



ROUGH~ROADS and ROUGH RIDING to the WHITE~HOUSE

The SECOND~OF~TWO~NOTABLE~ARTICLES

By CHAMP~CLARK

SPEAKER~OF~THE~HOUSE~OF~REPRESENTATIVES~



MISSOURI — this being written in Washington — one of my constituents in the Ninth Congressional District is rumored to have been provoked to institute an action for malicious slander against a resident of an adjoining county. On the case coming to trial, it developed that three years previously the defendant had been charged with having remarked publicly that the plaintiff bore certain deplorable, but none the less distinguishable, resemblances to a hippopotamus.

"But," argued the attorney for the defendant, in cross-examining the plaintiff, "you admit that the alleged reference was made nearly three years ago, whereas this action was only begun six weeks ago. Why did you wait three years to decide whether there was any ground for asking damages?"

"Well," came the answer, "I never saw a hippopotamus until six weeks ago."

Even so, may an aspirant for the Presidency of the United States be defeated in his ambitions and subjected to reprehensible criticism the moment his candidacy is announced, notwithstanding the fact that he may have been long in public life and that his record may have been an open book to all.

Probably, no Presidential candidate has suffered in this respect more vitally and notoriously than the late James G. Blaine, in his day the perpetual candidate for White House honors, just as Henry Clay had been in his. Consider the memorable campaign of 1876! Samuel Jones Tilden, the most eminent lawyer ever nominated by a great party for the Presidency, was the Democratic standard bearer, Rutherford B. Hayes being, of course, the Republican. Hayes, who was seated by the Electoral Commission, was, at the breaking out of the Civil War, City Solicitor of Cincinnati and was mounting rapidly in his profession. He had fought his way to a Major Generalcy in the Great Struggle and had made himself very popular in Ohio by refusing, in 1862, while in the field, a nomination for Congress. "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform." Hayes by refusing to resign his commission and to go to Congress, was helped, almost shoved, into the White House. Coincidentally, that same year James A. Garfield resigned his commission as a Major General to go to Congress, and his Congressional career helped materially to put him in the White House. Subsequently, Hayes was an inconspicuous Representative in Congress for a short time.

In 1873, to the wonder of all, to the humiliation of the Republicans and the boundless joy of the Democrats, Ex-United States Senator Allan, variously known as Old Bill and Rise-up William, defeated Governor Edward F. Noyes for re-election in Ohio.

Governor Allan was one of the foremost advocates of Greenbackery and, though past the Scripturally allotted three score and ten, was an astonishing campaigner. If this enthusiastic Greenbacker should be re-elected, it was generally believed that he would sweep the country for President in 1876 on a Democratic platform made to suit him and containing, of course, a strong Greenback plank. This sorely depressed the hard money adherents everywhere, the consequence being that the Ohio Republicans set up Hayes as their gubernatorial candidate in 1875, more on his war record than anything else, on a hard money platform. After a canvass which attracted international attention, Hayes won by a plurality of less than six thousand, thereby retiring Governor Allan permanently to private life, practically killing the Greenback movement and placing himself in a most admirable position as a compromise Republican Presidential possibility.

Blaine was the leading candidate at the moment. John Sherman, who hated him with the virulence of one having a genius for hatred, brought out Hayes, more to dissuade the Buckeye delegation from supporting the Man from Maine than with the hope of nominating his candidate. Roseoe Conkling, another great Presidential possibility always doomed to disappointment, was favored by Grant; and Bristow, Secretary of the Treasury and destroyer of the Whiskey Ring, was the Reform candidate. It was a notable field. On the first ballot the vote stood: Blaine, 285; Morton, of Indiana, 125; Bristow, of Kentucky, 113; Conkling, of New York, 99; Hayes, 61; Hartranft, of Pennsylvania, 58; Jewell, of Connecticut, 11; scattering 3, with 379 necessary to nominate. Blaine was a pronounced favorite with the masses. The famous, or infamous, Mulligan letters, so dramatically injected into the campaign, weakened him then and for all time, however.

Just as the Convention was on the eve of assembling, he fell insensible from sunstroke at the door of a Washington church. The chances are that he would have been nominated had it not been for the Mulligan letters and the sunstroke. As a fact, and according to general belief, he would have been nominated in spite of these severe handicaps but for as contemptible a trick as was ever played on a Presidential candidate. Blaine had gained slowly in the Convention till the sixth and next to the last ballot, when the vote stood: Blaine 308; Morton 85; Bristow 111; Conkling 81; Hayes 113; Hartranft 50; scattering 5. The ballot was taken just before a recess for supper, with a night session to begin at eight o'clock. The Blaineites had bitterly fought the adjournment, but

were overcome. Nearly every one expected that the Plumed Knight would be nominated during the evening; but lo! there was no night session. And why?

When the delegates reached the convention hall, it was in total darkness. Somebody had cut the gas-pipes leading to the hall, and they could not be fixed in time to hold a night session! During the evening the anti-Blaine plotters united on Hayes, and on the first and only ballot the next morning he won with 384 votes — five more than necessary — as against 351 for Blaine and 21 for Bristow.

The most spectacular and famous feature of that Convention was the Ingersoll Plumed Knight speech nominating Blaine, which, more than anything else, will go far toward saving both Blaine and Ingersoll from oblivion. Of the popular vote in that Hayes-Tilden campaign — even accepting the count of the Republican Returning Boards in Louisiana, Florida and South Carolina — Samuel J. Tilden had a plurality of more than a quarter of a million over Hayes, the figures standing: 4,284,757 for Tilden; 4,033,950 for Hayes; 81,749 for Peter Cooper and 9,522 for Green Clay Smith, with 2,636 scattering.

The Electors from Louisiana, Florida and South Carolina would decide the matter, and both sides claimed that their candidate had won. The Senate was Republican, and the House Democratic, however, and could not agree; so the Congress devised an Extra-Constitutional Commission of fifteen, to be composed of three Republican and two Democratic Senators, three Democratic and two Republican Representatives, and five Supreme Court Judges. The five Judges, according to the original arrangement, would have been Messrs. Clifford and Field, Democratic; Miller and Strong, Republican; and David Davis, of Illinois, independent in politics and anxious to be President himself some day. By the light of subsequent events, he would really have decided the matter, as all the Republican Commissioners voted for Hayes and all the Democratic for Tilden. Each party had hopes that Davis would decide for their candidate, as otherwise such an arrangement would never have been entered into.



The rough road to the White House

G. CHAPMAN