

Proposition regarding

Genl Russell A. Alger:

My dear Sir:

I am writing you a very
pleasant thing. Whether I shall succeed
cannot be sure.

In order that you may protect yourself, I
say at the outset that I am going to ask a favor.
I would rather die, and know I would if it were not for two things.
I will find no difficulty in specifying, if you think it worth
while to read farther.

To make a long story short, let me say that for 11 years I have
been a victim of an unfortunate failure. A very rich man induced me
in 1881 to engage with him in publishing The Continent Magazine.
When his extravagance and pretense had swamped what ought to have
been a success, he dug out and I very foolishly undertook to resus-
cite the corpse. Had I been brave enough to cut expenses down to
possible bed-rock, I should have succeeded. But I was not; and a par-
ty who wanted to squeeze me undertook the job and I went under. It
was a bad break--took everything and a lot more.

I could have arranged with the other creditors, but this one
fought me. A year ago I beat him. This left me practically free
with nothing.

During all this time, I was of course unable to do anything in
a business way. He hopped on every contract or attempt I made. I
don't complain. That was merely the hap of business; it was his right,
too. If he had compromised with me or even invested in me, I would
have taken up the load and paid out even his unjust claim. He did
not, but I won and have been free for a year.

During all this long interval
been beset with a desire to have
that bit me.

I am thoroughly satisfied that I was
dent, solid character with a strong personality,
success. Three months ago, circumstances led to my putting
first number of The Basis. It was a sort of accident
thought of going with me wanted to make a big spread-sheets
of it, which I knew meant failure. So I said that rather than
the chance of going under that way, I would go alone, -- creeping
rock-bottom economy until it got age enough to walk.

Well, I have crept for three months. My wife, my daughter and
myself with one type-writer girl, have done the business and nearly
all the writing, editorial and otherwise. You will see that it is no
light job, for I send you by the same mail the numbers issued up to
date.

The promotive schemes I devised are taking hold well and de-
spite the season of the year and the hard times, its income amounts
to from \$50, to \$75, a week in midsummer.

Its mechanical cost, including postage, is about \$125., a week.

It does not owe anything. Two parties have put in \$500, each,
agreeing to take \$1,000 in paid up stock on a capitalization of
\$30,000. It has about 800 subscribers, scattered all over the United
States, some in every state.

I have now no doubt of its success; but I must have capital
enough to carry it over into the subscription season.

What do I propose?

I desire to have \$150, a week until November -- say \$2,500 in weekly

instalments. This will enable me

1--To pay the weekly defi

2--To employ a man to secure

3--To prepare circulars, printing, do,
vertising.

What security have I to offer?

I would wish to deposit as collateral, two-thirds
\$20,000 leaving me enough to sell here and there to accum
fund to meet this and for other purposes. I have no doubt th
that time I can dispose of enough in small lots to meet it and
a healthy condition besides.

I would like you to have the option of receiving the money
with interest in one year or one-sixth interest, \$5,000, of paid up
stock. Should you elect to take the money, I would like to pay it in
monthly instalments of \$50, each, if it should be necessary.

Do you say this is not a very enticing business proposition?

Of course it is not: if it were I should not have to solicit
the favor. I can only ask you to consider these things:

1--I do not wish and do not ask a sum greater than I can pay
in two years.

2--The enterprise will have no other debt; I am determined that
if it goes down it shall drag no one with it.

3--I feel entirely confident that I know the economies of such
a business.--I paid for my education. Some age is necessary to the
success of such an enterprise, and I am willing to go very slow until
til I can see the light and get my grip.

4--The field it occupies is unique, practically unbounded, and
and the sentiment it represents is in the air.

5--I have a specific following

I cannot reach it all at once, but I am willing agent to get others. I do not do advertising, but expect to work my list of names, for all it is worth; believing a dollar put in newspaper advertising is worth ten put in newspaper advertising.

6--If I can reach 2,500 subscribers by Jan. 1st, 1888, the business will be worth more than the sum asked for.

After all as a mere business investment, leaving aside personality, I will confess it is not one which, as the legal adviser or another, I could recommend. If I may be permitted, I would suggest two other considerations:

1--Whether the influence of such a periodical is not worth considering. I sincerely believe that such a journal, with my following as a literary man and a political thinker behind it, will be a power for good in the country.

2--Whether a man whose life has been not altogether devoid of good influences, is not a proper subject for this sort of assistance --whether in fact, it is not worth while to help a man who cannot refrain from striving for the good of the people and the nation, even if he starves, to make himself more valuable, more potent for other's good and the happiness of himself and his family.

A number of years ago, I heard a man of large means say: "I never give money to help a man while he is alive unless he is absolutely starving; but I am always willing to head a subscription for his family or build a monument when dead."

He had just subscribed \$1,000 for a fund for the family of a man who had almost starved in his later years, but whose name is one

which has shed luster upon the court
liberal man, too.

I do not think all men of weak
ory of that remark has always deterred me from
the solicitation of aid. I can see how constant
aid, even of the most deserving, may become a source of
ance, and I have no excuse for my present action in writing
letter to you now, except a very sincere belief that it was
tirely safe for you to comply with the request, and a profound
viction that I have no right to allow my personal feeling to stand
in the way of such an opportunity under my present circumstances.

Should you be able and willing to comply with this request, I
can assure you of the grateful remembrance of an author who has us-
ed whatever power he has for the good of his fellows, and of another,
an artist-author, who has grown up under his care until her work
gives promise of being better than his--my daughter, who is "Henry
Churton jr.," of THE BASIS. More than that, except in unremitting
exertion to repay, in case repayment should devolve upon me, I have
not to give.

In case you cannot comply, I have only to request that you will
return this letter, that it may at least never become a matter of bi-
ographical comment. In either event, you will allow me to express my
pleasure that my knowledge of your character has at least enabled

me to write frankly and fully upon so embarrassing a subject. I sup-
pose few men had so hard a battle, and am sure that none was ever
endowed with capacity to suffer more keenly under such an experi-
ence as the last few years have brought. With recovered health and
freedom from the burthen of obligation has come the confidence and
hopefulness which alone could enable me to write this letter--a let-
ter, I could not allow another to copy were not my typewriter, the wife,
from whom nothing of my thought has been concealed.

Sincerely yours,

Albion W. Tourgee,