

The Case Book of a Private Detective

True Narratives of Interesting Cases by a Former Operative of the William J. Burns Detective Agency

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THE GOVERNOR'S COUP

How a Righteous Bill Was Forced Through the Legislature

The investigation of the means and ways employed in the election of a certain United States senator, with its muddle of exposures, plots and counterplots, has enabled the newspaper reading public to get an occasional glimpse of the parts that private detectives occasionally are asked to play in the politics of this country. There is a certain type of politician who is a good patron of a certain type of detective agency.

"Go out and get something on this guy," says the unscrupulous politician to the unscrupulous detective, handing him the name of a political opponent.

Then the unscrupulous detective, of which, unfortunately, there are so many in this country, proceeds in the most unscrupulous manner to "get something on" the man who is to be harmed. This is happening every day in this country. The Burns Agency never took any such business, or, for that matter, any sort of business which was not entirely square and above-board. But we have been called into service in several political fights, and there is no more exciting detective work than when two groups of politicians begin to fight one another with the help of "investigators."

A young governor in a certain state which cannot be named had come into office on a reform ticket. The governor I will call Braden. The state of which he was the chief executive is one in which the manufacturing interests predominate, and up to the time of Braden's election these interests had controlled the statehouse and what went on there as completely as if it had been an annex to their business, which is just about what it was. Sometimes the state had a Republican governor, sometimes a Democrat; but it didn't make any difference. He was the manufacturers' governor before he had gone far in his term of office, and the same was true of the state legislature.

The state house here was situated at the top of a hill, from which a street car ran down to the business district of the town. At the foot of the hill, directly down from the main entrance of the statehouse, was a little old hotel. The top floor of this hotel was reserved year in and year out for the lobbyists of the interests. The state fancied that its affairs were administered from the noble structure on top of the hill; but everybody in politics or big business knew that the real capitol was down in the top floor of the old hotel at the foot of the hill. There probably had been millions of dollars paid out to crooked legislators in that old building. Certainly there had been more bills passed down there than on the floor of the house.

Naturally a state with its affairs administered in this fashion did not care much for the welfare of the common people. The factory laws of the state, for instance, were about the most backward in the country. They were all made and passed solely for the benefit of the manufacturers, which, of course, made them inimical to the interests of the workers. A manufacturer in this state could work a man, woman or child of any age under any conditions and for any number of hours; he was not liable for what happened to them in his shop. Wages consequently were low and conditions were bad for all the working people in the factories. They were getting the worst of it in every way, shape and manner; and so they woke up and made a fight and elected Braden governor.

Braden was a remarkable man. He was the son of parents who had ground out their lives in one of the big mills of the state. He had begun his own active existence as a boy in one of those same mills, beginning to work at eleven years of age. The mills didn't kill him, however. He was made of tough stuff, and at eighteen he was working his way through college and playing quarter-back on the football team. He came out of college and went into a little law office up the state. He was a brilliant lawyer and attracted the attention of the interests. They sent for him and made him one of their counsel. He put in five years at it, then he resigned to fight the same interests that he had worked for.

He settled down in one of the big mill towns and opened a small law office and let it be known that he would take any workman's case, no matter what it was or how small the chance was of getting a fee. He admitted that he expected to come near starving at this game, and he did; but he made more friends than any other man in the state. He began to be the people's leader. He was forty-two when the people suddenly discovered that they wanted him for their governor, and into the statehouse he went, the sworn enemy of the interests that had run the state for years.

He carried into office with him enough reform legislators to give the

interests a fright. Two of these representatives were Murray and Schoenlein, who were looked upon as the governor's first lieutenants in the fight for reform.

One of Braden's first acts brought on the inevitable fight between himself and the lobbyists. He introduced through one of his reform legislators a factory inspection bill, and before the lobbyists had fairly got their machinery of delay and suppression in working order the bill swept through both houses and was passed by a big margin. Next was announced the preparation of a child labor bill, and by that time the fight was on.

The lobbyists got their machinery going then. They opened their check books and went into action. They knew how the game was worked. Presently the reform legislators began to look less like reformers. One by one they began to admit that there might be some sense in the contention of the manufacturers that the passage of such a bill might deal the state an irreparable injury. One by one they began to hesitate. The first thing Braden knew he found himself face to face with a proposition like this: He had to get that child labor bill passed or admit that he had lost his legislature—and it didn't look as if he could do it.

That was the situation when the Burns Agency was called in on the job. Braden numbered among his friends an old, retired politician who had read the signs with an experienced eye. Braden insisted on making his fight by calling on the people for support; but this old fox slyly slipped off to New York, and when he returned to the capitol I was on the same train with him, though in a different car.

"Braden will fight above decks," said he, "but we'll be down among the crew and get at the heart of the mutiny."

I went to the old hotel where the lobbyists had their headquarters and registered from a small town up the state.

"What's the latest thing about that fool child labor bill?" I asked the clerk casually as I signed the register. "Does that rube up at the top of the hill think he can put it over, or have we got him sewed up?"

The clerk grinned a little but said: "I don't know a thing about it, sir," and gave me a little wink.

"Good enough," I said, laughing. "I guess we've fixed his clock this time, all right."

I looked over the ground for three or four days, then I went to Braden's old friend and said:

"Is there a reform newspaper in any town in the state that you can get control of?"

"Why?" he asked.

"If there is, buy it," I said. "Buy it, and let me appear as the new owner, who is hanging around that hotel down there waiting for the interests to hand him his bit of coin before he begins his fight on the governor."

He sat and thought for a long time. "Me boy," he said, at last, "that's a big idea you've got in your head, I do believe. Yes, there is a paper we can get control of. It will take \$20,000, but I'm game if you can show me how the thing is going to work out."

"Well," I said, "I've got to get in with that bunch and get in right or there will be nothing doing. They're too wise and too old at the game to let any secrets slip except in their own bunch. I could stay there a year and be no wiser than I am now, unless I got in right. By playing the part of a crooked newspaper owner, willing to sell his soul for money, I'll be one of their own kind."

The paper in question was a small daily in a nearby town. It was in bad financial condition, and Braden's old friend soon raised the money for its purchase. I got a down and out newspaper man from New York to come out and take charge of it, and the day the ownership changed hands we came out with a front page editorial announcing a change of policy. Where before the paper had sought only to harm business—in a Pickwickian sense—and so to harm all classes, it was now going to help business all it could. We did not say so in so many words, but we hinted that we were not at all in favor of Governor Braden's "drastic and unreasonable onslaughts on the great interests that have made the prosperity of the state possible." My newspaper man was a peach; he could write as if he really meant anything he said.

farber, attorney for the Union Milling company. I want to congratulate you on that masterly editorial on the governor this morning."

"Have you seen what the governor's own papers say about it, Mr. Goldfarber?" I asked, and I showed him a reform paper that I had just bought, which bore the headlines: "Cronkton News in the Hands of the Grafters—Formerly Respectable Paper Sells Out to the Interests."

We laughed heartily over the story and adjourned to the bar. I told Goldfarber that I had bought the Cronkton News because I thought it a good business proposition—if it was run right. There was plenty of advertising to be had if its editorial policy was right. I proposed to keep it right. I hoped Mr. Goldfarber would remember me if he happened to speak to the advertising manager of the Union Milling company.

He certainly did. Next day there came by telegraph an order for a full page ad to be run daily for a month, and a check in full payment for the same came in the first mail.

To show its gratitude the Cronkton News ran a laudatory article about the Union Milling company and about the men who were at its head. My editor made the company look like the foundation upon which the welfare of the state rested and its owners like unselfish benefactors of the human race.

This was kept up until five large companies were running big ads in the News and until we had written them up favorably. I was on friendly terms with the five lobbyists who represented these concerns. They were the men who really had been running the state, and obviously they were the ones who were behind the defection of Governor Braden's one-time reform legislature. If I could learn what they knew about the change of heart that had come over the representatives after the labor bill had been introduced, I would have finished my case.

One day Goldfarber came to my room and said: "Suppose you send a man up to interview Murray and Schoenlein, those celebrated reform friends of the governor. They might have something interesting to say."

I took the hint and wired my editor to get on the job himself. Murray

thing," I said; "but for editorials its rates are very high."

"How high?" he asked.

"Twenty thousand dollars a year," I said.

"I'll raise it before noon," said he. In that way I got the money back that had been paid for the Cronkton News.

I had decided that Murray and Schoenlein would be easier to "get" than any of the lobbyists. They were a pair of ignorant fellows who until their election as reform representatives had worked as mechanics for a living. I knew that they were now enjoying a prosperity that would soon turn their heads. I decided to help the turning.

The two legislators were staying at the smartest hotel in the city. Presently there were two stylish young women staying at the hotel who flattered the pair we were after by seeking an introduction. The women were in the pay of Braden's foxy old friend. It didn't take long to make the inexperienced Murray and Schoenlein fancy that they were a pair of kings. They began to buy wine in the palm room of the hotel, bought a motor car each, and generally began to play the parts of a couple of fools caught by the attractions of a couple of clever, smart-looking women.

It doesn't take long for that kind of a pace to bring out the bragart in a man, especially if there is a good-looking woman to brag to. Within two weeks our women had heard all about how Murray and Schoenlein had been reached. They had been given \$5,000 each by Goldfarber in his room in the little hotel where the lobbyists hung out.

"And there's lots more where that came from," boasted Murray. One evening one of the women said: "There's a friend of ours stopping at this hotel who is interested in a bill for a dam across a river up the state. He said he would like to meet some representatives who would listen to reason. He's a millionaire."

Murray and Schoenlein said they wouldn't mind meeting the friend if it could be done in secret. It was a meeting was arranged in a room at a hotel, and they met Dawson, of the Burns Agency, acting the part of a millionaire. Dawson had his bill already drawn and showed it to them at once. It purported to be a bold-faced

gence of Governor Braden's old friend. There Governor Braden, his four friends and myself searched them and found and identified carefully the money and bill that Dawson had given them in the hotel. The gags were then removed from their mouths, and in the locked library we went to work on them.

Braden said: "I want to get that child labor bill passed, and I've been forced to take means like this to do it. You're going to help me pass it in order to save yourselves from exposure. I don't want to hurt you. You've been a couple of d—n fools, but I think I can save you and make useful citizens of you. If I can't, I can put you in the penitentiary, where you won't do any harm for some time. Now, you are going to give me the dope on how the legislature has been bribed by the lobbyists, first, and after that you are going to vote and work for that labor bill as if nothing untoward had happened. Either that or you are going to the pen. Take your choice."

We worked over them all that night. When we were through we had a detailed and signed confession of how they had been bribed, how other legislators had been bribed, and who had done the work.

"So far so good," said Braden. "Now we want the fellows who did the bribing. You say Goldfarber passed you the money. All right, you go and call Goldfarber to a room in the hotel down there and tell him you need \$500 apiece at once. We will pick out the room for you."

They did this. They engaged a room and sent for Goldfarber. He came in, smiling, and they told him what they wanted.

"If we don't get it we'll forget you paid us anything to fight that labor bill," said Murray, obeying Braden's instructions.

"Tut, tut, boys," said Goldfarber. "What's a thousand dollars between friends?"

He was handing over the money when the two photographers we had stationed behind openings cut in the walls of the room shot off their flashes.

Goldfarber ran like a thief. Next day Braden sent a note to him telling him that if opposition to the child labor bill were continued those two photographs would be published. He

Hope in the Middle Ages

The description of the Middle Ages as "the modern world in embryo" is never more true than when applied to the sphere of industrial life, but even here it cannot be accepted literally without reservation. The London Globe remarks. Workmen were combining in order to obtain higher wages and better conditions of work or to settle disagreements with masters and men. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, although, of course, their associations were on a much smaller scale than those of the workmen of the present day, significant as their disputes seem, compared to our own, they possess a considerable interest for us, because, while the action of the men in the two periods exhibits a remarkable continuity of aims and methods, the efforts to end the troubles made by both the masters and by the arbitrators called in to judge between them and their employes illustrate the extraordinary difference between medieval and modern views of the rights of labor and show how enormously the position of the workman has improved.

Curb Placed Upon Combination. The black death, which devastated England in 1348-49, was especially virulent among the poor and carried off large numbers of laborers, those who survived, realizing their own value, perhaps for the first time, refused to work unless they received much higher wages than they had been receiving. The government responded by passing the statute of laborers, which forbade any one to take higher wages than he had received before the outbreak of the plague, and both "givers" and "takers" of excess wages were punished.

The very year that the statute was passed there was trouble among the shearmen of London; the masters complained that if a dispute arose between one of them and his man the servant went to his fellow workmen and "by covin and conspiracy between them" they ordered that none among them should work until the said master and his servant had come to an agreement. To put a stop to this state of affairs they made an ordinance, with the sanction of the mayor and aldermen, that in the future disputes should be settled by the wardens of the company and that servants refusing to submit to them should be handed over to the mayor for punishment. Later regulations required all members of the craft to take a stringent oath of obedience to the wardens and forbade any shearmen to give work to a servant at variance with his master.

A Strike in the Year 1397. In 1397 the Journeymen Cordwainers were charged before the mayor of London with forming an illegal fraternity and with assaulting one of the trade who would not join it. The ringleaders did not deny the accusation and also admitted that a Dominican friar had agreed to petition the pope for a confirmation of the fraternity, so that no man, on pain of excommunication, would dare to interfere with it, a deed which the mayor declared would weaken the liberties of the city and the power of its officers. He consequently committed them to Newgate, to remain there until he should be better advised what to do with them, and his final decision is not recorded.

The letter books of the city of London contain accounts of the suppression of workmen's associations in three trades—the saddlers, the tailors and the bakers. They are all very much alike, and it will suffice to quote one of them. The master saddlers asserted that the serving men, or "yeomen," oftentimes held meetings, and that they demanded double the wages they used to have. The mayor, to whom the complaint was made, ordered the representatives of the two parties to confer together and report the result to him.

Meetings Were Prohibited. On the appointed day they returned, and the serving men assured him that they had not tried to raise wages, and begged to be allowed to continue their meetings, but all to no purpose. He decreed that they should henceforth be under the rule of the Masters of the Guild, and that they should no longer have a fraternity of their own or hold meetings. At the same time, however, he enjoined the masters to govern them properly, and promised to afford them speedy justice if grievances were unduly inflicted upon them, and this is the only indication in all the cases we have considered of any sympathy whatever being shown with the men's point of view. Submission to the rule of the masters or wardens must have been peculiarly irksome, when, as happened in some guilds, the journeymen were debarred from any share in electing them.

Labor Troubles in English Towns. London was by no means the only place which suffered from labor troubles. The fullers of Bristol ordained that if servants rebelled and would not work they should be brought before the mayor, to be dealt with according to law and reason. The journeymen weavers of Coventry formed a guild three times, but each time it was put down. On one occasion they not only refused to work themselves, but also prevented other working. Sometimes the corporation, strong as it was, could not cope with the journeymen, and was obliged to apply to the crown for assistance.



Within two weeks our women had heard all about how Murray and Schoenlein had been reached.

and Schoenlein up to now had been steadily standing by the governor, pledging themselves to fight for his reforms to the last ditch. But the interviews they gave to my editor were made of different stuff. They had been voting and talking against the best interests of the state. They would stop doing this. The governor was a headstrong fool, who persisted in trying to ruin the state in order to further his own ambitions.

"The bunch has got to them," said my man, reporting to me. "I could see it in their eyes. They've been taken care of by your friends the lobbyists."

We printed the interview and editorially lauded Murray and Schoenlein for being courageous enough to do their duty by the state in spite of the lash of a political boss like the governor.

Next day Goldfarber came to me with an editorial which he had written and which he wanted me to run.

"The Cronkton News will run any

steal of a river to make power for a mill about to be established.

"I'll ante \$1,000 apiece to you fellows," said Dawson, "if you'll introduce the bill. I'll pay anything you need to get it passed. And when she's through I'll give you each \$2,500."

"Give us the thousand now," said Murray.

Dawson paid it out. Schoenlein took the bill and stowed it away in an inner pocket.

"I'll go through sure," he said; "we've got this legislature by the horns."

Governor Braden, four of his friends and myself heard and saw all that went on from peep-holes in the next room. The money that Dawson handed them had been marked and viewed by all of us that morning.

Murray and Schoenlein left the hotel and went down a side street. They hadn't gone far before they were seized, gagged, dumped into a closed motor car and whirled up to the resi-

dent him prints of the photos, too. Goldfarber took a look at them, and pecked up and left the capital—forever.

The threatened opposition to the labor bill did not materialize. Various legislators were notified that they were released from their obligations to the interests and were at liberty to vote as they pleased. They voted with Braden and the bill went through.

A few days after its passage the Cronkton News quietly went out of business. A lot of people wondered why; it had seemed to be doing so well of late. Murray and Schoenlein resigned from the house soon after the labor bill was passed. They said that politics was too strenuous for them.

Shock Absorber. To absorb shocks that might destroy tungsten electric lamps suspended by cords there has been invented a wire spring with hooks at each end to engage the cord.