

H O W T H E O F F I C E W A S O B T A I N E D .

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With the death of Senator Platt, the last actor in the little drama ~~has~~ passed Beyond. I think perhaps it may interest some of their colleagues to learn the inside history which brought about Judge Tourgée's selection for ~~the~~ Consul at Bordeaux in May 1897 which was at the time a seven days wonder to the politicians of western New York.- So, I am moved to tell the story.

Though not in favor of McKinley,-being pledged to the advocacy of Thomas B. Reed for the nomination before the convention,- as soon as the choice of the party was declared, the Judge concurred heartily in it. When Bryan was made the standard bearer of the Democrats, he began the writing of a little book on the monetary question, which Bryan's advocacy of 16 to 1 had brought to the foreground. In July he went to New York with the complete manuscript of "The War of the Standards", which was placed before the Republican Committee. In a general way it met with

favor but some changes being suggested, he quartered himself at the Everett House, and re-wrote the whole volume on the lines indicated by the Committee. In its revised form it was heartily approved, and was immediately given to the printers to be rushed through the press. As it was a small book, in two weeks it was ready for distribution and was sent out in large quantities to State Committees, especially in the western states where the silver virus was most prevalent.

By September, Judge Tourgée was ready for the campaign, and for two months spoke every day, and sometimes twice. After the victory was won, he returned home, much worn out from his long and arduous labors, also much depressed in spirit, being aware that he was the victim of an incurable malady, the result of the almost constant pain from wounds received in 1861 at Bull Run. A change of climate and scene was recommended by his physicians and he began to look about for a new field of action.

The policy had not then been abandoned of "To the victor belongs the spoils", and early in the year, the New York Tribune published a list of Consulates, which would be filled by the in-coming administration.

This gave the Judge the idea of seeking one of these appointments as he noticed that of those which would probably be vacated, one was held by a western New York man, Jno. M. Wiley of Buffalo, - that of Bordeaux, France. Some how, this place did not appeal to him, though he was a fine French scholar, having taken several prizes for proficiency in that language while in college. He therefore selected Manchester, England, as his choice, and began at once to get together testimonials to be presented to McKinley as soon as was practicable after the inauguration. Being so well known by his writings and activities in Republican campaigns for many years, he soon had the endorsement of all the prominent Republicans of the North and of some influential Democrats of the South, with whom he had been intimate while on the bench in North Carolina. Soon after the inauguration, these papers were sent on to the Secretary of War, Alger, to be presented to the President at an opportune moment. He wrote to the Secretary, who had been his warm friend for many years, that he would follow in person in a few days, being then very lame from a slight accident, and not able to take the trip. A week or more passed and his lameness increas-

ing rather than deminishing, he began to despair of going to Washington. One day when he was especially blue over the situation, I suggested that I might go in his place and see the President. This idea met with a frowning disapproval and he answered that a man who would allow his wife to seek an office for him did not deserve to have it, and made other remarks of like import. Being aware of the fact by long experience that to press the matter then would be fatal to my plan, I said no more but bided my time. A few days later we noted in the ~~same~~ daily papers *that* some Consular appointments had been made and others were imminent. That decided the question. The Judge was hardly able to leave his room from the effects of his accident, and he reluctantly admitted that it did not look as if he were going to get about for some weeks, - and though he was a "idiot" to consent, I might go and see McKinley, if I were very anxious to do so, - and the next morning, armed with a ten days excursion ticket, I was off for the Capitol. Having friends in the city who had long urged me to visit them, I was prepared to have a good time and

obtain the appointment.

I had my plan of campaign well thought out, before arriving in Washington, I would first let Gen. Alger know I was in the city and ask for an appointment. This I did, and a reply soon came to my request, naming an early hour the next day, when he would meet me at his office in the War Department. Washington was at its ~~zenith~~ ^{loveliest} that April morning as I walked across the White House lawn, where the crocuses and daffodils were in bloom making bright bits of color in the vivid green of the grass. Gen. Alger met me most cordially. Having been entertained several times at the Thorheim, when he had visited Chautauqua, we were not strangers. We talked over the situation and when I named Manchester as the Judge's choice, a distressed look came over his face as he said he had some weeks before, promised a friend in Michigan to use his influence to get him appointed to this Consulate. He expressed much regret that the Judge was not able to come himself to the see the President, but, he added laughingly, that he thought the matter was in good hands and was glad I could come; that he would have a talk with McKinley that day

... after Cabinet meeting and I should call again the next morning when he would report what success he had had.

It is needless to say that I was promptly on hand at the appointed hour. Gen. Alger had interviewed the President, who had told him to come over with me to the White House, that morning, and if I were ready then, we would go at once, as he had a little leisure. All the arrangements for seeing the President were then so different from now that no one would recognize a description of this meeting should I give it in detail.

Being accompanied by a member of the Cabinet, all doors were open for me. Gen. Alger left me in the large left hand room of the White House at the head of the front stairs, where, some 20 or more people were waiting their turn, while he went to the President's room. I remained a half hour or so, amusing myself standing by a window gazing out over the beautiful Capital city, - unequalled I am sure by any in the world. While I stood there absorbed in the view, almost oblivious of my mission, Gen. Alger touched me on the shoulder and bade me come with him as the

President was in the hall just outside and could speak with me a moment.

I had seen McKinley some years before, but should not then have recognized him, only from his pictures so much in evidence during the campaign. He shook my hand in the most friendly way, saying Gen. Alger had informed him of my mission, that he had the highest regard and appreciation for Judge Tourgée, and should not have thought of offering him so small a plum as a Consulate, but if that was what he wanted, he would do all he could to gratify his wishes; that I should go to the Secretary of State, make my selection of a Consulate, and he would see that the appointment thereto was made, provided always that the one desired had not previously been promised some one else. I was so overcome by his kindness that I could hardly command my voice to thank him, but I managed to do so in a very awkward fashion. I am sure, when he again shook my hand and hurried back to his room. As it was then past the hour to see the Secretary of State, Gen. Alger made a date for me a couple of days later, when he would have time to go with me. I chafed at the delay, but recognizing the fact that I was only one of probably

thousands in the city who were on like errands intent, and having been so eminently successful thus far, I could afford to wait a little longer. The picture presented when we entered the office of the Secretary of State, that beautiful morning, is as clear before me now as then. It was a long wide room with large windows facing the east. The carpet and curtains were red. The venerable Secretary, then in his 74th year, sat at a long table in the middle of the room piled up with bundles of papers, all in the most orderly array, - reading the morning paper. Before ^{him} was a big bowl of hyacinths, sparkling with the dew yet on them and filling the air with their delicate perfume. The bright sunshine flooded the room with a brilliant radiance. It was a picture of peace and contentment of a man who had thought to be president but instead was serving his country ~~instead~~ in the cabinet of his rival. On being introduced, Gen. Alger stated our errand, to which he smilingly replied that the Secretary of State did not concern himself with such small matters as consulates, that I must see Mr. Rockhill, the 1st Assistant Secretary, pointing to a door opening from his room, where he said

I would find him, and with a courtly wave of the hand, I was dismissed.

More than an hour was spent with Mr. Rockhill who was most gracious and amiable, discussing the pros and cons of Consulates with all of which he seemed entirely familiar. He said if Judge Tourgée was somewhat of an invalid, he should recommend nothing in England for him on account of the fog and general dampness. He knew nothing better than Bordeaux, which he considered the pick of all the consulates. The salary was not large but living was inexpensive and the climate all to be desired. My decision was made. Bordeaux, to which I had all along had strong leanings, - it should be.

On returning to my friends I wrote the Secretary of War a note, detailing the outcome of my interview with Mr. Rockhill and asking him to let the President know what place had been selected. He replied that now that we had the appointment safely fixed that I had better see the New York Senators and make the confirmation as secure. Not a New York politician had been spoken to on the subject. I knew there would be no opposition from Senator Depew and I did not think Senator Platt would

give much thought to the matter either way. The Congressman from the Chautauque district was, I knew, pledged to the support of a Jamestown man. Gen. Alger had told me that he Hooker, was quite a chum of Speaker Reed and it might be well for me to see Reed, before confirmation and have Hooker's guns spiked if he had any aimed at the Judge.

In accordance with this advise, I called on Mr. Reed by appointment at his office in the hotel where he was staying with his family. It was a very warm morning and he received me with his coat and vest off. No apology was made for his untidy undress which was by no means charming. The office was small and stuffy and the Speaker did not look happy. We had a little talk about the Judge whom he said he greatly admired, was sorry he could not come to Washington, because of indisposition, etc. I then told my story giving in detail what the President had said, to select a consulate and he would make such appointment. As I proceeded I saw a most disagreeable change come over Mr. Reed's face and when I had ended, he broke out in a voice of ineffable scorn and disgust;

"Fairy tale! fairy tale! and you believed him?"

On my assurance that I did so he sprang up and took a few strides

he should not dream of opposing so eminent a man for a consulate, and in the narrow space allowed him, then turning fiercely, he almost would be most happy to do all in his power for Judge Tourgée, a man, thundered; "Well, after that fairy tale, what do you want of me?"

he added, to whom the Republican party owed a great debt and it was small I was not a bit frightened, if he did look as though he would recommend me asked.

like to eat me up. I had seen Tom Reed before and had been told that the

The time for the expiration of my ticket was approaching and the name of McKinley was to him like a red rag to a bull. I let him fume

several days, during which, I began to be anxious when one afternoon without interruption for a time, then quietly told him that, knowing

a special delivery letter came from the Secretary of War saying that the Representative Hooker had pledged to support another man for the

President had told him that day that he would make the appointment for Bordeaux consulate, I would like him to use his influence with our

soon. I did not, however, wish to leave the city until I had the Congressman that he did not oppose Judge Tourgée should he receive the

accomplishment of my mission. But I had to go to the city and I was nomination. With a muttered exclamation that he could do that easily

morning I went to the White House for a last interview with the President. enough, as he did not think Judge Tourgée would get any appointment

in crossing the lawn I spied a four-leaved clover. Though I had never of any kind from McKinley, - the interview ended by his putting on his

looked for one I had never found one before. I picked the green of vest and coat and asking most cordially if he could not show me to Mrs.

good luck and still had it in my hand when I went into the President's room Reed's room, who he was sure would be most happy to make my acquaintance.

telling him I had just found it on the lawn I would give it to him to

After a very pleasant call on his wife, Mr. Reed politely insure the success of his administration. He said one should never give escorted me to the elevator and I saw him no more.

away a four-leaved clover, as that would spell better luck, - to go home. I had an interview with Senator Platt that evening who assured

me, he should not dream of opposing so eminent a man for a consulate, and would be most happy to do all in his power for Judge Tourgée, a man, - he added, to whom the Republican party owed a great deal and it was small recompense he asked.

The time for the expiration of my ticket was approaching and for several days, hearing nothing, I began to be anxious when one afternoon a special delivery letter came from the Secretary of War saying that the President had told him that day that he would make the appointment very soon. I did not, however, wish to leave the city until I saw the accomplishment of my mission, but found I must go the next night. In the morning I went to the White House for a last interview with the President. In crossing the lawn I spied a four-leaved clover. Though I had often looked for one, I had never found one before. I picked the omen of good luck and still had it in my hand when I went into the President's room. Telling him I had just found it on the lawn I would give it to him to insure the success of his administration. He said one should never give away a four-leaved clover, as that would spoil the luck, - to go home,

present his compliments to the Judge, - and be happy as everything would be all right, as to who I was.

The next morning, ^{home}arriving unexpectedly, I was obliged to ride up the hill in the old Mayville House bus which was laden with politicians from different parts of the county. As we lumbered up the rough muddy road, one man called to another on the other side and asked; "in the light of this investment, what's this rumor about Tourgée getting the Bordeaux consulate?" "Oh there's nothing in it!" came the reply. "Mr. Putnam is slated for that. Tourgée has no influence in this county; couldn't get three votes in my town for anything!" One of the occupants of the bus, - perhaps an old soldier, as they called him Captain, resented this talk and said; "he's honest, anyway, - something that can't be said of all who want office, - nor are holding them now." "Oh give him the Mayville post office, if he must have something for his work in the campaign. He might possibly be able to run that!" the first man retorted. A good deal more of such talk went on until the driver stopped at the platform in front of the Thorheim. As I stepped out, I turned and smilingly waved

my hand at the Chautauqua County Solom, as I heard the driver's answer to their inquiry as to who I was. *The next day the appointment was announced.*

A fine example of the adage that "A prophet is never without honor save in his own country". In this case, it was not because the prophet was too well known, but not enough known. I afterwards learned that it was Assemblyman S. Fred Nixon, whose name ^{was} ~~has been~~ mentioned in the Aids investigation ~~of late~~, - that had the most to say about Judge Tourgée inadequacy to hold an office. Measured by Mr. Nixon's standard I think his estimate was quite correct.

Before leaving for France I met on the street one day a neighbor, a Quaint, old-time Democrat, who said he had been out of town and hadn't been in to congratulate the Judge; asked about the salary and when I told him, said, - "and pickin's?" Not quite understanding his meaning I suppose I looked curious and he repeated "pickin's?" "No one need tell me that a year later by the irascible Ned, in the prime of life, and his John Wiley has been holding down a \$3000. office for four years unless there's pickin's. I'll bet he has made as much more from the pickin's' as his salary. John has a keen eye for pickin's, he has".

We had not been many months at the Consulate before we learned about the "pickings", and Judge Tourgee came near losing his office because he did not see his way clear to follow in the footsteps of his illustrious predecessors in this particular branch of Consular work. The irrate shippers of hides and furs who had hitherto been accustomed to Consuls helping them evade the Quarentine Regulations of their country as to disinfection, instead of obeying them, in conjunction with the importers of these articles in the United States, represented to the State Department, that Judge Tourgee was persona non grata as Consul at Bordeaux. How they failed in their scheme makes an interesting chapter of Consular annals.

They are all gone now. The first to "lay his armor by", was the saintly McKinley, by the dastardly act of an assassin,- followed a year later by the irascible Reed, in the prime of life, who was not large enough to see how small his actions were toward his great rival. Three years later the recipient of their kindness passed away in the home of his Huguenot ancestors, after more than 40 years of intense

suffering from wounds received in defence of his ~~own~~ beloved native land, regretting only, with his latest conscious breath, that he had done so little when there was so much to do. My kind friend, the genial Secretary ^{did not} ~~never~~ recovered from the chagrin caused by criticisms of his Department during the Spanish War and though greatly honored by his State afterwards, was never quite his old self again. Senator Platt, the politician and great "Boss" of New York State, - though the oldest in years was the last to leave the scene of his activities, - full of years and honor.

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4500 words.