

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.

FIVE weeks from today the voters of the United States will make a formal declaration of whom they will have to serve them as President and Vice-President. In doing this they merely express their preferences, having no choice in the matter except indirectly; for, as is well known, it has frequently been the case that while the people have largely inclined one way, the electoral college chosen by them has gone the other or another way, and thus the candidates who have received a minority of the people's direct suffrages were successful. It is not our present purpose to explain the why and wherefore of this or to moralize upon it, as both have received sufficient attention in these columns and elsewhere to render such use of space unnecessary.

It has been frequently observed by prominent politicians of all shades of opinion and others that the campaign so far has been an abnormally quiet one, the apathy exhibited by those who are most interested being something utterly unprecedented. Various causes are assigned for this state of things, but in every case such cause has some special application favorable to the party of the one who expresses it, and is therefore not very valuable to the independent mind seeking for actual facts. Perhaps the real source of the prevailing indifference is the fact that there are no vital issues before the people, at least none but what have been presented and canvassed before, so that the campaign has more or less semblance to "threshing out old straw." This, coupled with the additional fact that the principal candidates for the first office have also been before the voters for the same place, and that therefore there is little that is new to be told, would seem to complete the case and furnish about as satisfactory an explanation as can be given.

Above and beyond every other question demanding the attention of the people is, as was the case four years ago, the tariff. Prior to that time it had generally occupied a secondary place, or was even further down the scale than that. The issues growing out of the war absorbed the greater part of the people's attention politically for many years, economic questions being more or less subsidiary; as time wore on, however, the former gradually grew less while the latter advanced in a corresponding ratio, and now there is scarcely anything left of war material, which of necessity throws the burden of making up issues upon those who deal with commercial, mechanical and productive affairs. The alleged abeyance of the Lodge election bill, commonly called the "force bill," which the Democrats claim is resting until the Republicans are strong enough to make it law, lends a shade of variety to the situation, it being a political measure pure and simple; but the Republicans disclaim any such intention, and insist upon it that their opponents are using it as a scarecrow to keep the South solid. However that may be, the bill is receiving a full share of attention; in fact, in the South it fairly divides the honors with

the tariff and all other subjects before the people.

Whether it be due to the indifference stated or to some other cause, it is undeniable that there has never been an election since the war which cast so dim a shadow before it. So far nothing is known as to how any part of the nation will go, and even the conjectures which are ventured are in most cases purely visionary, while the claims made are what they usually amount to—just so many claims. There have been three State elections held recently (not counting the one going on in Florida today)—in Arkansas, Vermont and Maine. The first named went overwhelmingly Democratic, but as it is a Democratic State anyway, this only serves to show that the hope of the Republicans to break up the solidity of the South is futile this time, and that the effect of the Populist vote has been overestimated. In Vermont and Maine, which are always more or less strongly Republican, there was a slight falling off in the majorities for that party. These facts taken together cause sanguine Democrats to anticipate certain victory; but they may not be fairly so considered, for the reason that in the last two cases a light vote was polled. Many voters stay away from the polls when a local election is going on, and are on hand "early and often" when it is a national contest. So that we are only permitted from such results to conclude—that we are as much at sea as before.

If any one could tell how the Empire State is going to vote, he could come pretty near to a correct conclusion as to the result at large. It is true the Democrats are making a vigorous campaign in the Northwest and are already "claiming" enough States in that region to offset the possible loss of New York; but such claims are not based upon precedent and no one will be safe in depending entirely upon any such outcome. The Republicans may lose some of the silver and other States west of the Missouri river; but all of such losses combined would only be a negative gain for the Democrats. Even if a full gain, they would not be compensated for the thirty-six electoral votes which they would lose if they failed to carry New York.

NIAGARA HARNESSSED.

BEGINNING today, and continuing four days, will be held at Buffalo, N. Y., the second congress of the National Real Estate Association, at which it is expected that every State and Territory in the Union will be represented by one or more of its liveliest real estate dealers. To predict with confidence that the meetings will be full of snap and interest, one needs but to remember the bustling, high-pressure characteristics of your successful real estate operator everywhere; and it goes without saying that where several hundred of his species are congregated together, there will the world be made to wag rapidly and the currents of the air be set into a commotion.

While the general public may take but slight interest in the proper and regular proceedings, one feature of the congress will demand con-

siderable attention. It is not only land and air, but water also that will feel the presence of the rustlers. It is proposed to devote a day to the examination of the great tunnel by which, as the glib-tongued Buffalo operators put it, "the power of Niagara is brought to the doors of Buffalo and made to turn the wheels of civilization." As explanatory of how these wonderful things are to be accomplished—it will be observed they are not yet all done—it may be interesting to know that the scheme is estimated to supply about 120,000 horse-power for turning the aforesaid wheels. The tunnel, which has been over five years in building, has been made from the level of the lower river, just under the falls, extending for nearly two miles up the river, and at a depth of 160 feet below the river level above the falls. It will be seen that an almost unlimited number of shafts can be sunk, discharging into this great waterway, which is 29 feet in diameter and 8,090 feet long.

It is by tapping this tunnel that the 120,000 horse-power is obtained. But the whole of Niagara has not yet been made ready for man's service. It has been calculated that there are 6,000,000 horse-power in the mighty cataract. But using only 120,000, Buffalo will have seven times as much power as Minneapolis and five times as much as Holyoke; and the river not only never runs dry but can never run dry.

Naturally the aim of the Buffalo representatives present at the congress will be to make Niagara's boom boom their city as the coming manufacturing city of the continent. In view of the enterprise that has been shown in prosecuting the work thus far, it is safe to say they are entitled to all the success they will be likely to achieve in a gathering where so many sections are represented, each pulling earnestly and exclusively for itself.

WONDERFUL IF TRUE.

AN eminent professor of Heidelberg, Germany, named Meyer, in an address to the students two years ago, said that chemistry was the great revealer of hidden mysteries. "We may," said he, "reasonably hope ere long it will teach us to make the fiber of wood a source of human food. Can the cellulose in wood be made into starch? I would not be at all surprised to hear that some savant had manufactured a nice food from what were once the most unruly elements."

The German chemists took the matter up, and ever since have been experimenting in this direction. It is now reported that they have succeeded in making corn starch from wood cellulose, and bread from the starch. It is further stated that this bread is chemically purer than that made from either barley or rye. It is possible that the day may not be far distant when a half dozen good catalpas or cottonwoods may be as valuable as a half acre of wheat land. Besides it would be much easier to irrigate an acre of oaks than of wheat. This bread-wood business would solve the question of food supply and several other important economical issues.