

Paying an Election Bet.

(Some facts regarding the election wager made between Benjamin Lillard and R. Fitcher Woodward in the autumn of 1896, in New York City. Illustrations mainly from Mr. Woodward's own Photographs.)



MR. R. FITCHER WOODWARD, AS HE LOOKED AFTER TRAVELLING 1,000 MILES, SHOWING DILAPIDATED SILK HAT, SWEATER, AND REGULATION SPECTACLES.

From a Photograph.



IN the event of Bryan being elected President, Mr. Lillard must pay me \$5,000 cash. If McKinley were elected I must pay Mr. Lillard \$5,000 cash, or ride a donkey from New York to San Francisco within one year from election day, Nov. 3rd, 1896, starting from New York within one month from said date without a dollar in pocket, and honestly earning my way to my destination. I must not beg, or receive gratuities in money. I could accept presents or hospitality.

The opportunity to save my \$5,000 in case of Bryan's defeat by accomplishing the proposed extraordinary feat was given as a form of odds, as in all cases of betting at the time odds were offered in favour

of McKinley, and money, or cash odds, Lillard declined to give. I must wear a frock-coat, top-hat, and large spectacles, and my donkey must wear spectacles too. At the end of my thousandth mile I was photographed in my curious rig, and the opening illustration shows my dilapidated silk hat, and my storm-coat worn over my frock-coat, also my sweater and regulation spectacles. I was not required to take one particular donkey across the continent, but I must purchase the first one before leaving the city, and pay for it from my earnings after my official art. I was required to traverse certain popular thoroughfares in New York City on the donkey in my route, and besides my clothes and 99 cents (which was not a dollar) I was allowed one firearm.

At 2 p.m., Friday, November 27th, 1896, Mr. Lillard assisted me into the saddle of a borrowed donkey in front of the Bartholdi Hotel, Broadway and Twenty-third Street, and I forthwith retired to the hotel parlour to sell photographs of myself seated on my borrowed steed. Several hundred acquaintances had gathered there to give me a "send-off," and while I sold the pictures I had secured on credit, the photographer waited in the parlour to receive his pay.



DONKEY AND SLEDGE STUCK IN A SNOWDRIFT AFTER A BLIZZARD.



CHOPPING WOOD IN OHIO TO PAY FOR A MEAL.

Mr. Lillard saw that the contract was carried out to the letter, and I had reason to believe I was watched by his agents along my route of travels. I was unable to sell sufficient pictures to obtain the price of the donkey, \$25, without engendering much delay and consequent arrest by the police for causing a blockade in the street, so, hearing a newsboy call the afternoon paper, "All about the Silver-man's ride," I rushed to the door, bought his papers, scribbled my name on them in blue lead, and sold them for various sums to the crowd without. In a few moments I sent for the donkey, and amid cheers from the multitude I rode down Broadway.

It was the most embarrassing moment of my life. Society lady friends, club friends, and college friends were there to see the "fun," as they termed it. My long-eared steed seemed to be thoroughly disgusted with his lot, and particularly his rider, and continually placed us in perilous positions in front of cable cars. At Poughkeepsie, on the Hudson, I traded him for a younger and nimbler animal, Macaroni II. ; and this little donkey I brought through to the Golden Gate, over 4,000 miles by trail actually travelled, within the prescribed time. I reached San Francisco and registered at the hotel twenty-two

hours ahead of time, having consumed 340 days on the journey, thus saving my \$5,000.

I visited *en route* the cities of Canton, O., the home of McKinley, who was under doctor's orders not to receive visitors, and Lincoln, Neb., the home of Bryan, where I was entertained by his wife at home. I met Mr. Bryan in Chicago, *en route*. The visiting of McKinley and Bryan were conditions of my wager.

On the early part of my journey I was very sensitive to criticism and ridicule, but I finally travelled and lived and thrived on "nerve." The blizzards I encountered during the winter in New York were a severe menace to my health and progress, and one of the photographs shows the hardships in transit over the snow which my donkey and sledge were forced to overcome. My donkey is shown stuck fast in a drift. The hard times were even more menacing to my success. I could scarcely support myself and donkey at times. It being a Republican, or "gold coinage" State, I was discouraged on every hand by high prices and disappointing returns from sales, lectures, bills at the theatres, etc. I often traded a photo. for a



From a] IN ILLINOIS—MAKING HEADWAY FOR THE MISSISSIPPI. [Photo.

milk punch as a substitute for a meal, and paid my last ten cents for a loaf of bread for my donkey. Here and there I chopped wood to pay for a meal, and was often photographed while at my arduous task. I sometimes lost my way, and all winter long had to walk and trail or drive my donkey to keep warm. I froze my ears twice, once my nose, and one night Macaroni refused to proceed farther, compelling me



THE DONKEY, MACARONI, REFUSED TO CROSS THE MISSOURI RIVER BRIDGE TO OMAHA, AND HAD TO BE CARRIED IN A WHEELBARROW.

and there were nine more States in my direct route to traverse in less than nine months. But the farther westward I went, the easier I made money, and the more favourable the weather. Besides, my steed and myself were both becoming initiated to the trials of the journey.

The plains of Nebraska were lovely in May, and the Rocky Mountains afforded me a delightful change of scenery. From Chi-

cago I had two donkeys, and from Central Iowa three, one of which was ridden by my valet, whom I had engaged at Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The distance began to increase between towns and habitations the farther west I travelled, and necessitated my camping out. One of my photographs shows the outfit, and several show the faithful mules which accompanied me. When nearing Omaha, Macaroni refused to cross the Missouri River bridge, and had to be bundled into a wheelbarrow, and wheeled across by force.



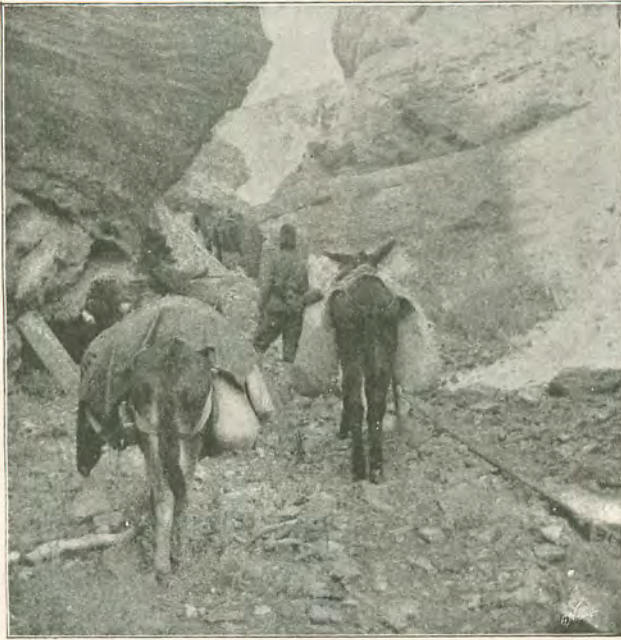
THE MAYOR OF AN INDIANA TOWN, AFTER RIDING MR. WOODWARD'S DONKEY BEFORE A CROWD OF SILVER DEMOCRATS, BIDS MR. WOODWARD GOOD-BYE.

to sleep in a haymow, several degrees below zero.

It was only the determination of my resolve to accomplish what I set out to do, and the knowledge of my disgrace before my friends should I give up the task, which held me patiently and persistently to my trying wager. It took me over eleven weeks, nearly three months, to pass through New York State,



CAMPING ON THE PLAINS.



TRAILING THROUGH THE CHIHUAHUA PASS TO EUREKA, NEVADA.

In Omaha I purchased a tent and camp outfit, and soon after a fowling-piece, with which I provided game, grouse, quail, doves, rabbits, etc. As I moved westward, the more cordial, generous, and hospitable I noticed the people. I could discard my top-hat at the Mississippi River, and I did so, substituting a sombrero. From the commencement of my overland journey I was entertained at private residences, at clubs, by mayors and high officials generally; and many times mayors rode my donkey up and down the street when I had concluded my out-of-door lecture to the amusement and applause of the multitude.

One photograph shows an Indiana mayor bidding me good-bye—an interesting and affecting farewell, which had been preceded by an exhibition of donkey-riding by the mayor himself, before a crowd of Silver Democrats.

I visited the governors and mayors

everywhere, received their best wishes and their autographs. I escaped sickness throughout my journey, save a severe cold I suffered in the Hudson Valley, and narrowly averted injury or death on several occasions, from a mad bull, from footpads who shot at me, from a fall through a bridge, and again down a precipice in the Rockies, from two desperadoes on the Nevada desert, and from a storm while crossing the Sierras; I was also lost in the desert on two occasions.

On the plains my experiences were amusing and exciting. The photograph of my camp on the plains shows a band of cowboys in the background, giving an exhibition of riding before starting out on a "round-up." In the foreground is my dog Don, presented to me in New York State, resting his sore feet. Through the Chihuahua Pass to

Eureka, Nevada, I was kindly trailed by a ranchman—another evidence of the helpfulness that met me at nearly every stage of my journey.

My method of defence against the two desperadoes is shown below. It took place at "Thirty Mile Spring," on the eastern border of Nevada, and Macaroni played in this little drama a quiet but effective part. I must not omit to mention that when crossing the dreaded red desert of Utah, which is



MR. WOODWARD'S METHOD OF DEFENCE AGAINST TWO DESPERADOES IN NEVADA.
From a Photo. by Taber, San Francisco.



THE LAST DROP IN THE CANTEEN. CROSSING THE DREADED RED DESERT.

enjoyed good health, and many pleasant experiences, derived a more thorough knowledge of my country than I could have done by crossing by train a hundred times, made many valued friends, and arrived at my journey's end with money in pocket, 20lb. more flesh than I ever before had registered, and with the satisfaction of letting others know that when I say I shall do a certain thing I shall do it if it is possible to be accomplished. I may

part of the great Salt Lake Desert, my store of water gave out. Desperadoes were but a trifle in comparison with such a catastrophe, for the journey across was seventy-five miles, taking three days. It may be imagined with what bitterness I drained the last drop from my canteen.

The goal of my long journey hove in sight when I arrived in Oakland, and it was in a dirty and dilapidated condition that I embarked on the ferry-boat for San Francisco. The wager was won, and there was no longer need for my outlandish costume. The barber soon took me in hand, and quickly sheared me into a gentleman again, and the tailor clothed me in civilized garb. I was then photographed, as shown below, and with little delay began a well-earned rest.

I had eleven donkeys from start to finish, five at one time, when crossing the great Salt Desert, but arrived in San Francisco with only two. I wore out ten pairs of boots, had over 100 shoes put on my donkeys, sometimes costing me \$1 for each shoe. I lived comfortably, even luxuriously, from Chicago westward,



MR. WOODWARD CROSSING FROM OAKLAND TO SAN FRANCISCO AT THE END OF HIS JOURNEY.



MR. R. PITCHER WOODWARD, IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS ARRIVAL IN SAN FRANCISCO.

From a Photo. by Taber, San Francisco.

add that it is not a little satisfaction to know that, in case reverses should come, one can rely on his own resources to pull him through the dilemma, even if suddenly stranded with less than a dollar in pocket. But I say, for the benefit of those who grow enthusiastic over elections, do not be led to wager anything more than a hat on the result at the polls.