

THE INDIAN BOY WHO BECAME LEADER OF THE SENATE

Charles Curtis at 10 Was a Ward of the Nation on a Reservation, Then a Jockey, a Nighthawk Caddy and On Up, Step by Step, to the Upper House of Congress

BY WILLIAM ATHERTON DUFUY.

THE BUSIEST two men in the United States senate this season has been Charles Curtis of Kansas, "the Indian," who is likewise the man of all those in public life who has the strangest, most romantic, picturesque and altogether marvelous career back of him.

I say the busiest two men, for Senator Curtis has been holding down his own job of "whip," most exacting of senatorial assignments, and, in the absence of Senator Lodge, who has been absorbed in the international conference for the limitation of armaments over at the other end of town and in attempts in a literary way to burnish the bird of paradise of the South sea islands, he has also done the work of "leader." He has been handling the two top jobs in the upper branch of congress.

"The whip," Senator Curtis told me



Senator Curtis, "the Indian," who is leader pro tem. of the senate.

the other day in the senate cloakroom, "is the assistant leader. He acts, of course, when the leader is otherwise occupied. Even when the leader is present the whip is the individual who is out on the skirmish line in actual charge of the fighting."

"The whip must, of course, know the location of every man of his command. Every morning he must get in touch with every senator on his list. He must know how many of them are out of town, if they are paired and with whom, where they are and how quickly they can get back if needed. If they are in town, he must know where, at all times, they may be reached. He must always be ready for an emergency, for a surprise attack. He must be always prepared to marshal his forces. It is the most active, the most exhilarating, the most altogether interesting and fascinating piece of work beneath the capitol dome."

And the man who drives this senatorial team, single, double, tandem or with a jerkline, as do the freighters of the west, this cracker of the whip over the heads of this body of dignified statesmen, over the members of this most exclusive of rich men's clubs—what manner of man is he?

Well, as a boy of 10, he lived as a nation Indian on a reservation.

Then, during those years when his character was taking shape, he worked as a jockey and rode race horses at the fairs of half a dozen formative states.

Again, later, for years he was a nighthawk, a back driver, on the streets of Topeka.

Upon such a foundation as this, the nation of opportunity, did one of the most successful and powerful figures in her national life build. In so building did he give the life to the alibi of the timid, that circumstance, poverty, obscurity, evil associations may stand in the way of him who has within him the quality of success, for the way up for Charles Curtis is as strange and improbable a journey as any man ever traveled.

Senator Curtis lives within two blocks of me in the city of Washington, rides downtown in the same street car, is addicted to very regular attendance at the same neighborhood motion picture theater. If you should see him there on the street corner waiting for his car, he would be likely to attract your attention, to arouse your curiosity as to the extraction of this individual, otherwise conventionally American, who is so inexplicably swarthy of complexion.

From reading romance, most people have been led to believe that the Indian is tall and slim and wand-like, while, as a matter of fact, he is almost universally quite the contrary. He is heavy and thick and blocky. Senator Curtis is the Indian of reality and not of romance. Rather darker in hue than the most brunette type of Italian with whom we are familiar. Coal-black is his hair, his mustache, his eyes. Standing there chubbily, round-faced, well fed, his sparse mustache and the commonly designated type known as "walrus," sticking straight down at the corners, he is more likely to be guessed as of far eastern origin than American, and the stranger easily conceives him with a turban about his head.

public man some elements quite set apart from the experiences of the general run of us. I found that this whip of the senate was born on the plains of Kansas as long ago as 1880. One would not have expected him to be 62 years of age, for there is no gray in his black hair and none of the wrinkles of age yet appear on his full face.

He told me of Julie Poppin, his Indian grandmother, the daughter of the old chief White Plume, who had wed with a French voyageur, one of those forerunners in the Mississippi valley of a civilization which was in a century to perform such a remarkable transformation. And the daughter of Julie Poppin married a frontiersman of English extraction by the name of Curtis, and to this couple was born young Charles, destined to reach a high place. So it works out that but one-fourth of the blood of this senator is Indian, although his appearance would indicate a stronger native American strain.

It was about the year 1870, and Charles Curtis had gone back to the reservation to live with his mother's people. Sixty miles west of Topeka this reservation slept in the sun, and the Indians who there made their homes idled about, as wards of the government are prone to do when relieved of the responsibilities that over the plains and maintained themselves from the kill of the buffalo herds.

One day as the reservation drowed languidly there broke upon it that rattle of musketry which carried its members back to the earlier days of the more active life. The Kaws were being attacked. Like hawks swooping down upon a quiet barnyard had the Cheyenne Indians out of the west descended upon this isolated band of ancestral enemies. Charles Curtis and the Indian children of his age were playing by the riverside, and he remembers well the manner in which the Cheyennes, decked in plumes and war paint, circled the camp and poured their volleys of fire upon it. He remembers well how the stalwarts among the Kaws sprang to arms, barricaded themselves and throughout the long afternoon kept the attackers at bay.

When night settled down and with it the uncertainty of what was transpiring out in the darkness, the great desire of the Kaws was to send a message out through the lines to the white people 60 miles away at Topeka, telling them that the Cheyennes were on the warpath and praying for help. The enemy had, however, already run off all the horses of the Kaws, so the journey must be made on foot. Who of them all would best fit into the imperative need of carrying word to the whites?

The council settled upon little Charles Curtis, part Indian, part white, capable of speaking the language of both races. He should stand through the lines of the attackers and should trudge away on foot those 60 miles over a road he knew well, since he had traveled back and forth between the homes of his mother's

and his father's people. Thus in the dead of night Charles Curtis left the reservation. Thus, though he knew it not, he put behind him the life of an Indian and jogged straight into a new world, where white men led far more fretful and complicated existences.

Charles Curtis carried the message of the Cheyenne outbreak to Topeka. While he lingered about that straggling settlement on a western frontier there came to him an opportunity into which his peculiar qualifications and training fitted rarely. He, the wiry little Indian boy, born upon the plains, reared upon the back of a pony, was given a chance to ride as a jockey in races that were then being held at Topeka and which were the center of interest for all that part of the west. He rode his races with credit, won money for his employers, made for himself a reputation of skill

as a pilot of fast steeds ridden in competition with others of their kind. So successful was the little Indian boy as a jockey that he became the rider for one of those stables of the west which follow the races that in those days in the cattle country were put on here and there, wherever these frontiersmen gathered to match one against the other those prime ele-

ments of the civilization in which they lived, those horses which were so important a supplement to their existence. Charles Curtis rode races through Kansas, Missouri, Indian Territory, Colorado, Wyoming and Nebraska. For five years he followed the races, and for these five years was a popular idol of the borderland to those people who revolved about this manner of life. That the circuit was a region quite unlike any that now remains in the United States may be evidenced by a single event. It happened one day down at Kansas City, the most easterly and furthest advanced toward civilization of any of the communities which Charles Curtis visited. Yet here in Kansas City while he was over at the stables, Jesse and Frank James, redoubtable outlaws of their time, swooped down upon the place after all the admissions were paid, held up the authorities at the points of their revolvers and carried away the gate receipts.

Senator Curtis showed me his strong, sturdy hands, and upon them certain white scars which resulted from wounds of his youth. These scars, he said, came from an attempt which he made to ride in a race a famous renegade horse by the name of Headlight, as fast a horse as galloped on the tracks of the west in those days. The little Indian boy, thought, however, that he could handle Headlight and he rode him in one wild race. He rode him half around the track, but at the turn at the end Headlight drove straight on, and through the fence, over the embankment, horse and rider going at a frightful speed, were hurled. These white scars on a senator's hands resulted from this encounter with a renegade race horse.

For five years Charles Curtis was a jockey. Then at the end of the season he found himself back at Topeka, and there came to town in the course of its wanderings a group of the Indians from the Kaw reservation from which this boy had once brought a message of the attack of the Cheyennes. In this group were a number of blood relatives of the jockey and among them was none other than Julie Poppin herself, his full-blood grandmother, the daughter of old

white and part Indian, found himself torn between the desire to accompany them and a hesitation in giving up his contract with the whites. Finally, however, the instinct to follow the easiest way prevailed. Charles threw in his lot with the Indians and took the back track to the reservation.

The first night out they camped by the familiar waterhole which he had known on previous journeys. That night as the moon came up, the old Indian woman, Julie Poppin, grandmother of Charles, gathered him to her and talked to him long in the native tongue of the tribe. She told him that she loved him and the tribe loved him as it probably loved and prized in no other human being. She told him of the pleasure that they all would take in welcoming him back to the reservation and having him as a part of their life, but she told him that a reservation Indian asleep in the sun would not amount to much and that if he came back to them he would become such an Indian and that the rest of his life would roll past in stuporous degeneration.

In the other direction she said, at the other end of the trail, lay the homes of his father's people. Should he take the back track, should he return to the homes of the whites, should he grow into manhood among those whites, he, like them, would be a white man; his would be the opportunities that come to white men; his would be a greater and a better and a fuller life. She, Julie Poppin, who loved him dearly, would rather give him up to this possibility than to have him and keep him a reservation Indian. Here was a pony ready for the saddle and it was his if he would take the back track to the white man's country.

And there in the moonlight the Indian grandmother helped this part-Indian boy saddle his pony and watched him ride away into the darkness and into the world which has since given him honor and work and responsibility such as come to few men who are to the manor born.

Charles Curtis, back among his father's people, had a bit of money from the days of his race-riding and he determined to make it go as far as he could while he attended school. For a year or two he maintained himself by hook or crook and delved into those mysteries that lie between covers and hide themselves in hieroglyphics of the printed page.

Then, when his money gave out, he turned to one of his horse friends of

astir who might require his services. For years he was a part of that life of the mysterious small hours into which the average man gets but an occasional and uncomprehending peep. And this night life, he says, was the corner-stone of all that he has since built.

Here is what Charles Curtis did. As he waited by the curb for a passenger, as he patiently hung about his back outside some address where his fare lingered, as his horse munched the oats in his nosebag for his midnight meal, Charles Curtis was busy. Those who can remember the life of two or four decades ago recall the glass-enclosed hacks then so familiar. The driver sat on his seat in the open out front and on either side of him burned dimly, sometimes smokily, an oil lamp. Those lamps of his night hack lighted Charles Curtis along the road to learning.

A lawyer friend advised him, lent him books. By the light of his hack lamp he read them. Perseverently, unfalteringly, intelligently, the one-time reservation Indian, jockey, hack driver, dug into the mysteries of the law. It was a three or four years course through this strange night school, but at the end of it Charles Curtis, at the age of 21, passed his law examination and went into the office as assistant to the lawyer who had guided him. Success came to him almost immediately. The incident which ushered it in was the fact that a senior associate of his with whom he was trying a sensational murder case went forth on a jamboree at a critical moment and the youngster was left alone with the life of a man dependent upon his efforts. No one had expected any other fate than conviction for the man under trial, and so when young Charles Curtis saved him he accomplished the additional feat of gaining fame overnight as a criminal lawyer.

This was 40 years ago. At the age of 24 this young lawyer was county attorney and he found himself in the congress of the United States by the time he was 30, a congress in which he has served almost constantly for the last 30 years, a congress which has placed upon him successively one responsibility after another.

"As a combination whip and leader," Senator Curtis was saying, "it is necessary for me to be always present when the senate is in session. As chairman of the committee on rules I try to give an hour or two each day to the work of that body. I am on the appropriations committee, am one

of its oldest members, and appropriations require much detailed attention. I try to participate in the work of the finance committee, of which I have long been a member. These are among the most serious tasks of the senate, and I try to do them full justice. In the mere matter of correspondence it is necessary that I have four stenographers to take care of dictation. It is a strenuous, active life of much responsibility. Obviously, there was little in my early days that offered me particular advantages in reaching this goal. Since this journey has been possible for me, who started so obscurely and who had so many early handicaps, is there any reason why any boy anywhere should not consider that to him all things are possible?"

And the lively stable man made good in his own way. He gave Indian Charles Curtis a hack to drive, one of those hacks that stand about the streets at night and pick up transient fares. Charles Curtis became a nighthawk. For years, summer and winter, good weather or bad, this lad spent the hours of the night when other folks are asleep upon the streets of Topeka, in front of its railroad station, its saloons, wherever the night lights burned, and people were

were all happy. Rose-Garden smiled sadly, saying, "But yes, madame, we have our children." Emma Hanoum agreed loudly. Only Faika did not answer. She seemed polite but indifferent to my question. Sami told me on the way downstairs that she was childless.

Within the next week Sami took me to several other harems. They were with one or two exceptions, much like the first one I entered. They were found along the Bosphorus and Golden Horn. They were in large white stone villas, where the different wives had private apartments with a common salon maintained by the Valideh Hanoum for the social intercourse of all. These homes seemed not like harems so much as Franco-oriental houses where several lived together and referred to the same man as husband—a man who seemed mythical, because never seen in company with his wives. Yet the sensual quality which hung over these women and their natures fitted in with tales I had read about old harems.

A French Cafe Singer.

Of the 18 or 20 women I met all but a few had as husbands "old Turks." Four women, one of them French, two Armenians and one a gypsy from lower Roumania, were married to a wealthy "young Turk." Or if they were not married, at least were harbored by him. The French girl had been a cafe singer in Petrograd at the first of the war. She had lived all over the world in her short

life. I felt that to her at least I could put a civilized question: "Are you really happy?"

She shrugged her shoulders. Her lavender forehead was conspicuous by the slight Parisian altering of its folds here and there. Her mahlak, or head handkerchief and accompanying veil which she wore to cover her entire face (the old tasmak or harem veil hanging below the eyes is never used now), was made of finely patterned veiling. She was pretty but hard. "One must live, my dear," she replied.

Two of the women I met had been driven down from the Crimea by the Russian war disasters. They seemed to regard marriage with a Turk as less awful than the fortunes of war. Several of them were Arabs. The corners of their mouths were tattooed with a small cross and three small crosses, all in blue ink, ran up and down the face above and below the lips in the center. These girls are oriental, barbaric and docile. They were Mohammedans by birth. One of them played delightful flute while the other danced in a fashion less appreciated in the western world than in the east.

By far the greatest number of these women were Armenians.

(In her next article Miss Symons will review the causes that have contributed to the revival of harems and slave trading in girls among the Turks and will expose the methods by which recruits are still obtained for the harems.)

LAST STRONGHOLD OF SLAVERY

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teach her. She was not particularly unhappy with him for he was kind as a rule.

One night, when she was 14 years old, he called her into his room in a lodging house in Bagdad, whither he had gone with some rugs, and showed her to a Turk. The man seemed satisfied. She thought he was going to be her husband.

The old man told her, however, that he was a friend of her future husband, who was a good man, and very rich. She was to dance well for him and receive fine clothes and see the world. She was not to tell anyone where she came from or she would be sorry for it. "They didn't want me to talk to anyone on the journey," she explained with a pretty, knowing smile, "for shipping girls for money is stopped by the police when they don't get paid enough to hold their tongues, and I had cost enough without having to quiet the police. And so I came to Constantinople and met my friend here."

She pointed to Rose-garden with affection. They seemed to be on terms of sweetest amity; in fact, one would have thought Emma had been brought to Constantinople just to celebrate this friendship with Rose-garden, rather than to be married. I found that strong friendships

often exist between the younger women and the Valideh Hanoum, so the first wife is called when she is a woman of character. Cut off as they are by their husband's orders from intercourse with modern Turkish women, and restricted from seeing many harem dwellers because of the actual scarcity of these establishments nowadays, the wives must perform make friends with each other to keep from dying of loneliness.

Third Wife Turkish.

The third wife, Faika (Superior), was Turkish. She was a native of Stamboul, the old Turkish quarter of Constantinople, where her father was a shoe-maker. She had known she was to be a third wife when she married. Most Turkish parents today refuse to let their daughters be humiliated thus and often an oath is required of the bridegroom that he will never marry again as long as he and his wife are together. Without this oath he cannot take to wife the better-class girl as fathers and mothers are fighting the harem bitterly.

Faika had only been married a few years. She spoke less French than the other two wives and was not so talkative. She was extraordinarily beautiful. She was quiet, almost sad,

in nature apparently, and this characteristic gave her dark face a melancholy beauty that was heart-stirring. Her eyelashes were long and vagrant, curling up below her brows in untidy profusion. Her mouth was full and sensuous, with a sensitive mouth. Her cheeks were pale, but a delicate pallor is considered beautiful in Turkish women who have so long been, as a sex, veiled from the sun. I noticed that her hands were full and white and that a fine starred sapphire ring stirred on one finger. Quite obviously she was the favorite.

I asked them if most of their women friends whom they called on were in harems, and they said yes. Their husbands, they explained, forbade them to call on or meet the modern Turkish emancipated women. "He is afraid they will argue us out of our harem," they explained. They had few friends of any description, though, they added.

The old serving woman appeared again and offered us arak, a strong white liquor, and cakes, though selfless drinks are absolutely forbidden to Mohammedans. Hearing Sami quietly open the door behind me reminded me of the waiting machine outside. My hostesses begged me to have tea with them next day, since their husband was not expected home. "I was saying goodbye, I murmured, diffidently, that I hoped they

