

"How to Make a Million"

NEWSPAPER ADVERTISING THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Told by a Man Who Began Life at a Shoemaker's Bench, Became Governor of his State and Is Now Head of a Business Empire.

BY ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE

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A face enough like Bismarck's to make the resemblance startling, a slender, wiry, boyish figure topped by a white head, a manner self-assured, yet never coarsely aggressive. There, in a nutshell, is the personality of one of the most picturesque, interesting figures in all New England—that of W. L. Douglas, ex-Governor of Massachusetts.

But it is not chiefly as ex-Governor, or indeed as statesman at all, that the world at large knows Mr. Douglas. A quarter-mile of factories, a yearly output of something over three million pairs of shoes, and a face that looks out from the advertising columns of eight thousand newspapers—these are the outward attributes that have made the name of W. L. Douglas so familiar from Maine to California.

The story of the man who could make himself so well known; his secret of achievement, his life history and his hints on business success will not only be of interest, but of profit to every class of reader.

For the description of a hard climb of a winning fight against circumstances and the "climber's" tales for victory are always worth hearing. The world loves a fighter and takes an interest in his battles.

And W. L. Douglas is a fighter, as even the most casual student of human nature could glean from the glance at the strong, prominent jaw, the hawk-like brows, the firm set of the lips.

That last of features of Bismarck to toppling European despots—the same "physiognomy" (with a gentler mould of eye and mouth) has caused Douglas to revolutionize people by bringing results from poverty and political power from a State peopled by a majority that differs from him in politics.

Bismarck rose above. Douglas has built up. That is where the ruler and the man differ.

There is a keyword to Douglas's success, of course. Several of them, in fact. The foremost is "Advertising."

His Life Motto

"Newspaper advertising" is the life motto in business. "First, be sure you have something worthy to advertise. Something just as good as you say it is. Struggle to keep it as good, and then advertise it constantly. The newspaper is the field in which no advertising has brought me the only perfectly satisfactory returns. And I have tried many lines before settling down exclusively to that policy."

The same "policy" served for New England and for the man who was once for it to be Governor of its sister State. For it was in ancient Plymouth, scene of the Pilgrims' landing, that Douglas was born, in 1845. His was an fatherless and hopeless childhood, as even Dickens pictured for David Copperfield or other of his luckless boy heroes. That Douglas rose from it to any later position whatever speaks volumes for the stuff he was made of.

In 1859 news came to a Plymouth woman that her husband, the breadwinner of their large family, had been drowned at sea. All the children were young. The mother was almost without means. So two years later she verbally "bound out" one of the brood—a precocious boy of seven—to his uncle, a shoemaker. The child's life from then on became one long era of drudgery and hardship. His uncle set him at once to peeling shoes by hand. This was a task for grown workers, but the baby fingers were kept at the incessant toil of it from dawn to dark. No holiday, no let-up of any sort, and worst of all, no wages.

The seven-year-old boy was carrying under heavy weapons in his life-battle. He has been carrying them ever since. His ability to do so explains why he became Governor William L. Douglas, instead of merely Journeyman Bill Douglas.

His uncle was a stern back-counter, and the boy's earnings, the only money he ever saw, were all his. He was the witness of the young man's life in the woods, in bitter New England winter weather, to put and bring in wood for the shop's fire.

Only at rare intervals was he allowed to leave his workbench for the school-room. But at such periods he proved so apt a scholar as to make up for the long lapses. He was greatly up-education and seemed to absorb his scanty portion of it without effort. It was only at this strange proficiency that he showed any learning at all.

For four years the shrewd uncle, then Douglas returned to his mother. But no valuable had he become in the shop that his uncle induced him to come back to him at the magnificent wage of \$5 a month. Doubt he was fifteen he continued to work thus, all the time busy with new ideas along his own line. These ideas were one day to bear fruit.

Once, seeking to better himself, he went to work in a Plymouth cotton mill at 25 cents a day. This meant fully \$5 a month, and the \$3 raise seemed not unlike a dream of wealth. But fate



HON. WM. L. DOUGLAS.



intended him for his original calling, but a fatal accident of a steam boiler, which he had just passed, had destroyed the intention. An accident in the cotton mill put a quick end to his plans of becoming a lawyer. Douglas was pulled out of the debris with a broken leg. That ended his cotton-mill experiences.

He went back to his mother. While recovering from his injury he attended school and once more planned for a full education. But the lash of poverty that has whipped so many men on to greatness was busy about the young student's shoulders and drove him back to the earning of a living, just as he was beginning to rejoice in his school progress.

No longer content to work aimlessly at one job and another, Douglas now set about learning the best and shrewdest business from bottom to top in all its branches. From town to town he worked his way, studying the methods of each shop until he had mastered every rudiment of his chosen profession.

Lure of the Golden West

By the spring of 1864 he felt ready to start in for himself. Like many another ambitious boy, at that time he fancied the future was brighter in the new West than nearer home. So to Denver he went, carrying along his hard-earned stock of cobbling knowledge—and little else.

Arriving there, he found capital was so scarce in Colorado as in Massachusetts. To acquire this capital he took the first work that offered. The work in question seemed to be the most very congenial position of day laborer in a lime-kiln.

Not exactly a brilliant fulfillment of the golden promise of the West, nor a direct advancement toward success in the shoe trade. But Douglas was on the principle that success consists less in hitting a road head than in playing a poor hand well.

Working hard and spending little, he at last saved enough to travel to the town of Black Hawk, where he had heard, lived one September Myers, one of the most skilled bootmakers in America. From Myers the young man learned the finishing touches that spelled perfection in his trade, and he soon acquired so wide a reputation in the same business as to outstrip his tutor. Douglas and another man formed a partnership and started a flourishing mill and shoe store at Golden City.

But New England always calls to her sons. Douglas heard the call and

came back to Massachusetts. Working as journeyman and later as foreman, he passed the next few years, and in July, 1874, made the plunge that began his real career. He borrowed \$75 and started a factory of his own. This "factory" was small enough to be swallowed up in the most insignificant workshop of his present building. It was just 30 by 60 feet (1,800 square feet) in area. Yet it was the nucleus of the plant that now has an area of 23,000 square feet.

Prosperity came, but did not arrive fast enough to suit the ambitious young shoemaker. He looked about for means of increasing it more rapidly. The method he chose was extensive and unending newspaper advertising.

From the first ten years of success it has grown more and more extensive every year.

"Have I tried any advertising mediums other than the newspaper?" he said recently, reading a question of the writer. "I should say so. Magazines, shoe stores, street car signs and many another. What, now, I actually pointed out to me was the newspaper. I spent \$200,000 in newspaper advertisements. I should not have done so were I not sure the outlay was going to bring me adequate returns. That was a fair sample of a year's advertising expenditure. Figuring on that basis I have spent \$2,000,000 in newspaper advertising during the past ten years. A fortune! Yes, but, as I say, the results warranted it."

"I have given every form of advertising the fairest sort of trial. I began with newspapers in 1883. The results were so good that later I also advertised in magazines. THE RETURN DID NOT WARRANT ME IN CONTINUING. I withdrew my advertisements from the magazines, but later on I tried the experiment again. Once more I took out my advertisements, and since then I have used only newspapers to bring my goods before the public eye."

"During the past decade, while I was spending \$2,000,000 for newspaper advertising, I sold during the estimate on my 150 returns 124,000 cases of shoes. There are twenty-four pairs of shoes to a case, that makes a total of 2,976,000 pairs for 1896, or \$1,725,792 for the 100 years. At the wholesale price of \$2.50 a pair, that would be for 1896 \$4,439,480. Or, at the retail rate of \$3.75 a pair, it would equal \$4,663,140.

"In my advertisements, as a rule, I call attention to my shoes, leaving the local dealers in their own newspaper advertisements to mention the fact that they carry the Douglas shoe."

"By the way, another excellent reason for the superiority of newspaper over magazine advertising rests in the fact that in those same local papers the reader sees the 'ad' every day of his life, while he sees it, at best, only once a month in a magazine. In other words, he sees it thirty times as often in a newspaper, and it has, therefore, thirty times as many chances of impressing him. Every man reads his paper first. Then, if he has time and inclination, he reads magazines. Sometimes he has neither, and the magazine goes unread.

"I am not a believer in spasmotic

advertisement. My principle is: Keep pounding away at the reader all the time. Formerly it used to be a custom to advertise shoes at only certain seasons of the year. I never adhered to that idea. I advertise—and I keep on advertising."

"When a season is dull I increase my advertisements. That may seem odd. Many don't do it. But I do."

"That is one of the secrets, I think, of success. Instead of hanging back, waiting for a slack season to pass, I believe in advertising all the more. This past spring, for example, was backward and cold. It was bad for trade. I did extra advertising."

"Nor, at such times, do I raise the price of shoes. It would not be fair to make the public pay for the slowness of a season. I do not lower wages in that event, either, as the 1906 scale will prove. The scale for that year shows the average shoemaker's pay in the United States was \$46. In Massachusetts it was \$530. In Brockton, \$62; while at my Montello factory it was \$700. That does not include superintendents and high skilled men. Just the workers, on the union scale."

"Another advertising theory of mine is that a good 'ad.' should be changed very seldom. Of course in the case of dry goods stores or other places where special sales are held and new attractions offered from time to time it is necessary to change the form and indorsements of an advertisement. But where a man deals in a single staple article, I think he should write one strong, convincing advertisement and let that stand for a long time."

"Let him make sure first that it is the strongest, best-words advertisement he can concoct. Then let it stand."

"There are good reasons for this. Suppose a man has glanced at my advertisement for several days in succession but does not read it. Then one morning I might have a weaker, less attractive, less convincing one than usual. Perhaps I lose his possible custom."

"A good advertisement is an argument. Remember that. An argument. Not a boast. It does not shout an unreasonable command to buy something. It explains to you WHY you should buy the article. It appeals to your sense of reason. It should never exaggerate in any way, but tell the mere truth."

Base Claims on Merit.
"An advertisement should never claim for goods more advantages than they

actually possess. An article must have merit—real merit—and its proprietor must fight, every minute, to keep the quality high. Success must not lure him into letting up, one atom, on high quality. If he does, in the course of time he will lose. Some people get to making money fast. Then they think they can lower the quality (and, incidentally, the cost of production), and make more. I have made more because my goods are worth more.

"It is a strange fact that fully two-fifths of the shoes sold throughout the entire week are sold on Saturday. Whether because that is pay day or merely because it is a favorite shopping day I don't know, but the fact remains, and we regulate our advertising accordingly; making it heaviest toward the latter part of the week. Of course, with a magazine (published only once a month) this would be impracticable.

"The Douglas shoe is sold all over the United States and also has a large sale in Canada and Mexico, besides having created more or less of a European demand. I employ 4,000 persons in making and selling my shoes, and I own and operate seventy retail shoe stores in the large cities. The vast area covered by my dealers renders it all the more necessary for me to use local newspapers from one end of the land to the other to advertise my shoes, and made it the more needful for me to study out carefully just what would be the best medium through which I might reach the people at large."

Concerning those 4,000 employees whom Mr. Douglas usually mentioned, an entire article of more than common interest might be written. They form a sort of Utopian community whereof he is the head. At his expense all of them are provided with medical care in illness, and they are in other ways made to feel his personal interest in them.

The labor question assumes none of its harsher features in the Douglas plant. By special agreement between the proprietor and his workmen, all differences, so far as possible, are mutually adjusted. Those which cannot be thus disposed of will by common consent be submitted to the State Board of Arbitration and Conciliation, that body's decision to be binding on both disputants.

In this way strikes and lock-outs are unknown among the Douglas-workmen, and the pleasant feeling has always existed between employer and employed.

Since the beginning of his first campaign of newspaper advertising, in 1883, Mr. Douglas has gradually but steadily become known to nearly every one in America. The face that looks out from the diamond-shaped frame in his advertisements is familiar to all. Yet the face that accompanies this article gives a far more accurate idea of the William L. Douglas of to-day. The character reader may perceive there the reasons why a lowly start in life had no power to check this man's rise.

By judicious newspaper advertising Douglas quickly "outgrew" factory after factory until, in 1892, he erected the huge works now in use at Montello, just out of Boston.

His Payroll Grew.
Here his payroll grew until it numbered its present 4,000 names. Here, too, grew the facilities for turning out shoes in unparalleled numbers—about 37,000 pairs a day being the capacity now. In the jobbing house alone a half million pairs of shoes are carried at all times in stock.

The factory—or factories, for there are two of them practically joined under one series of roofs—cover as much space as the walls of an ancient city, and are arranged in rectilinear lines with wide-reaching wings, like enfolding earthworks.

The man who employed newspaper advertising as the magic wand to raise this mighty structure from the earth still works as hard, in his own way, as did the seven-year-old carrier of wood and pegger of shoes. Outside office hours he is of simple, domestic tastes, his one "rich man's amusement" taking the form of frequent cruises on his big steam yacht, the *Magichiona*.

He has found time, too, as all New England knows, to make a decided impression in the field of politics. A staunch Democrat, he has served in both houses of the State Legislature, framed the arbitration and weekly payment laws, was Mayor of Brockton in 1886, and has four times been chosen as delegate to the national conventions.

His victorious campaign for the Governorship of Massachusetts was such as to awaken national interest. Throughout his term of Governor he conducted his great personal business interests as well as those of the State in such a way that neither suffered from inattention. His wise use of newspaper advertising during the gubernatorial contest was one of the most striking features of the campaign and contributed in no light measure to his triumph.

Why a man like Douglas, having made such giant strides in the world of business, should have sought the Governorship was a puzzle to many. And not a few wondered that he was not satisfied with the success he had already won.

But the man who is satisfied with success would be satisfied with failure. I do not think William L. Douglas would be satisfied with either.