

CONFESSIONS OF A WASHINGTON LOBBYIST



NE morning going over my office mail I found this letter:

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE MENTAL AND SPIRITUAL IMPROVEMENT OF THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN.

OFFICE OF THE CORRESPONDING SECRETARY.
Rev. J. Ebenezer Highly, D. D., Secretary.

"MY DEAR SIR:

"Knowing the interest you take in all phil-

anthropic movements, I appeal for your financial and moral support of our Association, the necessity for which is recognized by every one familiar with the deplorable history of the white man's treatment of his red brother. It is a story to make those who call themselves civilized blush with shame, and the duty rests with the present generation to repair the wrongs of the past. We need money urgently to carry on this noble work, and in the spirit of brotherly sympathy and common fellowship, I ask that you give out of your abundance to this worthy cause."

The Reverend Doctor J. Ebenezer Highly's begging letter, with its usual mixture of cant and hold-up, did not greatly impress me. I have never been able to work up any enthusiasm over the Indian or to feel that he got anything more than properly belonged to him. If I had been a Westerner when the Indian went on the war path, I have no doubt I should have done what every other man did in that time and thought that an Indian looked his best after a white man had filled him full of lead. Which, I admit, may not be the spirit of brotherly sympathy, but is the way I feel.

I should have thrown Dr. Highly's letter in the waste basket had there not been an enclosure, which interested me a great deal more. This letter was signed J. Hampden Shillworthy, of New York, an important financial operator whom I had met through Senator Bartman, and ran to this effect:

"I know that Dr. Highly's appeal will not fall on unresponsive ears. I have recently accepted the Presidency of the Association, and it is a work to which I am devoting all the time that a busy man can spare, but I do not begrudge energy in such a worthy cause. I want to see our membership largely increased, and I hope we may be able to raise a fund large enough to accomplish practical results. Dr. Highly is sending you some of our literature, and after you have read it I feel sure you will permit your name to be offered for membership."

I READ this short letter over several times. Shillworthy was not only one of the most prominent men in New York financial affairs, but he was noted for being one of the least sentimental. He was, to tell the truth, close fisted, grasping and narrow. It was seldom one saw his name on a subscription list, and when that happened it was always well down toward the end of the list for a small amount. I could as well imagine Shillworthy's heart wrung by the wrongs of the Indian and leading a movement in their behalf, as I could picture a hungry cat telling a fat little mouse to run away before something happened. Still hard-headed millionaires sometimes do curious things, and perhaps this was one side of

Shillworthy that neither I nor anyone else guessed. At any rate I knew well enough what was required of me. Consequently my secretary drew a check for \$100, and I enclosed it in a letter to Shillworthy, telling him how delighted I was to aid such a highly moral movement. My tongue was in my cheek as I signed the letter.

A few days later came another letter from Shillworthy. He asked if I would act as counsel for the Association. He explained that the Association would be incorporated by Congress so as to give it greater standing than if it were incorporated in New York. He sent me a list of the incorporators, which read like a combination of the Directory of Directors and the Social Register. Shillworthy must have gone up and down Wall Street raking in the biggest men in New York, and his wife must have traveled up and down Fifth Avenue getting the women. What between high finance and high society I felt I was in pretty good company, and nothing helps a man more than to be connected with a great public movement that is purely unselfish. I saw that my hundred dollars had been well invested, and I wrote to Shillworthy that I would act as the legal adviser of the Association without remuneration as, like himself, I was deeply interested in the mental and spiritual improvement of the Indian.

That was the middle of November, and on the first Monday in December Congress met as usual. Shortly afterwards Shillworthy came to Washington. He explained that he had decided to spend the winter there, partly because of the interest he took in the Indian Association and he wanted to see it start off with a big boom, and because his wife was being treated by a famous Washington nerve specialist. Shillworthy took a large house, he brought down a corps of well trained servants and his carriages and horses. He was not a man who splurged with his money or made a show, but he did everything well, and Washington tradesmen welcomed him as another good thing, and Washington society saw another place to gabble, gobble and git.

AS COUNSEL for the Association I supposed Shillworthy would want me to draft the bill for their incorporation, but as several days went by and he said nothing I thought he had overlooked that important detail. If I had known him as well then as I came to know him later, I should have known he was not the man to forget anything when his interests were concerned, no matter how trivial. I suggested to him that the bill ought to be introduced, but he told me there was no hurry and I need not concern myself about it. Senator Bartman, he said, had agreed to stand sponsor in the Senate, but that, of course, was merely a matter of routine, as there would be no opposition to such a meritorious scheme.

Bartman was the Senator who had sat in a poker game with a few of us at Chamberlin's one night, a few months previously, when Shillworthy had lost \$35,000 to the Senator as lightly as I might flip a dime to a street beggar. Well, it was none of my affair, but when Shillworthy gave his time to improving the condition of the Indian and Bartman was also a convert to the cause, it struck me that it would be well for a hardworking but trusting lobbyist to be careful he wasn't asked to buy a gold brick. I felt that Shillworthy and Bartman in partnership as moral uplifters and dealers in all kinds of philanthropic goods meant a job somewhere, but I couldn't see what they were driving at. The day before Congress adjourned for the Christmas recess Bartman

put in the bill, which was as innocent as a new-born babe, and like it, had neither teeth nor claws. It simply incorporated the Association, mentioned the names of the incorporators, and stated that its purpose was to improve the condition of the Indian. When I read the bill I felt I had been unjust to Shillworthy, and while he might be a shark in Wall Street and without mercy in a business deal, similar to nearly all other men, he had virtues as well as faults.

Shillworthy's next step was to have a public meeting to arouse interest in the scheme. Just how he worked it and what strings he pulled I never knew, but shortly after the New Year the Washington papers came out with first page announcements of a meeting the following week at one of the theatres to be presided over by the Bishop of Washington, with addresses from the President, the Secretary of War, who had long shown his interest in the Indian; Senator Bartman, clergymen and other prominent people.

IN WASHINGTON when the President goes no one stays behind. The theatre that night was crowded, and as it was a free show the public was out in force, but I don't think Shillworthy cared so much for numbers as he did for quality. The quality ought to have satisfied the most exacting. The President's wife was in a box, in other boxes were the wives of diplomats and cabinet ministers; nearly all society and half of Congress were in the orchestra seats. The audience gave the President a great reception and applauded him loudly when he said nothing would give him greater pleasure than to sign the bill incorporating the Association; the other speakers were equally well received. Everyone went away very well satisfied, although I don't suppose there were a dozen people in the audience who had a clear idea exactly what the Association intended to do, but that really made no difference. The main purpose had been accomplished. The Association had been endorsed by everybody of importance from the President down and received a certificate of the highest respectability.

The next move in improving the mental and spiritual condition of the Indian was the formation, at Shillworthy's suggestion, of an executive committee consisting of prominent Washington society people whose devotion to good causes did not prevent them from giving extremely good dinners several times during the season. One of the members of the committee, a retired lawyer, Bumpus by name, thought the bill incorporating the Association ought to set out more in detail what the Association intended to do. The suggestion had really been put in his head by Shillworthy, but Bumpus was too much filled with his own importance to see that he was merely a voice. Shillworthy agreed with Bumpus, and explained that the Government's Indian policy had been a mistaken one, although with the best intentions. The real way to civilize the Indian was to turn him from agriculture into industry, and if Congress gave it permission the Association would establish certain industries in the Indian Territory for which the Indian was peculiarly adapted and would soon make him want to wear store clothes and silk hats. The committee decided to ask Bartman to withdraw his bill and put in another granting the Association larger powers.

When Bartman introduced his new bill I was sufficiently interested to secure a copy and see what changes he had made; (Continued on Page 14)