

Election Bets in America.

BY E. LESLIE GILLIAMS.



EVER before in the history of Presidential elections has that peculiarly American institution, the freak bet, attained such a widespread vogue as last year.

Now that the campaign is over, the election decided, and the victor determined, staid and respectable citizens all over the United States, who were betrayed by their enthusiasm for Bryan into the making of fantastic wagers, have been paying the penalty by the performance of grotesque and impossible feats, feats which under ordinary conditions would probably render necessary the services of insanity experts.

The variety of these bets and the ingenuity

pensed music and called attention to the extraordinary spectacle.

It is hard to determine to what this strange ebullition should be attributed, or why it reached such a climax last year.

In previous elections the excitement of the campaign has always given rise to many of these bets, but never to the number of last year. In the big cities, on November 7th, thousands of people lined the streets to watch the many strange sights, and the "Losers' Carnival" bids fair to become an important and inseparable phase of future American battles of the ballot.

Probably the most striking feature about these "freak" bets is the character of the people who make them. If the custom were



From a

BRYAN'S BACKER GIVING MCKINLEY'S A FREE RIDE.

[Photo.

which has been expended in devising them are almost incredible. No eccentricity, no absurdity, has been too extreme. Losers have carted winners for miles in wheelbarrows, whiskers have been cut in all conceivable styles, heads shaved; stylish young men, dressed in their finest apparel, have worked as waiters and domestic servants, and have even dug ditches; while several losers have had to submit to mock funerals and actual burial alive. Business men have impersonated tramps, acted as clowns, and strolled along crowded thoroughfares carrying negro babies, while a brass band dis-

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confined to the lower and more ignorant classes it would not be so remarkable, but the fact that responsible business men, professional men, and leading citizens of wealth and standing are among those who so cheerfully sacrifice their dignity, and in full view of great street crowds perform the antics of clowns and idiots, greatly enhances the interest.

Reports of these bets, of all degrees of inanity, daring, and difficulty, have been coming in from all parts of the United States; at a moderate estimate, based on figures compiled from leading papers, it is

safe to say that there were fully a half-million such bets—about one to every thirty voters.

Judging from these reports it would seem that the favourite bet was the wheelbarrow, baby-coach, or push-cart wager. According to the terms of this, the loser is compelled to push the winner in some hand vehicle through the main streets at the busiest hour. This bet was especially popular throughout New York State, and reached its climax in Rochester, where during the entire day the principal street was constantly crowded with wheelbarrows, boys' express-carts, baby-carriages, etc.

In Philadelphia Elmer Gregg hauled one of his Republican friends, T. Sours, a man weighing over 200lb., a distance of half a mile up a steep hill, while a large crowd looked on and cheered.

Alfred Willis, a Democrat, of Reading, Pennsylvania, hauled Charles Whitman, a Republican, from the foot of Penn Square to the City Park and back again, as the result of a wager. The trip was made in a toy express waggon. Whitman, who weighs 200lb., sat contentedly in the little vehicle, waving a McKinley banner and shouting to the crowd to follow him.

The distance to the park and back was more than a mile.

Most of these wheelbarrow processions were headed by brass bands and carried flags and banners with election inscriptions. It is a singular fact that the winners, as a rule, seemed oblivious to the fact that they were quite as much a part of the spectacle as the losers and were making themselves equally ridiculous.

The victorious Republicans seemed indeed to immensely enjoy the excitement and derisive cheers of onlookers.

Even women had a share in the wheelbarrow bets and figured in several of the more startling. For instance, Miss Anna Metz, of Columbus, Ohio, was wheeled in a barrow from Ninth Street to High Street, on Living-

stone Avenue, one mile, by William Woelkert, as the result of an election wager. Miss Metz is an ardent admirer of McKinley, and predicted his election to her friend Woelkert, who is a Democrat. A wager was made by which, if McKinley were elected, he was to wheel her over this course, and if he should be defeated she should wheel him over half of the course. By blowing a horn Miss Metz attracted the attention of people to the spectacle.

A Chicago girl, Miss Ethel Elarton, cashier, and prominent in social circles, also enjoyed a similar ride in a wheelbarrow, propelled by William Breme, an ardent Bryan supporter.

Four times the clumsy vehicle with its laughing rider and puffing victim swung round the block, bounded by Forty second Street, Evans Avenue, Forty-third Street, and Langley Avenue, and on each trip the crowd, poking fun and cheering for McKinley, became larger. So great did the jam finally become that traffic was actually blocked for several minutes while the police endeavoured to restore order.

A bet of this same character, and intended to be ludicrous, has had a

rather pathetic termination. It was made in Wilkesbarre, Pennsylvania, two months before the election, between Austin Gibbons, a Democrat, and John Rawlings, a Republican, the agreement being that the loser should give the winner a four-mile wheelbarrow ride. About a month before the election Gibbons had both hands blown off in an explosion. Of course, Rawlings wanted to call the bet off, but the loser insisted on paying, and as soon as hooks were made with which he could hold the barrow handles, when strapped to his shoulders, the ride was undertaken.

The "hand-organ" bet ran the "wheelbarrow" bet a close second in the race for popularity; the ranks of the humble organ-grinders received some notable accessions from the most exclusive circles of society.



A WELL-KNOWN BUSINESS MAN OF PHILADELPHIA, HAVING BACKED BRYAN, IS REDUCED TO ORGAN-GRINDING.

From a Photo.

The intersections of streets in the busiest sections were the favourite places for the payment of bets of this kind, the unfortunate victims industriously grinding the organ while their opponents collected and pocketed the coins donated by the crowds.

For four long hours two leading Philadelphia politicians, J. Morgan Sweeney and Samuel Mullen, made themselves conspicuous in this way. At seven o'clock in the evening they took their places in front of McBride's Pleasure Palace, a popular dancing-hall. Sweeney played the organ and Mullen collected the money. A placard was posted on the organ, reading:—

"I am Sweeney the Fool, Living at 1011, Morris Street, Who Had No Better Sense Than to Bet on Bryan and Then Go Vote for Him."

On the afternoon after election Charles Clouser, of Reading, a registry assessor in the Fourteenth Ward, played an organ several hours on the principal thoroughfares of the ward as the result of losing a bet with a Republican on McKinley. He wore a flag on his hat, and on his back was a card: "I lost my bet." Mr. Clouser borrowed the organ from an Italian, paying him five dollars.

A number of people dropped money in a tin cup held by the loser. His collections paid for the organ.

One of the most arduous of hand-organ bets was that paid by Joseph Fisher to Joseph Goodrick, both residents of Philadelphia. For eight hours Fisher, with an old-fashioned hand-organ strapped on his shoulders, was compelled to tour all the principal thoroughfares and make an entrance and play in banks, office buildings, and large business houses.

Naturally he was not received with much favour, for all these buildings have strict rules against the entrance of mendicants. In

several instances he was roughly jostled out by janitors and watchmen, and in two cases only escaped actual violence through the intervention of friends.

The most popular betting novelty of the year was the "peanut and toothpick." This brand-new idea seemed to catch the fancy of those in search of freak bets, and every large city in the country reports the performance of this back-breaking feat. A hill is chosen, a peanut and a toothpick are the properties, and the loser is compelled to roll the little nut up the hill with the two-inch toothpick, not being allowed under any conditions to touch the peanut with his fingers.

Having been mistaken in his confidence in Bryan's election, one of Philadelphia's legislators, Councilman George Rummey, rolled a peanut up the steep Green Lane Hill. He started off laughing with a crowd following, and things went very well for half a square. But when the unfortunate loser's back began to ache, and the peanut was still several squares from the top of the hill, he began to lament. He reached the top during the afternoon, a sad and exhausted man.



From a] THE PEANUT AND TOOTH-PICK PENANCE. [Photo.

The same performance was gone through by Charles Mackenthun, a prominent Baltimore business man. Also in Pittsburg, where Walter Rinehart and a crowd of shouting friends followed Edward Kirk, who laboriously rolled a peanut with a toothpick the entire length of Meyran Avenue. People hurled taunts at him from all sides, but Kirk kept steadily at work until he had passed out of the avenue, having gone a distance of 1,500ft.

After these three principal bets came a multitude of smaller ones, which had a considerable following. Blacking the boots of the winning Republican was a great



From a] LOSER BLACKING THE WINNER'S BOOTS. [Photo.

favourite, and the street-arab proprietors of blacking kits reaped a rich harvest from the bettors who hired their outfits.

A. H. Thomas, of Rochester, New York, was among the most unfortunate losers, and spent the two most miserable days of his life on November 7th and 8th. Mr. Thomas bet with James Burke, loser to go to business for two days in a clown's suit. He lost, and, in consequence, was compelled to sit at his desk and manage the affairs of his publishing house in a rig which would



From a] BUSINESS MAN GOES TO HIS OFFICE ATTIIRED AS A CLOWN, [Photo.

have been eminently suitable for a masquerade party or a Christmas pantomime, but which looked wildly grotesque amid the sober surroundings of a typical business



LOSER PAINTING MCKINLEY'S NAME ALL OVER A CITY.
From a Photo.

office. Mr. Thomas was unmercifully jeered at by all of his customers and his employés, and swore never to offend again by the placing of a fantastic election bet.

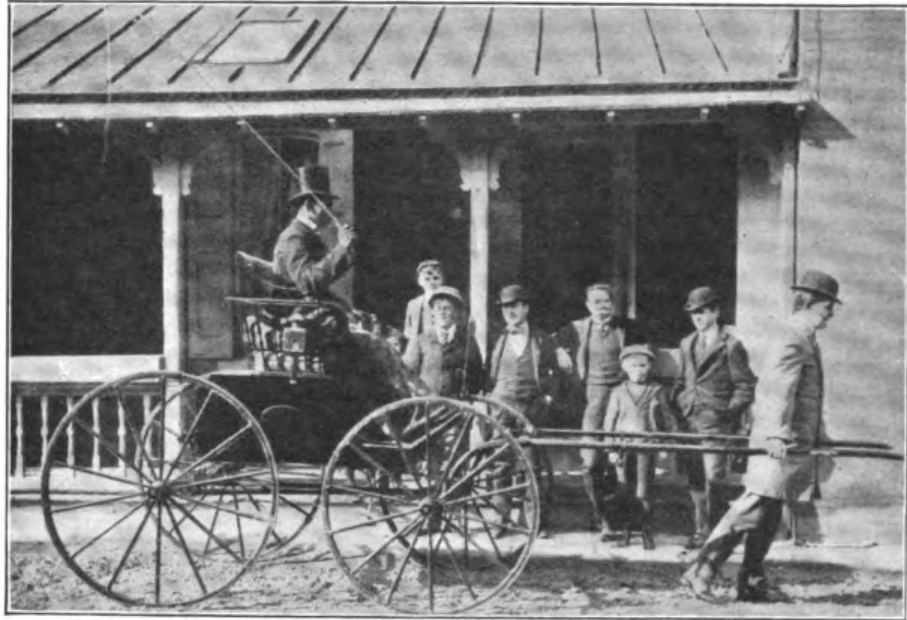
Compelled to paint the hated name of McKinley all over the walls of Jacksonville buildings was the reward which Mr. A. R. Howard of that city received for his faith in the Democratic standard-bearer's ability to win. Wearing a high silk hat and armed with brush and pot full of black paint, Mr. Howard sallied forth, and from early morning till nightfall spent his day tracing the

name of the successful candidate everywhere ; yelled at, cheered, pelted, abused, and threatened with arrest, Mr. Howard was completely exhausted when his day's work was done, and could barely drag himself home.

Another man who was placed in a very unpleasant position by the failure of Bryan to win was John W. Hamilton, of St. Paul, Minnesota. This Democrat has a coachman who is an enthusiastic Republican. As a result of an argument a wager was made, the agreement being that if Bryan won the coachman should pull Mr. Hamilton and a party of friends through the city in a carriage ; while if McKinley won, the coachman was to take the place of honour and occupy the seat, while his employer stood between the shafts and pulled the carriage. As Bryan lost, Mr. Hamilton had to discharge his unique wager, which he did to the great delight of the coachman, who thoroughly enjoyed his brief term of mastery.

Even art entered into the wagers, and Frank R. Harris, of Cincinnati, Ohio, artist, is now working busily on a portrait of President McKinley. It is not to be sold, and Mr. Harris will never realize a penny for his pains ; instead, he will have only the poor satisfaction of knowing that he has

discharged a bad wager. Mr. Harris bet his friend, Albert Williams, that Bryan would win, and agreed if he was mistaken to



From a

BRYANITE DRAWS HIS BLACK COACHMAN IN HIS CARRIAGE.

[Photo.]

paint a portrait of the successful Republican candidate, carry it to

Washington, and present it to President McKinley himself.

Still harder to pay was the bet lost by Mr. E. M. Pought, of Arnold, Pennsylvania. For putting too much faith in Bryan Mr. Pought was compelled to exhibit himself as a museum freak for a whole week ; while a Republican orator called attention to his peculiarities, he had to stand the withering stare of hundreds of pairs of eyes, including friends, family, and neighbours.

Frank Hansel, a society man of Pittsburgh, dressed in a cut-away coat, knickerbockers, golf stockings, a very high collar, silk hat, and patent leather shoes, worked a whole day digging a ditch in Park Avenue. The hole was dug for



BRYANITE ARTIST PAINTS PORTRAIT OF MCKINLEY TO BE PRESENTED BY HIMSELF TO THE PRESIDENT.

From a Photo.



THE BACKER OF BRYAN HAS TO EXHIBIT HIMSELF AT A FREAK-SHOW
 (From a) DRESSED AS A CLOWN. [Photo.]

the Pittsburg and Allegheny Telephone Company, and many members of the swagger set were present to see that the work was done well. Hansel did not mind the audience, but kept steadily on until the hole was the regulation depth.

The most gruesome and startling of all the bets occurred in Philadelphia, and Mr. George R. Williams was the chief figure. Mr. Williams is a loyal Democrat and did yeoman's work for Bryan. Among those whom he sought to convert was Henry Rudolph, a stalwart Republican, whose home is at the Falls of Schuylkill. His arguments, however, availed not, for Rudolph was loyal to his party, and could see no possibility of its candidate's defeat. As the election drew near the two men became more and more interested in the outcome, and finally, more fully to emphasize their faith in the success of their respective favourites, entered upon a novel wager. Williams predicted the election of Bryan, while Rudolph bet on McKinley, and it was solemnly agreed that the loser should permit the winner to bury him alive, the loser to pay all costs of the funeral. Bryan was defeated and Williams paid his wager in full.

Early in the evening Williams called at the rooms of the Wissahickon Republican Club, where he found all in readiness for his funeral. Crape streamed from the door, while in the parlour Rudolph and a score or more of his Republican friends were grouped about a plain deal casket. Into this Williams was placed, the lid put on, and carefully screwed down, after which the pallbearers lifted the casket to their shoulders and bore it to a dense grove on "Buckeye" Hill, a short distance away. There the coffin, with its nearly smothered occupant, was carefully lowered into a grave, which had already been dug, and the Republicans returned to the club-house, leaving Williams to his fate.

It was then that the Democrat proved what a lively corpse he was. Exerting his strength to the utmost, he succeeded, after several trials, in forcing off the lid of the casket, and soon scrambled from the grave, after which he hurriedly made his way back to the club-house, where the entire party then sat down to an enjoyable lunch, the expenses of which were all paid by Williams.

In Boston two Englishmen, John J. Murray and John Berry, restaurant-keepers, lost on Bryan, and each was compelled to blow a feather a distance of half a mile.

Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, furnished many amusing freak bets, which kept the city in conversation matter for several days after the election.

Ex-Councilman Michael Hannan, Allegheny, carried a loaf of bread 14ft. long, baked by Gustave Hammier, and a band led the procession.

D. J. Dimes, Diamond Street restaurant-keeper, won fifty dollars from John Labror, who had to carry Dimes from Sixth Street Bridge to Smithfield Street, and to an hotel in the Diamond. Dimes was in evening dress.

John Willenpart played horse and hauled Charles Dittler about in a buggy up and down the hills and streets for an hour.

One fellow was seen standing in the gutter with toothpicks. Another washed the feet of a Republican on City Hall steps, and a dozen or more wheelbarrows were trundled about, decorated, carrying jubilant Republicans.

So confident was pretty Rhoda Williams, a Trenton society girl, that Bryan would be

elected that she offered to dance on the State House steps if he were defeated. Rhoda shed bitter tears, but about dusk, accompanied by some companions, she went to the State House and danced, to the great amusement of onlookers.

Miss Eva Howard and Miss Agnes Hobart paid an election bet by sawing a railroad tie into 2ft. lengths with a cross-saw, in the front yard of Miss Howard's residence. They had their hands badly blistered.

Michael Burns, an employé of the Hilton Bridge Construction Company, Albany, New York, bet on Bryan with Henry Baker, a fellow employé, the penalty being that the loser should stand before the winner as the target for twenty-four dozen eggs. Eight dozen eggs of all ages had already been laid by Baker, and the throwing took place early in December.

Most of the bets, though ridiculous, were

single misstep would have plunged him to certain death. He succeeded in making the dangerous journey in safety, but afterwards admitted that he would not repeat the exploit for a thousand dollars.

Among some other unfortunates who suffered in consequence of the necessity of paying off freak bets may be briefly mentioned a Philadelphia broker, who had to impersonate a tramp and sleep all night in a public square; Tim Johnson, a Chicago politician, who had to pay for all the liquor which Lew Dockstader, the well-known minstrel, could drink in two weeks; G. N. Weingart, a Denver Democrat, who had to ride through the streets of the city mounted on a burro and having his face covered with gold paint; a Democratic drug clerk in Baltimore, who had to drink a quart of cod-liver oil; Michael T. Fitzgerald, a Boston barber, who must shave several of his



From a)

A STOCKBROKER, WHO HAD TO LIVE TWO DAYS AS A TRAMP, ASLEEP IN A PUBLIC SQUARE.

(Photo.

harmless, but in several cases serious danger was incurred by the losers, and in one instance death will probably result.

In spite of the cold, Isaac Brown, of Big Bend, Mercer County, Pa., attempted to swim across the Shenango River. He was almost drowned, and when rescued from his ice-bath developed pneumonia and is now hovering between life and death.

At Bridgeton, New Jersey, Tucker Vanleer hopped on one foot across a trestle bridge, 30ft. high, over the Cohansey River. A

customers free of charge for a whole year; Archie Evans, of Westbro, who put on women's clothing and pushed through the streets a baby-coach containing two negro children; John P. Murphy, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, who walked through the Boston Chamber of Commerce barefooted; and Harry T. Cole, a 315lb. fat man, of Logans-town, Pa., who was forced to walk sixteen miles in four hours or forfeit twenty-five dollars, the feat being accomplished just four minutes ahead of time.