

# STRONG AND STEADY

By HORATIO ALGER, JR.

## CHAPTER XIV.

Now that he was again in his native village, Walter realized how unpleasant had been his position at Mr. Drummond's from the new elasticity and cheerfulness which he felt. There had been something gloomy and oppressive in the atmosphere of his temporary home at Stapleton, and he certainly had very little enjoyment in Joshua's society. Mrs. Drummond was the only one for whom he felt the least regard.

He passed a few days quietly, renewing old acquaintances and friendships. Nancy Forbes had gone to live with a brother, who was an old bachelor, and very glad to have her with him. Her savings and the legacy left her by Mr. Conrad together amounted to a thousand dollars, or rather more—sufficient to make Nancy rich in her own opinion. But she was not quite satisfied about the legacy.

"They say, Walter, that you'll be left poor," she said. "You'll need this money."

"No, I shan't, Nancy," answered Walter. "Besides, there's a lot of minding work that'll come to something—I don't know how much."

"But I don't feel right about taking this money, Walter."

"You needn't feel any scruples, Nancy. I can take care of myself. I can paddle my own canoe."

"But you haven't got any canoe," said Nancy, who did not comprehend the allusion. "Besides, I don't see how that would help you to a living."

"I shall get a canoe, then, and I'll steer it on to fortune."

"At any rate," said Nancy, "I will leave you my money when I die."

So the conversation ended. Nancy agreed, though reluctantly, to take the legacy, reserved some time or other to leave it to Walter. If she had known how little he really had left, she would not have consented to accept it at all. The same evening Walter sat in the lawyer's comfortable sitting room, and together they discussed the future.

"Do you want to be a book agent, Walter?" said Mr. Shaw. "I can't say I fancy very highly of that plan."

"I don't mean to sell my life for it. I am more interested than that. But it will give me a chance to travel without expense, and I always wanted to see something of the world. And see, Mr. Shaw, this, as I am so young, even if I spend a year or two in this business, I shall not be too old to undertake something else afterwards. In the meantime I shall see something of the world."

"Well, Walter, I won't oppose you. If I had not so much confidence in you, I should warn you of the temptations that are likely to beset your young life, as you will be, entirely to yourself. Of course, you will be thrown among all kinds of associates."

"Yes, sir; but I think I shall be wise enough to avoid what will do me no good."

"So I hope and believe. Now, what is the name of that publisher you were speaking of?"

"Fusser. He's of the firm of Flint & Puscher."

"I have heard of them. They are an enterprising firm."

On Monday morning Mr. Shaw handed Walter a pocketbook containing a few bills. "You will need some money to defray your expenses," he said, "until you are able to earn something. You will find fifty dollars in this pocketbook. There is no occasion to thank me, for I have only advanced it from money realized from your father's estate. If you need any more, you can write me, and I can send you a check or money order."

"This will be quite enough, Mr. Shaw," said Walter, contentedly. "It won't be long before I shall be paying my way; at least, I hope so. I don't mean to be idle."

"I am sure you won't be, or you will belie your reputation. Well, good-by, Walter. Write me soon and often. You know I look upon myself as in some sort your guardian."

"I will certainly write you, Mr. Shaw. By the way, I never thought to ask you about the furniture of my room at the Essex Classical Institute."

"It was purchased by the keeper of the boarding house; at a sacrifice, it is true, but I thought it best to let it go, to save trouble."

"I should like to see Lem," thought Walter, with a little sigh as he called to mind the pleasant hours he had passed with his school-fellow. "I'll go back and pay the old institute a visit some time, after I've got back from my travels."

Walter reached New York by ten o'clock. Though his acquaintance with the city streets was very limited, as he had seldom visited it, he found his way without much trouble to the place of business of Messrs. Flint & Puscher. As they did not undertake to do a retail business, but worked entirely through agents, their rooms were not on the first floor, but on the third. Opening the door of the room, to which he was guided by a directory in the entry beneath, Walter found himself in a large apartment, the floor of which was heaped up with piles of books, chiefly octavos. An elderly gentleman, with a partially bald head, and wearing spectacles, was talking with two men, probably agents.

"Well, young man," said he, in rather a sharp voice, "what can I do for you?"

"Is Mr. Puscher in?" asked Walter.

"He went out for a few minutes; will

be back directly. Did you wish particularly to see him?"

"Yes, sir."

"Take a seat then, and wait till he comes in."

Walter sat down and listened to the conversation.

"You met with fair success, then?" inquired Mr. Flint.

"Yes, the book-takes well. I sold ten in one day, and six and eight in other days."

Walter pricked up his ears. He wondered whether the book was the one recommended to him. If so, a sale of ten copies would enable the agent to realize twelve dollars and a half, which was certainly doing very well.

Just as the agents were going out, Mr. Puscher bustled in. His sharp eyes fell upon Walter, whom he immediately recognized.

"Ha, my young friend, so you have found us out," he said, offering his hand.

"Yes, sir."

"Come to talk on business, I hope?"

"Yes, sir, that is my object in coming."

"Mr. Flint," said Mr. Puscher, "this is a young friend whose acquaintance I made a short time since. I told him, if ever he wanted employment, to come here, and we would give him something to do."

Mr. Flint, who was a slower and a more cautious man than Mr. Puscher, regarded Walter a little doubtfully.

"Do you mean as an agent?" he said.

"Certainly I do."

"He seems very young."

"That's true, but age isn't always an advantage. He looks smart, and I'll guarantee that he is all he looks. I claim to be something of a judge of human nature, too."

"No doubt you're right," said Mr. Flint, who was accustomed to defer considerably to his more impetuous partner. "What's the young man's name?"

"My name is Walter Conrad," said our hero.

"Very good. Well, Conrad," continued Mr. Puscher, in an off-hand manner, "what are your wishes? What book do you want to take hold of?"

"You mentioned a book the other day—'Scenes in Bible Lands.'"

"Yes, our new book. That would be as good as any to begin on. How's the territory, Mr. Flint?"

"Most of the territory nearby is 'taken up,' he said. "Does Mr. Conrad wish to operate near home?"

"I would rather go to a distance," said Walter.

"As far as Ohio?"

"Yes."

"In that case you could map out your own route pretty much. We haven't got the West partitioned out as we have the Middle and New England States."

"In other words, we can give you a kind of roving commission, Conrad," put in Mr. Puscher.

"That would suit me, sir," said Walter.

"Still it would be best not to attempt to cover too much territory. A roving commission gathers no money, you know. There is one important question I must ask you to begin with. Have you got any money?"

"Yes, sir, I have fifty dollars."

"Good. Of course, you will need money to get out to your field of labor, and will have to pay your expenses till you begin to earn something. Fifty dollars will answer very well."

"As I don't know very well how the business is managed," said Walter, "I must ask for instructions."

"Of course, you're a green hand. Sit down here, and I'll make it all plain to you."

So Mr. Puscher, in his brief, incisive way, explained to Walter how he must manage. His instructions were readily comprehended, and Walter, as he listened, felt eager to enter upon the adventurous career which he had chosen.

CHAPTER XV.

Walter, by advice of Mr. Puscher, bought a ticket to Cleveland. There was a resident agent in this city, and a depository of books published by the firm. As Walter would be unable to carry with him as large a supply of books as he needed, he was authorized to send to the Cleveland agency when he got out, and the books would be sent him by express.

"I will give you a letter to Mr. Greene, our agent in Cleveland," said Mr. Puscher, "and you can consult him as to your best field of operations."

Walter went downstairs, and emerged into the street. He had no particular motive for remaining in New York, and felt eager to commence work. So he bought a through ticket to Cleveland, via Buffalo and Niagara Falls. Though he had not much money to spare, he determined not to neglect the opportunity he would have of seeing this great natural wonder, but to stop over a day in order to visit the falls.

He selected a comfortable seat by a window, and waited till the train was ready to start. He realized that he had engaged in quite a large enterprise for a boy of fifteen who had hitherto had all his wants supplied by others. He was about to go a thousand miles from home, to earn his own living—in other words, to paddle his own canoe. But he did not feel in the least dismayed. He was ambitious and enterprising, and he felt confident that he could earn his living as well as other boys of his age. He had never been far from home, but felt that he should enjoy visiting new and unfamiliar

scenes. So he felt decidedly cheerful and hopeful as the cars whirled him out of the depot, and he commenced his western journey.

Walter put his strip of railway tickets into his vest pocket, and his pocketbook, containing the balance of his money, into the pocket of his pantaloons. He wished to have the tickets at hand when the conductor came round. He sat alone at first, but after a while a lady got in who rode thirty miles or more, and then got out. A little later a young man passed through the cars, looking about him on either side. He passed at Walter's seat, and inquired, "Is this seat taken?"

"No, sir," said Walter.

"Then, with your permission, I will take it," said the stranger. "Tiresome work traveling, isn't it?"

"I don't know," said Walter; "I rather like it; but then I never traveled much."

"I have to travel a great deal on business," said the other, "and I've got tired of it. How many times do you think I have been over this road?"

"Couldn't guess."

"This is the fifteenth time. I know it like a book. How far are you going?"

"To Cleveland."

"Got relations there, I suppose?"

"No," said Walter; "I am going on business."

He was rather glad to let his companion know that he, too, was in business.

"You're young to be in business," said his companion. "What sort of business is it?"

"I am agent for Flint & Puscher, a New York firm."

"Publishers, ain't they?"

"Yes, sir."

Walter's companion was a young man of twenty-five, or possibly a year or two older. He was rather flashy attired, with a cutaway coat and a low-cut vest, double-breasted, across which glittered a massive chain, which might have been gold, or might only have been gilt, since all that glitters is not gold. At any rate, it answered the purpose of making a show. His countenance was showy, and his whole appearance indicated absence of good taste. A cautious employer would scarcely have selected him from a crowd of applicants for a confidential position. Walter was vaguely conscious of this. Still he had seen but little of the world, and felt incompetent to judge others.

"Are you going right through to Cleveland?" inquired the stranger.

"No, I think I shall stop at Buffalo. I want to see Niagara Falls."

"That's right. Better see them. They're stunning."

"I suppose you have been there?" said Walter, with some curiosity.

"Oh, yes, several times. I've a great mind to go again and show you around, but I don't know if I can spare so long a time from business."

"I should like your company," said Walter, politely; "but I don't want to interfere with your engagements."

"I'll think of it, and see how I can arrange matters," said the other.

Walter was not particularly anxious for the continued society of his present companion. He was willing enough to talk with him, but there was something in his appearance and manner which prevented his being attracted to him. He turned away and began to view the scenery through which they were passing. The stranger took out a newspaper, and appeared to be reading attentively. Half an hour passed thus without a word being spoken on either side. At length his companion folded up the paper.

"Do you smoke?" he asked.

"No," said Walter.

"I think I'll go into the smoking car and smoke a cigar. I should like to offer you one if you will take one."

"No, thank you," said Walter; "I don't smoke, and I am afraid my first cigar wouldn't give me much pleasure."

"I'll be back in a few minutes. Perhaps you'd like to look over this paper while I am gone."

"Thank you," said Walter.

He took the paper—an illustrated weekly—and looked over the pictures with considerable interest. He had just commenced reading a story when a boy passed through the car with a basket of oranges and apples depending from his arm.

"Oranges—apples" he called out, looking to the right and left in quest of customers.

The day was warm, and through the open window dust had blown into the car. Walter's throat felt parched, and the oranges looked tempting.

"How much are your oranges?" he inquired.

"Five cents apiece, or three for a dime," answered the boy.

"I'll take three," said Walter, reflecting that he could easily dispose of two himself, and considering that it would only be polite to offer one to his companion, whose paper he was reading, when he should return.

"Here are three nice ones," said the boy, picking them out and placing them in our hero's hands.

Walter felt in his vest pocket, thinking he had a little change there. He proved to be mistaken. There was nothing in that pocket except his railway tickets. Next, of course, he felt for his pocketbook, but he felt for it in vain. He started in surprise.

"I thought my pocketbook was in that pocket," he reflected. "Can it be in the other?"

He felt in the other pocket, but search here was equally fruitless. He next felt nervously in the pocket of his coat, though he was sure he couldn't have put his pocketbook there. Then it flashed upon him, with a feeling of dismay, that he had lost his pocketbook and all his remaining money. How or where, he could not possibly imagine, for the suddenness of the discovery quite bewildered him.

"I won't take the oranges," he said to the boy. "I can't find my money."

(To be continued.)

# MANAGING A NATIONAL POLITICAL CONVENTION

## Slight Variation in the Procedure Between Republicans and Democrats.

### Great Power Wielded Vigorously by the National Committee Preliminary to the Gathering—Handful of Leaders Control Machinery, Nominations and Platform.

National conventions are very expensive affairs. Their cost to the party holding them is estimated at not less than \$150,000, and perhaps more. In each great party is a body of wise men known as the "National Committee." This body is the scene of political ascension. A man may be a proud member of a division committee, which is the first step in the ladder. But when he reaches the dizzy heights of national committee man from his State and appears at the convention with a badge as big as an ancient breast-plate, so that there can be no mistake in his standing, the height of ambition is reached. There is one national committee man from each State. This august body meets in December preceding a national convention, examines the claims of the different cities that desire the gathering and critically looks into the size of the "guarantee," as it is called. This latter form means that the city paying the most money usually gets the convention. The guarantee is accepted by the committee-men, and they then proceed to spend it lavishly. Apartments at the most expensive hotels are secured, a host of employes is retained and business begins in real form. The hotel bills of the National Committee are something enormous.

**Machinery of a Convention.**

While the preliminaries are being arranged the delegates are arriving. The delegate to the National Convention is generally a person of importance at his home. The Democrats require a two-thirds vote of all the delegates present and voting to make a nomination. The Republicans require a majority of those present and voting. At a national convention each State has its own headquarters, where the delegates gather. They do a lot of "conferring" with each other and with delegates from other States. They hold meetings and elect chairmen and honorary vice presidents. The honorary vice president has a seat on the platform and an extra ticket, but little else. The chairman does the dickering in some cases; in some cases the position is a shrewd. Usually the "conferring" and the dickering begin days before the convention is to be called to order.

Prior to the calling of the convention to order the National Committee is virtually in command of the situation. With it lies the arranging of the details, the "framing up" of the procedure of the first session, the selection of the temporary chairman, and, in great many cases, though not always, the program making of the whole convention, temporary and permanent organizations, nominating and platform building.

**Convention Is in Order.**

Now for the convention, the great meeting that the country has looked forward to for so many weeks. The chairman of the National Committee calls the convention to order, usually about noon upon the day set.

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(To be continued.)

printed schedule, calling on John Doe and Richard Roe at the right time, so that there may be no hitch. Committees are appointed; one on resolutions, which will have the drafting of the platform; one on credentials or contested seats; one on permanent organization. These are the important ones. When they are all chosen, and there has been a lot of hand-clapping and cheering, as well-known men are appointed to this or that committee, the temporary chairman announces an adjournment, usually until the next day.

**Putting Wires in Committee.**

At last the machinery is in motion and the district delegate begins to wonder what he is on hand for. A big man at home, he is lost in the hurly burly and roar of the convention. He may be assigned to a committee, but he had nothing to do with that. The State boss decided that so-and-so should be a member of the Permanent Organization Committee; that Mr. Brown, who is a political economist, should be honored by a seat in the Resolutions Committee; and that the Boss himself or one of his most trusted lieutenants should be a member of the Credentials Committee. These bodies all meet separately. All the contents that were handled by the National Committee the week previous go to the Committee on Credentials unless pressure has been brought to have the contestants withdraw their fight. The Credentials Committee wires are pulled the same as the National Committee, and the result is usually nearly the same.

**Framing the Platform.**

It is when the district delegate sits in the Committee on Resolutions to draft the platform that he begins to realize that he is only a small "I" compared with the bosses. The genial Mr. Doe, who has been coming to the national conventions since 1868, is elected chairman with a hurrah. He assumes his position and draws from his pocket a carefully prepared document, which the secretary proceeds to read. The district delegate might have had an idea some time previously that he would be consulted as to the platform. But the party leaders saved him all the trouble and worryment. They had skilled men at work on the platform weeks before, and it is built according to their ideas. The committee usually adopts the platform with a rush. Sometimes there is a fight on particular topics. But party expediency usually rules.

**Real Work Now Begins.**

The Credentials Committee frequently sits for three days and the convention must wait until its labors are finished. The Committee on Permanent Organization is usually a cut and dried affair. Finally the Credentials Committee reports and the new roll is made up. Then the Committee on Permanent Organization makes its report. It recommends that the "Honorable Senator or Mr. So-and-So" be called upon to preside. Cheers greet the name, and the gentleman is escorted to the platform. After he has been elected he makes a profound speech, the other officers are chosen and, like race horses, the meet is on.

If the Committee on Platform is ready to report it reports after the permanent chairman has made his speech. On the report there must be a roll call. There is always, too, the possibility of a fight. Certain "planks" that please Maine may be abhorrent to Texas. When the matter of the platform is disposed of, either by the committee reporting or by the announcement that it is not ready to report, the permanent chairman announces another recess; maybe until the next day, possibly until later in the same day.

**Nomination of a Candidate.**

Frequently the time is taken up with speeches placing the candidates for President in nomination. These addresses are usually good in their way. Men noted for their eloquence, who can portray the virtues of the aspirant in language that will thrill their hearers, are selected for this work. The platform is usually accorded the speaker and his oration is hailed with deafening applause and cheers. Each candidate is brought to the front and his works painted in glowing colors. Then

comes the critical period. The district delegate believes now is the moment when he counts for something.

The roll call begins and proceeds, monotonously. The chairman of the different delegations alone do the talking. That is all there is to it. The first ballot in the convention is usually devoted to complimenting favorite sons. After that the real work begins. The district delegate learns that he is not to vote as he intended, but that he will vote for some one else on the second ballot.

Suddenly there is a roar in the convention. It is a mighty shout, louder than cannon. Somebody has been nominated for President. Amidst great disorder the rollcall is pushed to conclusion. The chairman tries to learn how the voters agree in their count. But the crowd knows all about it. The chairman, powerless as Mrs. Partington with a broom against the waves of the ocean, tries to do his duty. The shouts and cheers keep up for ten or more minutes. Excited men parade the aisles, carrying their State banners, cheering and singing. Finally, when order is restored, the chairman announces formally the name of the nominee.

**World Knows the News Quickly.**

This is greeted by more cheering and everybody is happy except the friends of the defeated. They move to make the nomination unanimous with a formal grace that lacks enthusiasm. This is done and the band plays. In the meantime the click of the telegraph instrument shows that the news has been carried to every town and hamlet in the country. It has been cabled to foreign countries. The rulers of all nations know within a few minutes after the nomination who is the prospective President of the United States.

No matter how long it has taken to choose a nominee for the Presidency, the whole performance has to be gone through again when it comes to nominating a candidate for the second place on the ticket. There are not so many "favorite sons," however, and one ballot frequently suffices. More noise, more enthusiasm. The convention has nominated the ticket.

Each State delegation, at one of its conferences, has chosen its candidate for member of the National Committee. The election of this committee is now in order. It is put through quickly, as a rule, and without a hitch. Then resolutions of various sorts are passed.

The ticket is named, the convention passes into history and the battle for power and patronage begins. The district delegate goes home. His townsmen congratulate him on his good work.—Philadelphia Public Ledger.

**THE "FIXER" OF GOTHAM.**

New York East Side Character Has a Real Mission in Life.

You will not find him mentioned in the city's charter nor on the pay roll of Greater New York, but the east side "fixer" is an established institution and is as important in his way as the policeman who samples the wares of the peddler or as the white-robed street cleaner.

When aliens come to this country, says the American Hebrew, and are emmeshed in a mountain of ordinances and regulations it is obvious that their lapses from the straight path marked out for the native must be viewed with an eye of softened by kindness.

"This eye of kindness is the 'fixer.' He is the man who rushes to the rescue of the unfortunate wretch who has been caught in the wheels of the law and who needs a sponsor.

"Necessarily, the 'fixer' is the intimate friend of the ward heeler, of the district leader and necessarily of the judges of the minor courts. He is usually bluff, hearty, good-natured and with a genuine love for his fellow citizens.

"When a pushover peddler is suddenly made to realize that he is violating the law by standing on one spot for more than the regulation number of minutes, and he is arrested by the policeman who has been sampling his beans or his fruit, it is not a pleasant situation in which he would find himself if he had no means of communicating with friends who are friends of the 'fixer.'

"It is the 'fixer' who sees the district leader for him, who appears in court to say a good word for him, who sees the judge before the case is called, and who, if necessary, puts up the bail to take him out of jail for the night.

"It must not be supposed that the 'fixer' is a philanthropist. He disdains ethics and civic virtue as the fanatical mouthing of the silk-stocking folk. What he does is done for his own good.

"If he does not receive his fee in money he knows he may count upon the renewed individual for his vote, and a vote is easily converted into monetary value. As the friend of those in distress he becomes an influence in the neighborhood, and an army of such friends may lead to political preferment of lasting importance."

Ever bothered with insomnia? Piano players and dogs seem most frequently afflicted in this way. And the poor things make an awful fuss about it.