreciable factor in the education of the people to an understanding of the intricate points of the currency question. For no American in his right senses would go about with a button unless he could explain what it meant.

The Republican, of course, hoots at the "silver-bug" button, and refuses to wear it. To him the idea of a constant ratio between silver and gold is mere poppycock. It is his belief that the quantity of silver in the world is constantly fluctuating, and that the total amount of gold is nearly always the same. That is to say, the Republican party believes in a "sound money," which does not depreciate in value, and does not believe in an "unsound money," which tends to depreciate in value, the more the metal of which it is made is produced. Consequently the Republican wears upon his jacket a "sound money button," like that at the left. This button, with its bug and lettering in beautiful gilt on a blue background, is a deadly enemy to the pretensions of the "free coinage fiends," who, so the Republicans say, want to make the Government purchase silver at a price far beyond its value. It is, perhaps, not so striking as the two preceding buttons, because there is not so much on it. But the Republicans say there's a lot in it.

Sometimes on the buttons there is a sparkle of fun. Take, for example, this "G.O.P." button at the right. The "G.O.P." stands for "Grand Old Party," and is a term applied to the Republican party, which for many years after the Civil War remained in power undefeated. The words "good as gold" may be taken in a double sense, though what the elephant represents, no one except the designer can tell. Someone has suggested that the life of an elephant is long, and that the button prophesies an equally long existence for the "Grand Old Party." Possibly this is the correct explanation. At all events, it is a striking button.

Naturally, the buttons showing the physiognomies of the different candidates are the most popular, and hence the most widely worn. If you wear a "McKinley button" or a "Bryan button," your friends know at once who your candidate is, and there is no unnecessary quizzing as to your stand upon the money question. But if you wear a "sound money button," it is a toss-up whether you are going to vote for McKinley or for the candidate of the "gold Democrats." It may be said, in passing, that since the nomination of Bryan, the "silverite," by the Democratic party, a large number of Democrats, who are opposed to the theories of the "silverites," have broken away from their party and have nominated candidates of their own. Hence they are called "gold Democrats," and the "sound-money button" is as much a favourite with them as with the Republicans. But the portrait buttons are the most effective. Here is one, at the right, which does a double duty in expressing your own preferences and asking a question at one and the same time. The portrait of McKinley is very good.

The use of a flag for a background, although not at all a new idea, is always popular. Knowing this, the manufacturers, in order to meet the demand of all parties, prepare large quantities of flag buttons, showing the different candidates, usually on the same background. In the accompanying portrait button of Joshua Levering, who has been nominated by the Prohibition, or "no liquor," party, the flag is the same as that used in the McKinley button reproduced in the second paragraph of this article. This Levering button illustrates a peculiarly disagreeable detail in flag buttons. The hasty manufacture of buttons allows little time to be spent in perfecting the details, and the chances of getting the portrait exactly in the middle of the flag, or the flag exactly round the portrait, are few and far between. When not properly in the centre, the portrait looks odd, and the whole button shows slovenly manufacture. When buttons are bought by the dozens and hundreds, as they often are by dealers in knick-knacks, there is nothing more annoying than to find imperfect ones in the lot. No

dealer can sell them when perfect ones are to be obtained, and loss naturally results.

The question of loss to the manufacturer is interesting. It is very evident that the life of a campaign button is a few months at the most, and once an election is settled, the buttons are forgotten. The manufacturers, therefore, are very careful not to make too large a quantity, for fear that, at the end of the campaign, they will have a lot of useless stock upon their hands. As it is, they usually find that they have an overstock. People will have the best buttons; and if a rival firm gets out a unique and taking sample, that button is bought, almost to the extinction of others. In the last campaign one Eastern firm, which had prepared a large quantity of buttons, suddenly found itself outstripped by a smarter firm with prettier designs. The result was that, at the end of the campaign, about ten thousand buttons were tossed into the ash-heap.

Sometimes, for several reasons, a button does not "catch on," and this fact means more loss. The "Free Cuba" button is one of the daintiest of the lot. It was evidently designed in the expectation that the attitude of the United States towards the Cuban insurgents would be one of the chief issues of the campaign. The parties, however, have had no time to woo the Cuban goddess, and it is said by one dealer that the "Cuba Libre" cry has fallen flat, so far as the sale of the buttons is concerned.

It is amazing, too, how cheap campaign buttons are in the closing days of a Presidential fight. The ordinary or popular price for a button is five cents, or 2½d., although some of the more elaborate designs cost fivepence. In large quantities, good discounts are made to dealers. But just before election, the price suddenly drops, and good buttons can be bought for almost nothing. This sudden fall in price is due to an overstock in the market, and a desire on the part of the manufacturers to realize their money before it is too late. Even then, the manufacturers make money, for, in large quantities, campaign buttons may be manufactured for a fraction of a halfpenny apiece.

In the present campaign, the Democratic buttons, showing the portraits of the Democratic candidates for the Presidency and Vice-Presidency, Bryan and Sewall, have sold very widely, especially in the west. The demand is due to a general desire to see "what Bryan looks like." The nomination of "the young orator of the Platte," after a stirring speech in the convention, surprised the country, and the button manufacturers found no small difficulty in getting photographs of Bryan to put upon their buttons. But when the buttons came out, they were readily bought. The clean-shaven, good-natured face attracted everybody. The reproductions, moreover, were very successful, and the dark face on the white background, as in the accompanying picture, made a pretty contrast. The same photograph has also been reproduced upon the Stars and Stripes background; but, as in the case of the Levering button, the effect is ragged. A smaller Bryan button has also been popular. Here is one of them at the right, with the simple inscription "For President Wm. J. Bryan" over the head.

There are also buttons showing the candidates of each party for President and Vice-President looking at each other. The candidates of each party for the two highest offices are called a "ticket," and in the present campaign there are several "tickets." The Republicans have nominated McKinley and Hobart—the latter a New Jersey man with money. The Democrats have nominated Bryan and Sewall. The "gold-Democratic ticket" is made up of two generals who fought against each other in the Civil War—Palmer and Buckner. The "Populists" or "Popocrats" have nominated Bryan and Watson for their ticket. The Prohibition candidates are Levering and Johnson; and the Labour party have put forth a ticket too. But neither of these latter two parties is of much account in the present campaign.

With so many men to handle, it is no wonder that the number of different buttons this year is very great. It is a difficult problem, too, to get two photographs on the surface of a button without crowding. In the Harrison-Cleveland campaign of 1892, one of the Republican buttons represented Harrison and Reid nose to nose, so small was the surface of the button and so large the space swallowed up by Harrison's beard.

But in the Bryan-Sewall button at the right of this column, much has been done in a little space, and the likenesses of the Democratic candidates are fairly distinct and true. The McKinley and Hobart button at the left is quite as successful, although the Stars and Stripes again partly spoil the total effect. The presence of McKinley and Hobart together must not, however, be taken as a proof that they sat together for their photograph. It is said that the Republican candidate never saw his colleague until they met together at McKinley's home in Canton, Ohio, after the convention. In the button, however, they look as if they had been bosom friends for years.

A campaign in which two different Vice-Presidents are nominated by two different parties, with the same candidate for President, adds variety to campaign buttons. This year the silver Democrats nominated Bryan, a poor man, and Sewall, a rich man. The Populist party, which contains a goodly number of silverites, were willing to accept Bryan as their candidate for President, but they would have none of Sewall and his wealth—the hatred of wealth being one of the idiosyncrasies which descend from Populist father to son. The present situation, which is unusual in American politics, has caused consternation among the silver Democrats, and no little inconvenience to the button manufacturers. The latter have been compelled to design a new button, representing Bryan shoulder to shoulder with Watson, the Populist candidate for Vice-President. On this button, Bryan wears a frown, as if he cared little for his associate, and wanted Sewall.

This is the shield pattern, which is very popular. The shield is an old-time design, and figured prominently in the campaign of eight years ago, when Harrison defeated Cleveland. The different results obtained in photographs of the same man may be seen by comparing the face on the shield with the face on the button at the left of the column. The right-hand button represents Mr. Levering, the Prohibitionist candidate, as a neat and dapper man, with a keen sense of fun. The one at the left has none of these characteristics, the candidate looks tired.

The "clock-button," here reproduced, is, without doubt, the cleverest of the year. The dial, hands, and numbering are of silver. Nothing could be more striking than this design. It is profitable, too, for Republicans are buying it as a pretty curiosity, and Democrats wear it from conviction. It will doubtless be well to the front in the next campaign when the battle of silver and gold is fought again.

THE "FAVOURITE."