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The Roosevelt-Smith Affair

By Frank R. Kent

If Al Smith now calls Governor Roosevelt "that feller," will he, grown fat and rich and soft, become a Democratic Borah and clasp Franklin to his bosom at the Democratic convention? The inside story, the real reasons why politicians act as the public sees them act, the true conditions behind the platform thunder, these are the humanly interesting phases of politics. It is in the analysis of these human and practical sides of politics that Frank Kent excels. He will write for SCRIBNER'S each month until the political conventions.

It is risky business to write of politics at this stage of the game, when so much time must elapse between the day of writing and the day of printing. There may be a complete change of political scenery. With due allowance for this chance, I am going, nevertheless, to present now what I conceive to be the facts about this matter of selecting a Democratic Presidential nominee which the national convention of the party will settle in about five months. It is not proposed here to deal with issues, policies or principles. They will come later.

It is the personalities that first engage the attention. There are two of them—vibrant, vital fellows who loom so large in the Democratic picture as to obscure nearly every other figure—Franklin D. Roosevelt, Governor of New York, leading aspirant in the nomination race, and Alfred E. Smith, ex-Governor of that State, his party's candidate in 1928, and its titular leader now. Around these two the whole business revolves. Together they could easily dominate the whole Democratic situation. But they are apart—and that makes a great human political story—because their former friendship is party history. Also, it holds out the promise of a great, colorful fight in the convention. There is no space here

to recount in detail the Smith-Roosevelt association prior to 1930. Nor is it worth while to argue whether Smith is under obligations to Roosevelt for twice placing him in nomination for the Presidency, and yielding to Smith's personal plea to run for Governor to help him. Just as good an argument can be made on the other side.

It is contended that nominating Smith was an honor many coveted and gave Roosevelt a national prominence he would not otherwise have had. It is further contended that persuading him to run for Governor gave him his chance at the Presidency. So far as obligation goes it seems to be an even break, but it isn't important either way. The interesting point is how, when and why did these loving party brothers separate—and are they going to stay that way? No one can tell with surety but it looks exceedingly likely. At the moment, all of Al's friends, personal as well as political, are exceedingly hostile to Roosevelt, and all of Al's enemies are for him. The dry West and South, which accepted Al reluctantly in 1928, are for Roosevelt with considerable solidity. They give him such strength that it is perfectly clear, had he Al, he would be nominated by acclamation. Even

with an inactive, neutral, uninterested Al, he probably would be named on an early ballot. But with an Al militantly determined that he shall not be named, actively asserting his power, leading the fight against him, why then he is sunk and a compromise candidate—Baker or Ritchie—will be inevitable. Because, there is not the least doubt at all that with the “favorite son” delegations, always ready to join a movement to stop the leader, Al has a sufficient number of States east of the Mississippi and north of the Ohio to muster more than the necessary one-third to exercise the veto power. Practically every posted political observer agrees as to that. The question is will he do it? Will he go the limit and, rallying behind him the business as well as political elements in the East, which regard Roosevelt with distaste, thrust him aside? Or, grown fattish and richish and softish, will he shrink from a battle, and sulkily acquiesce in the selection—perhaps even name the man he does not want? Those in best position to know the real Smith feelings are of the opinion he will not shrink. So am I.



And that brings us back to the cause of the breach. Various explanations have been advanced but none seems quite adequate. It has, for example, been asserted that the real trouble is that Smith would like another chance at the Presidency and naturally resents the Roosevelt candidacy for that reason. But that is hard to believe, and I do not believe it. For one thing, to accept that you must regard Smith as a dog-in-the-mangerish person, who can't get what he wants himself but does not want any one else to have it. Concede that once a man gets within reach of the White House the desire to attain that goal never leaves him. Concede that Smith knows, as every one knows, that if he could run against Hoover again his chances of winning would be infinitely better. Concede that he would give a year of his life for another shot at the target. Concede all that, and still the argument does not hold, because the fact that Smith cannot be nominated in the next convention is too clear to dispute. I know of no balanced politician or informed observer who thinks he could. If Smith himself thinks so, then he has completely lost his sense of reality. Four years ago he was the four times elected Governor of New York, the single outstanding man in

the party, the logical and inevitable nominee. There was but one argument against him—his religion—and it was unthinkable the Democratic party could reject him on that ground. The South and the West reluctantly accepted him and the Democratic leaders in those sections went through a dreadful campaign that nearly destroyed many of them—and really did some. They underestimated the terrible forces of bigotry and unreason and they paid a pretty big price.

Smith is in no such position now as in 1928. He is not now a triumphantly re-elected Governor of the greatest State. He is a defeated candidate for President, with vastly more party strength in the East than any other individual but with a lowered prestige and no demand at all for his renomination from any section. On the contrary, the mere suggestion of having to make another campaign for Smith, with the opening up again of the religious issue which would be involved, offends and affrights the South and West to such an extent that they would stampede in any direction to avoid it. To a considerable extent this accounts for the degree with which these sections, almost without solicitation, have flopped into the Roosevelt lap. Even in the so-called Smith States of the East, where the organization leaders will follow his advice, there is neither expectation nor real desire for his renomination. So far as Smith is concerned, the door is closed. That is the simple truth and there seems no sense in not stating it. Moreover, there is every reason to think that Smith knows this as well as any one else.

There is at this writing a possibility that he may enter the Presidential primaries in certain New England States, as he is being urged to do, but that will be for the purpose of holding these delegations away from Roosevelt rather than as a bona-fide candidate himself. He is far too clear-headed for that, and so I think the idea that the breach is due to the Smith feeling that he should again be the party standard bearer can be dismissed.

By some it has been held that the resentment of Smith dates from last March when the Roosevelt influence frustrated the Raskob effort to have the national committee adopt his wet proposal for the convention. Undoubtedly that endeared Mr. Roosevelt to Southern and Western dries, who felt he sympathized with their acute local problems and that the Raskob-Smith combination was bent on thrusting upon them a situation fraught with per-

sonal political peril. This may have accentuated Smith's feeling and it was at this time that he curtly declined to answer the question of whether he favored Roosevelt's candidacy, but it wasn't the cause of the separation. The rift was discernible to the acute before that. The committee incident did inflame Mr. Raskob but that was a trivial matter. Mr. Raskob in politics is exactly what Mr. Smith makes him. By himself, he is just a naïve amateur with an inaccurate idea of the importance his money mortgage on the party gives him and an amazing awkwardness at the political game. He is a party liability, not an asset. Incidentally, he seems in a fair way to get most of his money back, which, even in this time of unemployment, is a good thing. Immediately after the convention, regardless of who the nominee may be, the obscurity from which he sprang in 1928 will completely envelop him again.

To return to the rift, it is suggested that perhaps Roosevelt is not wet enough for Smith and he dislikes Roosevelt's flirtation with the dries. That hardly holds water because Roosevelt is flatly and unequivocally on record for repeal, has been as wet as Smith in two campaigns, personally has the same views of Prohibition, has repeatedly expressed them. As for flirting with the dries, Smith is too intelligent not to know that you have to have dry votes from dry States to get two-thirds or even a majority of the Democratic convention. He knows, as every one knows, that the wet States by themselves cannot nominate. If he were friendly to Roosevelt he would regard it as merely sensible politics not to stress Prohibition inopportunistically until his nomination is assured. If he had been friendly toward Franklin he would hardly object to that remark a year or so ago that Prohibition is a secondary issue and economic questions of first importance now. Nearly everybody thinks that anyhow.

Then, it has been said that Smith did not care for Roosevelt's sponsorship of the Seabury investigation of the Tammany city government. Obviously that is weak. Smith is just as much revolted at graft as Roosevelt, probably would have done the same thing in favoring the investigation, but he would have done it with a great deal more vigor and force and effectiveness. It was not that, nor was it the Forestry Amendment, which last November Smith opposed and Roosevelt favored, nor is it the Roosevelt taxation policy or power policy. In the main these were Smith policies and the deviations

are not in any way vital. Some time ago a story was current in Washington that last May, on his way back from French Lick, Roosevelt, stopping off in Ohio, talked with a friend of Smith's and generally conveyed the idea that as Governor, Smith had gotten a great deal more credit than he was entitled to, or words to that effect. This, it was said, was promptly relayed back to Smith and made Al mad. If it happened—of course it did, because Al is very proud—and justly so—of his Gubernatorial record. There is nothing he would more quickly resent than an aspersion upon it. But it did not happen—at least I completely disbelieve it. In the first place, it is merely a Washington story, and there is no place in the world where more unfounded stories are put into circulation than in Washington. There are people there who make a business—almost a profession—of manufacturing and purveying them. The amazing thing is the extraordinary number of people who believe them—or rather it is amazing until you look at the shape of their heads. In the second place, Mr. Roosevelt may not be the most intelligent man in the world, but certainly he is much too intelligent to make a comment like that at this time about Smith—or, anyway, if he had to make the comment, to pick out a man known to be close to Smith as an audience. The thing is just incredible and can be dismissed.



I have talked with a good many people close to both these men as to the reasons for the rift. Some of them contribute one thing, some another; not one can cite a concrete incident that seems adequate. My own conviction is that there has been no single big cause, but that what happened in this case is what happens in so many cases where men drift apart—it is due to an accumulation of little things, and inherent defects in temperament that prevent freedom of communication and build up a strained relation. Smith is a proud man slightly touched, as many proud men are, with vanity. So is Roosevelt. They are proud in different ways, vain about different things, but each proud—and each vain. It seems probable that Smith, as the titular party leader, resented the fact that Roosevelt has not deferred to him more both as to New York affairs and national politics. On the other hand, Roosevelt probably from the start had a desire to show that he was not, as Governor, under Smith's tutelage either

as to state administration or party politics. Also, it is certain that, pretend as he has for months that nothing is farther from his thoughts than the Presidency, from the day of his re-election White House dreams have occupied the Roosevelt mind day and night. Every re-elected New York Governor is filled with these dreams. It is natural he should be. The New York Governorship is the great springing board for the Presidency. It is absurd for a New York Governor, twice elected, to pretend the year before the campaign that he gives no thought to national politics. Particularly it is absurd when his closest political friends scour the country for delegates and are conducting an active campaign for him, and his Presidential chances have been discussed in every newspaper in the country for two years. It is easy to conceive that a lack of frankness on this subject should have irritated Smith, that he may have felt he was entitled to be asked at the start for his support and approval. It is also easy to conceive Roosevelt reluctant to make any such request. That Rooseveltian pose that "I am devoting all my time to the job to which I was elected and not thinking of the future" may have been all right for general consumption but any one can understand it wouldn't go very well with Al. It may be Al felt he was being good-naturedly patronized—and that is not calculated to promote friendship.



Then there was the fact that Al's personal friends were not Roosevelt's close personal friends—not one of them. When Al was at Albany he had a small, unofficial cabinet—the really brilliant Mrs. Henry Moskowitz, the able Judge Proskauer and several others—with whom he advised and whose members had his complete confidence. Not one of these survived the first Roosevelt administration. Some, like Mrs. Moskowitz, pulled away voluntarily, but others were dropped overboard. An entirely new group surrounds the Governor, for none of whom Smith cherishes affection. There is the further fact that important Democrats in the business world—not Raskob—close to Smith, do not want Roosevelt nominated, have been against him from the start, regard him as a weak man, prefer Young or Ritchie or Baker. Undoubtedly these men have had an effect upon Al. He is more or less

a big-business man himself these days. His heart still beats for the common people but he talks the big-business language.

Now, then, putting wholly aside the notion that something concrete happened to estrange these two men, sum all these things up and you have a total that easily accounts for their present strained relations—particularly if you happen to know them personally and appreciate the ways in which they diverge as well as the points they have in common. At any rate, the estrangement is a fact recognized in every newspaper in the land and by every politician. It has been journalistically asserted a hundred times that the Smith element of the party in the East is determined to prevent Roosevelt's nomination. Smith's closest friends make no secret of their feeling and desire. Smith himself avoids any public word on the question, but is reliably reported in private conversation to refer to Roosevelt as "that feller." It is impossible not to believe that his own sentiments are not reflected by those with whom he is in closest contact. Every one of them is anti-Roosevelt. So there you are. Personally, I have no faith at all in the permanency of either political enmities or friendships, and thus, unlikely as it now seems, am prepared to find in the convention these two outstanding party figures again clasped in each other's arms. Things like that happen in politics. Look, for example, at Borah, the greatest clasper we have. Taft, Harding, Coolidge, Curtis—opposed to them all and to all for which they stood, yet one after another he clasped them to his rugged Idaho bosom. And who doubts that he will again clasp the unfortunate Hoover this fall? Already, scattered here and there in the bewildering personal publicity which gushes from him in unceasing flow, are to be seen signs of his once more becoming moistly affectionate and regularly Republican. It may be that way with Al. We may discover early this summer that he really has been fond of "this feller" all the time and dissembled his love solely for his own good. Al may turn out to be a clasper too. But I do not think so. On the contrary, it seems to be increasingly evident that he is going to ditch "this feller" if he can, that not to make the effort would be to let his friends down, and that he will not do that. Moreover, if he is sufficiently determined, what with one thing and another, the chances are he can do it, too. But that's a story for another day.

Love's a Grown-Up God

A COMPLETE SHORT NOVEL

By Arthur Tuckerman

A romantic story in the modern world told from a sophisticated point of view. The fourth selection in the \$5,000 Contest is not only a story of different kinds of love but of different races.

"But the heavens that angel trod
Where deep thoughts are a duty,
Where Love's A Grown-Up God—"
—"ISRAFAEL," EDGAR ALLAN POE.

PART ONE

IN the autumn of 1917 my mother shipped me from her Florentine palazzo to Oxford. They tell me that in those days I was a supercilious young cub, very slim and dark and elegant in my English clothes, a kind of pocket-edition of a man-about-town. I have no doubt that I was quite objectionable. I had been going to day school in Florence for a number of years and was, as my mother expressed it, getting just a bit soft. My mother was a worldly woman, and although her original pattern of American illusions had long since been torn to shreds by my irresponsible father, and by twenty years of exile from her native land, she still possessed a furtive admiration for the Anglo-Saxon virtues—particularly when manifested in the male of the species.

I have no idea how she raised the money for my Oxford career, but some Florentines asserted that she deliberately pawned the Jenesta pearls with a jeweller on the Ponte Vecchio. At any rate, I thought it wiser not to inquire into the matter—for fear that one of those illogical Anglo-Saxon scruples, which I seem unexpectedly to have inherited, might put an end to my higher education. One thing was certain: my father, Count Rafael Jenesta, did not contribute a lira toward my final polishing. He was too busy, in a Roman club,

gambling away the remains of my mother's Californian inheritance.

I remember well when she said good-by to me. She was sitting on the edge of her bed in a padded, plum-colored dressing gown. She had just had a henna rinse, and was looking tired about the eyes. She was living in a small room under the roof at the time, because the ceiling of her own colossal and gilded chamber had cracked, and because—with Oxford on the horizon—she couldn't afford to have it repaired. She was a tremendously good woman, with a profound sense of duty concealed under an artificial exterior. Now, looking back on it all, I realize that I am indebted to her, and to her alone, for any decency of character which may possibly reveal itself in this story of my youth, of my friendship with Paul Drury, and of that crisis which followed his strange marriage to Natia Palieff. Honor where honor is due.

She gave me one piece of advice, before I left. "I don't suspect you of being a saint," she said. "Not with your father's blood in you—" And here she smiled, faintly and sadly. "But don't be a young fool. Steer clear of tobacconists' daughters. I've heard that they are traditional in Oxford—almost part of taking your degree. Remember that it's difficult and dangerous to mix that kind of thing with your education. One does it more gracefully later on—if one has to do it."

What a sound, sensible, broad-minded mother she was! Her attitude was exactly suited to the tumultuous upheaval in which we were living. For Europe, since August, 1914, had been facing every