

Personalities and Problems

7---D. Lorne McGibbon, Consolidationist

On the Principle that Co-operation with Other Men is the Main Thing

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE

It was the poet Cowper who burst forth:

"Oh for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade!"

But it wasn't the worry of looking after big interests and the tyranny of the telephone that bothered Cowper. And the only reason for lugging in this introduction is, that it throws some light on the quite unusual character whose picture appears on this page.

Douglas Lorne McGibbon is one of the hardest men in Canada to corral, unless you have a political or a financial lariat. Just at present he is probably up at his stone castle at Ste. Agathe in the Laurentians. This is several miles from the offices of the Consolidated Rubber Co., in the Eastern Townships Building in Montreal. But I'm morally sure that Long Distance has a connection at Ste. Agathe; and it was only last week announced in the newspapers that the Consolidated Rubber Co. would build a million-dollar motor-tire factory in Berlin, Ont. This is a statement that it would take some men a million years to be able to make.

I speak from rather disjointed experience. It took me ten days to corral this consolidationist for an interview. Of course the Quebec elections were on. The time he spent behind the scenes trying to oust Sir Lomer Gouin, if valued at what it's worth in other business, must have cost him more money than the average journalist can expect to make in a lifetime. He lost. One difference between politics and business. D. Lorne McGibbon doesn't often lose in business.

After the elections he was up to the eyes in the formation of a new company. This was a new federation scheme, backed by representatives of many millions on both sides of the border. The object was to supply capital for development to any feasible proposition in need of it, according to the report of the Company's experts; whether it was a mine, a power plant, a utility investment or a factory.

Mr. McGibbon modestly disclaimed that the idea was original with him. He gave most of the credit to another man. But as the organization meetings were held in the offices of the Consolidated Rubber Co., it is certain that the Canadian end of the business depended mainly on the President of that concern.

THIS is cited merely as one example of the modern constructive methods employed by McGibbon. The dozen or so big corporations into which he has already infused his personality help to explain how a millionaire can be a slave. I don't know how many millions he is worth. Neither does he. Nor does he largely care. Most millionaires seem to have small regard for money after they round up the six 0's with a "1" in front. It's the fellows who have a hard time getting the two or three 0's after the "1" that set such a high value on mere money. To the other men the game's the thing.

But the game is nothing like parlour croquet. In the case of a man like McGibbon it means that he often gets out to lunch two hours after any clerk in his office is back at work. When he gets to the office he probably finds two or three jailers waiting outside. At home he is likely to be waylaid. Even in the elevator, first time I set eyes on him after days of telephoning, he was forced to talk business all the way up to the seventh floor, across the hall into the office; and when he got behind the door marked "Private," beyond the arena whose chief actor is a very obliging secretary, he was jailed up to talk business, Business, BUSINESS.

"Look here," he said over the 'phone, in the voice of a man who, though a slave to consolidations of which he is the big personal factor, is bound to be agreeable. "I guess the only way I'll ever get clear is for you to come up to the house on Sunday afternoon."

I decided never to become a millionaire except by inheritance.

It's quite worth while to discover what experiences have developed the kind of man that D. Lorne McGibbon is. He was born in Montreal in 1870, son of Major Alex. McGibbon, merchant and afterwards an Inspector of Indian agencies in the Northwest. As soon as he quit school arithmetic he spent

three years in insurance. While a mere youth he got out to Chicago and St. Paul in the coal business. From there he drifted to Medicine Hat, then a stop-off place for ranchers. In none the best of health he roughed it for a while on a ranch, but shortly drifted into town and took a job managing a store for a man named Tweed. Not for long; but long enough to enable Tweed to make a good-sized fortune—when the boy G. M., wishing to have more to do with the revenue of responsibility and failing to get it from Tweed, very naturally started up an opposition trading post. Three years in the



"He believes profoundly in himself, and he has a shrewd instinct for the value of other men."

Medicine Hat Trading Co. he made money and broke a monopoly. He made things hum in Medicine Hat, which in those days knew neither natural gas nor R. Kipling. For he was a large and husky youth who had imbibed a lot of subconscious mental arithmetic, and knew how to operate a store that probably made Tweed's look obsolete.

Had he stayed in Medicine Hat McGibbon by now would have been reckoned among the old-timers who knew a good thing and hung on even when it wasn't comfortable. But even though young D. Lorne, or "Doug," as he must have been called by the ranchers, could have foreseen prairie real estate in 1912 at three thousand dollars a foot, it's doubtful if he would have stuck it out. Things were decidedly slow. Waiting till they began to move and moving along with them was not palatable. Happened that he had a brother legal counsel for the Laurentide Paper Co., in the Province of Quebec. Through him he was appointed purchasing agent of the company. Nine months and the President, Sir William Van Horne, let him through to

be general manager. That was in 1898.

From that time on McGibbon began to demonstrate that he knew how to take hold of large bulls by the horns. No doubt he came strongly under the influence of Van Horne, who has given a large number of young men inoculations of germinal ideas. From what talk I had with the two men, it was pretty clear that the encyclopaedic and dynamic C. P. R. President saw enough in the personality of his general manager to give him plenty of rope and wise exchange of ideas. He had a shrewd eye for the fundamental economic value of a man. So has McGibbon.

It may be one thing to run a paper mill and another to comprehend rubber, or boots and shoes or gold mines or power plants and development companies or department stores; but McGibbon demonstrated that there's a good deal of similarity about all such things if only you take hold high enough up. Hundreds of men in Canada have worked out this principle of versatility in various ways. You may see it in a crude form on the signboard of the man in shacktown on the prairie who attends to nine separate businesses under one roof; in the career of a man like J. F. Cairns, in Saskatoon, who began life teaching in High School, became a bicycling expert, a sporting writer, and when down on his luck started a bakeshop in Saskatoon that grew into a department store. And the story of how D. Lorne McGibbon injected his personality into a number of under-organized concerns till they became powerful consolidations and himself more than once a millionaire, is a typical illustration on a big scale.

I don't think he ever read the genial books of Samuel Smiles on Success and Self Help, both of which he might edit up-to-date for young Canadians wishing to succeed where others fail. Not even reading lyric poetry could have kept his peculiar original bent of personality from going ahead in business further and faster than the average of successful men. Courage and speed and constructive imagination he has in a high degree; and he has the tenacity of a bulldog—as for example:

Four years ago, after years of tussling with consolidations, he was just about a physical wreck. Still under forty he was about as feeble as a man of eighty. Office was impossible. He had more than nerves: just how much more he suspected, but not feeling sure, said to the doctor:

"Now you might as well say exactly what's wrong and how much. I won't thank you to smooth it over."

"Well, you've got tuberculosis."

"Yes, but what are the odds?"

"That depends. You may live a year. You may live longer. But you'll have to get out of here—and cut every connection with business."

McGIBBON got away to the mountains. He was on his back for a year. But he had been too long in business to believe in the cure of absolute rest. He disregarded the doctor's orders about business but kept by the book in everything else; and he hung on, tussling with the tuberculosis, when he had at least a fighting chance with the advantage of a strong constitution otherwise. He kept his mind employed by keeping his bedroom in touch with business. He had no time for moping. In a year's time he was out. He got rid of the tuberculosis. And how much that fight, with an enemy that's almost devilishly common in Canada modified his outlook is expressed in the sanitarium for consumptives up at Ste. Agathe, which houses sixty patients; largely built and chiefly maintained through the efforts and the money of D. Lorne McGibbon.

Since that time the then President of the Canadian Rubber Co. has to his credit the organization of Consolidated Rubber, the acquisition of the Ames-Holden and McCready boot and shoe concerns, the A. E. Rea and Co. white-wear, Consolidated Felts, the LaRose Mining Co.; besides directorships in half a dozen other concerns all of different character. He has a place on the Board of the Montreal Street Railway, and is the practical head of Goodwins Limited, one of the largest stores in Montreal.

A census of the top twenty men in the financial affairs of Montreal would certainly include D.