

A DEFEATED POLITICIAN

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GEORGE Kendall always strikes me as being too gentle to be a full-fledged follower of Vare. He might have been a Y. M. C. A. secretary, or a teacher in a private school. He is courteous, mild-mannered and friendly; he is a handsome man, of average height, well-built, with a patrician face and a head of fine, steel-gray hair with a wave in it. He wears a freshly pressed gray or blue suit, with tie to match. He is genial, but not effusive. He is amiable, and likes to talk politics—national, state, or the more personal sort that belongs to the life in his district. He is eloquent rather than penetrating—a lawyer who knows so much that he cannot easily learn more. He is fairly well satisfied with himself:—no inferiority complexes ruffle him.

Another division leader, one of those dark-eyed, short, thick-set fellows, with heavy red cheeks and a chin and a half, told me about George Kendall. "He is the man you want to meet, Professor. He is a lawyer, and he can tell you all about politics so it will look nice in your book." (However, months later, I was again talking to this same bruiser and several other ward committee-men in the corridor on the 6th floor of City Hall. Kendall's name was mentioned in connection with an important case in his ward. These men—all friendly to him—agreed that they would never take Kendall as their attorney in a situation like this. I asked why. "He ain't got the guts—he won't do what's got to be done to win a hard case. He is a nice fellow, but it takes something else to save your man in some of these courts.") Later this same friendly division leader introduced me to George. He was pleasant, and invited me over to his office. He seemed mildly interested in the idea that someone was writing a book on his organization.

A few days later I called. He offered me a chair, presented a cigar which he urged me to take, and started to give me typical text-book information on the national committee and other general political subjects, including a personal estimate of the attributes of the mayor and the ward leaders of Philadelphia. It was thirty minutes before we got to Mr. Kendall's first-hand experience in the game of hopes and sorrows.

He got started in politics shortly after he cast his first vote. His natural popularity had won him many friends—he is always a

pleasant person to meet—and he lived then and now in a newly developed part of the city. He took a hand in elections, and campaigned for the organization ticket. As a young attorney, he did many favours for the people in his neighborhood without presenting a bill. He has a generous disposition, and besides, he was making new friends, and friends are capital either in politics or in law. At the end of six years he was elected to the party committee—a division leader. For 14 years he has been an enthusiastic and loyal party committee-man.

Mr. Kendall usually campaigns in a district wider than his own in state and national contests. In the 1930 gubernatorial primary he was one of a select group of organization men that travelled over the state in automobiles. He made speeches, and with his companions he saw contact men, and met the county chairmen in 29 out of the 67 counties of the state.

He also writes letters to the press (an unheard-of thing among division leaders). One letter that he showed me was more than 400 words long. It was on the ideals of George Washington, and the regrettable state of political indifference on the part of our young people of to-day. In this letter he quoted George Washington's farewell address, and a recent speech of former Senator Pepper. Another unusual thing is his scrap-books filled with pertinent newspaper clippings. Again I thought, he was of the school-teacher type; division leaders just don't keep scrap books.

The goal nearest his heart is to be endorsed by the organization for the state legislature. Clay never wanted to be President more than Kendall wants to be an assembly-man. But I am afraid he will never go. He is too friendly and too mild-mannered. Someone else with more grit and stubbornness gets the endorsement. When the new district attorney took office, George had the promise of a place under him. But when his list of the new assistant district attorneys was given out, George's name was not on it. His friends were more sorry than surprised. It meant merely that the place had been given to the favourite of a more determined ward leader than Kendall has. Sometimes it pays to be stubborn and to annoy the organization. It may then bribe you with a job to secure peace.

To him a division leader is not a public official; yet he is none the less a person of great power for good or evil in the community in which he lives. The people heavily count upon him, and it behooves him to serve them well. It is second nature for the committee-man to be kind and helpful. The real committee-man will serve people 24 hours a day. Kendall sometimes expresses his philosophy

of life by quoting a bit of the writings of Ed. Guest. "He is not the richest who out of life takes only gold. Richer far are they who serve the young and old. He is the richest who can say, I have neighbored down the way."

The ward in which Kendall lives is so big that for party administrative purposes it is divided into sections. Before the fall primary I attended one of the sectional meetings, at which 65 committee-men were present. I recognized seven of them as men I had often talked to at City Hall. They gave me a cordial greeting, and so did Mr. Kendall. He also introduced me to some of the other division leaders. The meeting began at 8.30 o'clock, lasted until after ten, and Mr. Kendall most ably served as chairman. He was easily the most distinguished-looking man present, not excepting the candidate for council and the leader of the ward. He was also the best speaker.

After a few introductory remarks, he called on an old-time division leader. This speaker made a brief speech extolling Frank Henley, the new organization candidate for city council. "Frank Henley," he said, "is not high-hat—not as some of you think he is. He is a real fellow, he likes rum and plays poker" (Applause.) "This is our one opportunity to have representation in council. You must get your people to register." (Emphasis was placed on the word "your". This ward is one of the independent wards of the city; many of the voters take pride in voting for non-organization candidates; therefore the committee-men must use discretion in getting only the loyal to register. One of the committee-men here told me that he couldn't win his division if more than 200 people voted in it. The organization loyalists always vote; the independent ones are never asked to, but sometimes they vote anyway. The problem of these politicians is to appear to be interested in having everyone exercise his right of franchise, but actually to see that only the faithful do. This division leader explained that on registration day he might unexpectedly meet an independent who would say, "To-day is registration day, I must register." He would answer, "Oh, there are two other days,—why bother?" If the question comes up on the morning of the third day, he will say, "Oh, it's early yet—there is plenty of time—you know you can register at night."

The speaker then paid a tribute to the ward leaders: "He battled with the organization down-town to put Frank Henley over. It is up to us to make him win. Otherwise our leader will be a poor fish in Philadelphia. The leader supported you; he is now entitled to your support." The burden of the remarks of

the ward leader and other speakers was in substance the message of the committee-man whom I have quoted.

On another occasion I attended a meeting of both independent and organization leaders and candidates in the same ward. There were 17 candidates for the Republican nomination from this district to council. The purpose of the meeting was to eliminate 16 in order actually to nominate and elect one. Each of the 16 independent candidates approved of the idea in principle, but he wouldn't budge an inch, said that he personally was in the hands of his friends, and would do whatever they asked him to. Frank Henley was at another meeting, but his proxy—George Kendall—spoke for him. Mr. Kendall spoke with ease and charm, and although he probably did no more than the candidates that spoke in changing opinions, yet he acquitted both his friend and himself well.

He described Mr. Henley as a successful business man, a person of integrity, and "one who will bring to you the united support of the organization, which means 12,000 votes at the start." Someone sought to embarrass him with "Will Mr. Henley withdraw if the rest of the candidates do"? Mr. Kendall paused a moment, looked at the interrogator and replied, "Mr. Henley is in the same position that you gentlemen are in. He is in the hands of his friends."

The candidate himself came a few minutes later, and was called upon to address the group. He is short, thick-set, with a florid complexion and bushy grey hair reminiscent of the elder La Follette. He walks with a quick step,—he almost struts, like a pouter pigeon. He doesn't look like an organization man, and I had to remind myself that this was the most independent of all the wards. The self-complacency of his appearance was not so evident when he started to speak. He was an ineffective speaker, and although ward nominations are but little more affected by public speeches than the earth is by the passing of Saturn on its orbit, he probably counteracted much of the good impression his friend had made.

I told Kendall that hearing him speak for his friend and then hearing the friend speak for himself reminded me that Garfield had once won a nomination to the presidency by the excellence with which he once performed a similar service. Kendall smiled in appreciation, but he said, "Ward politicians are different: it takes something else to win endorsements by the organization here."

Shortly after Christmas I called again to learn more specifically about the services that Kendall gave his people. First of all he

made a statement that he particularly wanted me to take down. It follows: "I want it distinctly understood that in all the time that I have been dabbling in politics I have never been asked to do anything wrong, in the sense that it was criminally wrong, by any member of the Republican organization in Philadelphia, from top to bottom, or by anyone indirectly connected with it."

Decisions are not often wholly right or wrong in politics. When a person is in trouble, it is often over a legal matter, and when he wants help he wants it badly; a politician that might say, "I could help you, but it would not be legal, so therefore I won't" would not survive a single election. Mr. Kendall knows this, and it causes him anxious moments. He made the foregoing statement to satisfy his pride, and because his is an unusually sensitive personality in politics.

At Christmas time he and his partner gave 36 baskets of provisions to the poorest families in his district. Mr. Kendall delivered these baskets in person. "There are many poor people in my division, as well as some wealthy ones. Last night four of the bitterly poor ones stopped at my home. One was a woman 75 years of age who is up against it. She has no money, and she has two sons in Camden. I agreed to send for her boys and pay her \$2.00 a week in the meantime.

"Mr. Hagins came to see if I could get his daughter, a partial paralytic, into a Jewish hospital. She badly needs hospital treatment, and I am trying to get her admitted. A man across the way from my home is out of work. He wanted me to buy a big bottle of ink. I didn't need any unknown brand of ink, but I bought the bottle just the same. A young chap was there to get me to see the ward leader about having him put back as a clerk in the electrical bureau."

Kendall then opened his file and took out a folder containing between 100 and 200 separate typewritten items—all matters relating to his work as attorney and division leader for a period of six months—July-December, 1931. He told me that his records of services for his people for other six months' periods were as great as this. He pulled several bundles from his file in order to show me. I began to examine them, and I was quite convinced of his usefulness to his people. Some he was wary about, lest he involve someone else. In one case he helped to defend a young man arrested for transporting liquor, and at the hearing the boy alleged that he was hauling for a prominent ward leader in the liquor business. Needless to say, I promised not to use any names. Finally George took up the most recent six months' bundle of typewritten notes

and carbons of letters, and briefly recounted a number of his most meritorious services. I shall quote several of them here. (The fact that he keeps his records so carefully is another definite indication that he is unique as a politician; the ones I know best keep no written notes at all.)

"I organized an improvement group for the purpose of securing a semaphore and signal light in the community in which my division has its boundaries.

"I also represented approximately ten fathers of about twenty children who were charged with malicious mischief, children under 16 years of age, the acts being petty and mischievous pranks, but destructive of property rights. Through association with the Big Brother Movement, we persuaded the authorities to give these lads another chance, in view of the fact that they had never been apprehended before for any criminal charge.

"Two weeks ago I represented relatives who were indirectly connected with four young New York youths who had hired an automobile and who were charged with the larceny of it. But the true facts turned out to be that they had been given permission to drive the car out of the state of New York, but for some unaccountable reason it was not noted on the records of the garage system. These boys had never been arrested before, and were properly discharged.

"I represented one of my constituents in a domestic relations case in Delaware County, which is an adjoining county of Philadelphia. While the matter was generally outside of a committeeman's duties politically, I undertook the matter in view of the distress of the family, the matter involving the custody and maintenance of a small child. The case was happily settled for the best interests of all the parties, particularly the child.

"My partner on the committee and I took up a collection throughout the division as well as some parts of the ward and collected approximately \$150, which was expended for coal, bread, clothing, and in one case for the purchase of burials. They wouldn't bury the woman unless the money was guaranteed. I furnished \$25 right here for that, but of course I was repaid that later. The woman was buried in a Jewish cemetery, Mount Sinai, I think.

"I represented one of our constituents before the state Highway Department's Road Bureau at 19th and Oxford, who had been charged with being a hit-and-run driver and failing to render assistance. The facts of the case were that a coloured boy had stolen the car, and without permission of the owner had taken it out, and within two squares struck another automobile. It turned out

that the coloured boy had been charged in many other cases for the same purpose.

"I helped several families who were evicted for failure to pay their rent, in some cases persuading the landlords to hold off until June, and in other cases taking up collections.

"Some of the citizens in the community complained of a smoke nuisance, and a petition was filed to abandon this smoke nuisance coming from a large machine shop. My partner on the ward committee and I removed the evil by arbitration with the owners of the plant.

"We two division leaders represented 27 real estate owners in filing for restraining order to prevent the erection of a coal yard in the rear of the 27 houses, and up to now the coal house has not been erected, and the case is still pending. That case necessitated a great deal of work in securing evidence and expert assistance in preparing the case for court. It cost a lot of money. The folks are all very poor. We had to send out photographers to take pictures of the condition of the place, and we had to foot the bill. It cost us more than \$100.

"A case just down the street almost blew up the whole block. I represented another woman directly related to these people that had the still. She had about 11 children. She was locked up three or four different times for bootlegging. She was discharged when I told them the case they would have. She would have been turned over to the Board of Charities.

"We had several cases before magistrates, involving miscellaneous crimes: malicious mischief, corner lounging—all the boys in the neighborhood were arrested one night—and one particular group of cases involving an automobile trap that had been placed at the intersection of Kereyon and 42nd Street and no signal light being at the intersection. The general charges against the automobilists were passing each other at the crossing, as well as general speeding. One of these cases was subsequently appealed, and the trap was broken up.

"A case involving the sale of liquor to a young man who lived in the division, but purchased it in another section of Philadelphia. His parents had warned the saloon-keeper not to sell any liquor to the boy, and the lad had been refused admittance by the saloon-keeper. As a result he went to a neighboring barber shop, got drunk on drinking red wine, and went back to the saloon-keeper and abused him. As a result of this a fight occurred and the boy was sent to the hospital, having been shot through the arm and finger and beaten over the head with a base-ball bat. The follow-

ing day the father wanted to arrest the saloon-keeper on the charge of sale of liquor, but I told him he couldn't do it as he really hadn't sold him any liquor. Subsequently some of the liquor was brought in here, which they said had been bought at the saloon-keeper's. They had somebody make a purchase of it, paying \$10 for a 5/8 bottle. The results were that the case had been adjusted before the magistrate by all the parties withdrawing the charges. They were Jewish people. The boy worked for the American Stores Company, wholesale department. He lost that job through liquor business, and from there he went through all the wholesale grocery businesses, without getting work. That is why we were interested in the case.

"We always co-operate, and especially during this depression, for the purpose of securing jobs not only politically but anywhere, and did succeed in placing young women and young men in fields entirely removed from politics, such as sales clerks in department stores, book-keepers, stenographers, and in several cases accountants.

"At the Jewish holiday we took care of 32 families. We collected all kinds of food, and sent them out in baskets and dispatched them. We were working about two or three weeks. We went to the wharf and bought stuff, and had some given to us.

"For a period of approximately two weeks or three Sundays we represented about seven store-keepers who had been charged with unlawfully keeping their stores open on Sunday or selling merchandise in hours not permitted on Sunday. It appeared in these cases that the sales were of condensed milk, single loaves of bread, bags of salt, and in no case did the sales amount to over a dollar. Some of these sales were within five minutes of the closing time set by the law in Pennsylvania for Sunday closing. Those cases ran over again. The first group were fined \$3.50 and costs, and on the following week or first week in June almost every store-keeper in the radius of three or four squares, covering several divisions, was arrested on the same ridiculous charges, and all of them were discharged. It was a different magistrate. The magistrate in the first cases, Magistrate T, had an axe out for us. He is now removed.

"We represented a chicken dealer who was charged with short weight. They went through the neighborhood and arrested several of them. It appeared that he charged 10 cents extra on the pound for the Rabbi's charge for special inspection. There was no charge as to the shortage of weight, but the charge was as to the excessive price, and there is no law that stops a man from fixing

the price of his merchandise,—he may charge 10 cents or 50 cents. The man was discharged. This spite wasn't Phinny Green (head of Weights and Measures Bureau): he always treated us all right. It seemed to be more just that Schofield and Belcher made an awful drive on us at that time.

"Through the co-operative assistance of Leader X we were able to place a boy in the Dental College at Temple, having him enrolled for the following year.

"We were also successful in securing a job in the playground association for playground inspector, for a man in my division.

"There was also quite a great deal of service given to families about to be evicted. Here are two examples:

"Family 'Y', husband and wife and five children, occupy a small two-storey house in 4900 block in Franklin Street, West Side. They have been helped by the committee-men for a period of three years. In May or June of 1931 they were evicted from one house for non-payment of rent. The husband was engaged as a driver for a milk wagon. He was hurt in some unknown way, but not in the line of his business, and therefore was not entitled to compensation. He was unable to secure any employment at all. He was being helped by the committee-men, and through the local division organization and the Bristol Township Poor Board.

"Some people are very poor in our neighborhood; we are doing this kind of work all the time.

"Family 'Z' was a family of five or six children. The husband was a construction carpenter; work got slack, and he lost his house through a sheriff's sale. He tried to rent the place, and was subsequently evicted for non-payment of rent. He moved into smaller property, helped by committee-men, and is still living in the division.

"Do I think rich people make as many demands as poor?"

"It all depends on the type of wealthy people. You know there are two different kinds of wealthy people—the wealthy person that obeys the law, and others who for some unaccountable reason disregard the law. Those that fall afoul of the law are the ones that require the help of the committee-men.

"We were asked to place a young woman in Byberry (hospital), which was done after considerable trouble.

"During the summer period there were quite a number of quarrels over children and property rights between the neighbours themselves, and in most of these cases the simple proposal of arbitration was suggested. It generally worked for the best interest of all.

"For example, a doctor complained about the number of

children playing in the driveway beside his house. Complaints were made to the police department by the doctor, and a group of children between the ages of 8 and 14 were ordered to be present at the police station. It turned out in this case that the doctor's own son was amongst the crowd, and the matter was adjusted.

"Another group of neighbours got into an argument over dogs which when let loose scratched up lawns. Both sides threatened to arrest each other, but were persuaded to look at it in a common sense manner by both committee-men. Both were right and both were wrong. The dog was subsequently disposed of, and the neighbours are now good friends.

"A number of other quarrels arose over scraps between children, and the committee-men refused to get into those scraps, but tried to patch up the difficulties.

"Quite a number of domestic relations cases, complaints of husbands and wives, were brought to the committee-men. They wisely refrained from getting mixed up in them. Most were caused by the economic depression, and both husband and wife had just causes to complain. Everything was done to arrange amicably their affairs, without interfering with their domestic problems.

"The biggest campaign job was to cut down the taxes on 14 rows of houses in that district. That certainly was a lot of work. Appeals were prepared, a stenographer was hired especially for that work, photographers were taken out to take pictures of the different rows, and assessed valuations of the rows were checked up with other properties in the same ward. We were successful in persuading the Board to reduce, on an average of \$500 a house in each row."

Mr. Kendall has a secretary and a comfortable office in one of the most central of office buildings. I would occasionally meet him in a corridor of City Hall, and he always greeted me with a friendly smile. His colleagues on the ward committee—I have talked to 57 of them—feel kindly toward him. And great was my surprise when I learned that, in April, he was defeated for re-election to his party committee. This was City Hall gossip to me before I called on George. The Jews have been steadily increasing in numbers in his division until it has become almost 85% Jewish. A young Jew—vital and aggressive—on the age-old racial issue, beat him by less than 50 votes, and in a poll of more than 300. It was generally agreed by his victorious comrades that the Jewish issue did it. (If anyone thinks that race and religion and colour do not count in politics, let him study election contests in the smallest unit of all—the divisions). Kendall is a Gentile, and he was beaten

as such. His old colleague is a Jew and was re-elected. The people partially forgot past services in face of the greater question of race. There was one other factor—his mild manner and his conscience prevent him from helping in questionable situations in which a more ruthless person would have recognised no limit.

When I called at Mr. Kendall's office he was busily engaged in preparing letters, to be typed and sent to the people in his division. He was filled with grief over his defeat. He had deserved re-election on the record of his services. Twenty years in politics—fourteen years on the ward committee,—“I had never refused a possible request.” It was a bewildering situation. He wasn't able to accept defeat as yet. He was sending out letters to tell the Jews what he had done for them; hadn't he employed Jewish secretaries in his office? One of them wrote an ardent letter to her people in the division in Mr. Kendall's behalf. I tried to say to George that the election was over—that an appeal was useless now. But he couldn't listen. “No, I am the president of a boys' club and active in various community projects. I want to know just what the people think of me. I'll quit everything if they don't appreciate my services.” I paid him a last farewell, and departed thinking that politics is a strenuous game, disquieting and thankless. It is difficult for a gentleman to survive. It was not a new story. Edmund Burke was once rejected by the Sheriffs of Bristol.