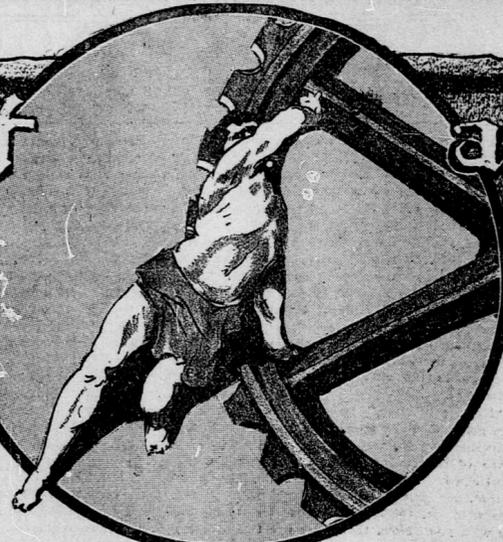


The Story of a Department Clerk



WASHINGTON, D. C., April 26, 1905.

To the Editor of The Washington Times.

Dear Sir: Twenty years ago I came to Washington a young man, filled with ambition. I was one of the first in my part of the country to pass a civil service examination, and I entered the departmental service with strong hopes of developing what abilities I had and rendering a good account of them by working for the Government. Today every chance of doing anything with my abilities is gone. I am a hack, hemmed in by the restrictions and little politics of one of the departments, and I am utterly unable to get work anywhere else. In the retrospect of forty-four years my life is a decided failure.

I have written out the story of my transformation clearly and honestly. I have found it necessary to change names, of course, but all the other details are accurate reports of my own experience.

I believe that if the young men of my country read my story, they would find it a powerful warning against entering the service where individual ability counts for nothing, or almost nothing, and ambition is stifled beyond hope. For that reason I hope you can find room in your paper for the enclosed, with the understanding that, if you use it, you are to edit out none of the facts. If you cannot use it, please return to the address on the inclosed slip.

Very truly yours,
A COG IN THE WHEEL.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

In the "first days of the civil service" away back in the eighties—the author of "The Life Story of a Department Clerk" was a young Indiana lawyer, came to Washington to accept a clerkship in the office of the Assistant Attorney General, the "dreamiest sort of a dream" that he had planned his way into the office of the Attorney General.

He describes his entry into the service of the Government and the shift in his dignified manner, but by future associates, kind to everyone, a law of the ordinary type of applying "the little law" in printed pamphlets to letters of inquiry.

The "new" chief, a man of fifty or fifty-five years, short, and half fat, over-learned in manner, but with a dignified, unassuming, and a hard drinker, a gambler, kind to everyone, a law of the ordinary type of applying "the little law" in printed pamphlets to letters of inquiry.

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would get stage fright took a new tack when they heard his first sentence. We print the entire talented effort on another page, so that if there are any Democrats in this country who are not so narrow-minded that they are unwilling to see the light when it shines they can read that speech and come in out of the wet. When he told of the shallow promises of the Democrats to put a merit system in the Government's departments at Washington had done all he could but how he was circumvented by spokesmen who have been eating at the Government crib since childhood and ought to get out according to the statute of limitations if for no other reason, the people could hardly wait for the end of his sentences they were so quick with their handclapping.

"He then called the attention of his largest audiences. At Centralia, three or four drunken train hands conceived the most marked affection for Colonel Powell, and while he spoke called to him repeatedly such greetings as, "Go it, Cull. We're with you!" and "Listen to that, now, ya crayfish, and call yerself Democrats!" Merrydale was beautifully decorated, small as it is, and heard our arguments with more manifest understanding than any of the others.

"Congressman" left us after about the second day. His place was taken by an Indianapolis lawyer, who was a member of the State central committee. He and Colonel Powell seemed to be old friends, and both laughed heartily when the newcomer repeated the "Honorable Tom's" report to headquarters of the speeches the colonel and I were making. "What they don't know

count and the other two because there was no telegraph service.

A messenger came in from Merrydale at about 11. The vote stood 21 to 20 against us, a clear loss of 18. Delight and Centralia reported within the next ten minutes. Both went Democratic also, contrary to all expectations. Monday did not report until after 1 o'clock. Like all the rest it had gone over to the enemy. For the first time since I became of age our country had gone against us.

As I walked home in the starlight that night, with the booming of Cleveland cannon echoing in the streets and the snap of firecrackers sounding from the square, my mind kept turning over and over until I was sick with the thought of it all, those two treacherous observations by the Hon. Tom Roundtree—Always Regular:

The Ashes of Defeat.

"And, my boy, his chances of carryin' his own State of Indiana ain't worth two whoops in hell."

"What they don't know about practical politics would sink a ship. They talk like the whole dictionary let loose, but the two of them together ain't got ten votes in their whole damn vocabulary."

It was true, all of it. I had failed, as I was sure to fail, and always would fail. Not a single town in which we had spoken had done more than hold its own, and all but one had lost ground. And, hard as this was to my pride, it was nothing compared to the likelihood that I would lose my place in the department and be unable to provide for Annie and our little daughter. I would have given the world to be as free of

papers quickly. "You have letters of endorsement here," said he as he handed them back to me, "from Mr. O'Mara, suggesting that you be transferred to the Record division, which I see was done, and from Representative Roundtree, of Indiana, urging that you be promoted because your father is a good Republican. And that is all."

"We shall not decide about this appointment right away, Mr. Schuyler," he went on. "I cannot tell you who will be appointed. But I will own that I find this record disappointing. In my observation you have proven yourself an extremely capable clerk. I hope I have not been mistaken."

With that he bowed me out the door as impersonally as a judge. I had it out with myself that afternoon as I rode home in the train. But it was hard to reconcile myself to the thought that O'Mara and his gambling partner still had influence enough to make me suffer.

(To Be Continued Next Sunday.)

All Republicans Contributed.

The Compiler of that evening published an extended account of the reception. As I read it I learned that every prominent Republican in town had contributed to defray the expense and that the afternoon trains had brought hundreds of people from the neighboring towns to witness the procession. My speech was published verbatim, the Compiler having employed one of the teachers in the high school to take it down in shorthand. As I read it there, in true, and noted how filled it was with earnestness and yet how rounded the sentences were, it seemed to me like the address of another man and a surprisingly good address at that.

In the rooms of the Young Men's Republican Club I found three things that interested me greatly. One was a letter from Colonel Powell disclosing that he was to be one of the speakers on Thursday night. Another was a list of the meetings at which I was to speak. The third was a life-size portrait of "my Congressman," the gift of his chief lieutenant in the county, inscribed "The Honorable Tom Roundtree—Always Regular."

Annie's scrapbook contains a crinkled and yellow clipping on the Thursday night meeting. It bears the headline "County is Clinched" and reads, with some omissions:

"The largest crowd of the campaign paraded in this city last night for the long-awaited demonstration of loyalty to political honor and reason at the court house, where the Hon. Henry W. Powell, Assistant Attorney General of the United States; the Hon. Tom Roundtree, our popular Congressman; and the Hon. Philip Schuyler, our brilliant young fellow-townsmen of several years ago, but now of the Government service in Washington, made stirring addresses.

While the whole office smiled at the "Down East" pronunciation of the new assistant to the Attorney General, it did not smile at the certitude with which he grasped the work of the bureau. In two days he had taken up the lines which Colonel Powell had laid down. In a week he had discovered the anomaly of Mr. Jennings' position. His course in the matter was characteristic. I was his chief subordinate, and so, first, he discussed it with me. Next, he held his own counsel, he studied the relative capacity of all his clerks. Finally, he carried the issue to the Secretary. I learned all this through a statement from Mr. Wheat himself.

"We Have Such a Record."

"Mr. Schuyler," he said, and his speech impressed me much as I might have been impressed by the same words written in a copy book; "we have decided to readjust this matter of the division chiefship. We are agreed, of course, that the salary and the work of the chief should be a matter of course, we must choose the most competent clerk in the bureau to do the work. You are one of the three men among whom I have determined to make my choice, and I have called you in to tell you that and to say further that we are preparing for the recent examination for promotion and noting its results, the Secretary has decided that the best measure of competency will be the record of the clerk's previous labors. We have such a record, you know, on file with the appointment clerk. I think you are entitled to examine your own record any time. I suggest that you get the papers which relate to you and talk them over here with me."

The appointment clerk (still holding over from the Harrison Administration) heard my request for my record with a smile. He unlocked the drawers, and we were just in on the same er'nd," he said. "There must be 'somthin' goin' on." Saying which, he gravely took a batch of papers from his desk and handed them to me, with an air that indicated entire familiarity with the purpose of the matter which was before me.

Walking down the corridor with those very important documents in my own fingers, it was all I could do not to open them there and find out their contents. It would be much easier to go over them with Mr. Wheat if only I knew their contents in advance. I had understood Mr. Wheat to say, however, that we were to examine these papers together right away. So I hurried on, nervous with the excitement and eager in the prospect of a \$2,000 salary.

In Defense of the "Cog."

To the Editor of The Washington Times:

Being greatly interested in "The Life Story of a Government Clerk," as narrated by "A Cog in the Wheel" in The Sunday Times, I was impressed with your editorial criticism, "Inchoate Ability," in Monday's issue. So much so indeed, that I am constrained to enter a protest against the article, although not all as intelligently as The Times, but few there are who can suggest an improvement or apply a remedy.

Under the system in operation during the time of which he writes, how could Philip help being a "Cog"? How could he have developed his ability along the proper lines? A practical answer to these questions, such as The Times is able to give, may keep some "bright young man" who enters the service from repeating Philip's mistakes. Perhaps Philip will answer them before he has finished his story. It is to be hoped he will. As your editorial on the subject now stands, he is told what to avoid, but not how to avoid it. My own opinion is, that anyone who can write a story such as the one under discussion does himself a wrong in wearing his life away as a Government clerk.

Respectfully,
JOHN P. HEAL,
Washington, D. C., June 8, 1905.

A Welfare-Clerk's Opinion.

To the Editor of The Washington Times:

Sir: I have been reading with a great deal of interest the story running in The Sunday Times entitled "The Life Story of a Department Clerk," and your editorials, following it, which have appeared at different times in your paper. I agree with you that the story in your opinion of his ability and that that he has just cause for dissatisfaction with his occupation. It is plainly evident that Philip is no ordinary clerk, and the probabilities are that had he returned to his native State when he was offered the opportunity to enter the law partnership in Philadelphia, his condition would have been improved and, in time, he would have become a man of wealth and prominence in his native State. Even though he might never have realized his courted ambition of the Attorney Generalship, his sphere of usefulness would have been greatly increased.

I do not agree with your opinion of Philip's ability, namely, that "he was a mole, but was not content to dig." It seems to me that the fact that he was not content to dig was the strongest evidence that he was not a mole. If there is any weakness in Philip's character, it is that he lacked the ability to see and to seize upon the opportunity when it presented itself. However, I would not say that Philip's life had been a failure. It is, as you, I think, have said in your paper, hard to say, that a man who has made a fortune in Philadelphia and a baby, a home on a hill with trees about it, and an occupation which was not altogether unbecoming, had made a failure of life. Robert G. Ingersoll said, that any man who had won the love of a good and faithful woman had made a failure of life, and he was undoubtedly right in the matter. I agree with you that the story is a good and in many respects a remarkable one. It is a strong indictment against any artificial or made-to-order system of society and a strong argument for individuality of effort.

DEPARTMENT CLERK.
Washington, D. C., June 6, 1905.

Hitching Posts in Use.

"Numbered in the vast throng that filled the square were ladies who move in the circles of the aristocracy. We are afraid they found the hastily constructed benches uncomfortable. The Independence division of the Central brought into town fully 300 who came early enough to partake of the hospitalities of the Y. M. C. before the meeting. The spirit of co-operation among all my friends from all the neighboring surroundings. All the hitching posts around the court house fence were in use.

"It was a hot night. Everybody clapped as the Junior Band, under the leadership of Frank Downing, took its place and that rattled the boys, but you can keep real talent down, and before long they had everybody patting time. This shows the appreciation of the audience. President Gardner, of the club, presided, and opened the meeting with a few well chosen remarks, commending the ladies in fine style. Our popular Congressman was first on the program, and he did not disappoint the host of his friends, whose expectations were high.

"His address was in lighter vein all through, putting the audience in splendid humor. In the serious section of his speech he flayed alive those Benedict Arnolds of their party to which they claim to belong who vote with it when everything goes their way, and vote with men whose principles they pretend to support as party as they themselves would like it to be run. It is this kind of talk that has made Tom Roundtree the leader here in this section of the country. We have no room in Indiana for mugwumps.

XX.

By the time our little party started back to Washington we had all regained the strength that we had lost. I was probably fit for nothing better. As I reached the gate, my heart heavy with fear, I lifted my head with a jerk. I heard voices as I walked up the path, and the rustle of a skirt. When I looked up there stood Annie and my mother.

"It's too bad," said my mother, softly. But Annie, saying nothing, squeezed my arm as she did that afternoon when we walked around the square.

HAS FATHER'S TEMPERAMENT.

There is every probability that Miss Almee Tourgee, only child of Judge Alton W. Tourgee, will follow in the literary footsteps of her father. She resembles him in poetic temperament and love of the horse. She is an enthusiastic horsewoman, and is known through the country about the Tourgee home in Mayville, N. Y., which is two miles from the summer town of Chautauqua. When the Chautauqua assembly was in session a few years ago she drove from home to the meeting place behind a spirited Kentucky bay mare that passed everything on the road. Though thoroughly in love with outdoor life and passionately fond of horses, Miss Tourgee is just as much in love with art. She took the course in the Philadelphia School of Design, is a member of the Buffalo Society of Artists, and is a member of the Art Students' League in this city.

At the time Miss Tourgee was in New York she was associated closely with Ruth Johnson, daughter of Richard Malcolm Johnson, of Baltimore, and Louise Cable, a daughter of George W. Cable. She has known them since childhood, and has lived for many years with the lovers of contemporary literature in the South. Thus it came about that the daughters of three prominent and successful novelists were studying together along the same lines, and with similar ambitions for artistic careers. They formed a charming trio. Louise Cable was the youngest, and most enthusiastic of the three. Miss Tourgee, who had the softest and most entrancing Southern accent. When Miss Johnson was a student a New Yorker told in love with her. He received no encouragement in his suit, but said he intended to risk a proposal because "even if it failed, it would be the music of such a voice would be sweet." Miss Tourgee was born in Greensboro, N. C., where the Judge Tourgee established and edited a paper just after the civil war—New York Press.

Just a Young Voter.

"As the other two speeches were logical arguments, the Hon. Tom's jokes introducing the First Voters' Quartet when a baby cried so nobody could hear themselves think. Bo made us all laugh and the mother feel better by saying wittily that he hoped that was a young voter trying to make himself heard. The quartet, consisting of Pope White, Clint DeWit, Henry Saunders, and Dr. Marsden, sang a song especially written for that occasion by the doctor, "We Cannot Fail," to the old familiar tune that everybody knows of, "Nellie Gray." In the trash that is sung during campaigns a good song is so unusual, that we prefer the hours of this one, only wishing that we had space for the whole poem.

Oh, poor old Grover C.
Where will your chances be
When the people's votes are counted once again?
You're floating down Salt river,
Sailing toward the open sea,
In a rowboat provided you by Ben.

"Those Democrats who have been telling around town that Phil Schuyler

The New Chief.

With a new chief to meet in the course of the next hour, I turned myself to see life as brightly as I could. I spoke cheerfully to all the clerks in the division, especially to Mr. Hutterly, who would have pitied me if I had given him the chance, and Mrs. Errol, who sympathized with me genuinely. I was opening my mail when the summons came, regretfully, because many of them were personal, and reflecting while I walked through the two rooms that the only thing I knew of the new Assistant to the Attorney General was his name and that for the instant I had forgotten even that.

Mr. Chamberlain introduced us. The new chief was "Judge Armstrong of Mississippi, formerly one of the attorneys of the Department of Justice." I was curious to note how the Assistant Attorney would describe me. "This is Judge Schuyler," he said, "a protégé of Colonel Powell's" and mine, and one of the few men in the departments who have worked their way up."

However much my new title of "Judge" impressed Mr. Armstrong, I looked on him as the original Dr. Fell. First, he was a Republican from Mississippi; and that was a bad sign. Second, he was putting his Southern reputation to office-seeking use; and that was more than a bad sign—it was comparatively certain proof that he was a manipulator of negro votes. Third, he had a fishy eye and wore side-whiskers; and those two elements never yet came together in a man's face with characteristic. Behind them, therefore, I did not sorrow that the new regime would last only through the winter.

Colonel Powell's Tribute.

"In addition to work which has been almost without a flaw and office conduct, which has been almost perfect, this clerk has compiled the laws under which the department is now operating—a difficult and exacting task. He is, in my judgment, one of the most valuable clerks in the department."

The chief ran through the following

XIX.

THE play's a failure if the center of the stage goes begging. This simple truth is one of the first lessons in nature's primer. But I did not learn it until I reached middle age, and many men, otherwise perspicacious and penetrating, do not learn it at all.

So there was no philosophic brake on the chariot of my happiness during that wonderful fortnight. In the focus of the town's eye, intrusted with a notable responsibility, encouraged by the sympathy of the finest men I knew, and sustained by the confidence of those who loved me best, my spirit exulted and my ambition tugged at the reins.

I found myself a political figure of seeming importance. The morning after we reached town, a telephone message came from Dr. Gardner, asking me to meet the chairman of the county committee and himself at the Young

Aroused Intense Enthusiasm.

At Independence we held much the same sort of a meeting and made much the same speeches. Monroe and Delight, being smaller towns, assembled the

first because of some trouble over the

the chief ran through the following