

Cummins, Iowa Trust Fighter

A Presidential Candidate Beloved by the People, but Hated by Railroad Corporations—Diplomatic and Genial. Swift and Forceful Hitter Who Knows How to Win a Battle That Seems Lost.

By JAMES A. EDGERTON.
OHIO is not the only state on the political map. There is Iowa. Until a year ago Iowa had two cabinet officers and even now can boast the luxury of two presidential candidates. She furnishes one of the "bosses" of the United States senate in William B. Allison and one of the orators that can move anything less difficult than a freight train in Jonathan P. Dolliver. The Hawkeye delegation in congress is noted far and wide for various qualities, though trust busting is not one of its strong points. Hepburn, Hull, Lacey and Cousins are mighty men "for the party," and others of their colleagues pull a strong oar for the "stand pat" crew. Yet none of these estimable gentlemen is the man of the hour in Iowa. The individual who claims that distinction is of a very different type. The faithful usually refer to him as "this man Cummins," which phrase shows that he has them both fighting and guessing. They say he is a "bad party man," which will suggest to many people that he is a good American. Since he has been governor, and even before, Cummins has fought the Republican stand patters and trust advocates to a standstill, and his fellow Republicans of Iowa have stood behind him and yelled: "Good boy! Hit 'em again!" This sort of rude action on the part of the rank and file has been very disquieting to grand old state leaders like Allison and purveyors of ancient anecdotes like Shaw.

Beloved by the People.
"This man Cummins" has done almost precisely the work in Iowa that "this man La Follette" has done in

Wisconsin. One phase of their work has been driving the railroads out of politics and sending the little railroad politicians scurrying into private life. As a matter of course, this has not endeared them to the corporations. Indeed, from that quarter they are about the best hated men in the United States. Their course has made them short on passes and paid puffs, but has kept them long on the affections of the people. Cummins has gone almost as far as La Follette in attacking the railroads and has gone further in opposing the stand pat attitude on the tariff.

So persistent did he grow in fighting this fetich that tariff revision came to be known as "the Iowa idea." The specific proposition referred to by this phase is that American made goods should be bought as cheaply at home as abroad. In other words, if a watch manufactured in this country is sold for \$10 in Europe it is not fair to charge the dear people at home \$25 for identically the same watch. Americans are just as good as foreigners. At least this is "the Iowa idea."

Albert Baird Cummins is a fighter, and yet he is so diplomatic and gracious that he hardly appears the part. He doesn't hurl hard names at his opponents, but hard facts. But despite his genial ways he is a swift and forceful hitter. He knows how to win a battle after it seems lost. That is one of the secrets of great generalship. Nor is the application of the principle confined to politics and war. The young man who knows how to win a girl after she has got away from him is usually the one "who lives happily ever afterward." The same rule holds good in business and pretty much everywhere else.

Both Cummins and La Follette are smashers of precedents. Each was elected to a third term in the governorship. If their policies were to be carried out, such a course seemed absolutely necessary, and they would not sacrifice a vital good to the state out of a sentimental regard for a custom. Needless to say, both are ardent advocates of another term for Theodore Roosevelt or were until he so peremptorily declined. Now that he is out of it Cummins and La Follette each think he is the appointed one to carry out "my policies" and to advance them a notch or two farther than did their founder.

Cummins was not born a politician. In fact, he started wrong several times and backed out before he found his true vocation. In his boyhood he became a carpenter to half pay his way; then he was a civil engineer and advanced to a point where he was offered the job of chief engineer on what is now the Santa Fe system. He declined, however, and began the study of law. Politics followed as a matter of course. He had found himself.

Chief of All Quests.
The greatest search any man has to make is that for himself. The sad truth is that most persons fail in this greatest of all quests, and if they do succeed in discovering their souls they never comprehend more than a small fraction of the exterior. While finding out all about the star, the microphone and the atom why not learn a little of that which most intimately concerns us? To Albert B. Cummins it doubtless matters little whether or not he is ever president of the United States. But that he found his own work and is doing it so thoroughly as to affect

One of the most exciting periods of Mr. Cummins' life was when he fought the prohibitory law. This act had been passed several years before, and it was considered political death to oppose it. Cummins did oppose it, however, and with effect. He spoke against it, ran for the legislature as an independent with a Democratic endorsement and overcame an immense Republican majority. In the legislature he was instrumental in bringing about a radical modification of the law.

The Women's Candidate.
It is one of the anomalies of a striking career that despite his fight against prohibition Cummins is considered the women's candidate. They flock to hear him, elector in his behalf and proclaim him their best ideal of what a public man should be. This may be due to the fact that he is a very handsome figure of a man—tall, with iron gray hair and mustache, possessing all the graces of the finished orator and endowed with a large share of that peculiar something known as personal magnetism. Moreover, the governor addresses many of his most effective oratorical appeals to the fair sex, who, although they cannot vote in Iowa, can make it mighty uncomfortable for those who do.

Governor Cummins' influence with the better half of the world, however, may not be so far to seek. Mrs. Cummins is quite an adept as a politician, and it is not at all impossible that she is doing a little electorizing among the sisters on her own hook. She has shown herself capable of just that sort of finesse, for when her husband was a candidate for the senate she surprised him and the other candidates by inviting them to a harmony dinner and managed things so tactfully that these men who before were ready to jump at each other's throat became quite chummy for the rest of the session.

She was a Miss Ida L. Gallery of Michigan, and it is related that Mr. Cummins had such a difficult campaign in winning her that it developed much of the persistence and resourcefulness which he has since displayed in politics. It must be said frankly that it is hardly probable that Albert B. Cummins will be nominated or elected to the presidency in the year of our Lord 1908. Still, we can never tell, politics, like the Fourth of July, being filled with surprises. If the unexpected happens, however, and that should be named, it is safe to say that certain gentlemen in this country would find things about as interesting as at present. There might not be so many initiations into the Ananias club, and the big stick might not be swung so violently, but despite all that the trusts would have many exciting half hours. Sallbad, the singer; Bldad, the conspirator, and Inbad, the malefactor of great wealth, would still have to run the gantlet of moral lectures and legal prosecutions, and the common people would occasionally be allowed a look in even if they were not permitted to enter the promised land.

When the Iowa legislature, at the behest of James J. Hill, passed a bill to allow a consolidation of two chief railroads, which provided for practically a limitless issue of stocks and bonds, Governor Cummins was urged from all quarters to sign it. Practically all the leaders of his party, his personal friends and associates and leading railroad attorneys from all parts of the country pleaded with him to let the measure become a law and promised him all the kingdoms of the earth, or at least of this portion of the earth, if he would comply. It took courage to deliver a veto message under such circumstances, yet the veto message was forthcoming.

To understand the extreme significance of this break with his former friends, with the machine and with the railroads it must be remembered that Cummins himself had been a corporation attorney. As the leading lawyer of Des Moines he was naturally called on to assist the companies in the trial of their cases. This, however, had not the slightest influence when

he came to make up his mind as a representative of the sovereign people of Iowa. When he was hired by the roads he was hired as a lawyer to act in certain specific cases. That had absolutely nothing to do with his duty as an official in other specific instances. It would be well if all lawyers could see clearly this important distinction.

Helped to Build Railroads.
To complicate matters still more, Cummins' early associations had been almost wholly with the railroads when in his capacity as civil engineer he had built or helped to build several lines. The only seeming influence of this fact, however, was to give him a clearer insight into the question and to make more certain his action in behalf of the people. He knew, and therefore his duty was the plainer and the greater.

Albert Baird Cummins was born in 1850 in Pennsylvania. His people were originally southerners. He attended the common schools, an academy and a college until nineteen years of age. He then went to Iowa, where he became a clerk in a county recorder's office. Afterward he worked for some time as a carpenter and then became an express messenger. This did not last long, and next he was an assistant surveyor of a county in Indiana. It was then he became a civil engineer on a railroad and advanced rapidly. He still was dissatisfied, however, and threw up his engineering to study law. At about this time A. B. Cummins had that mossless rolling stone backed off the pier.

It was 1878 before the future governor located in Iowa as a lawyer, and it was sixteen years later before he took a prominent part in politics. He was then a candidate for United States senator, but was defeated by John H. Gear, who was old enough for political death and met physical death before he took his seat. This was generally expected, and it was agreed that when the aged senator did shuffle off Mr. Cummins was to be his successor.

Leslie M. Shaw was then governor of Iowa, and thereby hangs a tale—not one of the antediluvian anecdotes told by Shaw, but one of the more recent ones told about him. Instead of calling together the legislature to let it fulfill its compact with Cummins, Shaw took matters into his own hands and appointed Dolliver to the vacant seat. This gave Dolliver an advantage in the race, and when the supreme test of strength came in 1890 he beat Cummins by three votes.

That was nine years ago, but the sequel to the story is only now coming to pass. This year Leslie M. Shaw is a candidate for president, at least in his own mind, and Albert B. Cummins, while really a candidate for the United States senate, apparently takes great pleasure in putting a spoke into the Shaw wheel by entering the presidential game himself.

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