MATTY'S MEMOIRS

CHAPTER V

William Cowie is the man who was really responsible for what the newspapers used to call "the infamous aldermanic combine."

By that, they mean the group of aldermen who stood solidly together for 12 years, through thick and thin; come what might, to rule this city. Not always the same men, for the personnel of the group kept changing, but always the same number-just enough to pass legislation over the Mayor's veto.

Cowie didn't mean to bring about the formation of such a group, of course. He didn't mean to do a lot of things, for that matter, that he was forced to do while he was Mayor in 1890 and 1891. But he did it, just the same.

He was the Mayor who investigated the famous prosecution of Alderman John McLennan of the old Eleventh ward. There would be no point in going over

that old ease here, in detail. It is enough to say that McLennan, who had been in Common Council four or five years, was accused by Cowie of betraying the trust

out of the city hall. We've got

Well, we had a long talk, and

the upshot of it was that we three

agreed to try to form such a combination. We didn't have any

secret oaths or anything like that,

but we did have an iron-clad

agreement. And that was that we

would stick together on any vote

that we considered important to

us, no matter what happened. We

agreed not to let the wishes of

the party leaders interfere with

us, if it became necessary to defy

them, and to submit our personal

There were 14 aldermen in the

Common Council then and we had

no trouble getting eight of them. In fact, we took nine into the

combination right off the bat.

That gave us one vote more than

we needed to pass ordinary legis-

lation, so that, if it was necessary,

one of the members of the com-

bination could vote the other way

to satisfy his constituents or some

individual necessity. Later, we

found it would be necessary to

expand the combination to cover

a two-thirds majority, so we could

pass legislation over the veto of

the Mayor. And we did that, too.

combination, or whatever you

want to call it, was to make

Mayor Cowie's life miserable. He

couldn't do a thing that we didn't

want him to do. He couldn't

prevent us from doing what we

wanted to do. The people, who

didn't understand it all, blamed

him for what he didn't do and

what we did do. I venture to say

he had the toughest time of any

man who ever sat at the Mayor's

He stood it for a year and five months and then, one day, he

asked me to get the boys together.

I did it, and he came in and said

"Men, this thing has gone far

enough. We can't go on like this.

Something has got to be done or

we'll all be ruined, politically. I

got to deal with you fellows. What

"Mr. Mayor, that's up to you.

We're going to have something to

you any more than is necessary. If

you'll play with us, you'll get

YOU Simply Can't JUDGE

ORMOND SILK STOCKINGS

do you want?"

I said to him:

The immediate result of the

inclinations to the judgment of

the majority.

the power-if we stick together."

of the people. There was a grand jury investigation, and, in the end, after a lot of scandal had been printed and a lot of unnecessary things said, McLennan was vindicated. That is, he was vindicated legally; a thing that is always bad for a man in politics, even if he is innocent.

Alderman McLennan was a brother of Peter B. McLennan, who was a justice of Supreme Court at the time. Peter B. was tremendously popular. The people liked him and trusted him and, naturally, they had a friendly feeling for his brother. John was popular, too, and was a capable

Cowie's friends advised him to drop the McLennan case, on the ground that he was wrong, anyway, and would succeed in doing nothing but hurt himself, even if he had been right. It was good advice, but Cowie was a Scotchman-and nobody ever saw a Scotchman who wasn't stubborn. He was a rich real estate dealer who got into Republican politics with the backing of the James st. crowd and, because he was honthe point of being elected mayor, His son, Alexander Cowie, is

now attorney for the New York Central. When he was a boy, everybody called him "Sandy" and the name still sticks to him. At the time the Cowie-McLennan

fight was on, Tom Merriam was alderman of the Eighth ward, which then included the university section. He was a Republican and a veteran of the Civil War and ran a box factory somewhere up in Water st. He was a great friend of Peter B. McLennan and was one of those who tried to pull Cowie off, only to find that Cowie

One day, Charlie Candee and I were in the city clerk's office when Tom Merriman came in. He was red-hot about the McLennan case, and didn't hesitate to say what he thought of the Mayor. Charlie and I helped it along by sympathizing with him, although it was honest enough, for we both knew McLennan wasn't guilty. We talked for a while and Merriam

"It's a shame that a Mayor can get bull-headed and ruin an alderman like that. We ought to have some protection. As it is, he can get any of us."

"If enough of us would stand together, we could run any Mayor

their true worth.

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us again, hammer and tongs. And the newspapers began to take it up and hammer us. The Republican papers took the position that we were a lot of grafters, after anything we could get, and that we were demanding a split out of ever franchise we put over. They pictured us as a lot of wolves, banded together for evil. In those days, the papers used to say about what they liked and nobody ever thought of suing them for libel.

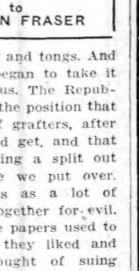
Anyway, it didn't do either Cowie or the newspapers much good. Cowie was a one-term Mayor. He could hardly be anything else, for no man could make a success of the job with our combination of aldermen against

opposite sides of a picket fence, so we knew each other pretty well. I couldn't fool him much, nor could he fool me. We were different types, but I liked him and I think he liked me. He got along better with the aldermanic combination than Cowie did, largely for that reason. But, even at that, he learned that it was the combination, and not him, that had the final word.

passes?

Well, Amos got through with it,

HAT TRADE EXCHANGE am ready to admit that I have MANILA, Nov. 3 .- The United States is the chief overseas supplier of hats to the Philippines and in turn is the chief market for Philippine hat exports, according to a say about what is done around report from Trade Commissioner E. here, but we don't want to hurt D. Hester, Manila. Shipments abroad of all kinds of hats from the islands during 1932 had a value He said he would but, just as I of 1,184,000 pesos, of which 871,900 expected, it didn't last long. pesos, or 73 per cent., represented



The next year, the Republicans nominated Jacob Amos and succeeded in electing him over Duncan W. Peck, who was the Mowry-Kirk candidate. Amos only won by about 500 votes. Peck was the prize hard-luck candidate in my experience. He should have beaten Amos and he could have won the next time, when Jay B. Kline took the Republican nomination away from Amos and Amos ran as an independent. It has always been a mystery to me how Peck lost that fight, but he did. Amos beat him by about 200, with Kline a bad third. I guess Dunk talked himself out of that

Amos and the aldermen worked together on one thing. We made the New York Central pave West Washington st. at its own expense. Several mayors had tried to do that, but had fallen down. And, when we finally put it over, the people thought it was a big thing. It is always popular to beat a railroad. People will forgive you a lot of things if you can report that you have won something for them from a railroad.

For some reason or other, Jake the New York Central. For a long time, he could get all the passes he wanted from them for his friends. He was pretty liberal with them, too. When one of the boys, or a group of them, wanted to run down to New York to see the sights, I used to go in to Amos and say:

He would always produce them, and it softened up a lot of the boys toward him. They looked on it as legitimate perquisites of the

and that brought us up to the election in 1895, the first time we ever elected a Mayor in the fall,

And that started the fireworks, for it brought in McGuire.

Within a few weeks, he was after exports to the United States.



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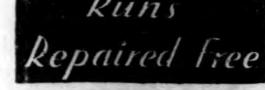
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