

Mr. Murphy—the Politicians' Politician

By RICHARD BARRY

AN artist in love with his art. A politician who loved politics for the sake of politics. A gamester enjoying the athleticism of his game. Not for the spoils only, though never without the spoils; not for victory only, though jealously cultivating victory. I think if we accept this view of Charles Francis Murphy all his life can be explained by its light.

First, what was his material profit? His estate was surprisingly small, probably less than Richard Croker's, which was much less than expected. As money goes, he was a very ordinary millionaire in a city containing over a hundred persons each with an income of a million a year and several thousand millionaires. Money, clearly, was not his first god.

Yet it must be noted that he was a thrifty, marked member of that race which has produced Henry Ford and Andrew Mellon. Before he was twenty-five years old he had saved \$500 from day wages, at a time when two dollars a day was extra good pay. Therefore it is not fair to assume that *all* of even his comparatively small fortune came solely from political sources. He knew how to save, he knew how to guard an investment.

Consistently, from the beginning he refused all tribute from gambling and from the social evil, formerly the most conspicuous elements of graft. The "cleanliness" of New York in the present generation is due as much to Mr. Murphy as to the change in public attitude toward gambling and prostitution.

There was a saying long credited to Mr. Murphy, "Tammany takes only honest graft." Whether or not he ever uttered the words, he abided and forced his associates to abide by their significance. It is not necessary to examine the obvious contradiction in the term to realize that by "honest graft" the "Boss" meant something like a broker's commission due him and his associates for "placing" the contracts.

This "broker's commission," this "honest graft," amounted seldom to more than ten per cent of the amount of the contract, and it had to be split in many ways. If Mr. Murphy came in for any, it was only a small share of it, and I have talked with one of his friends who asserts with conviction that Mr. Murphy himself always scrupulously avoided personal profit from municipal contracts. Many times, and especially in the later years, there was no "commission" at all. One of his later edicts was, "Tammany must keep out of the schools." The

IN the weeks just preceding the Tammany leader's death, Mr. Barry had three talks with him. As a result of these talks, Mr. Barry here presents Mr. Murphy as the politicians' politician; as one might describe Keats as the poets' poet and Turgenev as the novelists' novelist. To Mr. Barry such differing men as W. J. Connors, Will Hays, Hiram Johnson, R. M. La Follette, General Leonard Wood, and the late President Harding acknowledged their interest in Mr. Murphy's methods and respect for his mastery of the technique of politics. Mr. Barry's article seems to us a sympathetic but not favoring, a human but judicial, interpretation.

The Outlook's view of Murphy as a tribal chieftain was given last week.

Boss's reply to criticism of the taking of any "commission" was that "some one would get it; why not us?"

The life-work of the Boss was almost entirely devoted to other considerations than securing and parceling out graft. For years he stood as a bulwark within Tammany, staunchly preventing the looting of city and State, yet such was the vulnerable nature of his place and history, and the history of the organization, that he could neither claim nor accept the proper credit.

In one of my talks with Mr. Murphy I said: "Why don't you dissipate some false ideas about Tammany by saying publicly that your chief function is the establishment of a sort of clearing-house for political ideas; that you have equipped yourself as a kind of barometer to register the public pulse on candidates and issues, and that you can remain on the job only as long as you guess right?"

He replied: "That's it. Write it yourself. You got it straight."

I asked him how he got his equipment. He referred me to others, being either modest or else cognizant of the fact that when a man has many tongues to wag for him he does not need to wag his own.

As a relaying point between the people and officialdom, he came near being

selfless. For instance, in commenting on the observation that Tammany might prove a burden to Governor Smith in securing votes for his Presidential nomination outside of New York State, Mr. Murphy said to me: "If it will help Smith I'll agree to step into an airship the night he's elected and get out for good."

His relation to woman suffrage is also a case in point. Several leaders of the Women's Party say he turned the National tide in favor of the Suffrage Amendment. Though his personal predilection was against woman's suffrage, his sole object was to interpret the popular will, but through officials of his selection.

He came to rule, not by accident, but by design, the alert design of his own puissant mind. When he was thirty, the leader of his Assembly district, Eddie Hagan, died. Pending an election it was up to the city leader, then Richard Croker, to appoint a successor. It was night, but Murphy heard that a rival would approach the Boss early in the morning. He set about to get an emissary to Croker that night, and he did. The emissary had to go to a Turkish bath. At first the Boss was annoyed—doubly annoyed that he should be disturbed in his repose and that the decencies of recent demise should be so rudely overborne. But, on second thought, he conferred the district leadership on "the young fellow who beat the starting gun."

After four years, when the old Boss had retired, and when his appointed successor, Lewis Nixon, had failed, and a triumvirate was appointed composed of MacMahon, Haffen, and Murphy, and the triumvirate came to sit in meeting and have its picture taken, the youngest, least conspicuous, least-known member, Mr. Murphy, without canvassing his colleagues, without hesitation, sat in the central chair.

How did he manage it? So far as MacMahon and Haffen were concerned one of them has often said that it was like an eruption of nature; when anything was to be done, Murphy was on the job; no one ever asked for him in vain; he seemed to have no time for himself, but all his time for Tammany. Haffen lived in the Bronx; MacMahon on the West Side; Murphy within four blocks of the Hall. The others came once in a while; Murphy practically lived there, and if not actually there he always could be reached in a few minutes.

In the slang of his followers, he was "no buck passer" and "no stringer." He

said "yes" or "no" promptly to everything. And he always kept his word.

Not everything Tammany does is sinister. For instance, I know an apartment-house owner in Manhattan who, a few years ago, was on the verge of a \$50,000 loss because he could not proceed with a building owing to delays in the municipal departments of inspection. In desperation, and at the suggestion of a friend, he made a trip to Fourteenth Street and saw Mr. Murphy, and told him his grievance. The interview occupied less than five minutes. At the end of it Mr. Murphy turned to the phone and "fixed" the matter. The municipal departments began functioning within an hour. For this "service" no price was either asked or given, and the beneficiary was not a member of the organization, though I will add that since that time he has voted the Tammany ticket straight in every election.

The general outlines of the new zoning law were settled in Mr. Murphy's office. The Boss was called in only because the contrary interests and ideas at stake could not agree and all longed for solution. He listened; gave his decision; and his decision, in which self-interest, and even Tammany's interest, played no part, was final.

The largess of Mr. Murphy was similar to that of the chieftains of his tribe before, with, and after him, but it was a little more instantaneous and unobtrusive. He made it a rule never to ignore any appeal of distress from his own district. No question was ever asked as to political, racial, or church allegiance. There was not even any question as to the merit of the claim, save that it be OK'd by some voter. Appeals have been made to him at midnight, as he left the Hall on his way home, for coal or provisions, and he has had the relief delivered before morning. He never waited for the next day; he did it then. A fund was made up of contributions from others in the district, but when it ran out Mr. Murphy always supplied any deficit. That charity was practically a bottomless pit. When thanks were offered him, he always diverted them with, "Don't thank me; it's the organization."

Like Orientals, New Yorkers, high and low, love despotism. It cuts red tape; it avoids the delays of bureaucracy; it administers both mercy and punishment swiftly; it elevates lowly favorites sensationally and degrades respectable altitude with crude cynicism; above all, in a city whose gods are efficiency and action it introduces these deities into the complexities of politics, and especially does it render gracious for its friends this introduction.

Mr. Murphy was, in this sense, a despot.

If the theory of democracy, an enlightened citizenry individually and constantly vigilant to maintain its functions unimpaired, were a fact, there would have been no Mr. Murphy.

Consider the method of his choice. The presumably élite of the party are selected in the primaries, where all good citizens should vote. Do they?

About two thousand thus form the county committee, and they meet once a year. No one has ever seen a complete attendance of the county committee.

In the last twenty-two New York county committees one could find names of National importance in nearly every phase of life; men of the highest education, of the most finished expression, of honorable attainment in the professions and in business. Invariably they willingly abdicated in favor of a man of no formal education, who spoke ungrammatically, though very seldom; who never issued a written order; who began life as a saloon-keeper, and who ended it striving to overcome the handicap of his origin in securing the selection of his favorite for the National Presidency.

As Emerson said, power flows irresistibly to him who can and will wield it. Here was a lowly Warwick who knew how to wait, how to build power slowly but surely. His genius was constructive; it synchronized with the growth of the city of which he was as much a part as its subway. He spent his first twelve years as leader of the Hall in cementing the structure of city solidarity, precinct by precinct, ward by ward. He then went into New York State, county by county, in the same way. It was an arithmetical progression. In eight years he "possessed" the State of New York, the first Tammany chief who had dared aspire above the Bronx. For two years past he had been spreading beyond, through the Nation. At his death he had as an ally for his organization, within the Democratic party, Wisconsin, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and (*sub rosa*) Ohio, Indiana, New Jersey, and Illinois, with perhaps others.

His method changed with the years. Before he was fifty he used the mailed fist; later the gloved hand. When he read Devery out of the Hall, his was a brutal, frontal assault; it was a fight to the finish; either he or Devery had to be destroyed.

However, once having established a reputation as a hard hitter, he let it work for him and achieved his best effects through delightful contrasts. When in 1920 there was a revolt among a small group of young district leaders, engineered by Hearst, who gave them wide publicity as the "new rulers of Tammany," Murphy let the thing spread until it reached a formal vote in the county

committee and the "revolting" youngsters had shown their hand. Then, after they had been defeated in open meeting, Murphy sent for them to come to "headquarters"—instantly. Not one but went expecting to be deposed, humiliated, and marked for indefinite enmity from the Boss. That would be in line with precedent.

However, Mr. Murphy was oil itself. He softly told them more than they themselves knew of the abortive effort to oust him, assured each that he would be retained as district leader, and he concluded by giving each some special mark of favor. Thus did he, on occasion, pour cement into his structure.

Remember McClellan, Sulzer, and Hearst. McClellan, made Mayor of New York by Murphy, set about to displace the Boss, but the moment he was out of office Murphy "broke" him easily. Sulzer, put by Murphy into the Governor's chair, turned to rend his benefactor; but Murphy had him impeached and cast out of office. Hearst, frequently used by Murphy as an ally, tried now and then to leave his orbit as a satellite of Tammany; but Murphy always outguessed him, and in the last instance—that of the 1923 judiciary ticket—brought upon him overwhelming defeat. And yet when McClellan and Sulzer and Hearst came humbly back to the Hall, Murphy accepted each in turn, wiping out McClellan's past, forgiving Sulzer, and out-salaaming Hearst.

His ideal of service to Tammany always subordinated his own feelings. If all other political ideals of service were as faithfully observed as Mr. Murphy observed his, much less would have to be written either for or against Tammany.

If he did realize that he could serve his own tribe best by serving the general public well (which is claimed for him with excellent logic), was Mr. Murphy too highly paid for that service?

Political moralists easily may here stress their points of view, but let us consider it from a monetary point of view. Job E. Hedges, as receiver of the Metropolitan street railways, has a salary of \$50,000 a year, which is but half the amount paid Shonts for a similar job. His is the receivership of a physical property, somewhat limited, that in a generation or two may be scrapped in favor of newer transportation systems.

Mr. Murphy, on the other hand, was the self-appointed receiver in political bankruptcy of a vast community incompetent to handle its own governmental affairs. For this service he modestly voted himself an income probably less than that received by Mr. Hedges, while he carried on, in trust as it were, the political functions of a commonwealth of six million people.

A Painting by Albert Besnard



Courtesy of M. Knoedler & Co., New York

Gabriele d'Annunzio

M. Besnard, who has recently visited America and whose paintings have attracted much attention in an exhibition held at the Knoedler Galleries in New York City, is regarded as one of the outstanding figures in the art circles of France. In an interview in the "Herald Tribune" he is quoted as saying: "In France you still find paintings you call mad. But many are turning back to the classics, to the old masters, and particularly to Ingres. Cubistic and vorticist art has quite passed out of France. But just now there is not one school but many. The present tendencies incline neither one way nor another. It is a period of transition." The picture we have selected for reproduction indicates the sanity and strength, as well as the persuasive æsthetic appeal, that distinguish M. Besnard's own work.

The Great Coolidge Mystery

Special Correspondence from Washington

By STANLEY FROST

POLITICAL Washington has at last awakened to the fact that President Coolidge is getting an immense and increasing backing from the American public. The recognition of this rather amazing phenomenon is grudging and reluctant, to be sure, and tinged with a sort of blinking incredulity, but it can no longer be overlooked. Its consequences in the political situation are far-reaching. Democrats are made more cautious by it, and Republicans more aggressive.

The Sense of Power

ACCCEPTANCE of Coolidge as a power in himself, apart from his office, has been the slower because it has been so utterly unexpected. It violates almost all notions of what a man should be and do to win public favor. It flies in the face of every political rule of thumb. There were, indeed, some who, when President Harding died, did hope that Mr. Coolidge would "develop qualities of leadership," but comparatively few believed that he could, and almost none suspected that just as he was, with his known character of caution, calmness, silence, and retirement, he could become a dominant figure. He has not changed, he has shown little of what is usually considered leadership, yet his strength is as unmistakable as it is surprising. It is the one strength of the Republican party.

It is also Washington's pet mystery, and politicians are scratching their heads to solve it, without much success so far. The question of what it is that feeds the greatness of leaders has always been a fascinating and perplexing one; in this case it is more perplexing than usual, and of even more importance. For the man who can find what makes Coolidge popular will have solved the problem of our present American state of mind, will know how to control or forecast opinion, and will hold the keys to the coming campaign.

His present popularity is immense, obvious, and growing, though it is neither vociferous nor enthusiastic. The question to be settled during the campaign is whether it will last. There is grave doubt of this among some of the Republican leaders. "The Coolidge strength is based on a myth which is likely to explode at any moment," one of them told me some weeks ago. "I can't understand

how it's lasted so long, and don't dare hope it will last till November." Yet since he made this remark it has grown enormously. Beyond question, the election will hinge on it.

There are evidences of the Coolidge strength on every hand. One has only to note the applause which greets him when—rarely—his picture is thrown on a movie screen. Any one who reads many papers has been surprised to find how much support is given him even in journals which are strongly Democratic.

Much more concrete is the evidence of the primaries. In State after State the Coolidge vote has run far ahead of his friends' best hopes, and this even in the Middle West, where he was supposed to be weak. Nor is it true that this is due either to the use of money or to extreme organization pressure, as has been charged. There has been no need to spend much money, since his nomination was conceded from before the time of the earliest primaries except by his most bitter and optimistic enemies. Also the organizations have been none too friendly, and, if they had been, no organization could account for the weight of the indorsement given. That can come only from public favor.

The Senatorial Repulse

MOST striking of all has been the collapse of the attack on him in the Senate. The stage had been carefully set for a Roman holiday, with Coolidge as the Christian martyr. Yet, though weeks have passed, the play has not begun. And when the extremely unterrified Democrats in the upper house find reason to abandon so pleasant a promised pastime, it may safely be assumed that they have run into a staggering influence.

This strength of the President's has come to him in the face of handicaps which were enough to justify any skepticism. In the first place, his personality lacks almost all the elements usually thought necessary for popular appeal. He is anything but a "mixer;" he has about him nothing romantic or inspiring; no such trick of coining catch phrases as Wilson owned, nor power of inflaming emotions as Roosevelt did. He has no dash, no color, no flaming heat. He is a pitifully poor self-advertiser. And he has made no effort to imitate any of these qualities or to be other than himself.

He has not, either, assumed any vivid leadership; indeed, little leadership of any kind. He has made no visible effort to force legislation or spectacular changes in administration, advanced no thrilling theories, and sounded no clarion calls. Worse, he has inherited an Administration weakened by scandals, and has been given little and grudging support from his party. Yet he has struck back at his attackers only once, and has not "taken his case to the people."

Where the President Failed

FINALLY, any politician will tell you that, while he has played politics, he has not always played well. His choice of Slep as private secretary, his permitting Denby to resign, his waiting so long before ousting Daugherty and then acting on a minor and doubtful issue, his long delay in calling his hecklers to time and then basing his attack on a small and lawyer-like technicality instead of on the broader questions of fairness and good government which were involved and on which the public was ready to support him—all these are generally considered blunders, both by his friends and his enemies.

Even his warmest supporters grieve, too, over the chances he has missed. There were numberless openings for plays to the galleries while the scandals were at their height. He could have demanded resignations right and left, ordered officials suspended pending trial, taken the lead in a dusty house-cleaning. Instead he did only what apparently simply had to be done. The politicians think with longing of what Wilson or Roosevelt would have made of such a situation. How, they ask, can any such man as he hold public support?

Now that they are finally convinced that he does just that, however, they are beginning to discover reasons and explanations for it—reasons which did not occur to them till the result was forced on their attention. Talks with many men, both in and out of Congress and of the political organizations, show a consensus on certain of them.

"He shines by contrast with Congress;" "Congress is so discredited that every attack on him has been a boost;" "The Democrats have overplayed their hand and he wins on the roorback." These are the most pat and prompt of