

Politics Their Only Support

Professional Politicians' Only Visible Means of Livelihood.

By ERNEST McGAFFEY

Between Elections This Type Is Everything from Ghoul to Aeronaut.

THERE had grown up in our city an army of men who followed politics strictly as a means of earning a livelihood. They either expected to make a living by holding office of some kind or another, or they figured on making both ends meet by attaching themselves to the train of some "boss," who would dole out crumbs to them in some way, direct or indirect. Sometimes they figured on getting business of some kind through their connection with politics. But at any rate, there they were, with "no visible means of support" excepting politics. They might be in the directory as taxidermists, astronomers, chemists, rat-catchers, lawyers, aeronauts, plumbers' helpers, grave-diggers, clerks, or what you like, but as a matter of fact they depended on politics for a living.

Sometimes they were in one business, sometimes another, but you could find them always at the ward meetings, always at the primaries, always at the conventions, caucuses (when they could get in) at the city hall, at ward headquarters, at downtown headquarters, in the saloons where politicians might occasionally be found, at the funerals, dances, picnics, and all social gatherings, and, indeed, wherever acquaintance might be made or self-interest fostered. They were very busy individuals, and simply whirlwinds of energy around about election time.

If they had held a paying "job" for some time, and a change of administration had brought with it the disagreeable necessity of "resigning," they were usually "waiting" until the next municipal election. As these occurred every two years, in my time, the wait was over before the enforced "hand-to-mouth" existence entirely broke their spirits. Meantime, they skated about, working every avenue to keep alive and hold their own in "the organization." Give them credit, you with the three square meals a day, for their superb nerve. If you tackled one of these "captains of hope" he was as cheerful as a bumble bee on a thistle top. Everything was lovely, things never looked better, "the organization" was in elegant shape, "we" were going to win next time, etc. How he would lay down the assurance of victory with various tremendously suggestive chunks of wisdom, culled from his ever-effervescent "bonnet." How sanguine he was of glory and offices in the future. Well, even if it was straight "bunk" there was a gleam of possibility in it.

And his airy, insouciant, diffident "by the way, Bill, let me have a dollar till to-morrow" when the glittering "dope" had been exhausted—well, if you had it why not let him have it? The sands of every lucky office holder's career are strewn with the wrecks of dollars that were cast away to such siren invitations.

The evolution of such a politician might be from the bench of a bright young mechanic, ambitious to shine in the difficult calcium glare of publicity. He might get elected as a delegate to a city convention and get the "political bug" lodged under his hat. He might read up on the election laws and get so he could raise "a point of order" at a ward meeting. He might electioneer for some alderman, and, after the victory, get a bran new ten-dollar bill, which seemed like money off a Christmas tree. He might get elected secretary or president of the ward club. He might get to be a sort of political jackal to the "boss" who controlled his district. There were a great many ways in which he might distinguish himself in this way, but usually at the expense of his trade.

Or he might be some young lawyer with a gift for "the gab," who had attracted the attention of the leaders as having the nucleus of a "speaker" in him. If he was making money in his profession, so much the better. In that event was "milked" for contributions to the party and sent broadcast at night to split the tobacco-broadened empyrean of the halls where the voters gathered to hear about the "burning issues." These "voters," I may remark in passing, were confined to the garbage-wagon drivers, the sewer-pipe extension men, the city employes and others who had a real interest in politics, and who could stand all sorts of oratory if they could only smoke.

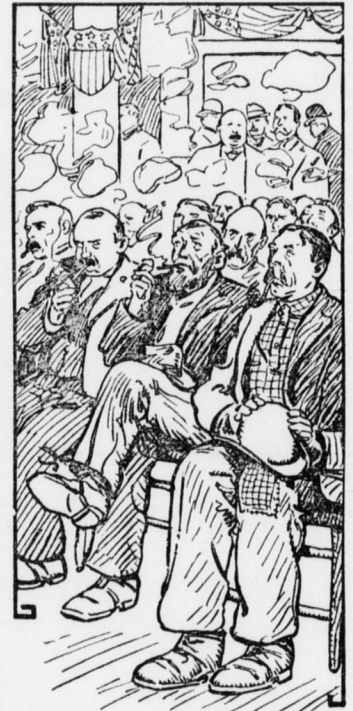
Such a victim as I have described was often held close to work and disbursement by promises, half-promises or suggestions of some prominent gift in the party nominations. Sometimes as the years rolled on and he never realized his ambitions, even in the shape of a nomination, he drew out a sadder and a wiser man and let the political will-o'-the-wisps alone.

a lawyer of his acquaintance, a venerable attorney of marked ability, to circulate a petition urging his nomination for a still higher position. The old lawyer circulated among the members of the bar of his acquaintance, and it was considered such a good joke that he got many prominent and influential names of lawyers who never gave a thought to the possible nomination of the young fellow. The petition added the aspirant substantially; he got the nomination, and what's more, he was elected. He retired from office with fees of his office aggregating about a quarter of a million dollars.

And instances like these kept the young lawyers on the qui vive for a possible like happening in their cases. But the reverse of the medal was in the incident of a very bright young lawyer of my acquaintance, who got a nomination, lost the election, took to whisky as a cure, established a "touching route," where he collected dollars, half-dollars and quarters for awhile, and then died shortly after, a victim to the "political bug" and the "whisky bug" combined, than which no more fatal and totally destructive combination was ever invented.

The most successful of the local politicians were those who had lived in one ward all their lives, who had made politics their life-game, and who could "deliver the delegates." In conventions, as the delegates made the nominations, the more delegates a man absolutely controlled the more of a power he was. The young and ambitious political worker always started out to control the delegates in his precinct. Then he reached out after other precincts, and when the time came that he could control his ward he had arrived at the proud position of a "ward boss." This, however, required years of the most unremitting attention to detail, an immense amount of wire-pulling and strategy and a rigid distribution on as even terms as possible of all "patronage" which might come his way. The delegates were usually very much the same individuals from year to year. They might be shifted from one convention ticket to another, but the names of the "faithful" would be pretty sure to turn up annually, unless in case of death, and in that event someone would be selected who could be "controlled" like a tin soldier.

Politics as a profession develops shrewdness, nerve, capacity to "stand the gaff," oratory, conversational powers, personal magnetism, and, in fact, all the accomplishments of a first-class confidence man. Although, of course, all confidence men are not politicians. Needless to say, no suggestion is here made to "statesmen." These gentlemen do not mix with vulgar municipal politics, but get elected to senatorial and other offices and never get their names mixed up in any scandal save one befitting their honorable positions. Politics loosens the action of the pecuniary nerve, for no successful politician can be a "tightwad." He may think he can be economical, but he can't be. He may figure on what it is going to cost as to main outlay, but "perquisites" will eat him up quicker than nitric acid will cook an angleworm. The hardened professional politicians know this only too well, and the result implants in



To Hear About the "Burning Issues."

their bosoms a pardonable curiosity in the question of "what there is in it for them" if any political proposition is unfolded to their longing gaze.

Politics as a profession has evolved the "boss." He is not always the coarse creature of the cartoonist's fancy, nor the devouring lion of the muck-rake romancer. Often he dresses elegantly, and quite often he is gentle-spoken and of few words at that. He just controls the "delegates," that's all. After all the fire and fury of reform has spent its force, his candidate is nominated and generally elected, and he gets a few "contracts" which enable him to keep the wolf tribe so far from his premises that he couldn't hear one howl if it used a megaphone.

He is the man on whom the petty politicians keep their eyes glued and their ears tilted. Each one sees in his dreams his own career growing to the Aladdin like height of the "big boss." And that subtle schemer nurses their aspirations, and as someone must necessarily take the place of the mighty when the mighty are fallen, of course there is a chance for all competitors.

Now as the mere mechanism of the game requires a very great familiarity with methods as well as men, it follows that the politician is a close student of the various cogs and wheels, the shafts and pulleys of political machinery. He finds, if a novice, that he cannot "butt in" and run things "right off the reel," because he does not know how. He finds that the nomination of candidates, the whole routine of political life, is governed by fixed rules and statutory laws, and that he must of necessity familiarize himself with these things else remain a mere tyro in the art.

This means that he will have to study books, read up the laws, keep posted in the changes which are continually occurring in the laws relating to elections and nominations, and in various ways "get next" to the legal aspects of politics. Then he will have to learn his ward; know its various precincts and their boundaries; know the location of the polling places, and who the people are in whose shops or stores the polling places have been placed, their politics, and everything about them. He must serve as clerk and judge of election, and learn the duties of a challenger. He must know



Each One Sees in His Dreams His Own Career Growing.

the poll list of his precinct as well as his a, b, c, and keep "tab" on deaths, removals, new residents, etc.

Politics affords a shining example of the wisdom of the rule about opening hostilities yourself. Never wait for the other fellow to assail your ability. Always start out by "soaking" him. And by this is not meant by any means to "throw mud" or indulge in abuse. Far from it. Do it in a gentlemanly way. Get him on the defensive and keep him there if possible. One of the surest ways to do this is to prepare a lot of questions, no matter how irrelevant to the questions at issue, if there happens to be any "issue," and keep hammering away at him with these questions.

Never answer any question yourself. Print your platform on your cards, if you are a candidate, but don't answer any questions about it. The platform speaks for itself, don't it? A professional politician ought to be able to convince the most captious questioner that "his platform" faces every way to the four corners of the earth and was meant for the blessing of all men. When he starts on his career he must expect to go slowly, as a rule, emerging from one unimportant position to another until he has either become a power himself, or has been useful enough to some "Boss" to be placed on a ticket. Once fairly launched in a political office, and he becomes a target for the press and public criticism, and his native ability is subjected to the corrosive test of having power placed in his hands.

A good politician must always be on the alert to "catch the instant at its forward top" and direct the current of any popular movement into the proper channel. If there is a reform movement in the air he must not only champion it, but he must be in the lead of the crusaders. The public are the sheep, the politician is the bell-wether.

I remember a typical instance of this kind.

A certain paving scheme was being broached, and in the district where it was proposed to introduce it, there were a great many Swedish-American citizens who opposed the improvement. Nearly all of them understood the English language as well their own tongue. A grand mass meeting was called for and held amid tumultuous enthusiasm. A well-known Swedish-American was selected as chairman, and a Swede secretary duly installed. Two speeches were made in Swedish, and then a popular Irish politician made a ringing address amid great applause. He was followed by a German lawyer who was even more fiery, if anything, than his predecessor in denouncing the outrage contemplated. The lawyer was also a politician.

A call for names was started and a club formed. There were 367 Swedish-American members of the club and the Irishman and the German, 369 members in all. And at the next meeting, postponed two weeks to elect officers, the Irishman was elected president and the German secretary and treasurer. ERNEST McGAFFEY. (Copyright, 1908, by Joseph B. Bowles.)

The first duty of a woman is her duty to her parents, and afterward to her husband and her husband's parents.

RISE OF A REPORTER

WADE H. ELLIS, ATTORNEY GENERAL OF OHIO.

Man Who Wrote Most of Republican Platform May Be Made Head of Government Law Department If Taft Is Elected.

Washington.—Faring forth from his old Kentucky home a youth of the name of Wade H. Ellis appeared on the Cincinnati horizon in the early eighties. He soon engaged himself in chasing the elusive local item for a newspaper there. In the little journalistic world of that Ohio city they still tell what a hard time young Ellis had. He frequently found himself in the awful presence of the local editor, trying to explain how the item had eluded him.

Time passed and a few months ago Ellis, still comparatively a young man, began to loom on the horizon of Washington. If he had indifferent success in hunting news, he had done better in hunting the octopus. President Roosevelt wanted to know about him. Ellis came to Washington for a consultation at the White House about federal trust busting, and soon thereafter President Roosevelt and Presidential Candidate Taft were in need of an apostle of terse and pleasing sentences. Such a one could be utilized in national platform building.

They sent for Ellis. They came, joined in the consultations, and hiked away to the sad sea waves of Virginia Beach. There he composed the more important portion of the platform. During a lull in the stressful days of the Chicago convention he confided to a friend that he wrote his best after a plunge into old ocean.

And now after his name has been much featured for a few weeks in the political headlines, the erstwhile Cincinnati reporter from Covington, Ky., is discussed as the attorney general for the next administration. It



Wade H. Ellis.

is even whispered that he may come into his own in advance of numerous Ohio faithfuls and may not have to wait for the new president to review the inaugural parade on Pennsylvania avenue. That is probably untrue. No one in Washington is ready to believe that Attorney General Bonaparte will relinquish an office of which he is very much enamored. But Ellis may be, some say will be, Bonaparte's successor.

In 1902, when he was near the end of six years' service as assistant corporation counsel of the Queen city, some one was wanted to draft the municipal code which the Buckeye legislature was to enact. Ellis, with his reputation for balancing words splendidly, was chosen. He did the work admirably. There were many personal liberty advocates in Cincinnati whom the Republicans did not want to offend, but the convictions of other populous classes of the community had to be considered. Ellis, holding the office that President Hayes had once held in Cincinnati, dressed the code up in the most attractive verbiage. He was widely applauded by the Republicans.

The present attorney general of Ohio is slow, but he has been constantly developing and has mastered whatever situation he found himself in. The "cub reporters" in Cincinnati laughed when he began to talk about studying law. "Hub, Lawyer Ellis," they exclaimed, lightly, "you'll make a great lawyer!" But he went ahead, and in 1889, when 23 years old, obtained his diploma from the legal department of Washington and Lee university. The following year he went up to Columbus and took the examinations that admitted him to practice before the Ohio bar.

He left Cincinnati for a time, but returned and interested himself in politics. At first he was very independent. He did not like George Cox, the Cincinnati boss, who, according to the orthodox Republican idea in that town, can do no wrong. The while he dabbled in politics, however, Ellis got back into newspaper work. Clients were not coming to him in such numbers, bearing fat retainers, that he was unwilling to accept the editorship of the Cincinnati Tribune. He filled the editorial chair for two years—till 1897—when he was elected corporation counsel. Then he began to embark on a promising career. He was so successful in drafting the Cincinnati municipal code that the Republicans made him attorney general of the state in 1904 and he is still holding that job.

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