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MATTY'S MEMOIRS
As Told to James Gordon Fraser
By Frank Matty
CHAPTER X.
About the time J. K. McGuire was becoming active in politics, I went into the saloon business. That's exactly what it amounted to, and I never made any bones about it. It was a respectable, honest business when I went into it, and, so far as I was concerned, it stayed that way. I ran a place for 16 years and no man ever was robbed or cheated in it. As a matter of fact, I got into the business by accident. Up to the early nineties, I had been a liveryman and horse-dealer. I was satisfied with it, because I liked horses—still do, for that matter. If I have been too enthusiastic about anything in my life, it has been horses—not the wine, women and song that the copybooks says characterizes politicians. One day in 1892, Sim Dunfee came into my place and said: "Frank, how would you like to go into the saloon business?" I laughed at the idea, telling Sim: "Not for me. I don't know anything about it and I've always found that it never pays to monkey with things you don't know anything about, especially when it involves spending money." But Sim was persistent. He said: "You're all wrong. You're just the fellow to make money in the saloon business. You know everybody and they know you. You know the value of money and you have a pretty good head for business. You can make more money with a bar than with a box stall." Well, he had me interested, and I asked him what he had in mind. He replied: "You know I own that building over on the corner of Warren and Fayette. I've got Joe Dunfee in it, but he doesn't like it and he'll never do much there. I wish you'd go over and look the place over and see what you think of it." I asked Dunfee: "What's the rent?" He said: "Oh, look it over and make me an offer." I went over that afternoon and looked the place over. It was on the corner where Schulte's cigar store is today—a three-story building, with a barroom on the first floor, sitting rooms on the second, and bedrooms on the third. Just like any one of a thousand little hotels that were running in those days. It was in pretty good shape. The next time I saw Sim, he asked me if I had thought over his proposition. I told him: "Well, I looked it over." He asked: "What's it worth to you?" I said: "I think a man might make a dollar there at \$7,000 a year. Sim thought a minute and then said: "Frank, you've bought something." And that's how I came to open "The Alderman Cafe," which was my headquarters for 16 years and which was, for that matter, the political headquarters of the town. More public business was discussed and settled there than in the City Hall, and you could always find more people who counted for something there than anywhere else. One of the men I got to help me was Bob Jackson, whom many oldtimers will remember. And the other was Mike Dorgan, who will be recalled by everybody over 50. Mike Dorgan was the catching member of that famous old baseball battery, McCormick and Dorgan, the greatest of their time and probably the greatest that ever existed. Anyway, Syracuse folks thought so, after they had carried the old Stars through a season in which they beat every big team in the country—Cincinnati, New York, St. Louis and all of them. I told Mike and Bob: "You boys are going to run this place. I don't know a thing about this business, but I'll make it go or know the reason why. You boys be square with me and I'll be square with you. I want to run the best place in Syracuse and I'm going to do it. What do we do first?" Mike and Bob more than made good. They had complete charge of the bar, and they took pride in the way they did it. With the best people in town for customers, it was easy to establish a high standard and stick to it. The place was more of a club than it was a public drinking place. There was never, from the day I hung out the sign, any rough stuff or dishonesty in "The Alderman Cafe." On the second floor, Chris Schneider had a gambling room. It was just like every other gambling room of the era, and there were plenty of them. With the difference, perhaps, that people always got a square deal and fair play in Schneider's. From the day I went into "The Alderman Cafe," until the day I went out of the gambling room twice, simply because it didn't interest me. As I said earlier in this story, a poker game or a horse race provided me with all the gamble I ever wanted. When I ran for mayor, the newspapers—one of them, at least—used "The Alderman Cafe" as a weapon against me. To read that paper, you would have thought I spent 24 hours a day fleecing the public with liquor, dice or roulette wheels. The paper pictured my place as a den of iniquity and a sink of corruption, whereas it was, in fact, the best and cleanest place of its kind in the whole city. And I challenge any oldtimer who remembers it to dispute that statement. All I hope is that, when we finally get rid of this blue-nose prohibition law, we have places as little harmful as "The Alderman Cafe." In the years when I was running the "Alderman combine," and thus the city's affairs, the place was full of politicians and people with schemes involving the city. I spent as much time there as I could, and people who wanted to see me came in and brought their friends. Business men liked

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