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IN THE MAYOR'S CHAIR

UNTIL the year 1895 the affairs of the rapidly-growing City of Cleveland were administered by honorable gentlemen and citizens, who had much dignity, but little energy and push. In the office of the Mayor stood a beautifully-carved walnut buffet with a decanter and a box of cigars. Visitors were welcome and humored by a drink, a smoke or a funny story, or two. The Mayor was a representative officer and understood his functions. The City's business was transacted at board meetings and by the City Council, not to say by certain street railroad officials, who were the godfathers of "the boys." John and George were good fellows, avoided scandal and saw to it that contracts and franchises were of the proper kind and given into the right hands. Some-

times the bidders who were "left," "raised a howl," but such is the nature of the bitten. Cleveland was no worse than other cities of the land and was more beautiful than most of them. The citizens themselves were satisfied to let things go their way, after they had done their duty on election day by voting their respective party tickets. But it happened one day during the administration of Mayor Robert E. Blee, 1893-1895, that the Street Railway Company desired a new franchise. Nothing was more natural for a street railway company, and Mayor and Council seemed willing to comply with the request.

One of the Councilmen at that time was a young lawyer by the name of Robert E. McKisson. He was a Republican and a fighter, ambitious and vigorous. "Curley-headed Bob" they used to call him. This youngster was possessed of the idea that opposition led to success. He therefore opposed all and everything, and as the administration was of the opposite party he made no mistake from a political standpoint. In April, 1895, he

was elected Mayor in spite of John H. Farley, who managed the Blee campaign, and who was an old and tried politician, and had himself occupied the Mayor's chair in his younger days.

With the advent of McKisson the old and slow methods were brushed aside. The vigor of youth was infused into the affairs of the city. The young Mayor wanted to do things. As long as he confined his energies to paving streets, building sewers or planning water tunnels he met with little opposition. Soon, however, he antagonised the steam railroads and the Street Railway Company, and also Mark Hanna.

Politics had played a strange part in McKisson's election. The Mayor belonged to the Foraker faction and had refused the assistance of Hanna, who had been for some time the "deus ex machina" of the Republican party in Cleveland. McKisson's election had, therefore, been a blow to Hanna. Mr. Hanna remained silent as long as the young man did not interfere with his busi-

ness interests. A renewal of street railway franchises was asked for, and McKisson demanded a reduction in fares. The war was on, but neither side gained much of an advantage. The quarrel was carried into the Legislature.

In the meantime another municipal election approached. The old Hanna guard made an effort, but the younger element won the day, and McKisson was re-elected. During his second term the Mayor lost himself more and more in the political turmoil, and was promptly charged with levying political assessments not strictly in accordance with custom.

Mark Hanna, the maker of a President, wished to become United States Senator, and McKisson had the temerity to oppose him. The history of that campaign is known. Hanna won by one vote. McKisson returned to Cleveland, resolved to seek a third term as Mayor of Cleveland. But now Senator Hanna had developed a personal grudge

against McKisson, and directed all his batteries against his political enemy.

There could be but one result, the defeat of the Mayor. The bitterest pang for McKisson in this defeat was that John H. Farley became his successor, the man whom he had attacked in and out of season, while he was a member of the City Council. Farley, although a Democrat, had the assistance of Mark Hanna. He was a strong man, rugged, self-reliant, fearless and defying. A Democrat of the old school, he reached into the new and fleeting time. He was not in sympathy with the ultra modern views upon city governments. His slogan was economy, and they accused him of trying to "save the city from progress." During his term the street railway question came up again. He wished it settled upon the same basis as of old. The people cried "treason," and an early day form of insurgency arose like an angry sea. The Mayor stood his ground, a fearless fighter, resolved not to yield, and depending

upon what he termed the "horse sense of the community."

It was a delusion. The people were not with him. They wanted a new solution to an old problem. Most painful was the spectacle that presented itself in the City Hall. The politicians around the Mayor, men whose career he had made, forsook him like rats leaving a sinking ship. Even his directors could be seen stealing into the camp of his enemies. John H. Farley stood alone, reading the handwriting on the wall. Nothing more was to be done, not even the risking of a second campaign. With his private secretary, W. C. Sage, he stepped down and out. A few weeks later he went to his northern island in Georgian Bay, where he soon forgot the vicissitudes of political strife.

His successor was Tom L. Johnson. During the winter of 1900-1901 the political situation in Cleveland had taken an aspect that was alluring to Mr. Johnson. Farley had taken an untenable position on the street railway question and was surrounded by men

in whom he could not fully trust, and who had little personal liking for him. One of these men was Charles P. Salen, City Auditor on the strength of a political arrangement.

Mr. Salen, though still a young man, had managed Tom L. Johnson's former campaigns and was a past grand master in that game of politics which never rises to statesmanship. He kept his friend well posted on the state of affairs in Cleveland, and at the opportune moment the people were informed that the Democratic patriots were making great efforts to induce Mr. Johnson to come to the rescue of the City. Johnson, who had always maintained his right to vote in Cleveland, was persuaded to become a candidate for Mayor. An unknown man of dark complexion paid his campaign assessment, out of admiration and friendship for Mr. Johnson. Such was the statement given to the newspapers. The name of this mysterious personage was never revealed, but the story was told by one Joe Goldsoll, now de-

ceased. It was significant of the Johnson method.

With the arrival of Mr. Johnson, the campaign became immediately highly interesting. His political enemies knew their man and did not underestimate his strength. They heaped insult after insult upon him, decried his sincerity, doubted his right to citizenship in Cleveland, referred to him as a charlatan and a humbug.

He answered with the declaration that he had sold out his business interests, and that it was his avowed intention to devote the rest of his life to the welfare of the people and the promotion of honesty and purity in public affairs.

He kept his promise in his own way. His was not the simple nature of "Golden Rule" Jones of Toledo. He was a man of the world, erring from selfishness, but well meaning. It was not his intention to forgive his enemies, but to subdue them. Whatever he did, he did not because of a great love for his fellow men, but because he was ambitious

to stand above the common politician of the day. He aimed at great things and was sincere in his fight for the people. Yet, his animus might have been revenge, not love, or a moral longing for the right.

The intensity with which he entered into the street railway controversy, and his tenacity of purpose in this "Seven Years War," were partly born of personal hatred. But all in all he was serving a noble purpose, conceived with enthusiasm, and announced with a flourish of trumpets.

It was but natural that many people distrusted his words, that they refused to see in him a modern Messiah. But only the poor in spirit failed to recognise his superiority. Among the intelligent men he had numbers of admirers, even among the rich who were his opponents from selfish reasons. The partisan asses need not be mentioned.

At the time Tom L. Johnson made his second entry into Cleveland, the City Council was wrangling over a proffered renewal of the existing street railway franchises, which

were to expire several years later. There was danger of a new franchise being granted for twenty-five years under conditions unfavorable to the people. Johnson with characteristic impetuosity worked up a sentiment of opposition to the grant among the people. He even circulated anti-franchise petitions and paid his solicitors two cents a name. He was accused of bribing the voters. His answer to that accusation was that it is better to buy up the people than to sell the people's council.

The Democratic primaries took place on the 19th of February, and Tom L. Johnson was nominated for Mayor. On April 1st he was elected by a plurality of 6,033 votes. His platform was considered a radical one, and he himself did not deny that he took an advanced stand in political matters, especially in advocating the single tax. Home rule, local option on taxation, municipal ownership as far as possible, a street car fare of no more than three cents, equalisation of

taxes, and just appraisement were his other demands.

Excepting for his single-tax theory there was really nothing radical in his declaration of principles, considered from the standpoint of the ordinary citizen. The politicians, of course, found much to denounce in them. They even opposed a reduction of car fares, arguing that poor service would be the result. John and George laughed in their sleeves, for they well knew that the service would always be as poor as possible, even at a fare of ten cents. It could not be worse than it was, at the lower fare. Today, after nine years, it is just as good or as bad as it ever was, and we have had both high and low fares. Nobody can object to home rule or just taxation, even if municipal ownership has its censors.

The main argument put forth against municipal ownership was an expression of fear that it might create an invincible political machine. There never was a politician

stronger than the people, the great destroyers of politicians, political machines, kingdoms and empires. Tom L. Johnson himself was a living example of this. According to his enemies he had the strongest political machine ever seen in Cleveland. Yet the people got rid of him as soon as they became tired of him.

Of greater importance than his demand for municipal ownership was his tax reform plank. With this he struck a vital spot of many of the good and law-abiding citizens, namely, their money bag.

Theories of socialism and anarchism were heard. Yet, Tom L. Johnson demanded but just taxation. In this connection the Johnson method furnished a rather incongruous example. Johnson himself was accused of not paying his just share of taxes, and took the matter into court. After a litigation lasting several years the case was settled by compromise. He defended his private interests against his own preaching with as much vigor as did Mark Hanna. He horrified the

teachers of morals by his declaration that he would make money out of monopolies as long as the law tolerated monopolies, though he was against them. The elasticity of his conscience was as remarkable as was his purpose to stand up for the rights of the people.

The declaration that he would make money from monopolies was first made by him as a candidate for Congress, but he repeated it in his campaign speeches on different occasions. There is no doubt that he was sincere in his attacks on the monopolistic principle. Far seeing as he was, he could perceive the danger for the future of the nation, if monopolies were to obtain control of the states' and the national government. He abhorred revolutions, had not the least use for the military power, and was a firm believer in the power of the ballot. Reforms, he believed, must be wrought through the ballot and not through the ax.

History would not, he said, repeat itself, since the world's progress in the last one hundred years had created conditions en-

tirely different from those existing before the great modern inventions. Besides, there never was any country like the United States with universal suffrage as a safety valve.

He was an optimist in all things, and would hardly ask the question whether or not the human animal would change its nature. He believed in men, because he liked to be among them and needed them for his plans. Solitude had no attraction for him. His election to the office of Mayor of Cleveland was highly gratifying to him. He saw great possibilities in his future work, for which he had the necessary business and political training, and an abundance of intelligence, energy and good will.