MR. BLAINE'S CANDIDACY.

THE election of delegates to the Republican National Convention has already proceeded far enough to show clearly the dominant sentiment in the party as to the candidate for President. State conventions were held last week in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania at the North, and in Florida and Texas at the South, two representative States in each section; and in all, the overwhelming majority evidently desire that Mr. Blaine shall be the nominee. Even in Ohio the week before, it was manifest that the very men who made lip professions of loyalty to Sherman, at heart desired Blaine; and despite all the efforts to tie up the delegates to the alleged "favorite son," it is generally believed that fully half of them cannot, for long at least, be held from following their strong impulses away from him. Iowa and Indiana have shown more sincerity than Ohio in their support of State candidates, but nobody doubts that the delegates are in great danger at the Convention of forgetting that they are supporting home candidates. The scattering talk in two or three other States in favor of local millionaires, like Alger of Michigan and Stanford of California, deceives nobody but the men who are vain enough to waste a little of their wealth in working up "booms" which are too ridiculous to stand exposure to the national scrutiny. The occasional suggestion of men of a higher type, like Hawley of Connecticut and Gresham of Indiana, meets little response, and every such man is fatally discredited by the fact that he has shown independence enough to incur the damning odium of Mugwump praise.

Indeed, nobody can survey the field at this date, less than two months before the meeting of the Convention, without reaching the conclusion that the Republican party wants Blaine for the candidate, and means to have him. From all the evidence accessible, it appears well within bounds to say that three out of four of the party "workers" throughout the country prefer him to any and all other men. The men who in 1876, 1880, and 1884 withstood his candidacy and twice defeated it, are now either quite outside of the party or no longer wield any influence in its councils. The management of the organization is almost entirely in the hands of Blaine men, but no management is required to produce evidence of a Blaine sentiment in the conventions, for the feeling is clearly spontaneous and widespread. A small percentage of thoughtful Republicans still maintain their ancient distrust of the man, and are more than ever before convinced that it would be folly to nominate him, because the experiment has been once tried and resulted as they had always predicted; but the overwhelming majority alike of the managers and of the rank and file want Blaine, and are bent on having him.

The insincerity of the man has never been so clearly exposed as in the treatment by his party of his so-called withdrawal. "My name will not be presented to the National Convention," he wrote in his "Florence Message" of January 25. If this meant anything according to the canons accepted in the interpretation of language among honorable men, it meant that he was outside the field of possible choice. But a week had not passed after the publication of the message before the chief Republican organ, edited by Mr. Blaine's next friend, declared that he had not said that he would not be a candidate "if his party should deliberately judge his nomination necessary to its success or to the safety of the country;" and for two months the *Tribune* has labored to show that this necessity existed, without eliciting a word of protest from the person chiefly concerned. The truth is, that those who really believed that Mr. Blaine meant to withdraw, must have been undeceived by the assurances of Mr. Blaine's intimates in this country that the Convention might safely go ahead and nominate him just as though he had never said anything.

There is only one possible reason why Mr. Blaine should not run. Our theory of party government presumes that a party will nominate for the Presidency the man who best represents it, and whom it most desires to see President. There is no possible doubt that Mr. Blaine stands in this relation to the Republican party to-day. As a loyal party man Mr. Blaine would have no right to say that he would not run except in one contingency—that he was physically unable to stand a canvass or to discharge the duties of the office if elected. A few people who still cherished a belief in his sincerity attributed his so-called withdrawal to the fact that he was in ill health, and they were strengthened in this idea when they found him telling the correspondent of the New York *World*, February 25, that he "could not go through the burden and fatigue of another Presidential canvass." This theory was confirmed by the reports of various people who have seen Mr. Blaine within a few weeks, that he looked like a man badly off with disease of the kidneys. But his spokesmen in this country indignantly resent the suggestion that he is not the very picture of health. The *Tribune* declares that he is "as well as he ever was in his life," and Walker Blaine quotes his mother as writing on April 10 that his father "had not felt so strong and vigorous for many years."

No reason, therefore, appears why Mr. Blaine should not be nominated. His party wants him if he is able to run; his friends say that he is better able to run than ever before. So far as the Mugwumps are concerned, we think that as a rule they, like the Republicans—and the Democrats, too, for that matter—desire to see him nominated. They consider him unworthy to be President, and they hoped that the Republican party would be above nominating an unfit candidate; but as the party wants him, and he really represents the party as it now exists better than any other man, they would prefer to have him run, and get beaten after a fashion that would leave no chance for Burchard excuses.

THE BRUNDAGE TAX BILL.

THE two reports of the Commission appointed to revise the tax laws of New York in the year 1870—the Commission consisting of David A. Wells, Edwin Dodge, and Geo. W. Cuyler—are supposed to be well known to all persons who give special attention to the subject there treated. These reports practically expunged all the arguments previously advanced in favor of the taxation of invisible and intangible things, such as bills of exchange, promissory notes, credits, money at interest, choses in action, cash in hand, stocks and bonds in the hands of the owners. Later reports by State Tax Commissions, whether agreeing with the point of view taken by the New York Commission or not, have served mainly to enforce their conclusions by demonstrating the perfect futility of all the attempts to reach this class of property with any approach to equality by any sort of taxing machinery.

As fresh illustrations we shall invite attention to the report of the Connecticut Tax Commission of last year, and to the more recent investigations of Prof. Ely of the Maryland Tax Commission. The latter are particularly useful by reason of the examinations (made by the writer personally in the States of Ohio, West Virginia, and Georgia) of the practical results of the energetic efforts put forth in those States to unearth and tax the invisible and intangible things which the Brundage bill seeks to reach. It is well known that the State of New York does not attempt to tax these elusive securities. The law does not exempt them, but the law has been allowed to fall into "innocuous desuetude." It is for this reason that the Brundage bill is now brought forward. If due and diligent effort has been made in any State to tax this species of property, and if the result has been a failure as conspicuous as our own, that fact should be taken as an argument *prima facie* against making the attempt here. Now what are the facts?

The Connecticut Commissioners tell us that the present system of taxing intangible things "has now been tested by the experience of thirty-six years, and it is safe to say that it has by no means fulfilled the expectations of its framers. . . . Of intangible property, such as notes, bonds, book debts, and Western mortgages, a small portion only has ever been reached, and this portion is of late growing less and less every year." The law of Connecticut since 1850 has required the taxpayer to make out and return the list of his property under oath. The following table shows the actual workings of the law since 1855:

Year.	Bonds, notes, etc., listed.
1855	$19,186,092
1865	20,521,204
1875	16,355,766
1885	13,208,724

Here is a shrinkage of about 40 per cent. in property of this class returned and actually taxed since the year 1855, whereas it is well known to every intelligent citizen that the holding of such property has more than doubled in Connecticut during that interval. It would probably be within bounds to say

that it has increased fourfold. The decline in the amount of personal property reached and reachable by the tax-gatherer in Connecticut has been in about the same ratio as in New York, where the listing of personal property is not required by the law.

In Ohio, where more diligent efforts are made to secure the taxation of personal property, a similar shrinkage in the actual results has been going on for several years. Gov. Foraker, in his last annual message, pointed out the fact that there has been a decline on the tax lists of more than $33,000,000 since 1883. Prof. Ely quotes the testimony of intelligent citizens to the effect that only 10 to 20 per cent. of personal property is reached by the taxing authorities in Columbus, and a still smaller percentage in Cincinnati. In the smaller towns a much larger proportion of personalty is reached, for the reason, probably, that in the smaller towns the people keep a sharper watch upon each other. It follows that the holders of personal property in the rural districts pay an undue proportion of the State tax, and that this happens in a State where the tax-gatherer's pursuit after personal property is keener, perhaps, than in any other State in the Union. It happens also in Ohio, as in Connecticut, that the property of widows and orphans in the probate courts gets the most disproportionate assessment of all. "A lawyer of standing in Columbus," says Prof. Ely, "who holds estates in trust for several parties, says that whenever he goes to the tax office to pay taxes, he feels capable of committing robbery, arson, and murder, because he is obliged to pay taxes on the full value of estates of two, three, and four thousand dollars belonging to little orphan children, whereas he sees wealthy clients paying on ten or fifteen per cent. of what he knows they are worth."

It was noted by Professor Ely that the State of Georgia is uncommonly well served by her chief taxing officer, the present Comptroller-General, and that his admonitions and instructions to the assessors to look carefully after personal property and see that "no guilty man escapes" have been very persistent and methodical. The taxpayer in Georgia is required to make out the list of his personal property and swear to it. He must catalogue his goods, chattels, watches, furniture, kitchen utensils, moneys, credits, and effects of every kind whatsoever, ships and boats and the property contained therein, all money due to him from within or without the State, and all stocks, bonds, or other securities of corporations within or without the State. After making out the list, he must be examined by the assessor by way of refreshing his recollection, and his answers must be taken down in writing. If he has control or possession of any property belonging to others, he must catalogue that portion separately. When the lists are thus perfected they are turned over to the Grand Jury of the county for a fresh examination, and after they have been scrutinized and passed upon by that body they go into the hands of the tax receiver.

This system is not only the law, but it is faithfully and diligently executed. There is no complaint in any quarter of laxity on the part of the assessors or the Grand Jury, yet the results are extremely unsatisfactory. The Comptroller-General, in his report for 1886, says: "From a careful examination of the digest on file in this office, it is evident to me that such [personal] property is not returned as it should be. . . . A great many merchants and other citizens of this State have borrowed money on bonds, notes, and other evidences of debt owed by them, and have deposited such bonds, notes, etc., as collateral security with the persons from whom they have made such a loan, and *think* that said notes, bonds, etc., being out of their hands on April 1, such property should not be returned by them; this is not true." In the mere article of merchandise offered for sale, which can be seen and handled, he says that not 50 per cent. is returned for taxation. In the whole city of Savannah there were not ten watches returned for taxation. The usual complaint about perjury was rife.

The same story is told for West Virginia. A special Tax Commission was organized and set to work in that State in the year 1884. They reported that not more than one-fifth of the invisible property was ever listed for taxation, and that of the visible personal property listed one-half was assessed 40 per cent. lower than the other half. "All the taxes from invisible property," they say, "come from a few conspicuously conscientious citizens, from widows, executors, and from guardians of the insane and infants; in fact, it is a comparatively rare thing to find a shrewd trader who 'gives in' any considerable amount of notes, stocks, or money. The truth is, things have come to such a condition in West Virginia that, as regards paying taxes on this class of property, it is almost as voluntary, and is considered pretty much in the same light, as donations to the neighborhood church or Sunday-school."

In Wisconsin the same condition of things was found, but that State appears to have drifted into the easy condition of New York, the attempt to tax personal property having been practically abandoned except in the small villages and rural districts. Now, the question for the New York Legislature to consider is whether it is worth while to make a fresh effort to do something which experience has shown, over and over again, cannot be done. In order to answer this question intelligently, let us inquire what the thing is that it is sought to do. It is to impose a penalty of about 2 per cent. per annum for the offence of bringing into or retaining in the State circulating and movable property which gives value to all the fixed property of the State, corporate or real. At the present time New York offers great attractions to this kind of property by the practical exemption she offers from taxation. She has profited by it to an enormous degree. Rich people have come and are coming from all parts of the country to take up their residence among us. Is this desirable or is it not? Is the spending of all this money in and around New York a benefit to the city and State, or otherwise? Would it be wise to reverse the current, and set the flow of capital outward rather than inward? We fancy that there are not two opinions on this subject. We judge that the holders of city real estate would be the first to cry "Hold!" if they observed any movement which tended to check the incoming and to promote the outgoing of personal property.

But we are told that while it is true that real estate in cities derives its value from the presence of personal property, which tends more and more to accumulate in cities, the farming community derives no such benefit, and that thus an unequal burden falls on agricultural land. This is true in part, because the New York farmer has to compete with all other farmers whose products can reach this market; but, on the other hand, the advance in city real estate due to the growth of personal property enables and requires the cities to pay 80 per cent. or more of the State taxes, New York and Brooklyn alone paying 55 per cent., while several of the rural counties actually receive from the State Treasury more money than they pay into it. In point of fact, the taxation of the State of New York is now so extremely light (2 7-10 mills on the dollar of a valuation which is probably not above 40 per cent. of the real value) that we should hardly be aware of the demands of the State Treasury if we did not receive the reports of the Comptroller once a year.

THE BOULANGER CAMPAIGN.

The Boulangist campaign in France becomes, as a study of political manners, more and more interesting. In the first place, far from submitting a programme of any sort to the public, Boulanger firmly declines to say what his plan for redeeming France is. This recalls to some of the wags of the press what was known as the "plan Trochu" during the siege of Paris, or, in other words, a plan which Gen. Trochu had for routing the Germans, but which he refused to communicate to any one until the decisive moment had come, and which, they said, he had in the meantime deposited with a notary. When Boulanger is asked what his plan is, he replies that "this is his secret," and that he should be a fool to reveal it. He cites as a precedent for this reticence the course of Mr. Gladstone in refusing to produce now, while he is out of office, a plan of Irish home rule. Being asked to what party he considered himself as belonging, he declared that he belonged to no party. How could any one think, after what the country had seen of parties during the past seventeen years, that he was going "to brigade himself in a party"? If they had only seen what he saw of parties in the Chamber while he was Minister of War, they would never want to hear of a party again. What he aims at is to convert the "Boulangist party" (*le parti Boulangiste*) into the party of France—a party which would have nothing to do with politics, but would occupy itself with "general interests."

The interview at which these ideas were extracted occurred at Rochefort's house, and when the General was asked how, exactly