

## ELECTION WEEK IN NEW YORK

BY GEORGES LECHARTIER

AMERICAN political activity is considered by common consent to focus in New York. Both great parties have their headquarters in that city. Here they elaborate their plans of attack, last hour manœuvres, insinuations, accusations, denials, outbursts of indignation, and climaxes of enthusiasm,—typical accompaniments of elections the world over, but perhaps more characteristic of America than of any other country. It would be difficult to find a more unique picture than that presented by New York the week preceding the presidential election. While Chicago, San Francisco, and the other great population centres of the United States are relatively calm, and limit their campaign demonstrations principally to the press and bulletin boards, New York is like a gigantic blast furnace where political passion becomes incandescent. The normal course of events is interrupted. Men of the world, professional men, financiers, and society men, are all intent on the approaching event. Police scandals, a bank robbed by masked bandits, a great football game, an express held up in the West, or a friendly bout between two famous pugilists—whatever ordinarily seizes and holds public attention is for the time being relegated to the eleventh page of the newspapers or left out entirely. Immense bets are placed upon the candidates. This week the odds are seven to one for the Republicans. Everything hangs on the election.

Fifth Avenue is an impressive array of banners, broken here and there by immense cloth signs urging men to vote for Harding, to defend the honor of their country, or for 'Cox and Justice.' New editions of newspapers are shouted on the streets every hour, containing full page advertisements, appeals, and cartoons, extolling the virtues of one candidate and ridiculing the incompetency of his rival. A war of posters is fought with all the resources of unbridled imagination upon billboards, in subway stations, on busses and trams, and even in the lobbies of great hotels. The Post Office is overwhelmed with a flood of letters, tracts, and pamphlets carrying the good word to the homes of the citizens, with exhortations issued by campaign leaders, with quotations from speeches, *bons mots*, and anecdotes of the candidates.

The cinematograph is naturally one of the favored instruments of propaganda. In the innumerable movies of New York, which on many streets stand literally side by side, the candidates are presented going about their ordinary duties, in the bosom of the family, or performing various official acts. It is a great advantage for an American presidential candidate, when he seeks the suffrage of his fellow citizens, to have started life on a farm, and to have been a farmer's son. Governor Cox, Senator Harding, and Governor Coolidge are all the sons of farmers. They passed their childhood on farms and they have not permitted

the public to forget it. Let us step into any movie along Broadway or elsewhere. There appears in quick succession on the screen, Mr. Harding mowing in overalls, working down the edge of a hay field with the rhythm of an experienced hand. Then Mr. Cox is shown on a tractor harvester, driving through an ocean of ripe grain. Last of all Mr. Coolidge is seen in front of the ancestral farmhouse, polishing with a most serious air the boots of his grandfather, who still occupies the farm. Then we get a series of domestic scenes. Mr. Franklin Roosevelt, the Democratic candidate for Vice-President, a very young, handsome man, smilingly embracing his mother. Then Mr. Cox appears again out in the yard taking telegrams and letters from a messenger. The dispatches are at once thrown in an enlarged form on the screen, revealing the fact that they contain messages of congratulations and encouragement. Last of all, Mr. Harding appears in his shirt-sleeves, playing horseshoe quoits with a policeman chum on a street at Marion. While some thirty thousand orators—*poetae minores*—in the service of the two parties are flooding the rest of the Union with their eloquence, the stars are gathered at New York, where meetings are in almost continuous session in halls, theatres, and other public places. Meantime the candidates themselves retire to their homes to await the final issue.

But to get the full measure of the incandescent glory of election publicity one must spend an evening on Broadway in the vicinity of Times Square. On any occasion nocturnal Broadway is a fire festival. During election week it is a blinding glare of brilliance. At every elevation, from the street level to the very pinnacle of the sky scrapers, numerous names and

numbers, gigantic and almost living, shift and move. Here a hundred feet or so above the pavement six gigantic gnomes, outlined by lights, perform in perfect unison extraordinary feats of agility. They bow, rise, raise their arms, lift one leg in the air, and vanish. Then for just an instant all is darkness. Suddenly their place is taken by a piercing blaze of light announcing a well-known brand of chewing gum and informing the spectator that it can be bought everywhere in three different flavors. That vanishes. A little farther on, two luminous cats, as large as elephants, play with a ball of light, entangle themselves in the thread, free themselves, then in three bounds spring to the height of ten stories. Then darkness, to be followed a moment later by the announcement of a well-known sewing machine. A radiant siphon fills two glittering glasses with sparkling water. Still farther on, a wonderful fiery sled drawn by six galloping dogs speeds across a luminous prairie under a flashing whip wielded by a prince clothed in sparkling jewels. Wherever the eye turns there are advertisements, starry appeals, a blaze of flashing, vanishing, reappearing, scintillating lights.

But how shall I describe the brilliance of the street below. The shop fronts are surrounded by luminous signs of many colors, masses containing thousands of polychrome lamps through which the light shivers and ripples, where azure or opaline phosphorescent serpents pursue each other through islands of brilliance and where all the colors of the prism succeed each other in countless forms and combinations, catching the eye and holding the attention, fairly blinding the spectator, as though a flood of sparkling, fiery jewels had been poured recklessly into the broad avenue's lap.

However, during election week Broadway fairly excels itself, and even this marvelous display is thrown into the shade by great banners of light, reproducing the features of one or the other candidate, by cascades of sparkling diamonds and radiant pearls which group themselves into the most quotable phrases of their election speeches, by symbolic and phantasmagoric pictures, condensing into a flash of light some essential feature of a party policy or platform.

As though even this riot of lights was not sufficient, the night before election the very pavements became a torrent of fire. At one end of the avenue a lurid reddish glare appears, slowly approaching. As it draws near the blur of humanity which accompanies it differentiates into cheering individuals, music, and an orderly procession. Governor Coolidge, the candidate for Vice-President, is in the leading automobile. Then come other automobiles decorated with lights, pennants of lights, banners, musicians whose instruments reflect the rays of the bright red and white electric torches. Some of the standard bearers carry aloft luminous banners. Then there are automobiles containing people clothed with what appear to be jewels sparkling in magnesium light. Thirty thousand—sixty thousand, according to the statements of some newspapers—men and women are in this procession, each one an independent centre of brilliance. There are thirty thousand or sixty thousand red or white torches tossing like the waves of the sea, stopping, separating, meeting, interrupted here and there by countless bands of music each again, reflecting in turn the glow of the myriad passing lights. Broadway has become a blazing, roaring glare above the slowly moving sea of humanity.

Election day is a holiday in the

United States. Offices and factories close. Only such employees as are indispensable for guarding property and performing necessary services remain on duty. The downtown business centre, and its narrow streets gloomy in the shade of gigantic sky scrapers which have permanently excluded the sunshine from the depth of that section of Manhattan, ordinarily such a hive of hurrying humanity, are deserted and dead. Office buildings, banks, and stores are closed.

During this rainy November 2, the life of the city is centered around the polling places. The latter resemble in a general way those we have in France. In place of our wooden ballot boxes a grating box is used in order to render fraud more difficult. This device makes it possible to see each ballot deposited. The polling places are open from six o'clock in the morning until five in the afternoon. There are 2127 of them in New York City, mostly located in public schools. Numerous watchers of every party are constantly on duty keeping an eye upon the voting, and guarding the polls. Not until evening does the city resume its normal activities. When the first returns come in, the life of the mighty metropolis again pulses with greater intensity than ever.

By six o'clock the crowd begins to gather along Broadway and in Times Square. Its centre is in front of the offices of the latter paper, where a great transparency has been erected. As rapidly as the returns come in they are displayed here. By six o'clock it is almost impossible to move. A little later it is practically hopeless. Viewed in the midst of thousands and thousands of blinding, flashing lights, the spectacle is weird and picturesque.

Upon the sidewalk a dense crowd growing thicker every moment, moves slowly in both directions. From time

to time gigantic policemen manage to open a narrow passage to allow a close file of trumpeting automobiles to pass through. However, by nine o'clock when the decisive results are beginning to arrive, the police are utterly unable to keep traffic going. Fifty thousand people are packed in the square, and one hundred thousand pair of eyes are lifted to the same point, where a black line reports the returns from some state or important district.

The first figures come from Massachusetts, indicating that five towns in that state have given 1487 votes to Harding and 300 to Cox. This is received with a wild shout mingled with enthusiastic whistling. It looks as though the great crowd was there to applaud success in the abstract rather than any particular party. At increasingly frequent intervals from that time on fifty thousand throats have occasion to cheer again, with eager enthusiasm but with varying intonations. It will be a long time before the enthusiasm moderates. At first the applause is spasmodic, terminating suddenly when new figures are thrown upon the screen. Then it becomes continuous, merely rising and falling in intensity. Finally, however, the returns succeed each other so rapidly there is no respite and the cheering becomes a sort of steady roar whose almost intimidating modulations will din our ears until two o'clock in the morning—at least until the final returns are known.

The people who are not on the streets are packing the theatres, cabarets or movies; between each act or each turn on the stage, or each reel of the film, results are thrown upon the screen, and are received with the same clamor of applause and whistling.

But the most picturesque spectacle is neither on the street or at the movies. The better society of New York is as

excited as the people on the curb over the final result, but prefers to receive the returns more exclusively. It has gathered at the restaurants and grills, of the great hotels, which have been converted into reception halls and ballrooms for the night.

Let us enter the Plaza Grill. A multitude of little tables with shaded candles, decorated with roses and orchids, fills the vast room. In the middle there is an open space for dancing. These tables, reserved for weeks and months ahead, are now occupied by gentlemen in evening dress and ladies *en grand décolleté*—corsages are evidently regarded as a pre-war institution—wearing furs and enormous pearl necklaces. All of these people are eating pastries, ice creams, and candies, or are smoking and drinking—in spite of prohibition, something else than water. A typical jazz band, with discordant banjos, rattles, sirens, squawkers, cow bells, whistles, breaks loose at intervals. At the far end of the room is a screen half hidden by vines and flowers, where the returns are projected as they arrive.

Conversation here, as everywhere in public in the United States, is carried on in an extremely high voice punctuated by the loud laughter of women. From the first measures—or better said the rioting racket—of the band the guests begin to dance. The fox trot leaves the tables deserted and the vacant space is soon crowded with partners of all ages—even of years which in former times would have been considered, or at least called, respectable. They dance with hands balancing on high, cheek resting against cheek, with features which have suddenly become grave, impassive, and composed. The few diners who remain at the table throw paper streamers over the dancers. Rattles, castanets, sirens, and gongs punctuate

the music, or better said the racket. But the dancers, who were so exuberant and joyous at the tables a moment before, now seem to be performing some sacred rite. At the end of the hall the results of the election in the Seventh District of Alabama and the Third District of Ohio are projected on the screen, giving the Republicans votes which ordinarily go to the Democrats. Although dancing continues uninterrupted and the band even intensifies its discord of rattles, whistles, gongs, and other barbarous devices, the people on the floor simultaneously add their applause to the general clamor. Altogether it is a startling vision of movement and madness, of alternating gauzy toilettes, sparkling jewels, dark dress suits, variegated confetti and streamers, and above all brutish noise combining in a veritable Walpurgis Night pandemonium.

We encounter the same atmosphere, if not exactly the same manifestations of it, not far from the Plaza, at 511 Fifth Avenue, in the low building with its comfortable, dignified furniture and general air of opulence characteristic of American clubs, where the Republican Club is serving as temporary headquarters for that party. Here the leaders are gathered; presidents of banks and railway companies and firms known throughout two hemispheres, representatives of the largest fortunes in New York and in the world. In spite of a certain aristocratic calm, one catches a quality of tenseness in the conversation and in the applause or expression of satisfaction as the favorable results pour in. Enormous wagers, whole fortunes, have been staked by these gentlemen, who exchange congratulations as they chew the ends of their cigars. It is not the money itself that worries them. Their eager anxiety is due to larger interests; to the object to which they

have bent all their energies and efforts for eight years, still more during the last four years, and above all during the last four months; a partisan triumph, an assured Republican government for four or for twelve years, crushing for good and all *l'odieux régime*.

When some time after midnight the success of Senator Harding is assured, we see here, as on the streets, exhibitions of brief folly, which even the previous enthusiasm had not elicited. A bank president, elderly and somewhat gouty, grabs a famous and eminent lawyer, and the two gentlemen with the most serious air in the world tread a few measures of the fox trot.

By this time a throng of elegantly clad people has emerged from party headquarters, restaurants, and clubs along Fifth Avenue, and gathered in the street, where the infernal din is multiplied and intensified. Whistles, horns, the explosion of backfires, bells, sirens, and anything that can make a racket is used to contribute to the confusion. Searchlights sweep the heavens. The whole populace surrenders to a mad delirium, as the nation learns that a change of administration has become a fact.

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## ELECTION IN ATHENS

BY PIERRE DE LACRETELLE

PEOPLE who have watched the election campaign here at Athens for a month, feel that the utter defeat of the Liberal Party is almost inexplicable, and are tempted to lose confidence in the Greek people.

Late in November Venizelos made a triumphal journey throughout the principal strongholds of the opposition,