

The Iron Republic

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Dear Sir: Since the visit of your representative to my vessel I have thought over the matter and decided to respond to your invitation to give an account of my strange adventures for the benefit of your readers. I write the narrative for your magazine because you have been kind enough to ask for it and because your interest and consideration is in marked contrast to that of other editors who have treated me with positive discourtesy, refusing to accept the statement of my experiences seriously. I am well aware that much of what I shall relate will appear incredible, and doubtless the whole story will be set down by many as a purely fanciful creation, like the fictions produced by Bellamy and other theorists within the past few years.

About this matter, though I give myself no concern as the many incontrovertible proofs documentary and otherwise which I have on board will, when presented to the proper authorities, receive the recognition of the government in due and proper form as also that of geographical and scientific societies the world over.

I regret that my narrative proved and demonstrated, as it will be, must unsettle scientific theories and make it necessary to reconstruct some of our school books. But while this will result in temporary inconvenience and shake the faith of some in the dicta of science, upon the whole the benefit will far exceed the injury. It is well to have our scientific theories unsettled every now and then or we would become fossilized and arrogant like the bigots of the middle ages, and oppose any further advance in knowledge.

It is unnecessary to say that after my narrative has been accepted, the Zetetic theory of the earth as a plane will have to be recognized and the geographies made in conformity therewith.

In writing this history of my adventures I wish it distinctly understood that I make no pretensions to literary style or ability and my account will probably be crude and faulty in many respects. My only effort will be to tell a round unvarnished tale true in every particular, for I realize that it is only in its truthfulness that the story can be of any value.

A man whose literary efforts have been limited to lawyer's briefs, few and far between, and whose supremist and most extended written effort was a spread eagle thesis on the science of politics, at the conclusion of an uneventful college career, cannot be expected to be a model of literary excellence.

But to come to my story. In the autumn of '94 I was enjoying a comfortable practice in a flourishing county town in one of the great states of the middle west. I say comfortable practice, because it was one that entailed very little work and gave me plenty of time to devote to society and politics, for the latter of which I had always felt a strong predilection. My father had achieved some distinction as an officer in the civil war and afterwards rose high in the politics of his state. It was the opinion of many that had he entered the arena of politics at an earlier period in life, he might have risen to the very highest office in the nation.

It has always been my desire to emulate his political career, and the prestige of his name with my strong inclination for

public life, gave reasonable promise of success. Modesty forbids the mention of other reasons, though I already enjoyed some reputation as a speaker and was regarded by politicians throughout the state as a fighter and a “coming man.”

I had adopted the profession of law as nearest allied to politics and a brass plate bearing the name of “J. Edward Barrington, Attorney and Counselor at Law,” adorned my door, though I was known in political circles as Ned Barrington and a “live wire.” There was no great demand for my professional services and I was not displeased that my social and political popularity far outshone my professional fame. The reader will understand my position when I say, by way of explanation, that I was not dependent upon my profession for support, my father who died during my last year in college, having left an ample fortune for a young man of my steady habits and inexpensive tastes. And so, at the time my story open I may say without offensive egotism, that I was rather a promising young man, of twenty-four, with a clear conscience, infinite digestion and (I say it modestly) a fair share of good looks.

I was a member of the Young Men’s Christian Association, president of a flourishing literary club, and had been a year past the chairman of the republican executive committee of our county. I was also a leading spirit in a local temperance society and was supposed to have considerable influence with the better elements of society in the town and county. I had never been a candidate for any office, but was a worker in my party, content to wait for my time. I am thus particular in these uninteresting details, because on them hinged the events that changed the whole course of my life, and gave me an experience that will, in all probability make my name as

familiar in future generations as that of Galileo or Columbus. The campaign of '94 was a particularly heated one. "Fatty" Burkheit, a notorious dive-keeper, had been nominated by the republican party as the candidate for congress from our district and a wave of indignation swept over the county. Meetings were held, several of which I addressed, and this action of the party was condemned on all sides. The district was republican by a large majority, but many life-long republicans declared that they would never vote for such a candidate.

The democratic convention had nominated "Buck" Magee, an ex-prize fighter, of a reputation so unsavory that the alternative of voting for the opposition candidate was not to be thought of.

One evening in September, I was sitting before a comfortable fire in my library reading the evening paper, when my office boy announced a party of gentlemen. Supposing it was some members of the executive committee come to talk over the political situation, or a party of friends to enjoy a rubber of whist, I had them ushered in. To abbreviate this part of my story as much as possible, it transpired that these gentlemen were members of the democratic committee and came with a proposition to cast the bulk of their party vote for me if I would permit myself to be brought forward as an independent candidate. They pointed out that the respectable element of the republican party demanded a candidate that it could vote for, and that with this vote and the support I would get from the democratic party, my election was assured. It is not necessary to dwell upon the details of that conference. Suffice it to say that the interest was so great and their reasoning so cogent that I consented in the interest of

morality and good government, to lead the movement. It seemed to be the providential opening to a great career, and when in the enthusiasm occasioned by my acquiescence, the four gentlemen (who seemed to be men of wealth) shook hands with me and with each other and pledged a thousand dollars apiece in support of the campaign against corruption, I could do no less than hand them a check for a like amount.

This part of my narrative may be tiresome reading but it is a part of the story and in telling a story as in solving a problem, there is nothing like having all the factors stated at the beginning.

I will pass over the exciting events of that campaign; the speeches I made, the letters received, commending, warning, threatening even; the abuse heaped upon me by members of my own party, it is all a part of the political history of the district. Up to the last week of the campaign it seemed that my election was certain.

A few days before the election I was waited upon by a committee of "workers" with a letter of introduction from the chairman of the democratic committee which stated that the support of these gentlemen was absolutely essential to my success at the polls. After reading the letter I turned to the party, which had remained standing and asked what I could do for them. Taking the stub of a cigar from his mouth and squirting a lot of tobacco juice on my carpet, the leader, a big nosed Dutchman, made two or three awkward attempts to speak and finally blurted out something like the following: "dots all right cabding, you dond vanst ter ged lefd at der pallot box. Goot! Id dakes monish der

make der mare drot. See? Ve vil gif you subbort of der zaloon geeper for ten thousand tollars vich butts you in gongress vare you can makes id back on one vode. See? You puts oop der ten thousand ter shwing der vod ant goes to gongress: You dond put oop und sthays ter hoom. Und now vich is it?'

And replacing the cigar stub in his mouth and putting his arms akimbo. he looked for the world like a fiery fat jug with a handle on both sides. To say that I was astonished does not express it. I was utterly dumbfounded. The appearance of the men in my house had been an insult and when the vile proposition was made it was more than I could endure and without standing on the quality of my English I turned them summarily out of doors.

The balance is soon told. The democrats voted solidly for their candidate as it was intended they should, and as I drew about fifty per cent of the republican vote, a democrat was elected to congress for the first time in the history of our district.

I learned afterwards that if I had paid the ten thousand dollars it would in no wise have affected the result. The money I did advance was not used in furthering my candidacy at all and the whole scheme was a device to divide and defeat the republican party in the district.

The morning after the election I was the most universally hated man in the state. I was abused, ridiculed, cartooned. Life-long friends turned their backs upon me as a man who had sacrificed principle and sold himself in the vain hope of gratifying an inordinate political ambition. Some of those

even, who had supported my candidacy, shook their heads dubiously and said there had been selling somewhere!

This, with the natural mortification I felt at having been used as a cat's paw and defeated, thus cutting off prematurely my anticipated political career, made existence a burden and I determined to leave forever the scene of my disgrace.

But where could I go? My name was familiar from one end of the country to the other, even my features, from a half-page cartoon in a New York paper representing me as a cat's paw pulling out of a fire a most self-satisfied looking chestnut, which revealed the countenance of the successful democratic candidate. After some bitter reflection, I decided to convert my property into money, and purchase a vessel large enough and strong enough to bear me beyond the confines of civilization, for only there did I feel that I could escape from the scorn of my fellowmen.

My eventful voyage, my discovery of the "Iron Republic" with its remarkable government and industrial conditions, my residence on this hitherto unknown continent, and study of its wonderful advancement in civilization and the arts of life, I will give an account of, to the best of my ability in this narrative, which I trust may be as interesting as it is true. In the meantime the people of Jacksonville are welcome on board of my vessel at all times, where they will be at liberty to inspect the many articles of interest which I brought from the land which lies beyond the ice barriers of the Antarctic circle.