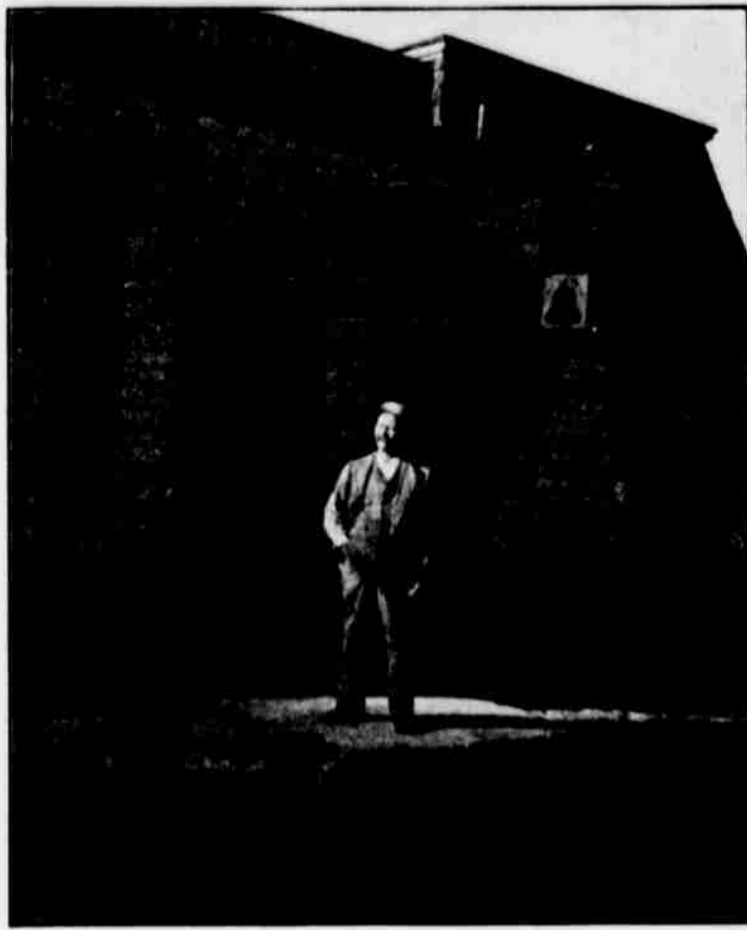


# The Only Man Who Beat Out Rockefeller



JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER GAVE TARRYTOWN A ROAD FOR THIS ONE WHICH HE IS CLOSING.



JOHN MOLIN, THE ONLY MAN WHO EVER BEAT ROCKEFELLER.



WORK ON ROCKEFELLER ESTATE GOES ON STEADILY THE YEAR ROUND.

(Copyright, 1907, by Herbert Wallace.)  
**O**N A small piece of sloping ground fronting on the Sleepy Hollow road stands a one-storied frame building, which a small sign designates as "John Molin's Inn."

From the back windows of the main room there is a magnificent view of the Hudson as it makes a broad curve in its seaward course; off to the right lies the old Sleepy Hollow cemetery; from the front one may look down on the village of Mount Pleasant, a part of Tarrytown and up to the Pocantico hills. The inn stands almost at the junction of three roads and so insignificant is the little building set in the side of the hill and partly concealed by a few houses that it cannot be seen until one has approached within a few yards of it by any of the highways.

Just around the turn of these roads begins the front lawn of one of Molin's neighbors. Indeed, if the house were similarly situated to the inn, only the width of Sleepy Hollow road would separate them. But the front lawn of Molin's neighbor happens to be a half mile long and altogether some 15,000 acres lie about the house. It is impossible to see Molin's little inn from front porch, window or cupola of the palace of the Pocantico hills and this might be the reason why John Molin and his next-door neighbor, John D. Rockefeller, are not neighborly—but it isn't. The reason is that Rockefeller sought to get possession of Molin's place and the innkeeper not only frustrated him, but carried the war into the enemy's country and beat out the Rockefeller candidate last election.

Molin, the innkeeper, had the advantage of being first on the ground. For seventeen years his thirst-quenching establishment has been a familiar landmark in the neighborhood and the smiling Swede and his wife, who together run the place, are known to everyone in the countryside for miles around. Mr. Rockefeller cannot claim so much on this score, though no one will doubt that in the fewer years of his residence in the community he has done more to merit attention than has his humble neighbor.

Molin—"the only man that ever beat the Rockefellers," as he is locally described—is a big, broad-shouldered, slow-moving, heavy-built Swede. Shrewdness and good nature beam from his pleasant, gray-blue eyes. His speech is slow and mild and what he says is characterized by a well-considered common sense. The man's whole personality breathes from personal independence combined with a tolerant charity for others. One can see that his 55 years have mellowed instead of hardened him. He would rather be friendly with the whole world than quarrel with anyone, but there is that in the square jaw and heavy-set eyes that tells of grim persistence to be apprehended once he is in a quarrel. He would fight without bitterness, perhaps, but with unconquerable tenacity, and that is what he has done in his difference with John D. Rockefeller.

"He fight me an' so I fight him back," says Molin. "I guess he's a pretty good man, Rockefeller. He does plenty good around here. I got nothing against him, but when he fight me I fight him back, I guess."

The trouble between the two arose over their both wanting the same thing. Being the richest man in America John D. Rockefeller is accustomed to getting what he wants. John Molin is by no means rich, but he has a habit of holding to what he gets, and he already had that which the other John wanted, the little six-square-rod plot of ground with the roadside inn on it. Possibly Mr. Rockefeller wished that par-

ticular spot to put up an arbor, or a lodge, or a barn on; possibly he only wanted it to get rid of the inn. At any rate he went about it in the wrong way.

"If he came to me, man to man," says John Molin, "I most likely sell him my place right off. I sell it to him for less than I get offered afterward, too."

But John the millionaire didn't go to John the innkeeper with a man-to-man proposition. He sent an agent. The agent made an offer. Molin refused that. He went away. Another agent came. This one made a still better offer. Molin questioned him shrewdly as to whom he was acting for. The agent went away. In a few days still another man came offering about twice as much as the place was worth. Molin was bored. He asked the agent to have a drink and please not talk business any more.

"I guess I keep my own place myself," he said emphatically.

The agents reported back to Mr. Rockefeller and it is a fair guess that he was surprised. But he wasn't beaten. He heard that Molin's place was violating the excise laws. Shortly after private detectives appeared in the neighborhood and took more than a friendly interest in John Molin's inn. Their interest culminated in the arrest of Molin and the closing of the bar. When Molin, out on bail, returned to the place another agent came to him with an offer. The agent didn't get the place. But he got out alive, and that was something.

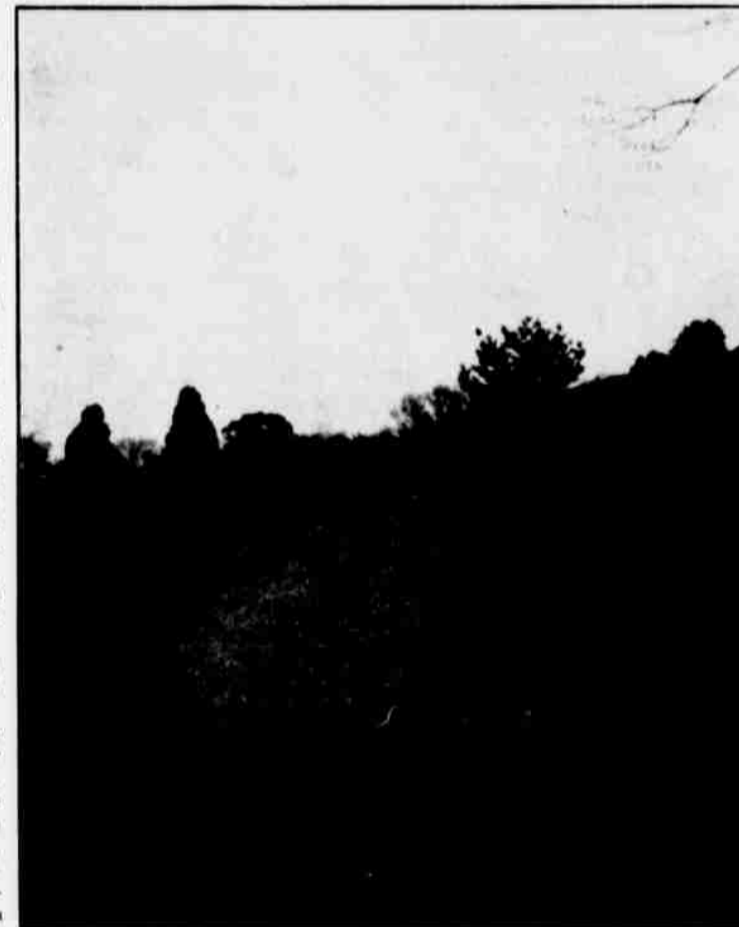
They got Molin's license away—"I gave them an old one," he explains, gleefully, though he doesn't explain what good that did him)—and he decided to fight. He and his wife had been there for seventeen years; they were well liked and respected in the neighborhood and the sentiment of the people was in their favor, but everyone advised them to give in and sell the place.

"Rockefeller has \$1,000,000 for every \$10 you can raise," said they. "You can't beat him."

"All right," said Molin, his big jaw setting firmly. "I try it, anyway."

The Anti-Saloon league took up the case against Molin and it was tried in White Plains. It cost him \$800 to defend the case, but he won, and John Molin's inn opened again. It has been open ever since. Its popularity has increased locally, but of the hundreds of men employed on the Rockefeller estate none buys his beer there. It is generally understood that patronage of Molin is perilous to permanency in the Rockefeller employ. Still, the innkeeper did a good business and was satisfied. His chance to get back at his rich neighbor came last month.

The Rockefellers take great interest in road building. John D. and his brother William have built at their own expense many miles of roadway for the public good. It is important to their interests that the road commissioner should be in sympathy with them. They did not like the road commissioner, William Hutton, and secured the nomination of one of their own workmen, named Roosa. Hutton, though a demo-



MILE AFTER MILE OF THESE ROADS TRAVERSE THE ROCKEFELLER ESTATE.

crat, is an old friend of Molin, who is a staunch republican. One day he came into Molin's place, much dejected.

"The Rockefellers are going to beat me, John," he said.

"Don't let them," said Molin. "Fight 'em, same as me."

"What's the use?" said Hutton. "They've got all their workmen's votes."

"All right," said Molin, "if you won't fight 'em, I'll fight 'em for you."

He threw himself heart and soul into the campaign. There was nothing at stake for him, but he wanted to beat John D. Rockefeller. Night and day he worked. At 6 o'clock in the morning he was on the road and often would be still at work at midnight. His wife looked after the inn while he traveled around getting votes for Hutton. Meanwhile the Rockefellers were working hard for their man. No doubt they have gotten enough votes to win, but Mr. Rockefeller is not a man who does that sort of thing. It was a fair fight and a hard one. The Rockefeller wagons carried the Rockefeller laborers to register and afterward to vote. But when the count was over John D. Rockefeller's man was beaten by twenty-four votes.

"When Hutton got the news," says Molin in relating his victory, "he come to my place an' he throw his arms 'round' me an' I throw my arms 'round' him, an' he says: 'John, you did it. You can have anything I got.' An' I say: 'I don't want it.' An' we both dance on the floor."

Probably Molin was the happiest man in the township that night. For several days following the inn was a sort of ratification hall. The successful candidates lost no time in congratulating Molin, not only because

he had been the one man who had brought victory to them, but also because, in their election, he had brought to himself a greater triumph than had come to any of them. He had beaten John D. Rockefeller. To the prejudiced minds of many of these partisans Molin's victory took on a gigantic significance and they talked in large phrases of the humble citizen who had defeated the aims of the most powerful Standard Oil trust. Molin, to them, was the modern St. George, who, single-handed and alone, had chopped off the grasping tentacles of the Pocantico hills' dragon and had forced it to flee from the limits of the Mount Pleasant corporation.

But Molin himself has no such notions. He understands how much the Rockefellers have done for the community. Now that he has won his fight he is thinking of giving up the place. He talks of this entirely without rancor. His view is that it has been a give-and-take fight between himself and Rockefeller and he harbors no resentment at the thought that in the end his millionaire neighbor will get his place.

"I work here for seventeen years," he says, "and I get very tired. Maybe I sell out after while, and then Rockefeller get my place. Maybe I go back to Sweden then for a visit, I don't know. Anyhow, I win this time. Ach, I work hard for Hutton, and I got sick, too, but I win the fight."

## Short Stories Well Told

Passengers on a South Side elevated car last Tuesday evening listened to an amusing colloquy between two women whom chance had thrown into adjacent seats, relates the Chicago Tribune. The older one was shrill of voice and garrulous; the younger was quiet and was devoting herself to two children who accompanied her.

"What nice little children! How old are they, dear?" began the old lady.

Some quiet response by the little woman.

"What's that? I don't hear well."

The young woman raised her voice as she blushed because of the attention of the other passengers.

"One is 3 years and the other is 2."

"My! Are they sisters?"

"They are brother and sister."

"Which one is the older, the boy or the girl?"

"The boy."

"Well, well! How many months are there between them?"

The young woman seemed much annoyed and answered shortly:

"Fifteen."

"Indeed! Are you their sister?"

"No."

By this time everybody in the car was looking and some pitied the young woman, whose face was flushed at the personal questions, but were obliged to smile at the persistency of the older one.

"Perhaps their cousin or their aunt?" she hazarded. "No? But you are not their mother, are you?"

There came a decided nod from the little

woman as she turned her face away from her cross-questioner.

"You are? Well, well! And how long have you been married? You are only a girl yourself. Too young to have two such big children."

The train drew up at a station just then and the young woman gathered her children together as she answered, with a snap of her big brown eyes:

"I've been married long enough to be able to attend to my own business. Have you been married as long as that?" and she swept out of the car to wait on the platform for another train that would not contain such an unwelcome questioner.

"Well!" said the old woman as the train started again. "I wonder what was the matter with that girl. She seemed put out."

"It was settled some time ago that he was to marry my daughter," said the father of a girl to a Detroit Free Press man, "but it yet remained for the young man to get my consent. It was merely a formality, however, as I had cut no figure whatever during the campaign, my girl arranging matters to suit herself without consulting me or my wishes."

"Now, I remembered with what trepidation I had approached my wife's father when I asked him for her hand and I made up my mind that when that young man showed up to ask me for my daughter's hand I would have revenge, not only for what I had to pass through when I urged my suit, but for being shoved to the background during the present proceedings."

"Well, he called at my office yesterday and I told my office boy to admit him and leave us alone and see that were not disturbed."

"Just dropped in," said he, easily, declining to take a seat, "to tell you that I am going to marry your daughter the middle of next month. It will be an informal affair, so you may consider yourself invited without further notice. Good day."

"Before I could catch my breath he was gone, and when I complained to my daughter about his treatment of me, all the comfort I got was that I could consider myself fortunate in getting an invitation, as it was to be an exclusive affair."

The recent marriage of Eugene Field's daughter recalled to an old school chum of Mrs. Field—that chum being now the wife of a prominent New York attorney—a hitherto unpublished story of the erratic western genius.

There were visitors in prospect one afternoon in the Field household and a strike in the culinary department. Mischief was at floodtide and Mrs. Field was vainly endeavoring to be everywhere at once, when the man of "Sharps and Flats" appeared in the kitchen doorway with a folio in his hand.

"Oh, won't you watch these pies for me while I run upstairs an instant?" his wife exclaimed. "Be sure not to let the meringue scorch—it would ruin 'em—you'd better give me that book or they'll be burned to a crisp." With mock meekness Mr. Field allowed her to carry off his treasure. On returning she was horrified to find the oven door wide open and the rich, fluffy meringue flat, tough and leatherlike.

"They're ruined!" she exclaimed, in dismay. "Why didn't you keep the oven door shut?"

"Keep the door shut?" Mr. Field repeated, in very genuine amazement. "Why, you told me to watch them every instant and I'd like to know how I could do that with the oven door shut!"