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THE DARK HORSE CONVENTION

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THE Democratic National Convention of 1912 meets at Baltimore on the 25th of June. The fact that up to the present writing no one of the several candidates whose names will be presented for the first place on the ticket has enough delegates pledged to his support to assure his nomination lends a special reminiscent interest to the proceedings of the Democratic National Convention of 1896, which likewise opened as "everybody's race."

Grover Cleveland was President, serving out his second term. Nominated and elected in 1892 by a genuine popular uprising, and in spite of the opposition of the Democratic machine in his own State, he had entered office with freer hands than any predecessor in many years. For the same reason he was also an object of more vindictive hatred among the sordid and self-seeking element in his party. These gentry could not endure the thought that he felt independent of them, and in their resentment they were willing to wreck the party for the sake of damaging its titular head. He had called to the chief seat in his Cabinet a man who had been a Republican until recently, and filled most of the other chairs with non-Bourbon Democrats, two of his selections being, besides, New Yorkers of the "silk-stocking" variety.

As soon as he had got his first string of executive appointments off his hands, Mr. Cleveland found himself faced with a country-wide currency panic. The ingenuity and energies of the Administration were taxed to the utmost to weather this storm at all, and before it was over the President convened Congress in extra session to consider legislation for the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Law, which, in his judgment, had proved the most serious menace to the public credit. The repeal was put through only after a long, hard fight, the leaders of the hostile force and most of its rank and file being Democrats, while not a few of the Republicans were unpatriotic enough to treat the whole matter as a mere Democratic family quarrel, in which they were not morally

bound to give the President more than a grudging support. A struggle of that sort cannot fail to stir up a lot of bad blood; and before Christmas of 1893 the party supposed to be behind Mr. Cleveland had broken in two, only the smaller fragment clinging to his fortunes, while the members of the other faction were hardly on speaking terms with him and had cut the White House off their visiting lists.

A tariff controversy came in at this juncture to help widen the breach. A fairly good reform bill having passed the House of Representatives, the Democratic leaders in the Senate proceeded to rip it to pieces and make it over into something which was neither flesh nor fish, and was foul only in that spelling of the word. By his fight for decency in tariff-making, concluding with his refusal to sign the act as it finally emerged from the hurly-burly, President Cleveland alienated the strongest of the Senators in his remnant of a following. Meanwhile the People's party, which had been organized just before the close of President Harrison's term, had grown and waxed truculent, and a large contingent of Southern and Western Democrats had struck hands with it as allies, claiming its support in exchange for votes in Congress for every sort of fad and wildcat scheme on the legislative calendar. To make matters worse, a Treasury depleted of its gold reserves had to be strengthened by extraordinary means; and President Cleveland, having exhausted every resource of appeal for an act of Congress which would enable him to recoup at less expense, was at last compelled, on his own initiative and responsibility, to purchase gold with a special issue of interest-bearing bonds, depending for his authority upon an almost forgotten statute, on whose language his advisers were willing to put a liberal construction.

This was the story of the derelict bearing the name of the Democratic party, and consisting of only a few broken timbers held together by a historical tradition, which was drifting helpless on the sea of American poli-