

IN LIGHTER VEIN

At Candle-Lightin' Time.

WHEN I come in f'om de co'n-fiel' aftah wukin' ha'd all day,

It 's amazin' nice to fin' my suppah all erpon de way;
An' it 's nice to smell de coffee bubblin' ovah in de pot,
An' it 's fine to see de meat a-sizzlin' teasin'-lak an' hot.

But when suppah-time is ovah, an' de things is cl'ared away,

Den de happy hours dat foller are de sweets' of de day.
When my co'n-cob pipe is sta'ted, an' de smoke is drawin' prime,

My ole 'ooman says, «I reckon, Ike, it 's candle-lightin' time.»

Den de chillun snuggle up to me, an' all commence to call,

«Oh, say, daddy, now it 's time to mek de shadders on de wall.»

So I puts my han's togethah,—evah daddy knows de way,—

An' de chillun snuggle closer roun' ez I begin to say:

«Fus thing, hyeah come Mistah Rabbit; don' you see him wuk his eahs?

Huh uh! dis mus' be a donkey; look how innercent he 'pears!

Dah 's de ole black swan a-swimmin'—ain't she got a' awful neck?

Who 's dis feller dat 's a-comin'? Why, dat 's ole dog Tray, I 'spec'!»

Dat 's de way I run on, tryin' fu to please 'em all I can;
Den I hollaahs, «Now be keerful—dis hyeah las' 's de buga-man!»

An' dey runs an' hides dey faces; dey ain't skeered—dey 's lettin' on;

But de play ain't raaly ovah 'twell dat buga-man is gone.

So I jes teks up my banjo, an' I plays a little chune,
An' you see dem huids come peepin' out to listen mighty soon.

Den my wife say, «Sich a pappy fu to gin you sich a fright!

Jes you go to baid, an' leave him; say yo' prayers, an' say good night.»

Paul Laurence Dunbar.

Pertinent Suggestions to Office-seekers.

It has occurred to the writer that in these opening days of a new administration he could render no more important public service than by suggesting to persons who desire to obtain office under President McKinley the most approved way of doing it. For years I have watched the process by which places of honor, dignity, and profit have been bestowed by various administrations in their turn, and from these observations I am convinced that no pursuit more than that of office insistently demands scientific methods and strategic skill. There are tricks in all trades, and office-seeking is no exception.

The fundamental mistake that a beginner is most liable to make is in believing everything that is told him. His skepticism should first be aroused by the advice of pretended friends that his application for office «should be made in writing.» This is all wrong. The man who wants an office should come to Washington to get it. The suggestion to write «inclosing testimonials, etc.» is simply a device of the statesman in office to rid himself of annoyance and importunity from the man on the outside. Written applications are convenient for the influential statesman, because they can be folded and filed and so disposed of in a way that their living authors could not. Letters rarely receive attention. Some insignificant clerk sends out a formal, stereotyped answer, and then files every letter in such a way that if its author is ever seen coming, it may be taken down and given a cursory reading. But if the seeker never comes in person his letter is never read. When a Democratic «boss» in New Jersey, who thought himself of considerable consequence, received in reply to one of his letters a printed form from the private secretary of a cabinet officer, stating that a communication of a certain date «would be 'given careful consideration,» the boss, in offended dignity, folded the formal note and returned it to the private secretary, indorsed with the single word «Thanks.» If a practical politician from New Jersey can command no attention with a written request, what unspeakable folly for the ordinary seeker to expect it! When the foreign missionary remains in New York and converts the heathen by writing letters to them, or the book-agent reaches his customers successfully in the same way, it will be time to use the pen for getting a leverage on the government pay-roll.

Let the office-seeker come to Washington, and come at once, and come prepared to stay. It may be urged that living in Washington is expensive, and that perhaps the chances of success are not worth the outlay. This can all be satisfactorily arranged. Of course the seeker will not stamp himself and his «claims» with an air of cheapness at the start by giving as his city address some fourth-class boarding-house on Z street, southeast; but he may take advantage of the economical rates of such an establishment, and at the same time maintain the best nominal residence in the city. Ascertain carefully from the Congressional Directory the member of your State delegation who has the most fashionable hotel address in Washington. Say to that member of Congress that, owing to the crowds now in the city, your mail has not been coming to you very regularly, and that perhaps it would be well to have it come to his hotel and in his care. If this request is made at what promises to be about the end of a forty-minute call, you will be surprised at the alacrity with which it is granted. You will then have a good post-office address for your calling-cards, and, what is of more importance,

you will have made a friend. Your daily calls thereafter upon the influential statesman at the fashionable hotel will occasion no comment. Friendship will ripen, and it will be possible from time to time to put in a few well-chosen words in the interest of your candidacy. The inference which the other members of the delegation will draw from this seeming intimacy is also worth something. This is a much better plan than for you to board at the — Hotel, because in this way you can stay longer. A protracted office-seeking campaign is generally desirable, and usually necessary.

When once settled in Washington, your first duty is to build up an acquaintance, and in doing this you will not waste much time on subordinates. Private secretaries and confidential clerks of all grades should be ignored. Next to the «put-your-application-in-writing» humbug, these persons are the worst obstacle in the way of patriotic men bent on entering the service of their country. The inexperienced seeker, without some such word of warning, is very apt to rejoice and consider his battle half won when somebody's private secretary pours a few smooth words into his ear. That is what a private secretary is hired for, and he is, moreover, only earning his salary when he is keeping the seeker away from the statesman; and hence between the secretary and the seeker there is an irrepressible conflict to which no known rules of honorable warfare apply. Ride over the private secretary rough-shod, or he will ride over you. When you call on Senator Blank, and learn that the senator is «out,» but that «his secretary, Mr. J—— will see you,» just inquire at what hour Mr. J—— is likely to be out, and make that your time for calling in the future.

It is invariably better to see a senator at his residence than at his committee-room in the Capitol, where he is sure to be disturbed by other seekers, and may even occasionally be interrupted by official duties. He has there, besides, immeasurably greater facilities for eluding you than at his private residence, where, fortunately, certain rules of hospitality cannot be wholly ignored. A good time to call at the house is near a meal-hour, for it is one of the characteristics of a statesman that when his ear is gained just as he is about to respond to a dinner-call, he will surely be an attentive, even though a somewhat irritable, listener. This little nervous tension that the statesman is under is invaluable in fixing firmly the seeker's claims. A long call at any time, of course, is better than a short one. With hundreds of office-seekers actually wearing the life out of every man of influence in these days, it is hardly to be expected that a few minutes' conversation will sufficiently impress upon the memory the needs and merits of any one claimant. The longer the call the greater the impressiveness. Measure your success in minutes, not in cordiality. Remember the parable of the unjust judge and the importunate widow.

It is related that President Lincoln once became so weary of the solicitations of an office-seeker that he ordered the claimant for favor to find on a globe standing in the executive chamber the one point furthest removed from Washington. Lincoln then rang for his private secretary, and requested him to ascertain the consular post on the earth nearest to the point represented on the globe. The persistent place-hunter was

immediately appointed to that consulate; and while on grounds of politeness his methods could hardly be commended, it is well to remember that in office-seeking they are wonderfully effective. At least the seeker should never err in the other direction, as did a Georgian four years ago, who, instead of going to Secretary Hoke Smith's residence, went to his office, where he became one of a long line of clamorous applicants. So depressing was this atmosphere that when the seeker reached the Secretary of the Interior, and saw his woe-begone look, and the pushing throng behind, all that the seeker could remember of his carefully prepared speech was to say that he had called merely to pay his respects. He declared impromptu that he wanted no office whatever. Too much Chesterfield has ruined many a good place-hunter. An Iowan, on the other hand, who called at the White House a few days ago, gave evidence of a perception of the right idea. When asked if he desired to see the secretary to the President, he replied: «No, sir; I do not want to see any secretary, or any assistant, or any executive clerk, or any one of the messengers.» The name of the man I want to see is William McKinley.» Perhaps at the executive mansion some deference must still be paid to subordinates; but as a general rule the office-seeker should see the influential man himself, and not his servants; should see him at his residence, and not at his office, and in such a way as to be most impressive. Above all, the office-seeker must not stand at one side and write letters.

The worst thing that the honorable office-seeker has to fear is the treachery of pretended friends. Your influential statesmen in Washington are the men who have been successful in working off as legal tender a good many promises, and many of these must naturally be dishonored when presented for redemption, but not necessarily his promises to you. The only way I know of to avoid becoming a victim of this sort of thing is by seeing to it that treachery is made impossible. A common device of the statesman is to say to his office-seeking friend: «Oh, yes; I will speak to the President about you. I am going over to the White House next week to talk over that marshalship, and I will tell him all about you—yes, everything,» with a significant chuckle. The sagacious seeker will rise to this occasion by saying: «That suits me exactly, and I will go right along with you. What day shall it be? Any day is perfectly convenient to me.» If the seeker only accompanies the statesman right to the throne, there will then be little chance of any treasonable evasion. Another common form of treachery is conducted by letter-writing. The statesman says to his constituent: «Oh, yes; I will give you a letter to the Secretary of the Treasury, insisting on your having this appointment.» Senators recommend so many men in this way that sometimes it happens that the cabinet ministers are obliged to number the candidates for each particular post recommended by the same statesman. Mr. Jones's letter from Senator Blank recommending Jones's appointment as district attorney is briefed in the department files something like this: «Blank, senator; district attorney, second district; No. 7; name, Jones.» Most congressional people have an understanding with the cabinet officers, moreover, that letters are to be counted as absolutely meaningless, and that if anything is really wanted the statesman will call

in person to see about it. Sometimes secret signals are arranged, so that letters which bear the signature of the full first name are known to be worthless, while letters signed with an initial for the first name are to be taken as of some value. It is well for the beginner to remember these things. And he should by all means avoid making a ridiculous spectacle of himself by taking around a package of letters and testimonials. Everybody knows that these things are merely perfunctory, and yet each year a new crop of office-seekers is fooled by the same chaff, and set to work gathering letters of indorsement just as children collect postage-stamps. A colored man who was appointed to office a few years ago had a package of indorsements so large that it filled a «Saratoga» that had to be checked as baggage wherever he went; and yet it did not help him to get his office, and that the package was ever opened may well be doubted. Another colored man recently asked Secretary — if he had not produced testimonials enough to get his son a messengership, whereupon Mr. — gave a glance at the package, and said: «Testimonials enough for a place in the cabinet!»

While the seeker's first important duty is to gain the attention of influential people, his greater task will come after in the making out of his case. He should ascertain whose favor and influence are necessary to secure the coveted prize. For some positions the President himself will allow no outsider to influence him in making a decision, while many of the smaller places, even though nominally «presidential appointments», are given over unreservedly to senators, representatives, and the like. Certain offices are known as «senatorial patronage»; others as «congressional» (by which the lower House of Congress is always meant); and the cabinet officers and their assistants all reserve certain places for their own friends. It is first necessary, then, to find out who controls the office that you want. There is only one certain test by which you may know this, and that is by the eagerness with which those statesmen who have nothing to do with the filling of a particular place will urge you to try for it.

In stating their claims office-seekers should avoid conventionalities. The same argument appeals to almost every one of the vast army of place-hunters, and as a result Presidents, cabinet officers, and congressmen all become weary of hearing a thousand stories just alike. Some of the most successful office-seekers have been men who have broken loose, even blunderingly, from conventional lines. The mental refreshment which an occasional new plea affords is very effective. It once happened that when two rival factions of Minnesota politicians were seeking a coveted prize, each berating and vilifying the other, an absolutely obscure young man, unknown and hence un hated, came to Washington and presented himself as the «harmony candidate» for the great office for which the factions were noisily contending. He was successful because, as the President said, «He seemed the only man in the State whose appointment would not completely disrupt the party.» This had been the testimony of the factions concerning each other. This incident illustrates the folly of telling the President that the other candidates for the place you seek are all very bad men. It will be inferred, without your saying it, that you think they are.

But a much worse piece of conventionality than this is to say that you are the «logical candidate» for the office you seek. The inventor of this phrase brought out something that sounded so well that it met the needs of thousands of people. Had the phrase been copyrighted it might have remained a good thing; but without such protection the words have become, in Washington at least, a weariness to the flesh. The office-seeker from Skowheganville thinks, because the last district attorney for the State came from that town, that he is the logical candidate for the succession. Two boys were pitted against each other in a political debate at Harvard twenty years ago. One of them became minister to a South American country under President Cleveland, and the story goes that the other fellow has made application for his place, on the ground that because of that old debate he is the logical candidate to succeed his one-time opponent. The railroader of ten years' experience is the logical candidate for railroad commissioner, and the owner of some former government land for public land commissioner; and so it goes. An old Cape Cod fisherman, now in the city, who wants to be collector of the port at Pocasset, was asked a few days ago by a somewhat officious friend if he was not the logical candidate for the post. The old fisherman replied emphatically: «I think I ought to be; Senator Lodge says I am his man.» The phrase ought to be restricted to this use.

Major McKinley will be pained to learn that he is so unpopular that you have been nearly crushed out of existence for his sake; so do not tell how much you have suffered for the sake of the President, but rather how much you will suffer if you do not get the desired office. It is never necessary to say that you have made a failure of business life, and desire a public position to get a living. The politer, although perhaps more roundabout, form of expressing the same thought is to say that your business is so arranged that you can leave it.

Another conventionality which it is best to avoid is the coincidence, or historical analogy. It is not wise to urge your appointment on the ground that your mother was a member of the same church as Mrs. Nancy McKinley, or that your uncle learned the iron-molder's trade with David McKinley. Because Lincoln appointed your grandfather consul to Calais, President McKinley may not regard it as absolutely incumbent upon him to appoint you to the same position. No President wants to bestow all the so-called «federal plums» upon the fast friends of his youth, the jurymen of his first law case, the soldiers of his old regiment, or even upon that unnumbered army of individuals known as the «first discoverers.» Every township in the United States has at least one man who thinks he first suggested McKinley for the Presidency. The claim is a good one, but has become somewhat attenuated, particularly since a large percentage of these discoverers want government offices as a vindication of their right to the exclusive title.

Especially is the claim weakened for honest men by the ingenious devices of the mercenaries. Take the case of Mr. Baycot, who is perhaps typical of the professional «first discoverer.» He planned to pose with title unquestioned as the original advocate of any man who might possibly be elected to the Presidency. This would seem to be a large undertaking, and herein lay the bold-

ness of Baycot's plot. He composed a series of « letters to the editor, » which he had published in different newspapers throughout the country, selecting one journal for each candidate in sight when he began three years ago, and adding a publication to his list whenever a new « remote possibility » appeared on the horizon. The « Gazette » was his McKinley paper, the « Patriot » his H. Clay Evans organ, and so on. Since nobody but Mr. Baycot and the proof-reader ever read these letters, it seemed like an easy matter after election to pull out the one series of newspaper clippings, running back for years, that had urged the nomination and election of McKinley. To one of these communications to the editor—for Baycot never failed to send them where they would do the most good—Major McKinley is said to have responded by saying that he hoped that Mr. Baycot would not prove a prophet without honor in his own country. On the 5th of March, so the story goes, Mr. Baycot took Mr. McKinley's polite note and went to the White House with this equally felicitous response: « President McKinley, since you have expressed the hope that I may not be without honor in my own country, I see no better way than for you to honor me. I want something paying about five thousand dollars a year, » Mr. Baycot's whole scheme was apparently simple and effective; but he neglected one precaution, illustrating the sage reflection that a chain is no stronger than its weakest link. In his enthusiasm he had at times talked on uncertainties. Some weeks before the choice of the St. Louis convention had become apparent, and when the chances for some dark horse seemed good, Baycot had told his friends that he was for Governor Morton. After both national conventions had been held he was also indiscreet enough to come out for Bryan, and to berate in unmeasured terms the Republican party and its platform. He had allowed himself to have personal views aside from the comprehensive scheme of viewing with favor all possibilities; and it was the leaking of these personal views which led to the disclosure of the whole plot. Poor Baycot has already started in for the campaign of 1900, with an added resolve, known as « Silence until certainty. »

An office-seeker makes a great mistake in asking for anything for his own sake alone. With a thousand applicants for every possible office, it is eminently desirable that the greatest conceivable number of people should be represented in the man who is finally successful. Every man should analyze his career, his social, business, and society connections, to see how many influential bodies he may fittingly assume to stand for. If he has ever been a shoe-worker, he should approach the throne saying: « One million sons of St. Crispin are behind me. Every man who works on leather from the Atlantic to the Pacific desires my appointment. » The seeker should next take account of his religious connections, and if he has none of his own, those of his wife or mother will answer about as well. If a Baptist, he had better call attention to the enormous membership of that denomination in the United States, and the compliment which by his appointment would come to every member of that body. Of course fraternal orders, like the League of American Wheelmen, the Grand Army, the Sons of Veterans, the Odd Fellows, the Knights of Pythias, are very important, and should be carefully

borne in mind. A person who has ever figured prominently in one of the charities connected with any of these orders is especially fitted to ask for office in the name of the order. In presenting your application, always make your request in the name of the thousands whom you in some way represent. If you are a railroad man, say that the million men thus engaged deserve some recognition, and that your appointment is just the way to gratify them.

So small a matter as the paper upon which he writes many an office-seeker believes to be very important. Sometimes the seeker has a thousand sheets of note-paper struck off, bearing under a McKinley and Hobart emblem the banner of some local club which may appropriately be named in honor of an influential statesman of his locality. The seeker's own name always appears as president of the club. Some seekers even go so far as to get up badges to give seriousness to some fancied political service they have performed; but this always arouses suspicion, and such a practice cannot be commended.

These suggestions, if carried out, may not be efficacious in every instance; but the office-seeker who acts upon them, and fails, may ever afterward enjoy the blissful assurance that his defeat was due to his own intrinsic qualities, and not to the strategic method with which his case was conducted. This at least is something.

Robert Lincoln O'Brien.

A Matter of Temperament.

I AM a bard of high degree,
As these inspiring lines will show,
And there are others—*inédits*—
Which means quite out of print, you know.
I crave whatever 's sweet and nice
To feed my fancy's royal bent,
And debit each alluring vice
To my artistic temperament.

My wife,—a rondeau won her heart,—
Believing in her laureate yet,
My fickleness confounds with Art
When I with other dames coquet.
Unprofitable friends I slight,
All social rulings I resent,
And hear: « It does seem impolite;
But—his artistic temperament! »

My bills I often fail to pay,
For computations vex my mood;
But friends respect my air distrait
And somehow keep my credit good.
When in Bohemia's fair domain
A night ambrosial I have spent
My deviations I explain
With—« My artist(hic) temperament! »

So, while the primrose path I tread,
I lay my lapses to the Muse:
A mind so delicately bred
All common standards must refuse.
And when before St. Peter's gate
My poet soul I shall present
I'll pass—dead sure—to heavenly state
On my artistic temperament.

Edward A. Church.