

The Fable of the Corporation Director and the Mislaid Ambition

By George Ade

One of the Most Promising Boys in a Graded School had a Burning Ambition to be a **Congressman**. He loved Politics and Oratory. When there was a Rally in Town he would carry a Torch and listen to the Spellbinder with his Mouth open. The Boy wanted to grow up and wear a Black String Tie and a **Bill Cody Hat** and walk stiff-legged, with his Vest unbuttoned at the Top, and be Distinguished. On Friday Afternoons he would go to School with his Face scrubbed to a shiny pink and his Hair reached up on one side, and he would Recite the Speeches of Patrick Henry and Daniel Webster and make Gestures.

When he Graduated from the High School he delivered an Oration on "**The Duty of the Hour,**" calling on all young Patriots to leap into the Arena and with the Shield of Virtue quench the rising Flood of Corruption. He said that the Curse of Our Times was the Greed for Wealth, and he pleaded for Unselfish Patriotism among those in High Places.

He boarded at Home for a while without seeing a chance to jump into the Arena, and finally his Father worked a Pull and got him a Job with a Steel Company. He proved to be a Handy Young Man, and the Manager sent Him out to make Contracts. He stopped roaching his Hair, and he didn't give the Arena of Politics any serious Consideration except when the Tariff on Steel was in Danger.

With the return of Prosperity and the Formation of the Trust and the Whoop in all Stocks he made so much Money that he was afraid to tell the Amount. His Girth increased--he became puffy under the Eyes—you could see the little blue Veins on his Nose.

He kept his Name out of the Papers as much as possible, and he never gave Congress a Thought except when he talked to his Lawyer of the Probable Manner in which they would Evade any Legislation against Trusts. He took two Turkish Baths every week and wore Silk Underwear. When an Eminent Politician would come to his Office to shake him down he would send out Word by the Boy in Buttons that he had gone to **Europe**. That's what he thought of Politics.

One day while rummaging in a lower Drawer in his Library, looking for a Box of Poker Chips, he came upon a Roll of Manuscript and wondered what it was. He opened it and read how it was the Duty of all True Americans to hop into the Arena and struggle unselfishly for the General Good. It came to him in a Flash—this was his High School Oration!

Then suddenly he remembered that for several Years of his Life his consuming Ambition had been—to go to Congress! With a demoniacal Shriek he threw himself at full length on a Leather Couch and began to Laugh.

He rolled off the Sofa and tossed about on a \$1,200 Rug in a Paroxysm of Merriment. His Man came running into the Library and saw the Master in Convulsions. The poor Trust Magnate was purple in the Face.

They sent for a Great Specialist, who said that his Dear Friend had ruptured one of the smaller Arteries, and also narrowly escaped Death by Apoplexy. He advised Rest and Quiet and the avoidance of any Great Shock.

So they took the High School Oration and put it on the Ice, and the Magnate slowly recovered and returned to his nine-course Dinners.

Moral: Of all Sad Words of Tongue or Pen, the Saddest are these, "It Might Have Been."