

The Political Career of Joseph Sellers

(Continued from page 15)

eyes, to dream of my future political greatness. Here I had come into a household an absolute stranger, and only a few moments before had met this big coarse, forbidding creature. I had, so to speak, conquered her, won her confidence and, I hoped, her esteem. I was now left in charge of her infants and the household.

What I had done to the Plummer family could be repeated with the Smiths and the Browns of Van Dorn Street. The ward, the city, the province, the whole Dominion would soon be mine; I would rise to become the political dictator of the age, and would have a following that would bow at my feet. The children would bare their heads as they pass along the street, and I would graciously smile upon the little ones. Men and women would whisper, "There goes Sellers!" In the course of time "Sir Joseph Sellers," who knows? Ah, this was life! Politics! Politics! At least, that's what I used to think.

I must have sat for half an hour at least, and had begun to think something might have happened to Mrs. Plummer, when one of the children sat up in bed and called: "Maw, I want a drink!"

"Hush, little one," I called, turning to the bedside. "Mamma has gone out for Papa."

"Who are you?" asked the child, looking at me with open eyes. It's strange that children and dogs are never afraid of me. "Are you a doctor?"

"No, little one," I replied. "I'm not a physician. Do you want to see one?"

"Naw, I want a drink of water," was the answer.

"I'll get you one from the kitchen," I replied, going to the door.

Much to my surprise, the door would not open. In some unaccountable way, it had become locked; doubtless there was a spring lock on the other side.

"The door is locked," I said to the child. "I can't get you any water."

"I want a drink!" cried the little fellow.

"Sh—sh—" I whispered. "You'll wake the other children."

The child stopped and looked at me again.

"Are you a doctor?" he asked.

"No," I replied. "Do you want a doctor? Are you sick?"

"We've got the measles," he said.

Now, mother always shielded me from children's ailments. I am an only child and grew to manhood without having whooping-cough, measles, scarlet fever, or mumps. Grandmother says I had a touch of brain fever once, but mother never believed it. These diseases are apt to go hard with grown-up people—very often they are fatal. You can imagine what I felt like! To be in a dirty room, away off in the outskirts of the city, locked in with three children, all down with the measles. I rushed to the door and pulled with all my might. It wouldn't budge. I rushed to the window, but it was nailed down. I rapped on the window-pane hoping to attract some passer-by, but the street was deserted. By this time, the children were sitting up in bed and screaming at the top of their voices. My terror had become infectious. I really think they were more frightened of me than I was of them, if possible. I was nearly beside myself and seriously thought of throwing a chair through the window and escaping through the broken pane, when I heard footsteps, and the outer door opened. It was Mrs. Plummer returned, thank heaven. No,

it couldn't be Mrs. Plummer. It wasn't her footsteps. It was a heavy, shuffling sound.

The children heard the noise and with one accord yelled: "Maw, Maw, come here! There's a burglar in the house!"

"I'm coming," answered a husky voice, and there was a noise of a body falling heavily against the door, and then falling away against the other side of the hall. "I'm coming," called the voice.

There was an interminable fumbling at the key-hole. Mrs. Plummer was apparently finding difficulty in locating its exact whereabouts. I stood there biting my lips with anxiety to escape from this pest-ridden house, and—Mrs. Plummer; but I intended to take just time enough to give her a piece of my mind. Her husband could vote against the party for all I cared.

The children screamed, the room was a perfect Bedlam. At last the door opened and Mrs. Plummer lurched into the room. She had been drinking! She had a bottle of gin in her hand!

"Right, children—I'm home," she hiccupped.

I made for the door, but Mrs. Plummer blocked it with her immense bulk.

"Now, you dirty little rat of a Tory," she said, shaking the bottle at me, "what have you been doing to my children—makin' 'em cry like that. Don't you know how to take care of sick children when their poor mother goes out for a breath of fresh air?" she asked.

"Let me out!" I commanded, "I'll call the police."

"I don't want you here," she retorted, making way for me. "You won't get Plummer's vote," she called as I rushed from the house, "for his time ain't up till after election day."

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