

The Political Career of Joseph Sellers

By WILLIAM HENRY, With Illustrations by C. W. Jefferys

I HAVE given up my political aspirations. That seems strange, in view of the fact that a week ago I had firmly made up my mind some day to be the Prime Minister of Canada. Not all at once, of course. I am not a fool. I realised that it might take years, perhaps ten years or even more, to reach the goal of my ambition. But I was prepared to wait and work, to tread the thorny paths; only I did not think the paths would be quite as briery.

I was willing to start at the bottom. It would have been much more congenial to my natural disposition to start right out speech-making, and I had already prepared one or two speeches suitable for almost any political gathering, but I did not know how to get myself before the public, could not get the bushel basket off my light as it were.

You see, I am the second book-keeper in a large wholesale house, and my opportunities for meeting with the political giants of the day are somewhat limited. So, I made up my mind, as I think I said before, to start right in at the bottom. I went to the Conservative Rooms in Timmons Square and told the man in charge that I wanted to help in the organisation of the campaign. I always had leanings towards Conservatism, and anyway I think it is the party of the future. I have never actually voted for the party for my name has not been on the voters' list. Political rooms are not very pretentious affairs, but those in Timmons Square used to be a vacant store and were fitted up with merely a long board table and a lot of wooden chairs.

They were glad to see me, and I think the man behind the table recognised at once that there was unusual ability in me for he immediately closed the big book he was reading and took my name and address.

"You want to help us?" he asked.

"I have decided to throw body and soul into this great campaign for purity in the public administration of the affairs of the country," I said. This is a sentence from one of my speeches. Since I've had no opportunity of getting them off, except in my own room and then very quietly for fear of disturbing the other boarders, or when taking my Sunday walks in the country, I take every advantage of saying them, little by little, in private conversation.

"Quite right," said he encouragingly, "we'll give you a street to canvass."

He took a little book out of the drawer and opened it before me. There were a lot of names written in it with addresses and columns left vacant to fill in and tell whether the man was a Conservative, a Liberal or undecided, with a wide column at the end for remarks.

It did not take me many minutes to grasp the idea, and I really think—at least, I did think—I had the instincts of a born politician.

"Now, report here as soon as you get finished and I'll give you another book," said the man, and he handed me a nicely sharpened lead pencil. I learned that his name was Grundy. "If I'm not here," he continued, "ask for Mr. Thompson. Either one of us will be here all the time."

A number of chaps strolled in while I was there, mostly big, rough, uncouth-looking men, but I've no doubt in their own way effective workers for the party.

"Let me introduce you to the boys," said Mr. Grundy, after he had finished his instructions. We shook hands all around. They were not the sort of men whom I would care to meet socially, but one must do that sort of thing in politics.

"Sit down and have a smoke," said Mr. Grundy, handing me a box of weedy-looking cigars.

"No, thank you," I replied. "I must be up and doing, out to fight in the cause of truth and justice." I said this with a smile, but at the same time I intended it should be a kind of object lesson to the men standing around. Elections are not won by prayers, as we in politics—or rather, as we who used to be in politics—would say.

When I stepped out of the room I felt rather queer, and a creepy feeling came over me. I took my book and looked at it in the light of a shop window, and I knew

that my political career had commenced. If it had been daylight I think I would have had my photograph taken with the book in my hand—a sort of



"A big woman whose form completely filled the whole doorway."

historical photograph, in years to come, to be preserved in the archives of the political history of my country.

The district under my jurisdiction, or rather the street I had been given to canvass, was quite a long way out in the suburbs, and I had to take a street car and paid my own fare. I began to wonder what became of all the big sums subscribed by contractors for campaign funds. I made up my mind when next I saw Mr. Grundy to suggest that I should be allowed car fare.

I got out at Van Dorn Street and found the first house on my list. It was the house of Mr.

William Plummer. I hesitated for a moment as to what I should say to Mr. Plummer. Apparently he was a working man, judging from the kind of house he lived in, and not a very prosperous one at that. You must size all these things up with the eye of an eagle in the political game. In a moment I knew just how to take him. I no longer hesitated, but rapped firmly on the door. I wasn't kept waiting long.

"What do you want?" said the voice of a big woman whose form completely filled the whole doorway.

"Is Mr. Plummer at home?" I asked pleasantly.

"What d'ye want with Plummer?" she questioned in a surly voice.

"Why, Mrs. Plummer," said I, holding out my hand, "I want to talk politics with your husband." She didn't seem to notice my hand, but looked me up and down.

"What side are you on?"

"Why, the right side, of course. Won't you let me come in? I'm tired."

"Come in if you want to," said she, "but Plummer's not at home."

"He's late to-night," said I in a familiar sort of way, taking the rocking chair in the front room which served the double purpose of parlour and bedroom. In my own opinion it's not time wasted to talk to women. If they have no votes, they are the mothers of our voters. That's what I say—or at least, used to say.

"You didn't tell me what side you are on," said Mrs. Plummer, looking me squarely in the eye. She had a somewhat florid complexion, and a rather hard, stern face. As I remember her now, I regret to say Mrs. Plummer had a dissipated and altogether disagreeable face. But politicians must get used to meeting all kinds of people and learn to adapt themselves to circumstances.

"Mrs. Plummer," said I, "I belong to the party that is with the working people. The party that believes in high wages and low taxes. The party—"

"Are you a Grit or a Tory?" Mrs. Plummer interrupted.

"Our party believes that the working man has rights," I continued, paying no attention to the interruption, "and rights that should be sacredly protected, and the rights of a working woman—"

I was about to make a gracious reference to her sex when Mrs. Plummer again rudely interrupted me.

"Cut out that speech-making," said she. "Are you a Grit or a Tory?"

"My dear madam, I am a humble disciple of that grand old chieftain long since dead, Sir John A. Macdonald, the party of the National Policy, the party of—"

"You're a Tory," she said with an ominous look. I was beginning to think that Plummer was a Grit, and felt that there was some missionary work cut out for me if he was as strong-minded as his wife looked.

"Yes, madam, Tory, or Liberal-Conservative, as we call ourselves in this age and generation. What party affiliations, if any, has Mr. Plummer?" I inquired, placing the book on my knee and taking out my lead pencil. I was about to make my first political record.

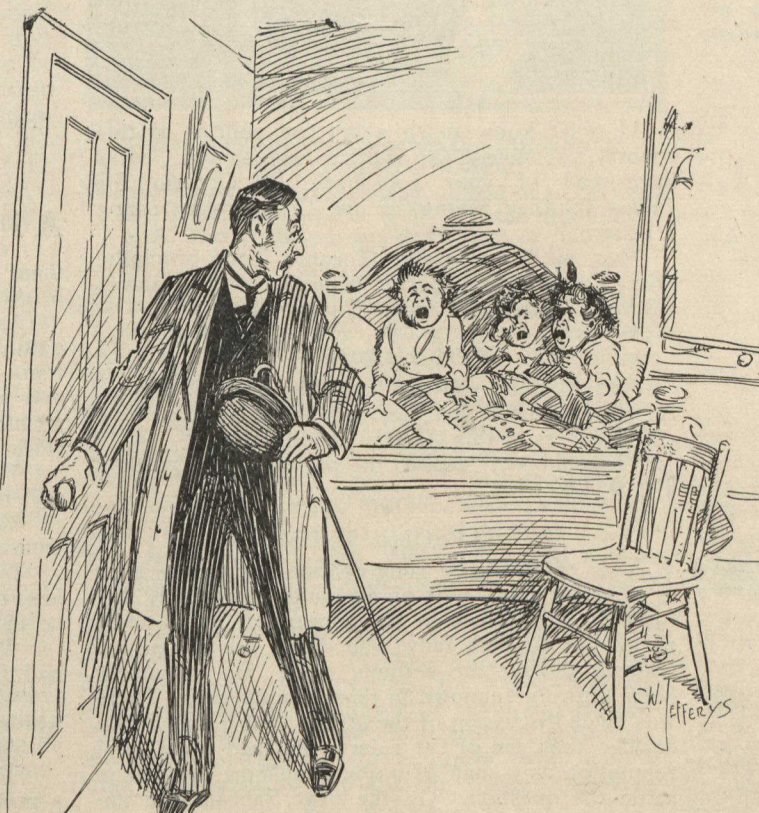
Mrs. Plummer sat in silence, as if in deep thought. "Oh, Plummer," she said, after a moment, with a start, "he'll tell you himself. I wonder if you'd watch the children for a minute while I step to the door."

"Certainly, madam, with pleasure," I replied, wondering where the children were. I found out that they were in bed. There were three of them.

"Oh, the little dears," said I, stooping over the bed. "What pretty children you have!" I exclaimed, looking around at Mrs. Plummer. But she had already left the room and closed the door; so my remark was lost upon her. There is nothing wins a mother's heart like an expression of appreciation of her offspring.

"I won't be long," called Mrs. Plummer as she closed the outside door.

"All right. I'll keep house," I answered playfully. I knew that I was already firmly established in the confidence of the family and I sat back in the chair and closed my



"The children were sitting up in bed and screaming at the top of their voices."

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