

"I'm Going to Be The First Real Speaker The House Has Had In 50 Years"--Clark

(W. S. Couch in New York World.)

"Uncle Joe was our Czar. What are you going to be?" I asked Champ Clark, of Missouri, who will hold the gavel over the next house, which will be a democratic house.

"I am going to be the first real speaker the house has had for fifty years," Champ Clark said.

"There are so many kinds of democrats," I suggested. "Bryan democrats and Cleveland democrats, high tariff democrats and low tariff democrats, Eastern and Western and Southern democrats—at least according to the newspapers. What sort of democrat are you, Mr. Clark?"

"A democrat," drawled Champ Clark. "A man who believes in democratic principles and who votes the democratic ticket. That is the only kind of democrat there is." Then he told his story.

"People bother me a good deal during the first Bryan presidential campaign," he said. "Asking about the different kinds of democrats who were advertised to exist—gold democrats and silver democrats, and Palmer and Buckner and Bryan was what not democrats. So I used to tell 'em about Dick Gbodman's dog. 'My dawg,' Dick used to say, 'is one-fourth setter, one-fourth pointer and the other half is just plain dawg.' Now, like that dog, most of me is just plain democrat. That's the kind of democrat I am."

"The republican veterans of the house," I hinted, "seem to be having a lot of fun over the Donnybrook Fair

which they insist is sure to follow democratic control of it. Is there any reason why the democrats can't run the house, and legislature?"

"Certainly not," said Champ Clark, with emphasis. "That sort of talk is just republican whistling to keep up the party courage in this dark time. The democratic party has had no basic difference since the silver question, and that is settled. The democrats are more thoroughly united today than they have been at any time since the polls closed in 1892. The republicans are worse split up now than we were in 1896, and they will be long or in recovering."

"The house democrats are united. If we seize our opportunity and meet the responsibility with courage, wisdom and patriotism, we ought to have a long lease of power, and I am satisfied that we shall."

"Of course, if we fall to do so it's back to the wilderness for us!"

He knows "the Man at the Fork of the Creek."

The coming election of Champ Clark as speaker to the second place of power and authority in the government will crown a career of brave struggle that began in hardship and poverty and has achieved national political leadership. Clark's story is the traditional American "poor-boy-who-became-famous" tale. Teachers in country school houses will tell the story of Champ Clark this winter to prove that all American boys are still equal and each has a chance to be president. It is said that the precocious pupils in

the city school study the muckrakers these days and know that the legend about equal opportunity is not so, and that Charles F. Murphy is the real power in the land, and that presidents are turned out ready made, from the office of Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan. But in the country school houses the old faith in the republic is still taught, without the higher criticism. The national strength of Champ Clark comes from his close relations with the country school population, and with the constituent whom he is pleased to call "the man at the fork of the creek."

"I want to say that the man at the fork of the creek knows more about what is going on than the fellow who lives in town," Clark once declared.

"He takes a biweekly paper and a daily if he can get it, and an agricultural paper. He reads these papers line for line—even the advertisements. He never holds office; he never expects to hold office. His voting is a matter of faith. When he comes to believe in him because he thinks the man is right. He doesn't know anything about politics manipulation; doesn't want to. Take Bryan and Roosevelt, to illustrate. Those are the kind of men who appeal to the fellow at the fork of the creek. And that fellow is a stubbornly faithful constituent, a most comfortable kind of a constituent to have."

To see Champ Clark you simply walk into the committee room assigned to him in the capital and then on into a little office that opens to the right at the far end. He has always been approachable and as speaker-to-be, as busy as he will ever be in the chair, he is just as easy of access. He promises to be a democratic speaker in both senses of the word. Clark has never shown much taste for locked doors or secret conferences, or the many mysteries in which statesmen love to cloak themselves.

He Can Fight, But He Does Not Hunt Trouble.

Champ Clark swung into his office a bit behind on the morning I saw him, swing in with his Western, so-called soft, wearing the inevitable black, soft, Western hat, and a long, loose, overcoat—six feet and one inch and some two hundred pounds of man, carrying his weight so easily and with it so well distributed over his big boned frame that the words "stout" and "fat" did not suggest themselves. He grinned a greeting, said "Hello!" and shook hands vigorously. Inside his little office he pulled his overcoat, slammed up his hat, sat down in his roomy, swivel chair and leaned back with the involuntary flexing of the muscles and the contented sigh of the healthy man who has just had a good breakfast, is ready to get down to business, and is glad of it.

Clark has a massive head, topped with thinning gray hair, well poised on a strong neck above his shoulders. His face is a wide, fleshy one, with well proportioned features, the forehead

broad and deep, the gray blue eyes busy and inquisitive, a straight, plump well shaped nose, an expressive mouth, neither large nor small, and a good chin. It is the face of a man who can fight but who isn't hunting for trouble.

Talking from his office chair Clark slouched back in it, let his eyelids drop over his eyes, as he always does when speaking, and slowly swung his right hand in gesture. His drawing, Southern voice is musical in conversation, but on the floor of the house he uses a slow, nasal tone which carry far and, like the snarl of a shell's flight, it generally precedes a bursting retort that usually demolishes his opponent.

James Beauchamp Clark was born at Lawrenceburg, Andersonville county, Kentucky, in 1850. He made himself "Champ" Clark. The East accepted this as a nickname and the first published unofficial list of congress in which Clark figured made it "Beauchamp Clark."

"When I was in law school," so Clark complained to a New York reporter, "Judge Hoadley told me a man had as much right to change his name as to have his hair cut. I changed James Beauchamp Clark to Champ Clark. If I had not done this I would have been called, in all probability, 'Jim Clark,' and a man might as well be called 'John Smith.' I believe I'll sue for libel if the unofficial list is not corrected."

But Champ he is and he did not have to use. His mother died in infancy and his father an itinerant dentist whose hobby was politics, placed his small son and daughter in the hands of John Call, a farmer. At ten or twelve little Champ was doing a man's work, or pretty near it. He once told a story of thirty mules and a blue blue jackass that were but a part of his responsibilities. He dug what education he could from occasional newspapers and a few tattered books. With this beginning he long held the record of having been the youngest college president in the United States.

"I was teaching school before I was 15," he told me. "Of course I didn't know much, but it was the only way I had to make money enough to go to college. I taught school at intervals until I was 26." Clark did not say that he had to organize that first school himself, but it is a fact.

He attended Kentucky University for more than three years, teaching school to pay his way, and then, after a final year spent there, was graduated from Bethany College, in West Virginia, in June, 1875, with the highest grades any student ever got in Bethany, before or since. The scholar received three offers of positions, but he took the presidency of Marshall College, the State Normal School, at Huntington, W. Va. He was then 23 years old.

"I got that position," Clark explains, "through the friendship of Col. Alexander Campbell, son of that great preacher, Alexander Campbell."

After a year Clark left Marshall College for Cincinnati Law School, where he was graduated in April of 1878. He went West after graduation, as young men were doing in those days, and landed in Louisiana, Missouri, where he was principal of the high school for a year. By that time he had a law practice and a start in politics. Before Clark was elected to congress in 1892 he had moved to Bowling Green, Missouri, a town adjoining Louisiana that he married Miss Genevieve Bennett, whose "folks," Clark is careful to ex-

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plain, came from Kentucky. The Clarks have two children living, a daughter, and Bennett, a son near voting age, who in his father's chum and a college fraternity brother and who wants to have his name changed to Champ.

"Politics? Oh, yes, I began to meddle with politics right away," Clark said in answer to interruption of his autobiography. "I was city attorney for Louisiana in 1877, elected to the legislature in 1878, and in 1889 I was a presidential elector. In 1892 I was first elected to congress."

Clark was beaten for re-election, too, at the end of his first congressional term, beaten by an unknown. It is hard to reconcile Clark today with the Clark pictured in the newspapers of 1892-96. He came east as the defiant champion of the wild, untamed, under-rid and busted west to hurl its challenge in the teeth of the money power. His debut was a sensational Fourth of July speech at a Tammany picnic in New York. The New York papers reported that speech as ungrammatical, and printed weird interviews attributed to Clark, in which he was credited with a story that his first school teaching had been hindered by a Kentucky feud and that he kept discipline with two guns and a bowie knife. The Washington press gallery took this cue and Clark was pictured as a sort of individual Hunnish invasion of the capital. What Jerry Simpson and "Joe" Bailey got in those days was mild in comparison. And Clark, not at all dismayed or impressed, roared back his defiance.

"You Can't Afford to Bear Malice in Politics."

When Clark returned to congress two years later he was a better balanced man, with a much more sober tone. He has been acquiring balance ever since. His democratic colleagues predict a successful session of the next house on the ground that Clark is a harmonizer. In this connection he made two significant remarks to friends recently:

"The only wise thing I ever heard Dockery say," Clark said, "was one time when he had been damning somebody or other in Missouri. 'Champ,' said Dockery, 'don't you know that you can never afford to bear malice in politics?'" And Clark does not, at least in these days.

The other comment was after Clark's struggle to keep his democratic minority in hand and patiently wait in the background while he let Norris of Nebraska and the insurgent republicans have the spotlight in the successful fight to amend the Cannon rules. This had to be, and Clark succeeded, but he had a hard time.

"The hardest work a leader has," he commented, "is keeping everybody in good humor. It beats all what they will get angry about. You always have to keep rubbing their fur the right way."

There is an undercurrent of quiet talk in Washington now that Clark may yet be a possibility for the democratic presidential nomination in 1912. The coming democratic house can make or break the party's standing in 1912, and Speaker Clark, while he must bear the blame for the blunders, has a chance to be a popular hero if the democratic house strikes the popular chord.

"I took up lecturing," Clark himself told me, "to make money. It was the

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