

The Vindication of Henderson of Greene

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

BALDWIN, the lobbyist, leaning forward with his elbows on his knees, and swaying with the train as it swung out on to the rocky ledge that paves the Valley of the Desplains, contemptuously cut

the end from a fresh cigar and said: "But I'm not so sure, after all. My experience with the Bailey bill shook my faith in that proposition." The two other men in the salon looked up with startled eyes. Baldwin had been driven over from his Michigan Avenue home and caught the Alton Limited when it made the station stop at Twenty-third Street, where he boarded the last of its curtained Pullmans. This coach was the political institution known to Illinois statesmanship as the Springfield sleeper, and Baldwin and his two companions, Jennings, the secretary of state, and Denny Healy, a canal commissioner, had the capulated coziness of its smoking compartment all to themselves. Down by Dwight they had fallen into a desultory discussion of the old question as to whether or not every man has his price. The question could hardly interest these men long, for, after many years' constant contemplation, under the gray dome of the state house, of the weaknesses of men, they had come to an acceptance of the doctrine now grown frank enough to have no lingering taint of cynicism. Jennings, indeed, had just dismissed the subject by declaring: "All men air fer sale, an' most of 'em damn cheap."

And so the subject might have lapsed had it not been for Baldwin's heterodoxy. That George R. Baldwin of all men should doubt the first maxim of their profession was beyond comprehension. Though he played his part in life with a suite of law offices in a skyscraper as a background, his serious business was lobbying bills through the legislature. His friends, who were many, boasted that he always stood by them, right or wrong. Which he did, indeed, and as they were generally wrong, the value of such friendship, or his opinions on practical politics, could hardly be overestimated. The day had been a hot one in Chicago, but now a cold draft of smoky air was sucking through the narrow window-screen, on which the cinders hailed as the Limited plunged southward.

Baldwin had lighted his imported cigar, the superior aroma of which, perceptible even in an atmosphere choked with coal gases and the fumes of the domestic cigars Jennings and Healy were smoking, indicated faintly the height of cultivation to which he had brought his appetites, when Jennings, flecking his ashes on the floor of the salon just as he would have done on his own parlor carpet, said: "Well, go on with the story."

"One session there was an old man named Henderson in the house, who had come up from Greene County; Henderson of Greene, everybody called him, to distinguish him from Tom Henderson, of Effingham. He was a queer figure was Henderson of Greene, tall and gaunt, with a stoop in his shoulders. He always wore a hickory shirt, opened at a red and wrinkled throat, and his hair was just a stubble bleached by harvest suns. The old man was a riddle to everybody in Springfield that winter. He was always in his seat, even on Monday evenings, when no one else was there. He voted always with his party, and he voted consistently as well, like a good country member, against all the Chicago legislation. But he was a silent man, who stood apart from his fellows, looking with eyes that peered from under his shaggy, sun-burned brows with an expression no one could fathom. He never made a speech, he never introduced a bill, he never offered a resolution, he never even presented a petition, and when the speaker made his committee assignments, he placed the old man on the committees on History, Geology and Science, and on Civil Service Reform, and he did not even look disappointed."

The two politicians chuckled. "As for me," continued Baldwin, "I never spoke to him, and never knew any one who did. The speaker himself only addressed him—and then as the gentleman from Greene—when they were verifying roll-calls. No one ever knew where he boarded. The herd book gave him a paragraph, saying that he had been born in Indiana along in '37, and moved to this state sometime in the fifties. Left an orphan early, with no education, he had been a day laborer all his life, working at anything he could get, mostly on farms. He never had held office before, and none knew how he broke into the legislature—the tidal wave, I suppose. Every one knew he never would come back again."

"Well, we got down to the last night of the session. The hands of the clock had been turned back in that vain old attempt to stay the remorseless hours, but its pale and impassive face was impotent as a gravestone to stay dissolution and oblivion-

are, and out to Camp Lincoln. They took many trolley rides, and even climbed to the top of the state house dome, whence, they say, you can see Rochester and the prairies for thirty miles around. He brought her over to the house one or two mornings, but not on to the floor as other members did their over-dressed wives; he sent her up to the gallery, where she sat peering down over the railing at the gang—and her husband, who took no part in all that was going on.

"The old woman's interest in all these new things that had come into her starved life, her ill-concealed pride in her husband's membership in such a distinguished body of law-givers, were touching to me, and as I looked at him that last night of the session, and thought of her, the wish to do something to lighten their lives came into my heart, but just then, suddenly, old Zeke started from his chair, grasped his gavel firmly, and leaned expectantly over his desk. At the same instant the older members dragged their feet down from their desks and sat bolt upright. The newspaper men flung away their cigarettes and adjusted their eye-glasses. The assistant clerk, who had been reading, looked up from the bill then under what I suppose they would have called consideration, and hurriedly gave his place at the reading desk to the clerk of the house. I knew what was coming. I knew that the Bailey bill was on its way over from the senate. And I heard Bill Hill call:

"Mistah Speakah." "At the sound of that voice the uproar in the chamber ceased. It became so still that the silence tingled like a numbness through the body; stiller than it had been any time since nine o'clock that morning, when they had paused for the chaplain to say his prayer. The gang turned around and stood motionless, panting, in its shirt-sleeves, as though a flashlight photograph were to be taken. Half-way down the aisle stood Hill. You know how he would look at such a time, in his long black coat, his wide white shirt bosom with the big diamond, his rolling collar and black string tie, and his long black hair falling to his shoulders. You know how



he would love such a moment—and it was his last chance that session. He stood there quietly a whole minute, and then putting a foot forward, said in his great bass voice:

"Mistah Speakah." "Old Zeke rose and said: "Mister Doorkeeper." "A message from the senate, by its secretary." "A message from the senate by its secretary," repeated Zeke, and then Bill had to give way to Sam Pollard, who stepped forth and said: "Mr. Speaker, I am directed to inform the house that the senate has passed senate bill No. 106—I never shall forget the number of that bill, after all the sleepless nights it caused me, and the anxious mornings scanning the calendar to see if its black figures were there—Senate bill No. 106. A bill for an act to amend an act entitled: An Act concerning the exercise of the right of eminent domain, notwithstanding the objections of the governor—you know the lingo.

"Then, as the speaker said, 'The clerk will read the message; Hen Harvey, who was clerk of the house, stretched his arm over the narrow desk and took the file from the page. The old man was mad when he wrote that veto message, and he gave both legs the devil. I never knew the legislature to get such an unmerciful lamming in my life; it was outrageous, for it was a good bill, and—' "Ought ter pass," interjected Jennings, repeating the trite phrase sentimentally.

"But nobody heard it, for when Hen began to read, the gang took a deep breath and began to howl. From both sides of the chamber broke forth a clamor of 'Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker,' until in the din even these words were lost, and there was just that long, heavy roar. The boys came over from the senate, for they had done their duty and had done it nobly, in the face of a great storm of criticism, combined with the abuse of the Chicago papers, and they wanted to help lift in the house. And with them came the crowd of reformers from the Municipal League, and stood about with George Herrick, the old man's private secretary. The reformers, as

George pointed out members here and there, and whispered in their ears, supposed that they were doing great things in the fight against the bill, but that was only another time when they deluded their precious selves. They did their reforming chiefly at banquets, but George and the old man knew a thing or two about politics themselves, and George, standing back by the Democratic cloak-room, smoking his little cigarettes, was directing that fight with the party last in his hand, and some of the best men on the floor of the house to do his bidding. He was the only private secretary I ever knew who could set an army in the field.

"But through it all old Zeke stood there, game as ever, with a hard, cold smile on his face, and you could hear the sharp, monotonous rap of his gavel, rap, rap, rap, neither fast nor slow. The tumult did not die during the reading of that scathing message, and when Hen's ruined voice ceased, and he rolled the message up again and thrust it in his desk, Zeke smashed his gavel down and I heard him say: "Will the house be in order?"

"And it was in order, for Zeke knew how to compel order in that bear-pit when he wanted to, and he never raised his voice to do it either, only his eye and the gavel. And so, when they were quiet, he said: "The question is: Shall the house concur with the senate in the passage of senate bill No. 106, notwithstanding the objections of the governor?" "The house tried to break away from him again, but he held it in his gavel flat, drawing the curb tight, and turned to recognize old Long John Riley, who was standing like a tall tree beside his desk, with his hand up-raised.

"The gentleman from Cook!" "Mr. Speaker," said Riley, "I move the previous question." "There was another roar, but Zeke's gavel fell, and his eyes blazed black again, and he said: "The gentleman from Cook moves the previous question, and the question is: Shall the main question be now put? Those in favor of this question will say aye—there was a roar of ayes—and those opposed will say no."

Sold only at
Yeager's Shoe Store,
Bush Arcade Building, BELLEFONTE, PA.

Dry Goods, Etc.

LYON & COMPANY.

Cotton and Linen
Fabrics.

All the choicest shades in Linens, Crepes, Ratives, Flaxons, Bengalines, Poplins and Ginghams. If you want a cool fabric for these hot days visit our Wash Goods Department and be convinced that we have the right things at the right prices.

Our Ready-to-wear department is always up-to-date. Here you can find a complete line of Ladies, Misses and Childrens' Dresses. Ladies Shirt Waists in white, plain tailored and fancy Balkan and Norfolk Middies for Misses and Ladies. Ladies Skirts in cream, serge, cotton, corduroy, and linen.

Neckwear.
Our line of Neckwear will appeal to you if you want a cool, comfortable collar, a Jabot or Frill. We have the largest assortment of everything new in neck fixings.

For the Little Tots we have Rompers made of plain gingham and also Crinkled Seersucker in colors, also a complete line of Boys Wash Suits.

Hosiery.
Childrens Socks in Silk and Lisle in white, black, pink and blue, also assorted colors such as red and white, blue and white, and pink and white.
Mens, Ladies and Misses Silk Hose from 25c up.

Shoes.
Ladies, Misses and Childrens Shoes, Oxfords and Pumps, in black, white and tan. Childrens Sandals from 35c up. Mens Shoes and Oxfords.

Special Reduction on all Summer Stuffs—A visit to our Store will be a money saving investment to you.

Lyon & Co. 57-59-1y **Bellefonte**

(Continued on page 7, Col. 1)