

## V

### THE HELPERS

**N**OT little of the praise and credit belong to the men who labored with Mayor Johnson in the advance of Cleveland. Wont to follow his own dictation, he selected as his assistants the men whom he thought capable, disregarding party lines in many instances, and also disregarding the dissatisfaction of the patriots. It almost caused a rebellion when he appointed E. W. Bemis superintendent of the Water Works with instructions to manage them regardless of politics. Bemis obeyed, and soon was the most ridiculed and most hated man in the City Hall. He was innocent of business experience, made errors like an absent-minded professor, but had a great understanding of figures, and did very well, after all. When the downfall of the Johnson administration

came, he received a splendid offer from the City of New York, and left Cleveland with "a smile for those who hate," to speak with Lord Byron.

The Department of Public Works was during the first term of Mayor Johnson under the management of Chas. P. Salen, who proved capable. Mr. Salen, having been elected to a county office, was succeeded by W. J. Springborn, formerly a Republican member of the City Council. The choice proved to be excellent. Springborn was a young man, who had to work his way up in this world and was without much schooling. He, however, possessed something better than a mere book education. He was endowed with common sense, great industry, a fine memory and quick comprehension. There was nothing of the fanciful about him. He was more in favor of clean streets, good sewers and a good garbage plant than of beautiful buildings or parks. From early morning till late in the evening he worked in the interest of the city, looking after every-

thing, being everywhere. He was a perfectly honest man and constantly striving to save money for the city. He knew the value of a penny. Thoroughly in accordance with Mayor Johnson and his views on municipal ownership, he built up a practical street-cleaning plant, a garbage plant, and an electric lighting plant, all of which proved of great value. It was his greatest pride to be able to demonstrate the possibilities of municipally owned institutions. The people recognised his merits and applauded him vigorously whenever he told them in his simple way what his department was doing for them.

The Public Parks department under Director Daniel E. Leslie followed the popularising policy, inaugurated by Chas. P. Salen, with great success. The large and beautiful park system (luckily started by a far-sighted commission that was violently criticised by the near-sighted) became within a short time a recreation ground for all the people. Much was done in establishing baseball grounds, children's play grounds, in

erecting shelter houses and bath houses, and in providing free concerts, children's days in summer, and skating carnivals in winter. Little attention was given, however, to the zoological garden, a neglect much to be regretted. Neither the Mayor nor his Director were so philosophical as to become interested in animal life.

Mayor Johnson placed "his preacher," Rev. Dr. Harris R. Cooley, in charge of the Department of Charities and Corrections. Some of the wiseacres sneered at this selection, but within a short time, Mr. Cooley proved to be more than a preacher. He was a broad-minded man of action and one of not words alone, a great big bundle of humanity, a true friend of the suffering and the downtrodden. His kindness was without bourn, his faith in the good of men unshakable. Being an assiduous student of sociology, he knew the ailments of society and understood the lugubrious influences at work. He was not afraid to put the blame where it belonged. As far as it was in his power he

tried to alleviate the pains of soul and body. No one was too lowly for him to consider, none unworthy of being redeemed. He brought his head and his heart into his labor of love.

The outcome of his activity while in the employ of the city was the abolition of the old poor house system. In its place he established a Farm Colony, comprising almost two thousand acres of land. Here the poor were taken care of in a home-like fashion. Man and wife were not separated but had a comfortable room in a pleasant cottage. The prisoners at the Workhouse were sent to the Farm, not in chains, but like free men. The guards had neither gun nor pistol, and it must be said that but few of the prisoners sought to escape. They were well fed and worked in the open, where healthy surroundings exercised beneficial influences upon the men.

A Boys' Farm was started, and here, too, the character of a public institution was avoided as much as possible. The boys lived

in cottages under the supervision of kind people, were schooled and received instructions in the practical working of garden and farm.

The Outdoor Relief Department sought employment for the strong, and extended its aid in various new directions. Yet it was always the aim of Director Cooley to bring lasting benefits. He even tried to cure the drunkards and was not without success. Fresh air, sunshine and healthy employment did much to help the poor wretches. Words of encouragement, a friendly interest, were Director Cooley's medicines. He paroled prisoners to give them back to their families whenever they needed them, and it was not very often that he had reason to regret his kindness and his belief in human goodness. He founded a Brotherhood Home, where discharged prisoners without funds could remain until they secured employment. Mayor Johnson, who attended the meetings of the Board of Pardons at the beginning of his term of office, was wont to put a five-dollar

bill into the hands of this and that discharged prisoner to give him a fresh start. This brought happiness to the convert and also to the Mayor in his enthusiasm for better conditions for all men.

Director Cooley gave splendid service, and, by and by, his fame spread over the land, and people came from far away, even from across the ocean, to see and to learn of his work. To know him was to like him. He was a good speaker, and his voice would quiver when he told about his wards and their needs and sorrows. And there was not a Councilman who would not vote for the appropriation for which Director Cooley had asked. Few men of his kind have lived. Hats off to them. With a bleeding heart he took leave from his friends and brethren, the poor, lowly and downtrodden, when he was forced to say "Good-bye."

Another man who assisted successfully in the great work of developing and modernising the City of Cleveland was Dr. Martin Friedrich, appointed health officer by Mayor

Johnson, after a former appointee had been summarily discharged, as above mentioned. Dr. Friedrich, a German by birth, began an unceasing war against all unsanitary conditions and became known as a fearless small-pox fighter. His two predecessors had not been able to stamp out the epidemic raging in their time. The new officer required but a few months to free the city from the dire disease. Since that time all contagious diseases have been carefully watched, physicians have been sent to the schools to examine all children at regular intervals, the water supply has been continually inspected, the building of sewers urged, and there was much disinfecting done in public buildings and private houses. The general health of the city was enhanced, and in the year 1909 Cleveland showed the lowest death rate of any of the larger cities in the country. Dr. Friedrich was no politician and is not affiliated with any party. He put his whole soul into his work as it should be, and is a man of fine intellect.



In the course of time the administration of the City of Cleveland was spoken of in the press of other cities. The magazines contained lengthy articles about the Mayor and his methods, and Mr. Johnson was declared the best Mayor of the best governed city of the United States.

The citizens of Cleveland, not the hostile politicians, appreciated the efforts of their city administration. They knew that intelligent, clever, and honest men tried to do their best. Not always did they understand the aims of Mayor Johnson, who frequently marched ahead of his time. The conservative element found fault with his methods and accused him of burdening the city with debts. He was accused of spending too much money on the poor and that the Workhouse did not pay, as in former years. It was not his intention to make that institution a source of revenue, nor to be saving in matters of charity. On the other hand, he suppressed unsparingly low dives, and the social evil as much as possible. His Chief of Police, Fred-

erick Kohler, made a name for himself, being recognised as one of the most energetic and successful police officers in the country. Mayor Johnson was of a liberal turn of mind, and well aware that narrow views on the Sunday question would not do in a city like Cleveland, with its conglomeration of nationalities, he did not enforce the antiquated blue laws. For this he was frequently and severely criticised, but he laughed at his critics.

It was ever his aim to lighten the burden of the poor. He abolished almost entirely the license fee system. Hucksters and pedlars were no longer required to pay their hard-earned pennies into the city treasury. He demanded from his Council fair wages for the city employés, but was averse to increases for the high-salaried officials, making exceptions in very few cases.

Dealing with great questions he almost invariably antagonised the "interests." He demanded full protection of the city, never retreating one step from his demands. Thus

the building of a new Union Depot was delayed until this day; the street railway question caused a war forever famous, and regrettable, in a way, at least. The Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company fought his demands and had soon a competitor in the East Ohio Gas Company, a Rockefeller concern furnishing natural gas. This company was given a franchise with a stipulation that the City Council should have the right to fix the price of gas every ten years. The Mayor's enemies entitled it a perpetual franchise. He declared it a franchise renewable every ten years. Opinions differ on this point, but Mayor Johnson was accused by some of his bitterest foes of having received a million dollars for saddling this grant upon the city. Of course where Mr. Rockefeller is concerned, a million is like a drop of water in a bucket. They might, therefore, as well have said ten millions, and their accusation would have been just as plausible. As to his integrity in municipal affairs, Mr. Johnson needs no defender. He had passed the stage

of deals and made his conditions known from the beginning.

If the politician was predominant in Mayor Johnson, his instincts of the former business man were still noticeable. He could never be induced to make war on the smoke nuisance, though recognising its great detriment to the people and their homes. "Where there is smoke, there is business," he used to say and dismiss the subject. He was always willing to grant the railroads permission to lay tracks across the streets or to make betterments. In the building of a belt line to further traffic he sided with the railroads, though deputation after deputation of citizens whose properties were of need injured, pleaded with him for protection. He had a way of subjugating the smaller for the bigger thing.

The building of a new City Hall and a high-level bridge across the Cuyahoga River were frustrated by the voters, who refused to sanction the necessary bond issues. Some of the most dangerous grade crossings were

abolished, however. A great plan, redeeming the lake front for park and business purposes for a distance of over six miles was conceived by Mr. Johnson towards the unexpected end of his public career.

In the course of time the actualities of the daily life and strife pushed his theories on sociology into the background. He had not given them up nor changed his views upon any of them. Single tax and free trade no longer belonged to his daily curriculum, however. They went down with his defeat in state politics, and were of no use in his great street railway fight, which in the last few years absorbed nearly all of his time. Yet it cannot be said that he neglected many of his other duties as Mayor. He had department heads in whose knowledge and integrity he could fully trust. The City Hall machine, not politically speaking, worked to perfection. Besides, Mayor Johnson could expedite business in a truly wonderful way. He worked as much in a day as half a dozen ordinary men. His working day ex-

tended over sixteen and more hours, Sunday not excepted, when occasion demanded it. His power of concentration was great and is one of the secrets of his success in life. No matter how many different questions were brought to his attention, each one was given due consideration, followed by quick decision.

His theory on municipal ownership was as much exploited as circumstances and the state laws would allow. Contracts for street cleaning and street lighting were cancelled or left unrenewed when they expired. The private company which collected garbage was bought out and two electric lighting plants became the city's property by annexation. Mayor Johnson was very solicitous that these plants should make a good showing, and Director Springborn succeeded in rendering them effective.

Enemies of the administration tried in vain to convert the citizens to a contrary view. The building of an art museum was delayed because Mr. Johnson insisted on a stipula-

tion fixing the days of free admittance, after the trustees of the museum had demanded the cession of park land for a site from the city. It was his constant aim in those matters to watch and extend the rights of the public.

While Mayor Johnson did not succeed in all his great plans, he gave the City of Cleveland a clean and honest administration. He awoke the people to their interests and educated them in municipal matters so well that they overthrew him, when they believed that his usefulness had come to an end. To-day the people of Cleveland are perhaps better versed in public affairs than the citizens of any other city of the United States. He was a great teacher, and his greatest legacy is, after all, the public spirit which is awakened in his fellow citizens. It was beyond human power, even for this extraordinary man, to overcome the resistance of a united class of influential and powerful men, who saw in Mayor Johnson an enemy, and who had the law machinery and the powers of the State

on their side. Only a man of his intelligence and forcefulness, could accomplish anything under those circumstances. The City of Cleveland owes to Mayor Johnson a monument, as much as the Chamber of Commerce owed one to Mark Hanna.