

Getting the Franchise

The Story of a Street-Railroad President

From the Philadelphia Saturday Evening Post

Concluded from Last Week

"It's rotten; and neither of them will get the money—not more than a half to a third of it. I am on to this special-edition game and you are not. There are teams of pretty shrewd citizens travelling across the country; and wherever they see a paper fairly hard up for advertising revenue they tempt it—just as men hard up are always being tempted. They contract to get out a special edition; and the publisher, for lending his office, his stationery and the good name of his property, gets from thirty-three to fifty per cent. of the gross revenue—without lifting his hand for soliciting the business. Chicago has been worked, New York is a good proposition and the other towns are having their turns. It's a good money-maker of a business; and if I were not helping untie these Riverport kinks I'd probably be doing the half-year stand, with an advertising team of my own."

After that I promised Durrledge that I would be good—and he saw to it that the promise was kept.

"We'll need to advertise in this Congress Street situation," he said; "and we'll be generous advertisers—but not at the corporation rate. We'll be thinking up our campaign just as craftily as the Emporium drygoods store uptown. You'll be astonished to see how friendly and interested the publishers will be in our campaign, and the position the editors will give us in the new columns—"

"But we have advertised—sometimes," I protested.

"Do you consider Compliments of a Friend advertising?" he said with a fine scorn. "I don't. We'll hit them between the eyes. We'll get the credit for spending the money and we'll get the benefit of the space. Advertising counts—when you give it the punch. Without that punch it's worse than useless. And we will pull the reading notices right alongside. We'll make our big stabs on Monday mornings, though we'll try to give a fair alternation of releases between the morning papers and the evenings, and so keep them both on good terms; but Monday mornings—Monday morning is the prize time for press-agent stuff, and every publicity man from the president of the United States right down the line knows that. Cabinet officers, seasoned campaigners, show people, society leaders—all the rest of them—know it is all a city editor can do on Monday morning to keep his paper from getting choked with sermon stuff and the managing editor landing on him for it."

Durrledge was a dandy. I began to have infinite confidence in him and to take him into all our plans.

"Get your staff of pencil-pushers lined up," I told him. "We've no time to lose on Congress Street. They are setting the piers of the new bridge."

We took stock of the situation. There were eight daily papers in English printed in Riverport. Of these the Record had the largest circulation, even when you took its morning and evening editions separately. Durrledge decided that it could be reached between the combined persuasive powers of an advertising appropriation and by diplomatic appeals to its owner, whose general outside interests in Riverport were heavy—a great weakness in a newspaper proprietor. The Times, the Enterprise and the Herald-Gazette were all too weak to be of much account one way or the other. A little advertising would probably hold them in line.

"So far as the Enterprise is concerned," I laughed to Durrledge, "I have Fennworth, the owner of the paper, bottled up. He's heavily in debt, paying for his paper a good deal of the time with notes—and most of those notes are in the strong-box of the Comstock National. Comstock has been after me for one of our accounts—and I've given it to them on condition that they keep Fennworth lined up for us."

Durrledge did not laugh.

"That puts you in the In-Bad Club again!" he said. "You don't know Fennworth. He must know that—and he will hate you for it. I found him short with me at the Country Club last Saturday, and that was the reason. And you do not know

another thing: Fennworth's been picking up backing from somewhere and getting control of the Register. He'll consolidate plants, reduce working expenses and use the power of the morning paper to build up the evening. All he's lacked has been capital. Loosen that crimp."

Again I obeyed the orders of my press agent. I did not propose to have the Register enlisted against us. It was too strong. We could discount the Standard, which, because of heavy mutual owning interests with the Citizens' Company, would be bound to fight us; and Relligan would take good care of the Herald-Gazette. He had sent the veteran editor of that sheet halfway toward being a millionaire. "How could he do it? How about the publisher?" you ask. The publisher was Watson, better known in Riverport as the Little Press Agent of the Rich; and the environment of the Watsons was therefore such as required a bigger income than his weak-kneed Herald-Gazette could give. Watson knew of his editor's weaknesses and condoned them—because he shared

local investment. He had no irons in the fire—save his paper. He lived in his paper and the paper in turn was Patterson's life. It was honest because he was honest. Worse than honest, it was able; and, worse than both, it was popular. Its managing editor knew the inner trails—the dirty, half-hidden scandals of Riverport—as he knew the fingers of his hands; and he was a man after Patterson's own heart, given to speaking the truth.

The Star, without opposing us, gave us no comfort. Instead of hailing our new extension through Congress Street as a benefit to the town, it kept asking why competitive service would not be as valuable to the North Side as to the South Side, and how heavy rental tolls Riverport would receive from us for the use of the new Congress Street bridge. That was a new question. I proposed to pay no tolls. It was absurd for Patterson to raise that point about rental for a non-revenue-producing bridge; and I told him so one day.

"We add to our haul and get no increase in fares," I explained to him.

have sent him back to her—I had not forgotten when I bade the last goodbye to my own!

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Within twenty-four hours my self-confidence was back again, however, and I felt myself capable to handle the thing without my press agent. For opportunity—opportunity in the form of a man six feet tall—had stalked into my office. Opportunity's name was Sam Dwiggins. Sam Dwiggins was the star reporter on Patterson's paper, and he was a daily caller at my office during those strenuous times. It was Sam Dwiggins who had told me informally time and time again of the plans of our enemies, as they were given to him for publication—their retaliation schemes for not only occupying Congress Street and the new bridge with their tracks, but for fairly gridironing our North Side territory with their lines. It was his hope that he might exasperate me into so sharp a reply as to make good copy for the Star. It was Sam Dwiggins who had first told me of his paper's plan to make the Public Utilities Commission, up at the state capital, to which had been given entire control of the franchise matter, demand the heavy bridge rentals. The idea was popular—Dwiggins said that Patterson had recognized it as a circulation builder. This time Dwiggins sat in the chair beside my desk and hinted to me that the Citizens' Company was going to make a suggestion of giving some slight percentage of its increase in gross to the city of Riverport in return for the coveted new franchises—the privilege of having us come to them on bended knees, with our hats in our hands.

It was revolutionary! It was preposterous! We had perpetual franchises and a hard enough fight to pull even with them, let alone any fool divisions of revenues when American towns had been educated not to expect anything of that sort. Pete Arnold was playing with fire and breaking all the rules of the traction game. I began wondering how far he would go in this business—what his suggested percentage of city income would be. If I could find out that — If I had but the means —

I lifted my head. The lanky figure of Sam Dwiggins sat there, his long fingers thrumming on the table. Sam Dwiggins! There was the man who could find out for me! I got to the subject easily.

"Do you know Pete Arnold well?" said I.

"As well as I know you. I see him every day."

My mind was settling itself.

"You reporters have opportunities. I suppose you get close to the whole bunch in a fight like this?"

"Rather!" said Dwiggins. He was one of the fools who boast when you give him the chance. "I think I know what Governor Harkness has in his mind on this whole proposition. He is pretty confidential with us fellows—and we respect his confidences."

He was my man—no doubt of that! I plunged in—waist-deep.

"We need a man of your sort here with us, Dwiggins," I began.

"Durrledge?"

"Durrledge is a brick, but there's work for both of you."

He shook his head slowly. "I'm not much for the press-agent game myself," said he.

Bless his heart. I did not want him as a press agent—I wanted him in another capacity. I wanted him to keep his place on the Star and draw fifty dollars of our money a week. It was hard work explaining that to him and I recall that I perspired, though my office was chilly that morning. Sam Dwiggins cried—cried like a woman. He was hard up and I knew it. It had been pulling for him and I had seen that by a single glance at his face—before he began to stammer out something about his awfully sick wife. He had been whacking his fist upon my desk at first in anger at my suggestion—a moment later he stretched forth the slim fingers of his white hand.

"God help me!" he said. "I can't help myself!"

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A GREAT BOOK

Every man and woman who wants to understand the tariff question and be able to talk and vote intelligently on Free Trade and Protection, should read Edward Porritt's great book "Sixty Years of Protection in Canada." The first edition has been sold out for over two years, but the need for knowledge on this subject is so great that we decided to have it reprinted and to sell it at a popular price. In order that it might be up-to-date we asked Mr. Porritt to revise the book. Mr. Porritt, unfortunately, was ill, but Mrs. Porritt, who is also a well known author on economic questions, has done the work and included in the same volume her husband's later book, "The Revolt in Canada Against the New Feudalism," which deals largely with the efforts of the Grain Growers and U.F.A. to secure tariff reduction. The new edition is now off the press and on the way to us from the printers in England. We could have printed it in The Guide office, but the cost would have been considerably more, so we gave the order to a London firm and those who purchase the book will get the advantage of the lower cost. "Sixty Years of Protection in Canada" was originally sold at \$1.50, and "The Revolt Against the New Feudalism" at 45c, but we are selling the new edition, which contains both these books and also a chapter on Reciprocity, for \$1.25 post paid. The book is intensely interesting. It contains 500 pages, is printed on good paper in clear type and handsomely bound in cloth. To those who would be posted in the tariff history of Canada this book is indispensable. It should be in the home of every man who aspires to be a leader in the reform movement, and in the library of every branch of the Grain Growers' Association and U.F.A. Its facts are indisputable, it is impartially written, yet no fair minded man or woman can read it without being convinced that Protection as it exists in Canada is a burden upon the country and a hindrance to its progress. The book will be in our office in two or three weeks. We want it to be in the hands of our readers at once. Several hundred copies have already been ordered, but there are a thousand copies still to be disposed of. To secure prompt delivery, orders should be sent in advance, so don't delay, but order today.

BOOK DEPARTMENT,
GRAIN GROWERS' GUIDE,
WINNIPEG, MAN.

in the gross receipts. Those things were common knowledge in Riverport. They were common scandal, but probably no worse scandal than affected banking or railroading or wholesale drygoods or hardware, or any one of the infinite number of businesses that went to make the city.

That left us confronting the really great morning paper of Riverport—the Star. The Star was our real problem. Of large circulation, it also held the keenest city staff in our part of the country. It had never sacrificed editorial cost—which means editorial ability—to moneymaking; and that meant that it had never stopped moneymaking. It was owned by a keen-minded, hard-headed man who, as a matter of principle, put his earnings in Government bonds and refrained from

"And, of course, get no development of your territory," he answered. There was no use in arguing the merits of the situation.

"We are just out of the shadows of bankruptcy," I pleaded, throwing myself on his mercy. "Can't you forget that matter of bridge rentals?"

He looked at me sharply.

"You can go to hell!" he said softly, then smiled and handed me a cigar—to show there could be no offense between friends. After that I gave it up with him. The man was impenetrable. Durrledge might have handled the thing better, but Durrledge was away at that critical moment. His mother, away down East, lay hovering between life and death, and it would have been inhuman of me not to