

Reform in the First

By BRAND WHITLOCK

AUTHOR OF "THE THIRTEENTH DISTRICT," "HER INFINITE VARIETY," "THE HAPPY AVERAGE," "THE TURN OF THE BALANCE," ETC., ETC.

Copyright by The Bobbs-Merrill Company

THE senatorial convention in the First district was to convene at 10 o'clock, in a dingy little hall in lower Clark street, lighted by windows so long uncleaned that they looked like ground glass. From the chandeliers, black and sticky with dead flies, shreds of tissue paper fluttered, relics of some boisterous fete an Italian society had given there long ago. The floor was damp in arabesque wrought by a sprinkling-can, for the janitor had sprayed water there to lay the dust he was too indifferent to remove. Perhaps a hundred chairs were set in amphitheatrical order, and before them stood a kitchen table, on which was a white water pitcher, flanked by a glass, thickened by various sedimentary deposits within.

In the saloon below, at 9 o'clock, scores of delegates were already shuffling in the sawdust that covered the floor, holding huge schooners of beer in their hairy fists, gorging grossly at the free lunch table, with bologna, rank onions and rye bread. The foam of the beer clung to their mustaches, which, after each sip, they sucked between their lips. Most of them managed, at the same time they were eating and drinking, by a dexterous sleight-of-hand, to smoke cheap domestic cigars, and a cloud of white smoke rolled along the low ceiling. Each new arrival was greeted with some obscene but endearing epithet, and the room rang with laughter and profanity. A keg of beer had been provided by one of Conway's managers, and the bartender, wiping his hands on a dirty towel, was rid, so long as the keg lasted, of the responsibility of keeping account of drinks, and of ringing up the change on the cash register. At 11 o'clock the keg was empty, the free lunch table abandoned to the flies, and the delegates scuffled up the dingy stairs to the hall. Half an hour later the chairman of the senatorial district committee pounded the kitchen table with a leg of a broken chair, and shouted:

"The convention will be in order." This declaration made no impression upon the babel of voices, the laughter, the profanity, the noise of shuffling feet and scraping chairs.

Finally the chairman of the committee, growing impatient, split the table with his club and yelled:

"Damn it all, boys, come to order!" And then, eager to resign such a difficult command, he hastened to announce:

"The committee has named Honorable John P. Muldoon to act as temporary chairman."

He handed the chair leg to John P. Muldoon, who, stroking back his curly hair from his brow, began to beat the table impartially.

All this while Underwood stood against the wall, looking on. The question that had been agitating him for weeks was about to be decided, but now that the ordeal was actually upon him, the consciousness beat numbly against his brain, so that the whole scene lacked reality, almost interest. He was dazed. He was about to take his baptism of political fire, and he trembled like a white novice.

Underwood belonged to one of the oldest families of Chicago—the name had been known there before the fire. His father, who had lately taken him into his law firm, continued to cling in his conservatism to an old stone house in Michigan avenue long after his neighbors had abandoned their mansions to uncertain boards, and either retreated farther south or advanced to the North Side. John Underwood had come out of Harvard with a young lawyer's ambition in politics, an ambition that had the United States senate merely as a beginning of its home stretch, and when the year rolled around in which state senators were to be elected in the odd numbered districts he decided that it was time to begin.

The newspapers had scented the sensation that lurked in the candidature of a young man like Underwood in the district like the First, and because he went into what is called society, promptly dubbed him a reformer, and thus weighted he had set out upon his race for the nomination. He liked to see his name in the newspapers, liked to think of himself as a reformer, though he was embarrassed in this attitude by the fascinating figure of the political boss he had hoped to become—a well-dressed, gentlemanly boss, of course, who, while at home in those saloons where he permitted the convivial familiarity of the boys, nevertheless took his luncheons at his club. He fell into a way of speaking of the First as "my district," spoke of it in fact, as if he, instead of Malachi Nolan and "Cinch" Conway, owned it, and when certain ward politicians in the first days of the campaign called upon him, Underwood was pleased to lend them money, just as he was pleased to comply with the requests of certain others who organized the John W. Underwood First Ward Campaign club, and sent a committee to inform him that they were assembled in the club rooms ready to transact business, and beer only four

dollars a keg. He winked confidentially at himself in the mirror that night as he gave a final touch to his white cravat and surveyed his fine young form arrayed in evening clothes for the reform banquet at the Palmer house. His speech was "The Tendencies of Modern Politics." The newspapers said it was a very brilliant speech, breathing lofty political sentiments that were bound to make John W. Underwood votes. Also, the Reform club endorsed his candidature.

As Underwood leaned against the greasy wall of the little hall on lower Clark street this morning, the whole campaign flashed before him, just as the events of a lifetime are said in books to flash before the mind of a drowning man. He recalled every vivid detail of the call Baldwin had made upon him, how he entered his private office without troubling the pale, pimpled office boy to announce him, how he lifted from his carefully parted hair his straw hat with its youthful band of blue, and laughed out, "John, my boy, how are you? Hot, isn't it?" He could see Baldwin as he sat in the solid oak chair that stood intimately beside his roll-top desk, fanning his ruddy face with the hat, which had impressed a broad red band on his forehead. Underwood had been glad enough to close "Cooley on Taxation" and remove his chair to face Baldwin, just as if he had been a client, for Baldwin was the most important politician who had ever called upon him professionally.

He knew Baldwin had come with some practical proposition, and when the lobbyist suggested that he was too respectable, and would run better in some residence district, that the boys looked upon him as a reformer, and that the silk stockings were not practical enough to help him, Underwood had felt that at last it was coming. It was simple enough. Baldwin had been talking that very morning about Underwood's candidature to Mr. Wood of the Metropolitan Motor System, and to Mr. Peabody, president of the Gas company, and they had been very much interested. They had an anxiety to see good men nominated that year, for they had large business interests that were more or less affected by legislation, and had feared they would have to settle on Conway. Conway had experience in legislative matters, and had been friendly enough in the city council, yet they felt they could hardly trust him—he was such a grafter, and in such things, Baldwin blandly assured Underwood, they had to depend upon a man's honor alone, and so they had sent Baldwin to suggest that Underwood meet them at luncheon, and talk matters over. Baldwin, with his love of ease and luxury, had preferred a dinner over at the Cardinal's in the evening, but Mr. Peabody had something on hand with the trustees of his church and couldn't meet them then. Baldwin had taken out his watch at this point, with the air of a man who suddenly remembers some important engagement—the details all came back with a fidelity that was painful—and stood awaiting Underwood's reply, with the open watch ticking impatiently in his palm.

Of course, Underwood had understood—and he wished ardently to be nominated and elected. He could see himself swinging idly in a big chair behind a walnut desk in the senate chamber, just as an actor sees himself, with an artist's ecstatic, half-frightened gasp, in some new part he is about to study. The position would give him much importance, he would be riding back and forth between Chicago and Springfield on a pass, it would be so pleasant to be addressed as senator, to be consulted, to head delegations in state conventions and cast the solid vote for any one he pleased; besides, it would be a good training for Washington, he could practice in oratory and parliamentary law just as he practiced on friendless papers over in the criminal court when his father influenced some judge to appoint him to defend an indigent prisoner. It meant only one little word, he could be wary of promises. His heart had expanded, he had turned half around in his chair to face Baldwin, when suddenly the reformer within him rose to object, pointed to his ideals, rehearsed the speech on "The Tendencies of Modern Politics," recalled all the good words the independent papers had spoken of him, urged the beauty of great sacrifices for principle. At the idea of self-sacrifice, Underwood had felt a melting self-pity, he admired himself in this new role of a self-sacrificing reformer. And so he flung the cigarette out of the window, watched it whirl down to the melting tar of the roofs below and said firmly:

"I have an engagement this morning, Mr. Baldwin. I'm sorry, but I guess I can't come."

Once more Underwood saw the pleasantness leave Baldwin's face, saw him flick a fake of ash from the white waistcoat he wore with his summer suit of blue, and snapping the lid of his watch shut, he once more heard him say in a final and reproachful tone:

"Well, all right; sorry, my boy." Underwood wondered that morning in the noisy convention hall, whether,

if he had the decision to make over again, he would decline such influence. It had been the cause of much doubt and some regret at the time. The boss within him had protested—surely it was a political mistake—and the boss was louder than the reformer, and more plausible. He came forward with a brilliant scheme. He recalled Baldwin's reference to the rivalry between Nolan and Conway. Underwood remembered that when he suggested the possibility of Nolan's running for the nomination himself, Baldwin had shaken his head—there wasn't enough in it, he said. Nolan could do very much better in the council, where he was. Besides, Mr. Weed and Mr. Peabody disliked him.

Underwood thought out his scheme that afternoon, while hunting in the digest for cases in point to be cited in a case his father was preparing for the appellate court. The work of looking up cases in point, while its results are impressive and seem to smell of the lamp, had in reality grown quite automatic to Underwood, and as he loafed over digests and reports and dashed down his notes, he elaborated the scheme, just what he would say and do, how he would appear, and so forth. And so, when he entered Malachi Nolan's place in Dearborn street, early that evening, he was fully prepared. The details of this incident came back just as the details of Baldwin's visit had done—the empty saloon, the alderman himself leaning over his bar, his white apron rolled into a big girth about his middle, the cigar in the round hole at the corner of his mouth gone out, denoting that it was time for him to go down the alley to Billy Boyle's and get his porrbhouse and baked potato.

Underwood watched Malachi Nolan mix his Martini cocktail, splash it picturesquely into a sparkling glass and bejewel it with a Maraschino cherry, then gravely take a cigar for himself and stow it away in his ample waistcoat. Then, as Nolan mopped the bar with professional sweep of his white-sleeved, muscular arm, Underwood unfolded his brilliant scheme, skirting

test vote; it would disclose his own strength and the strength of Conway. He looked over the red faces before him. He saw Conway himself morning among the delegates, snarling, cursing, quarreling with the friends of years; he saw Conway's candidate for the house, McGlone, over in the Second ward delegation, his coat off, a handkerchief about his fat neck, a fuming cigar between his chubby fingers, turning on his heavy haunches to revile some man who was numbered with Nolan's crowd; he saw in the First ward delegation, Malachi Nolan, clean-shaven, in black coat and cravat, his iron gray hair cropped short, calm alone of all the others. He would have looked the priest more than the saloon-keeper, had he smoked his cigar differently. Now and then he solemnly raised his hand, with almost the benediction of a father, to still the clamor of his delegation, which, with its twenty-one votes, was safe at all events for Underwood.

Muldoon was Conway's man—they would try to make the temporary organization permanent. D'Ormand was Underwood's candidate. And Muldoon won. Underwood had lost the first round.

The candidates for senator were to be placed in nomination first. Underwood stood in the crowded doorway and heard Conway's name presented. Then, in the cheering, with his heart in his sandal throat, he heard the chairman say:

"Are there any other nominations?"

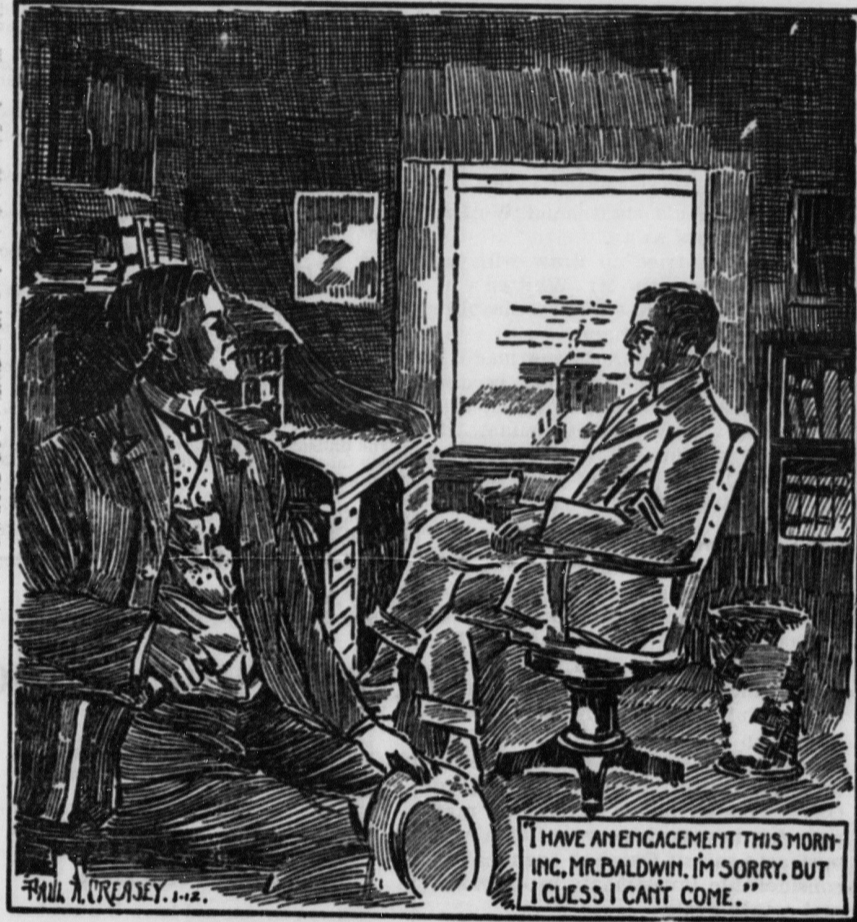
There was a momentary stillness, and then he heard a thick, strong voice:

"Misther Chairman."

"The gentleman from the First ward."

"Misther Chairman," the thick, strong voice said, "I rise to place in nomination the name of wan—"

It was the voice of Malachi Nolan, and Underwood suddenly remembered that Nolan was to place his name before the convention. He listened, an instant, but could not endure it long. He could not endure that men should see him in the hour when his name



carefully the acute suspicions of an old politician. But Nolan mopped, blinking inscrutably, at last putting the damp cloth away in some mysterious place under the counter. The fat Maltese cat, waiting until the moisture on the bar had evaporated, stretched herself again beside the silver urn that held the crackers and the little cubes of cheese. Still Nolan blinked in silence, like a hostile jury with its mind made up, until at last, in desperation, Underwood blurted out his proposition. Nolan blinked some more, then, half opening his blue Irish eyes, grunted:

"Well, I like your gall."

Underwood's spirits fell, yet he was not disappointed. It was, after all, just what he had expected. It served him right for his presumption, if nothing more—though the subdued reformer within had hinted at other reasons. He hung his head, twirling his empty glass disconsolately. He did not see the light that twinkled in the blue eyes, he had not then known how very ready Nolan was to form any combination that would beat Conway and Baldwin, especially with a reformer like himself who had money to spend on his ambitions. He had not discerned how badly the man whom the newspapers always cartooned with the First ward sticking out of his vest pocket needed a reformer in his business, as the saying is. Hence his glad surprise when Nolan wiped his big hand on his apron like a washer-woman and held it out, saying:

"But I'm wit' ye."

Then the campaign, under Nolan's management, in the most wonderful legislative district—a cosmopolitan district, bristling with sociological problems, a district that has fewer homes and more saloons, more commerce and more sloth, more millionaires and more paupers, and while it confines within its boundaries the skyscrapers, clubs, theaters and hundred churches of a metropolis, still boasts a police station with more arrests on its blotter than any other in the world. Night after night, with Nolan's two candidates for the house, he spent in saloons where a candidate must treat and distribute his cards that the boys may see him up.

But they were balloting for permanent chairman now. It would be a

was being thus laid naked to the world. Reporters were writing it down, perhaps the crowd would laugh or whistle or hiss. Besides, candidates do not remain in the convention hall; they await the committee of notification in some nearby saloon. He squeezed through the mass of men who stood on tiptoes, stretching their necks to see and hear the old leader of the First ward, and fled.

The first ballot was taken—Conway, 31; Underwood, 30; Simmons, the dark horse, 8; necessary to a choice, 35. The vote was unchanged for twenty-six ballots, till the afternoon had worn away, and the trucks had jolted off the cobblestones of Clark street, till the lights were flaring and hot-tamale men, gamblers, beggars, street walkers, all the denizens of darkness were shifting along the sidewalks, till the policemen had been changed on their beats, and Pinkerton night watchmen were trying the doors of stores, till Chinamen shuffled forth, and Jewesses and Italian women emerged for their evening breath of air, bringing awart and grimy children to play upon the heated flags. The hall was lighted, just as if some Italian festival were to be held there. The reporters' places at the table were taken by the men who did politics for the morning papers, themselves reduced at last to the necessity of taking notes. They brought reports of the results in other senatorial conventions held about town that day—it seemed to be assured that John Skelley had carried the country towns, Lemont, Riverside, Evanston and so on. In certain west side districts this man had won, in certain north side districts that man had been successful. It looked as if the old gang was going to break back into the legislature.

And so the interest in this one remaining convention deepened, the strain tightened, the crowd thickened. Now and then the leaders made desperate attempts to trade, harranging Simmons, offering him everything for his seven votes. Simmons himself, in his turn, tried to induce each faction to swing its strength to him. But the situation remained unchanged.

Once Nolan sent for Underwood and whispered to him. He thought he

(Continued on page 7, Col. 1)

Shoes.

Shoes.

Yeager's Shoe Store

"FITZEZY"

The Ladies' Shoe

that

Cures Corns

Sold only at

Yeager's Shoe Store,

Bush Arcade Building, BELLEFONTE, PA.

Dry Goods, Etc.

LYON & COMPANY.

:::Suggestions to Mothers:::

We are prepared to help the mothers who do not have time to make their Childrens Clothes. We have on hand a complete line of Misses, Childrens and Infants Dresses, Combinations and Petticoats all the necessary requisites to make a little Miss happy and to save the tired mothers who have so much to worry about at this time.

Silk Hosiery.

If you are looking for Silk Hosiery we invite you to visit our store and see our fine line.

Parasols.

We also have a line of Parasols that will delight any young lady and the prices are very reasonable.

Silk Department.

Our up-to-date Silk Department was never so complete as now—we have everything new in Charmeuse, Crepe de Chine, Meteors, Messalines, Brocades and Tub Silks.

Wash Goods.

Our Wash Goods Department is laden with new things, such cool inviting fabrics as Voiles, Ratines, Cotton Crepes and others too numerous to mention.

Corsets.

We are sole agents for ROYAL WORCESTER and Bonton Corsets from 50 cents up to \$5.00.

Shoes.

Men's, Ladies', Misses' and Children's Shoes—Oxfords poms, in black, tan and white.

Sandals.

All sizes in Sandals at very low prices.

Lyon & Co. Bellefonte