



1900,
on the Last President

by Ingersoll Lockwood



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About Author

The Chicago Platform assumes, in fact,
the form of a revolutionary propaganda.
It embodies a menace of national
disintegration and destruction.

Garret A. Hobart.



Chapter One

That was a terrible night for the great City of New York—the night of Tuesday, November 3rd, 1896. The city staggered under the blow like a huge ocean liner which plunges, full speed, with terrific crash into a mighty iceberg, and recoils shattered and trembling like an aspen.

The people were gathered, light-hearted and confident, at the evening meal, when the news burst upon them. It was like a thunder bolt out of an azure sky: “Altgeld holds Illinois hard and fast in the Democratic line. This elects Bryan President of the United States!”

Strange to say, the people in the upper portion of the city made no movement to rush out of their houses and collect in the public squares, although the night was clear and beautiful. They sat as if paralyzed with a nameless dread, and when they conversed it was with bated breath and throbbing hearts.

In less than half an hour, mounted policemen dashed through the streets calling out: “Keep within your houses; close your doors and

barricade them. The entire East side is in a state of uproar. Mobs of vast size are organizing under the lead of Anarchists and Socialists, and threaten to plunder and despoil the houses of the rich who have wronged and oppressed them for so many years. Keep within doors. Extinguish all lights.”

Happily, Governor Morton was in town, and although a deeper pallor overcame the ashen hue of age as he spoke, yet there was no tremor in his voice: “Let the Seventh, Twenty-second and Seventy-first regiments be ordered under arms.” In a few moments hundreds of messengers could be heard racing through the silent streets, summoning the members of these regiments to their Armories.

Slowly, but with astonishing nerve and steadiness, the mobs pushed the police northward, and although the force stood the onslaught with magnificent courage, yet beaten back, the dark masses of infuriated beings surged up again with renewed fury and strength. Will the troops be in time to save the city? was the whispered inquiry among the knots of police officials who were directing the movements of their men.

About nine o'clock, with deafening outcries, the mob, like a four-headed monster breathing fire and flame, raced, tore, burst, raged into Union Square.

The police force was exhausted, but their front was still like a wall of stone, save that it was movable. The mob crowded it steadily to the north, while the air quivered and was rent with mad vociferations of the victors: “Bryan is elected! Bryan is elected! Our day has come at last. Down with our oppressors! Death to the rich man! Death to the gold bugs! Death to the capitalists! Give us back the money you

have ground out of us. Give us back the marrow of our bones which you have used to grease the wheels of your chariots.”

The police force was now almost helpless. The men still used their sticks, but the blows were ineffectual, and only served to increase the rage of the vast hordes now advancing upon Madison Square.

The Fifth Avenue Hotel will be the first to feel the fury of the mob. Would the troops be in time to save it?

A half cheer, a half cry of joy goes up. It is inarticulate. Men draw a long breath; women drop upon their knees and strain their eyes; they can hear something, but they cannot see as yet, for the gas houses and electric plants had been destroyed by the mob early in the evening. They preferred to fight in the dark, or by the flames of rich men’s abodes.

Again a cheer goes up, louder and clearer this time, followed by cries of “They’re coming, they’re coming.”

Yes, they were coming—the Twenty-second down Broadway, the Seventh down Madison avenue, both on the double quick.

In a moment or so there were a few bugle calls, and a few spoken commands rang out clear and sharp; and then the two regiments stretched across the entire square, literally from wall to wall, in line of battle. The mob was upon them. Would this slender line of troops, could it hold such a mighty mass of men in check?

The answer was a deafening discharge of firearms, a terrific crack, such as some thunder bolts make when they explode. A wall of fire blazed across the Square. Again and again it blazed forth. The mob halted, stood fast, wavered, fell back, advanced again. At that moment there came a rattle as of huge knives in the distance. It was

the gallant Seventy-first charging up Twenty-third street, and taking the mob on the flank. They came on like a wall of iron, bristling with blades of steel.

There were no outcries, no cheers from the regiment. It dealt out death in silence, save when two bayonets crossed and clashed in bearing down some doubly-vigorous foe.

As the bells rang out midnight, the last remnants of the mob were driven to cover, but the wheels of the dead wagons rattled till daybreak.

And then the aged Governor, in response to the Mayor's "Thank God, we've saved the city!" made answer:

"Aye, but the Republic—."

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