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Political Giants Lock Horns

The Man Who Might Have Been Senator Seeks Political Disgrace for the Man who Promised to Make Him Senator but Didn't Keep His Word



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turbable, but his prominence is due more to his quiet persistency and shrewdness than through his ability to mix with all sorts and grades of men. Mr. Richards plays an open board game. Mr. Schneider has not been known to renig, but he holds his hands out of sight while the deals are being played.

Fremont has long been a republican stronghold. It is the home of a number of very able and excellent gentlemen who follow the blue and gold of republicanism. A harmonious unity of action between them has been one of the seven political wonders of the state. But the red flag of war hangs out today, and the white dove of peace covers unseen in her eerie cot. The two political giants of the Dodge county capital, Richards and Schneider, have locked horns. Mr. Richards has espoused the cause of Representative Dan Swanson, who wants to be postmaster. Mr. Schneider bears aloft the standard of Ross Hammond, now postmaster, who desires to be continued in that comfortable position.

This, however, is but the outward expression of an antagonism that dates back to the fierce senatorial scramble of last winter. Mr. Richards firmly believes that he would today be United States senator if Mr. Schneider had not played him false. It needs no violent exercise of the memory to recall that for several weeks nine republican representatives withstood the pressure of their colleagues and from outside to re-enter the republican caucus, out of which they had walked because D. E. Thompson, personally distasteful to them, was pretty certain to be nominated. Mr. Thompson was nominated, but still they remained recalcitrant. The anti-Thompson combination was led by able and astute politicians, among them Mr. Schneider, who is a close friend of President Burt of the Union Pacific, John N. Baldwin, one of its principal attorneys, and Ben T. White, general attorney of the Elkhorn. It was through their efforts that the nine were kept out of the caucus and around them the fight centered.

It speedily became apparent that so long as they held to their resolution not to permit any of the nine to vote for Thompson, he could not be elected. It was also apparent that if they would consent to the nine voting for Thompson they could name the other senator. On the contrary, if they held out to the end and Thompson withdrew, it was equally plain that Thompson would name both of the senators.

Mr. Richards had been voted for now and then during the session by Mr. Swanson. Astute politician as he was and is, he thought the time would come when he could be made the North Platte senator. The time did come, and he embraced the opportunity. He saw Mr. White and Mr. Baldwin, both friends of his, and they agreed. He

had for some time been impressed with the idea that Mr. Schneider had not been as loyal to his interests at other times as he should have been to the one who helped create him politically, but he was willing to wipe the slate clean if Mr. Schneider would turn in and help make him senator. Mr. Schneider was consulted. He was told that the others had consented and he, too, gave assent.

Mr. Swanson had been an employe of Mr. Richards and still is. He was sent to the Thompson headquarters and told that the nine were ready to come into caucus if Thompson would throw his strength to Richards. Everybody who spoke by the card was summoned and the matter was arranged. Meanwhile, says Mr. Richards, Mr. Schneider went to White and Baldwin and by his arguments and persuasions induced them to recant and recall their pledge to Richards. That ended it. Swanson was sent back to tell the Thompson men that it was all off. That was when Mr. Richards swore vengeance. He told his friends that if Mr. Schneider had but told him when he asked him that Thompson was an insuperable objection he would not have minded it so much.

Now Mr. Swanson had very frankly said at various times during the legislative session that his vote was in Mr. Schneider's keeping and that Mr. Schneider had secured him the promise of the oil inspectorship from Governor Dietrich. It was Schneider who told him, when Dietrich said he could not reward disloyalty to the caucus, to take his old oil inspectorship. After this avenue had been closed Mr. Swanson was told he would be taken care of in some other federal position. After the session was over Mr. Schneider tried to get him made an Indian inspector, afterwards he tried for a post-office inspectorship and still later for inspector of rural free mail delivery. He got neither. But he did get discouraged. He was being run up into too many blind alleys and after a time he made up his mind that he was not to have anything.

Then it was that he went and told his troubles to Mr. Richards. He was told that Mr. Richards had no real need of his services, and Swanson asked him if he would help him get the postoffice. Richards told him that he held no malice against him for what had happened in the winter and agreed to help him. He did. He secured for Swanson a splendid list of endorsements, both from business men and the county organization. Ross Hammond had supposed that the post-office was to be his again. He was rudely awakened by the appearance of the Swanson petition. He started one of his own, but soon found Swanson had been ahead of him.

Mr. Schneider, who had espoused Mr. Hammond's cause, was quick to see that the day was lost unless finesse

could beat Swanson. He went down and talked with Senator Millard. The latter had all but told Mr. Richards that Swanson would be named. Schneider returned home and summoned Hammond and Swanson to his office. There Swanson was told that Hammond did not want the office particularly, but he did not want to be turned down. He wanted to be nominated again as a vindication of the stand he took last winter. The offer was made Swanson that if he would accept the deputyship Hammond would place his resignation as postmaster in Senator Millard's hands to be accepted at the end of a short term, when Swanson was to move up and be made postmaster. Swanson thought he saw in this an opportunity to make a certainty of what was not yet sure, and he signed it, after declining to go down to Omaha and arrange the matter with the senator, a declination founded only on the fact that he did not have time that day.

Schneider and Hammond took the next train to Omaha. Meanwhile Swanson became uneasy and fearful that he had not done the right thing. He could not find Mr. Richards, but he did find Chairman Abbott and C. C. McNish, close friends of Mr. Richards. They told him that what he had done was a virtual slap at Richards, because it was in effect a shrewd shifting of Schneider to secure the credit for naming the postmaster. Swanson at once wired Senator Millard repudiating the agreement. The telegram reached the senator while he was in conference with Hammond and Schneider. He threw up his hands in disgust and anger over being played with, and tersely told the gentlemen that the subject would be dropped for the present.

Then Mr. Schneider hied himself to Washington, where he is putting in a few plugs for Hammond. Mr. Richards, it is understood, washed his hands of the affair after Swanson's break, but the best opinion available is that neither Hammond nor Swanson will be named. But you can never tell in politics.

The outcome will be interesting as marking the extent of the influence of the national committeeman in matters of patronage. If he cannot name the postmaster in his home town the politicians and office-seekers are fairly certain to take it as proof of his impotence.

Fremont is a pretty, bustling little city in Dodge county, just where the Platte makes a big bend southward, after a vain effort to force its way to the north. It boasts of perhaps 8,000 inhabitants, but despite its size does not appear to be large enough to contain two great political leaders.

Many years ago a young civil engineer came to Fremont. After a few years' residence he was called to South America to help in a great engineering task. His work finished, he returned to the young city of the plains and there made his permanent home. This was L. D. Richards, and for twenty-five years he has been a foremost figure in business and politics in Dodge county. In 1890 he was the republican candidate for governor, but lost in a three-cornered contest, just at the time when the farmers' alliance and the anti-prohibition furores raged highest. He has twice been mayor of Fremont, but aside from the governorship never sought any other office. Mr. Richards is a wealthy man. For years he has been the head of the banking house of Richards & Keene and been extensively engaged in real estate.

R. B. Schneider is one of Fremont's wealthiest citizens. He is a member of the Nye-Schneider Grain company, one of the largest houses in the west. Mr. Schneider, too, is a Fremont resident of many years. He began humbly, but by great business sagacity and close application to his enterprises has placed himself in a position where he is the recipient of a very large yearly income. He has not been a prominent figure in politics many years. He was first induced to take an interest in the fascinating pastime of "making" men by Ross Hammond, editor of the Fremont Tribune, and L. D. Richards, both of whom have been mixing political medicine for many years. He first came into state prominence in 1896, when he was made treasurer of the state committee and took an active part in managing the campaign. In 1898 he was state chairman, and in 1900 he made a successful race for national committeeman against Editor Rosewater.

Mr. Richards is a big, bluff, warm-hearted man. Mr. Schneider is slender and the perfect type of the up-to-date business man. He is cool and imper-