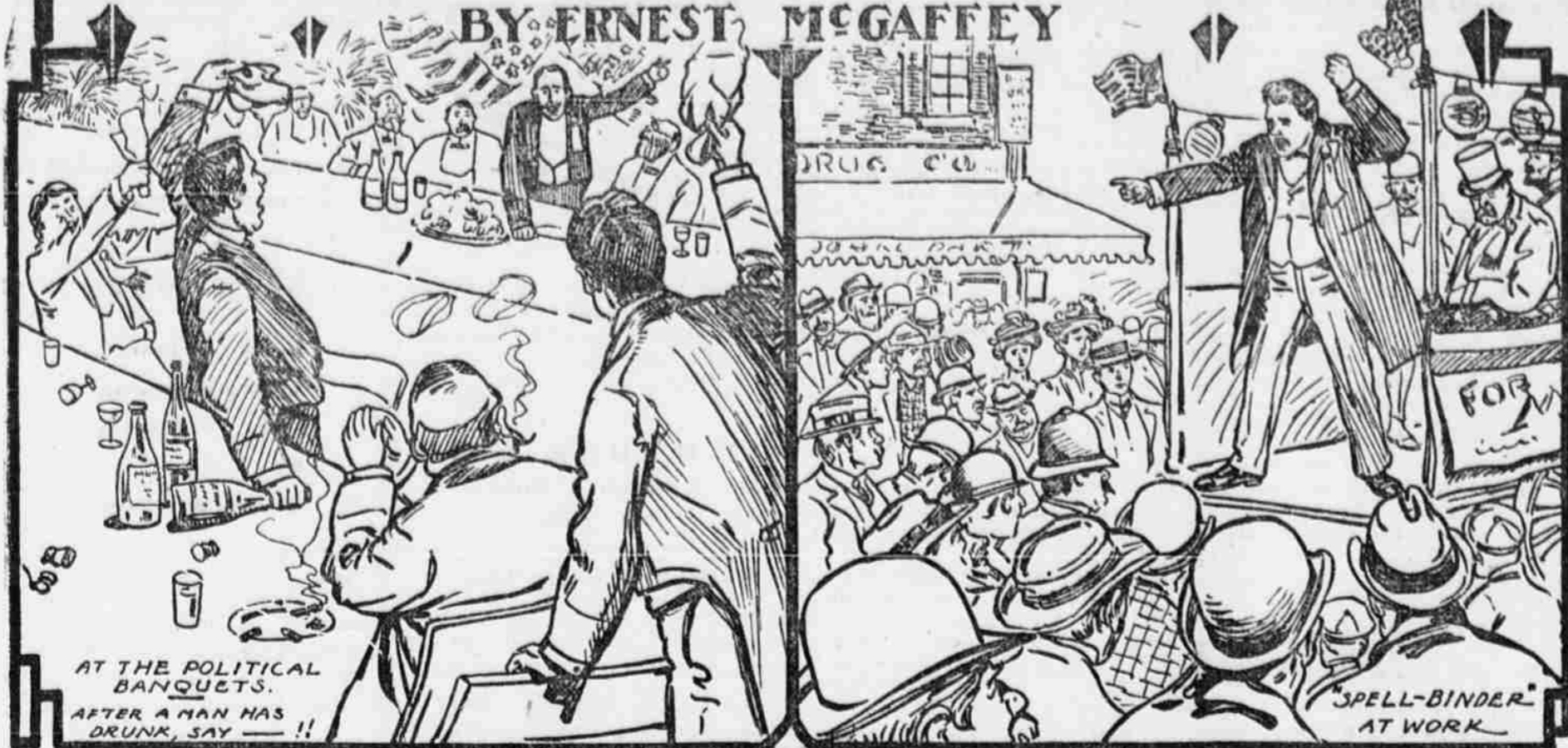


POLITICAL "JAW-SMITHS" and THEIR WAYS

BY ERNEST MCGAFFEY



AT THE POLITICAL BANQUETS. AFTER A MAN HAS DRUNK, SAY — !!

A POLITICAL orator is a man of verbal luxuriance, and nearly always the shallowest of sophists. There is usually little to be gained in what he says, but, to "the groundings," there is a deep significance in the way he says but, to "the groundings," there is a deep significance in the way he says it. We had orators in the ward and in the city, the common, native garden variety of "wind-jammers," and the exotic, or imported variety of "jaw-smiths." Oratory at its best is rather a lost art, and the political orator is a good example of a lost artist. We never expected to influence voting in the ward on account of speech-making. The Republicans went to Republican meetings and the Democrats went to Democratic gatherings, and the applause that the speakers received was simply the "jolly" that their own crowd was handing them, and there you had it.

Occasionally a man might drift in where some really witty and able talker was rousing out the "chin-music," and be impressed a little, but after he had gone home and slept over it, and appeared at the polls, he would get the same old ticket and vote it in the same old way. I heard the orators in an early day who were orators, but did not hear them in the political campaigns. "Bob" Ingersoll and Emory Storrs were orators the like of whom I shall hardly hear again, but it was not for me to be dazzled by the glittering generalities or clumsy platitudes of these "silver-tongued" orators of the hustings, no matter whether they were of my own party or not. I liked a good, sensible talk, but the average line of "bunk" handed out by the ground and lofty tumblers of the city campaigns was something to make a man laugh.

And yet the custom had grown so strong that nothing could apparently stop it. There was always the committee on halls, and the committee on speakers, and there was a racing and chasing of cabs and a mounting of platforms by anxious candidates, and a great desire to present to the citizens the "issues of the day" and solicit their suffrages on election day.

And who attended these meetings? Why, mainly, the "boys." The precinct captains, the members of the ward clubs, the hangers-on that only knew Andrew Jackson as the name of a cigar, the men on the pipe-extension gangs, the ward superintendent, the men down in the city hall, the sewer diggers, laborers, etc., who are working for the city, and the "pay-roll brigade" in general.

And where was the private citizen? Why, he was at home, reading the evening paper, playing with the cat, having a quiet little game of "cinch" at ten cents a "corner," five cents a "set-up" and Tommy around to the Dutchman's with the big white pitcher. Much he cared for oratory. If he got a letter from the managers of the campaign, or maybe a letter from a mayoralty candidate, he opened it and read it, and possibly speculated a little as to the truth of it, but, as a rule, he did not bother himself much as to the meetings.

There was an exception to this, however, when the candidate for alderman or the candidate for mayor appeared in a ward. Then the citizens generally went to the meetings. But not to hear what were glibly termed "issues" discussed. But to look at the candidate, size him up, and see whether they liked him, and if he looked like a man who could fill the job. They didn't care for his "oratory," unless he could tell them a good story, or "roast" the opposition candidates wittily, and then he was indeed a "star."

The appearance of the mayoralty candidate was, of course, the great event of a ward campaign, and filled the halls to overflowing. Boys and women in the galleries, and even the aisles jammed. Perhaps some "silver-tongued" would be making the welkin ring with a passionate declamatory burst about "the thirteen struggling colonies," "these are the times that try men's souls," "when in the course of human events," or some other "guff" borrowed from a school history, or a pamphlet or the declaration of Independence, when all at once there



REHEARSING HIS SPEECH

would be a shuffle at the other end of the hall.

"Here he comes," and "there he is" would be the whispers and signals, and the great man or great men would approach through the center aisle attended by a cordon of followers like the attendant pilot-fishes to his majesty the shark, or more properly speaking, like the attendant porpoises on the whale.

The "silver-tongued" "bunk-shooter" would then grasp the hands of the great men, to show how close he was to the throne, and would gently but firmly subside, and "the Real Thing" would proceed to address the meeting. Close attention was always shown to the mayoralty and aldermanic candidates and to no one else. And what the audience was always trying to figure out was "what kind of a man is he?" and not "what are the issues?" And so the orators soared in and out of the issues like a swallow's flight above a river, and their analysis of the questions of the day left as much an impression on their hearers' minds as the bird's flight does in the air above the river's current.

But they were watching him, and shrewdly or otherwise making up their minds as to his sincerity, his courage, his honesty and his general ability to fill the office he was seeking. The main issue was always something that no one, not even the originators of it, really understood. It was usually based on a strictly scientific degree of accuracy. It started from self-evident and bitterly contested conclusion, and arrived in a labyrinth of contradiction from which there was no outlet. The celebrated traction issue, for instance, was one on which several campaigns were fought, and no honest man ever really pretended to understand it. The question had as many angles to it as three-cushion carom billiards, and as fast as one perfect solution to the puzzle was offered, something would bob up that would change the status of affairs and make it as much of a mystery as before.

The main uses of campaign oratory in the wards was to enthrone the workers, to get the "hustlers" in the various precincts busy in getting out the votes. To do this required that the speaker descend from the high trappings of flowery declamation and talk about the practical benefits to be derived by a party victory. "The thirteen struggling colonies" were all right in their place, but that was several years back, and what the workers wanted to hear about was the patronage to be distributed, the possibility of jobs and positions when the victory was gained, and "what there was in it for them."

lector's office, whether a measure of public policy smacked of Hamiltonianism or Jeffersonianism? What he wanted was the job. So a great deal of the local political oratory was practical to a degree.

At the political banquets, however, the real oratory was supposed to be uncoined, and we always attended these banquets, usually at from three to five dollars "a throw," or a plate, as the more polite termed it. But the science of after-dinner speaking—post-prandial oratory, as it is called, is largely dependent upon extraneous conditions; and particularly as to the state of receptivity on the part of the audience. After a man has drunk, say two or three glasses of sauterne, a couple of glasses of claret, and four or five or eleven glasses of champagne, he is usually in a very uncritical condition. And almost any flowery "bunk" goes with him as something grand.

But just let a man stick to "little old aqua pura" all during the banquet; let him up-end his glass and say: "Nay, nay, Pauline" to the teetering waiters who hover near with the Bacchanalian fluids, and "what a change is there, my country-men," in his judgment of the post-prandial slush that is ladled out to him. The Joe Miller jests and learned by heart orations of the speakers fall on an inattentive ear; and he cannot be lured into wild and unreasoning applause over some well-known quotation which has been delivered by an orator with the air of "I've just thought of that."

Political oratory is composed of the usual two classes of all oratory, to-wit: prepared and impromptu. Prepared oratory is oratory which has been admitted gopher up beforehand and which the speaker is ready to hand out to the reporters on type-written sheets before the banquet. Impromptu oratory is oratory which the speaker has learned by heart and refuses to give copies of, although it has been written out carefully. This compels the attendance of short-hand

reporters to take it down. When the stenographers take it down, the impromptu orators will sometimes give a favored paper an exact copy of the speech, so as to have it printed correctly.

It may be hinted that all this savors of the cynicism of the man who envies the accomplishment of oratory to the "silver-tongued" tribe. Far from it! I have "been there," Horatio, and have on occasion aroused the plaudits of the banqueters myself. The most pronounced success I ever had in that way was a little impromptu gem that I delivered before a "stone sober" crowd one time. I had been given my subject six months before, and had written and re-written my talk all out, at least a dozen times. I had polished it, and adorned it with slavish care, and had blended with it various thoughts and quotations from the poets and the philosophers. You don't have to use quotation marks in oratory, and anyway, I did not know where these gentlemen had stolen their stuff from.

I type-wrote this talk, and let it lie a couple of months, and then went over it again, shortening some of the long sentences, and rearranging and shifting until I got it down as fine as it was possible for me to do. Then I learned it absolutely by heart. I could say it backwards or forwards, begin in the middle and recite it either way. I knew it better than the multiplication table or the alphabet. I "orated it" until I had, as I thought, all the proper inflections, even to a little stumble, a little "eloquent pause" where I was supposed to be overcome by the strength of my emotions. It was really a very hard job, the getting up of this little "impromptu," and one which I should hardly care to tackle again just for the sake of doing someone a favor.

Finally I had the thing down letter perfect, and the day and occasion arrived for my "setting it off." Now some "impromptu" speakers make the mistake of "spilling" their piece right off "the hooks" without giving themselves any time for "inspiration." This is a fatal mistake, and even the most obtuse will not be deceived if you begin at top speed with your "fireworks." But I had heard too many impromptu speakers to be lured into such a false position. The proper way is to select something about the particular occasion which may strike your fancy and then start in with a few halting sentences about that. Something of this sort, for instance: "As I stand on this spot to-day, I feel incapable of adequately voicing the feelings that the time and the occasion would call up in the breast of a real orator," or "I am glad to be with you here, my friends, to-day; and this audience, and the event which we are called upon to celebrate, only makes me feel my shortcomings as a speaker," or "As I entered the hall to-day I caught sight of," etc., etc.

And then, when you have edged in with one or two airy common-places you can come in with your "sis, boom, ah!" verbal pyrotechnics, and give the audience a sure-enough "impromptu" exhibition. The uninitiated will say: "Ain't he a corker?" The man that "is next" will reply: "G'wan; I'll bet it took him six months to frame that up!"

ERNEST MCGAFFEY.
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ONE POINT IN OUR FAVOR

Might Not Build Cars, But America Has the Railroads.

At Briarcliff Manor, the day before the great motor race, Barney Oldfield said to a reporter:

"Here is a good one on the foreign cars. Do you see that young millionaire with the strap and buckle arrangement on his low shoes? Well, he was doing the south last month in a French limousine.

"Between two towns there was a steep, rough, soft hill. With his heavy limousine the millionaire got stuck on it. He had to turn back.

"Well back there in the town they advised him to ship the limousine on in a flat car of the local freight that was just about to pull out. He wise-

ly did so. During the slow, steep run the conductor and brakeman of the freight gathered about him and his limousine on the flat car. He gave them large, gold-tipped Egyptian cigarettes, and to please him the conductor said:

"Fine car you've got there."

"Yes," said the millionaire. "It's a French car. We can't build them like that in this country."

"No, maybe not," said the conductor, a bit nettled; "we can build railroads, though, to take them up the hills."

Higher Than Monarch.

He who reigns within himself, and rules passions, desires and fears, is more than a king.—Milton.

She Knew the Place.

The elderly matron with the bundles, who was journeying to a point in Wisconsin, and occupied a seat near the middle of the car, had fallen asleep. On the seat in front of her sat a little boy. The brakeman opened the door of the car and called out the name of the station the train was approaching. The elderly woman roused herself with a jerk.

"Where are we now, Bobby?" she asked.

"I don't know, grandma," answered the little boy.

"Didn't the brakeman say something just now?"

"No. He just stuck his head inside the door and sneezed."

"Help me with these things, Bobby!" she exclaimed, hurriedly. "This is Oshkosh. It's where we get off."—Youth's Companion.

Cause for Thanks?

It was at a social gathering of one of the mutual improvement societies which help to pass the shining (or otherwise) hour in an edifying manner.

A little singing was to be indulged in by some of the members, and about half-way down the program the name of Miss Molemy-Brown figured. Alas, however, when the time came for her to appear a messenger arrived to say that the lady was suffering from a cold, and, therefore, the chairman had to excuse her to the audience.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I have to announce that Miss Brown will be unable to sing, as announced, and, therefore, Mr. Green will give us 'A Song of Thanksgiving.'"—Stray Stories.

What, indeed!

Tompkins is one of the people who has taken up the phrase, "What do you know about that?"

The other afternoon his beautiful stenographer laid down her paper and said:

"I agree with Olga Nethersole in the opinion that it is better to be a mother than to have a career."

"Well," exclaimed Tompkins, "what do you know about that?"

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Bears the Signature of *Dr. J. C. Williams* In Use For Over 30 Years. The Kind You Have Always Bought.

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"Do you enjoy hearing the robins singing joyously in the treetops?"

"No," answered Mr. Sirlus Baker, "I don't. If a human being kept practicing the same tune forever, like a robin, they'd run him out of the community."

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Not Recorded.

Bill—Did they record that politician's speech?

Jill—I believe not. They hadn't a wind gauge, I believe.—Yonkers Statesman.

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In the Pinkham Laboratory at Lynn, Mass., any woman any day may see the files containing over one million one hundred thousand letters from women seeking health, and here are the letters in which they openly state over their own signatures that they were cured by Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

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Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound is made from roots and herbs, without drugs, and is wholesome and harmless.

The reason why Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound is so successful is because it contains ingredients which act directly upon the feminine organism, restoring it to a healthy normal condition.

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