THE PORTRAIT OF A CANDIDATE

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THE first thing, the Wednesday after the election, and even before breakfast, my wife asked me to find out at once if Sol had won in the primary. She was thoroughly satisfied when she found out that he had not only won the Progressive nomination for state treasurer, but that he had received more votes than the combined totals of his two opponents. No other election returns appeared to matter to her, even though this is a presidential election year, and in this same yesterday's primary a La Follette was a winning candidate for his party's nomination for Governor and nominations were also made for the offices of Congressmen, Lieutenant Governor, and Secretary of State, Attorney General, State Senators, and county positions.

It happens that my wife is more concerned with the lives and works of poets than with the fate of the politicians; the latter do not interest her at all. They are a race apart, and she is most willing for them to remain so. But her feeling about the Honourable Solomon Levitan is basically the same as the feeling of a preponderant number of voters in Wisconsin, who think of this grand old campaigner not as an institution or in terms of a political party, or even in connection with some abstract political issue, but solely as a Man, as a Fellow Ccreature, as a Human Being *plus*. In a society that has become vast, unseen and impersonal, Sol remains the natural man.

I

I first saw Mr. Levitan in 1930. I had asked an old time resident of Madison to give me the name of "the most colourful" politician in Wisconsin. Immediately the answer came, "Sol Levitan, the state treasurer, is the man you want." I called on Mr. Levitan in the Capitol, introduced myself, and explained that I wanted him to tell my political party class about his experiences in politics. He threw up his hands and exclaimed, "Professor, I can't do that. I talked three times last week and I talk tonight, but I can't talk in a classroom." I said that if he could talk to the farmer, and other people of the state, he could talk to the students. "Oh no, Professor, talking to the university students is different from talking to a lot of d— Swedes." I insisted that

the same talk would do for both groups, and added, "There will be a newspaper man there to get your speech." He said that he would come.

It was midwinter when he came. He left his great brown chinchilla-like overcoat and his gray felt hat in my office. Before we entered the classroom, I stopped to introduce him to several students standing near the doorway. As I pronounced the name of one of them—a Miss Goldberg—he held out his hand, smiled, and said, "That sounds like home cooking to me." When he entered the classroom, he first of all removed a large gray sweater coat that he was wearing over his coat. Underneath, another gray sweater coat was visible. And in the classroom he lifted his glasses high on his head, looked at the seventy students, many of whom were Jewish, smiled and remarked, "I am glad to see so many of my cousins here." The class laughed their appreciation, and Mr. Levitan's career of university lecturer most auspiciously began. (Since that day he has failed in only one term to talk to each new class studying politics.)

He began with a smile, an enquiring eye, and a hand full of notes. The notes (in large print) were on strips of cardboard six or eight inches long and two inches wide. They were either briefest clues to paragraphs in his mind about his life story or supplementary passages on important subjects, such as:

> You American people, the greatest educated people in this world.... You hold in the palm of your hands the greatest treasure on earth—the ballot. If you have a man in office who votes and works against the people's interest, "Raus Mit 'em." You American people are broadminded. You don't care where a man comes from, what congregation he belongs to, if he is a real American....Now my dear people you are studying for the good of the country. Help the government by following the teaching of St. John, "Love thy neighbor as thyself."....Won't you give me credit that I don't quote Moses? Don't worry. Worry won't bring you anything. You can't change the world any more than you can change the planet. We all have to guess, and sometimes we guess wrong. The worst thing a man can do is to give advice, and advice doesn't always work out. I said 5 per cent brains and ninety per cent luck. And I can illustrate this. In Europe we have lotteries. Nobody can be rich unless he buys a ticket. One man wanted No. 14. He got 14 and he won that million. Everybody wondered how he came to pick No. 14. He said that it was brains, but they knew it wasn't brains. They kept after him, and he told them that he had had a dream about the million. A great big six and a great big nine appeared to him. So he used his brains and figured out that six plus nine was fourteen, and that is how he won.

His naturalness, charm, and wit in his spontaneously told life story were infectious and compelled attention; they carried him through the laborious reading of the rather stilted and impersonal parts. (However, in 1936, after the election, when he gave his campaign speech in the classroom, the speech was a unity and altogether delightful.) Moreover, the speaker was so finely attuned to the response of his audience that he dwelt on those ideas and stories that the class most appreciated, and briefly disposed of the other. The end product was a performance that every student abundantly enjoyed.

II

Here follow the most revealing incidents in the story of his life as he tells it to the student—and the voters too, for on election night when I was at Mr. Levitan's home as the returns were coming in over the radio, he suddenly smiled and said, "Professor, the speech I gave to your students so many times is the speech that elected me. I started on June 15th and spoke in 69 counties, sometimes two or three times a day. It is now my one speech. It takes forty minutes or an hour to give."

Some of his observations and stories have such unique and arresting turn that they are fascinating even without the presence of Sol himself. To understand his full appeal, however, one must have some picture of how he looks to the eye. He is only five feet five, but rather squarely built, and he bears himself well. He is at home with all the world; he is interested in everyone, and he assumes that everyone is interested in him. And nearly all of us are. He is, however, quaintly unique in appearance, manner and speech. His very uniqueness is appealing. The sight of him delivering a political address suggests for the briefest instant the foreigner, but only for the briefest instant, and only for once, for after he begins to talk, a very different galaxy of figures strikes one. He may be the patriarch, or the mischievious Puck; he may be the stern law-giver protecting the public's interest, or the thrifty trader. Or again, he may have both the pitiful and the lovable expression of a spaniel that is most anxious to please. But always he is the warm friendly human being, who looks directly at you as he talks, and you forget his appearance and become sympathetic and absorbed in him. You think of him as somehow being connected with you, and many voters in Wisconsin would no more vote against him than they would refuse to support a member of their own family for public office. In atmosphere or personality,

he is something like a Wisconsin Will Rogers or Mark Twain, or he brings to mind a comical and touching picture of one's own parents from Europe who had to struggle to make their way in America. There is something magnetic about him, with his fringe of rather long snow-white hair, and his very close cropped goatee, his round, and at times almost cherubic face that is pleasant, good-looking and unmistakably Jewish, with dark eyes that seem to relish what they see, his variable expressions, ranging from jovial friendliness and whimsicality to a look of concentrated seriousness. His voice has an expressive quality that wins his audience. His speech creates an emotional and physical response; it strikes somewhere lower down than the reason, although the reason accepts what he says. He seems to be life itself, rather than a highly specialized detail of life. Thus he disarms criticism and wins support, as the home baseball team wins the good will of the people in the community.

III

He was born in Taurrogen, Lithuania, on November 1, 1872, studied the five books of Moses at the age of six, Hebrew and Yiddish (his native tongue) and German at the age of eight, and at eleven he studied the Talmud. Later he earned money praying for the sick or writing letters for those unable to write. During these early years at school, he lived on rye bread and water (meat once a week), and mended his own clothes. "Our beds were the benches with straw for mattresses, and our overcoats for covering." At the age of sixteen he gave up the idea of a formal education and set out, without a dollar in his pocket, to see an uncle in the Crimea, 3000 miles away. He remarked that people were kind to him, and much of the distance he travelled smuggled under benches of trains at night. One night, about 3 a.m., he was discovered and put off. A few hours later he met some pious Jews going to a synagogue. That same morning they introduced him to a ship captain, who took Mr. Levitan to Kiev, another taking him to Krima Chug, and another to Yakatrine Slav. From there he took a train to the Crimea, (hitch-hiking in the seventies). At first he was hired out to a grain merchant at $50.00 a year, the second year he was given $85.00" with board and lickings free." Life looked good; he now had meat and white bread daily. He did not miss the absence of recreation in his life, for he never had had it.

A pogrom broke out in the Crimea in 1880. A Jewish woman was accused of throwing a bomb at the Czar. "Every Jewish

business house was destroyed; no Jew was safe." His employer went out to search for his wife. A big soldier caught him by the neck and started choking him to death. Sol picked up an iron bar and hit the soldier on the arm; the soldier released the employer and started after Sol. The crowd laughed and taunted the big soldier, "What, can't even catch a little Jew!"

His employer was so grateful that he offered Sol the choice of a modern education or a ticket to America. Sol reached Baltimore without five cents and unable to speak the English language. (His speech is still picturesque rather than grammatical). He worked on a street paving job, saved some money, and became a pedlar with a pack on his back. (He hesitates as he says this, smiles, and then adds, "They call them bond salesmen to-day".) He peddled among the Pennsylvania Dutch, for they could understand him. Often in the evenings, at the farm houses where he spent the nights, the children would help him to spell and pronounce English words. He would repay this and other kindnesses by doing chores around the house and barn, or by tending babies for the farmers' wives. He finally migrated to Wisconsin and settled permanently. A large number of the people that he went among were immigrants—Scandinavians, Germans or Swiss. He felt at home and picked, as his "home town", New Glarus, a little town near Primrose, the home of La Follette. This was in 1881, and by 1887 he was able to open a store of his own.

One Saturday morning before his store-keeping days, when he still had his pack on his back, he walked into a bank in a small Wisconsin town. He stopped, as he entered, to look at the bank president signing bank notes. The president was disturbed by the persistent stare. He abruptly asked, "What do you want?" Sol explained that he would like to know how long he would have to stay in this country before he, too, could put his name on money. At this the banker laughed so noisily that two clerks came up to see what the commotion was about. The banker pointed at Sol, and exclaimed, "This Jew peddler wants to know how long he will have to live in America before he can sign currency!" And then, turning to Mr. Levitan, he said, "Why you could live here forever and never sign a bank note."

Mr. Levitan adds, "I thanked him for the encouragement he had given me." And then: "Some years later, when I was the President of the Commercial National Bank of Madison, a much larger bank than the one in the little town, I thought of this first bank president of my acquaintance. The first $10 bill that I signed I sent to him as my calling card. I wrote, 'See, I am now

signing bank notes, and it did not take me half as long as you said it never would.' "

One time in his peddling days he was walking along a country road, wondering more about his next meal than about the next sale. He came to a farm house, but there was a forbidding sign in the yard—*No Peddlers Allowed.* Mr. Levitan surveyed the sign for a moment, took a piece of chalk from his pocket, and wrote "Only Sol" underneath the word "allowed" in the sign. He then knocked on the door, was admitted, sold some goods, stayed for dinner, and was right in the midst of his meal when the man of the house returned from town. He, following an old-time custom of certain farmers, had been drinking, and when he discovered a peddler in his home, he shouted, "What are you doing here; can't you read my sign?" Mr. Levitan said that he could read a little, but not very much. The farmer then took him out to the sign and read it to him. Mr. Levitan pointed out the "Only Sol" printed below, and he exclaimed "I am Sol". The farmer was at first bewildered, and then good-naturedly invited him to return and finish his dinner.

This was the first of a series of sales and dinners at this farm house. Years later, Mr. Levitan adds, the farmer confessed to him that when he put up that sign against peddlers he meant Sol too: "But you fooled me. So I fooled you. I heard that a Jew that eats pork never goes to heaven. I told my wife to cook pork chops covered with gravy every time you came to dinner. I told you it was veal, but it was always pork. Now you will go to hell." Mr. Levitan tells this story, as all his stories, with an appreciative smile, and the audience always laughs with him.

He then described his chance meeting with the original Bob La Follette and the official start of his career in politics—for actually he started in a form of politics when he first sought the favor of people. First he sold merchandise from his pack, then from his store, and finally he sold himself to the people:

> I happened to go down to a neighborhood near New Glarus. That is where Senator Bob La Follette was born, and I stayed around there and made my home with a man by the name of Eli Peterson, called Uncle Eli. One day when I had dinner, a nice appearing young man, very intelligent, came and right away Eli said, "Bob, what brings you here?" "Uncle, I am going to run for District Attorney, and I want you to help me." And they were talking politics, so all at once he turned and said, "Bob, why don't you get together with the Jew Peddler here? He knows all the farmers and can do you lots of good." So he said, "Bob, here is Sol; Sol, here is Bob." We shook hands, and

> an honest-to-goodness handshake, not like here in Madison. I didn't known a darn thing about politics, so he instructed me, told me how I should talk to the farmers, and gave me some kind of cards to tell all about it. Well, after we got through talking, business is business with me, and I right away sold him a pair of suspenders, and I supported him the balance of his life.

In 1892 he was elected to his first public office, that of justice of the peace, in the town of New Glarus. This was just five years after he had established himself as a storekeeper with a store of his own. "I didn't run. There was a town caucus that nominated me. I held the office four years and never made a cent." His knowledge of law was nil, but resourcefulness has always been one of his dominant characteristics. He "settled" the law-suits out of court, and sometimes made two friends where he had had one or none before. To quote him: "I was not educated enough to read the law. I didn't want to be embarrassed, so when a case came up before me, I would settle with them. I would say to them, 'Now you are neighbors. You don't want to have a fight; why not settle this out of court?' and I settled with them. Sometimes they had to apologize, sometimes one would pay with a keg of beer, and many times they would not settle, so I would pay it myself. If there was trouble between man and wife, I would ask the husband, 'Are you sure that your next wife will be any better?' I would then turn to the wife, 'Are you sure that your next husband will be any better?' Nobody could be sure, and I advised them to keep what they had. Later I was often thanked by both parties—in private."

His quick wit is revealed by the following story told one evening in his home. "One time I was at a meeting in New Glarus where delegates were chosen for a convention—it was before the direct primary. I was being suggested for a delegate, when a Norwegian spoke out and said, 'Here, we have enough delegates of our own people. We don't need to go to Jerusalem for one.' "

I interrupted and asked Mr. Levitan how he answered the Norwegian. He had not intended to mention this part of the story, but he smiled and added, "He said, 'We have enough here to choose from and no need to go to Jerusalem for a delegate.' 'Well you did once. Are you sorry?' "

His resourcefulness is suggested by the following. "In one early fight when La Follette was a candidate for governor, word was sent to me that the La Follette delegates must carry Green County—my county. I then had a store in New Glarus. One of the other merchants controlled some votes. I often had bargain sales that hurt this man, but this time I needed his votes, so I said,

'Albert, help me elect La Follette delegates, and I will never have a cut-price sale again.' He said, 'Can I trust you?' I said, 'Other people do', and so he helped me."

"At the convention, I had all the La Follette delegates lined up, and I moved that we make the strongest one of our opponents, the leader of the opposition, chairman of the meeting."

I asked his motive. He answered, "Don't you see, if we had him up there on the platform as chairman, he couldn't work around among the delegates. He would be out of the way, and we might win the ones that weren't so sure."

Later he added, "When I was a candidate for treasurer, I used to get every vote but four in New Glarus, and every vote but three in Primrose."

He became a Progressive because he liked La Follette and his ideals, and also because he doubtless had the feeling that La Follette would be Wisconsin and Wisconsin would be La Follette's. To the students and to the voters he explains the matter in these words. (And now when he speaks, when he mentions the La Follette name and the Progressive cause, he grows tense, he stands erect, or leans forward and shakes his fist at the unseen foe of the people. His voice now has no faint undertone, but thunders a defiant challenge at all who might be so rash as to question what the Progressives have done for the people.)

> Why am I a Progressive? When I moved to Madison, La Follette and I were neighbors. And he always said that people were not getting fair play, and something should be done to change conditions. Naturally I liked his way, and Progressives have done considerable. Now they give you the Civil Service. Before it was only a few, those who had a little pull, could get a job. Now they have got Civil Service, and we all have the same chance. If you have good marks, you get a job. That's a step in the right direction.
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> Now they have got Workmen's Compensation. I remember when I was up north peddling in the lumber camp, when a man took sick, nothing to it, just took him off the payroll. When a horse took sick, they right away put him in the stable, and give him plenty of rest, and send for the doctor. They know if they lose that horse, they lose $100, but when they lose a man, they haven't lost nothing. Nobody paid any attention to the poor widow and orphans. Now Progressives made the law where they got the Workmen's Compensation, and the poor widow and orphans are taken care of.
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> Now we have got Unemployment Insurance. A person can't kick a man right away after working for him. They have got to give him a certain amount of salary until he gets another job.
>
> Now we have got the Primary election law. Before, it always was behind closed doors, four or five people tell you "You

> will be governor, I will be lieutenant governor." It is the Primary where you, the people, decide who should be your officer.
>
> Now we have got unemployment pensions, mothers' pensions, old-age pensions.

In his successful re-election campaign for 1936, he made a particular appeal to the women in his audience. He asked the rhetorical question, "Who is it that bring up the American race?" And he gave the answer, "The woman, she brings up the child from the time he is born until he votes:"

> Say that a woman is not a politician? She is the greatest politician in the world. She plays politics to win her man. After she is married, she plays politics to keep him happy. I live in Madison. The women there are wonderful. Half of them have a university education. The other half make you think they have. The men could never get along without you. When we are young, we love you. When we are middle-aged, we appreciate you; but when we are old, we are crazy about you.

And then to the voters he adds, "Let me tell you my dear people, you don't have to be afraid of La Follette. It took courage to be a Progressive at one time. I remember in New Glarus the banker called me in and said, 'Sol, you are hollering too much for Bob. Now you owe us $1,000. When you pay us up, you can holler for Bob. As long as you owe us, you don't holler for Bob.' Then $1,000 looked like a million. I decided I was going to borrow from my relatives. I soon discovered that the poorest place in the world to try to borrow money is from relatives. They know you too well. I borrowed that money, and I have been hollering for Bob all his life time, and I am supporting Phil La Follette for governor."

All of his life he has learned by doing, the way that more than 90 per cent of all politicians learn. He learned about people from people. People are to him the data that the surgeon finds in the hospital or the student of constitutional law in the Supreme Court reports—except that the physician and the lawyer have other sources of information too, but Sol has one—people. The ballot box on election night tells him how well he understands his subject. He does a thing a certain way, and if it meets with the right response, he does it again; if he fails to receive the desired result, he asks, "Now wherein was I wrong? How should this be done?" He gained wisdom from first-hand experience.

Mr. Levitan was first elected to county and state conventions, and then in 1924 he was a delegate to a national convention—an alternate delegate in 1916 and 1920. "Once I was a presidential

elector—in 1912." He first became a candidate for state treasurer in 1918. Some of the party leaders wanted him to try for the office of lieutenant-governor instead, but he said, "Now you gentlemen know that I cannot preside over the Senate. I don't know Roberts's Rule of Order, but make me state treasurer. Give me something that I know. I can count your money in the dark and never lose a nickel."

The argument seemed as logical to the students as it does to their parents—the voters. However, in his 1918 campaign, and again in 1920, he was defeated. "I didn't campaign at all in these years. They told me to stay home—the less the people look at me, the more votes I have. I did use a campaign card. One of the leaders said I lost because my picture was on the card. But in 1922 I went out campaigning. The Lieutenant Governor Geo. F. Comings, Mrs. Rosa, and Ada James went with me. La Follette was not there, but he told the people to vote for me. They told me how to make a speech, but each morning my speech was, 'How much is the bill?' (The hotel bill, where the campaigners had spent the night.) Then at Baraboo I did make a speech—because of luck. Mrs. James was talking about bacon and pork, the rich robbing the poor—how it was that bacon sells so high and yet the farmer gets so little for his pigs.

"A conductor in the crowd of farmers said, 'Let's hear what Sol has to say?' I hadn't my speech with me, but I started talking about the big packers in Chicago who buy the pigs at their own price. They form a monopoly and cheat the farmers. The conductor called out, 'What in hell does Sol know about pork chops?' Everyone laughed, and I knew what the people wanted in a speech."

However, he nearly lost the third try at the nomination. I quote Mr. Levitan. "In 1922, La Follette didn't want me. I'd tried twice and lost. He thought I couldn't make it. So he invited some leaders of the Progressives (Crownhart, Comings, Evjue, etc.) and says to them, 'Gentlemen, I brought you here. We need a state treasurer. Must have a Progressive. I feel friendly to Sol, but I feel he can't make it. I don't want to jeopardize the Progressive movement for any man.' La Follette asked each what they thought of me. Then Secretary of State Hall came into the discussion. La Follette told him, 'We want to make a strong ticket. We don't want to put any lemons there.' Hall asked, 'Who's the lemon?' 'Sol Levitan.' Hall said, 'Let him talk. A man who hears Sol will vote for him.'" La Follette was persuaded by the group to give Sol his support. Hall was right—the people that heard him talk voted for him. And since that

time Sol's main ambition is to give the sovereign voter the opportunity to hear him talk.

(Later he told me in a personal conversation that he had learned much by his first speech. "I asked myself what must I do to get elected? What do people want? I decided that they don't want it all like going to church. They want jokes, so I studied what to do. I learned some German stories, some Norwegian stories, and told them in every speech. The press carried these stories, and I got much publicity.

"It gave me an idea—here I come in a country, don't know the language, the ways, but I sell them merchandise. Why, when I know English ways, don't I sell them myself? I studied what every kind of people want, tried to be humoristic."

Then addressing the students, he said, "There was a man named Jensen that campaigned against me. He was Jensen when he talked before the Danes, but he was Johnson when he spoke to Norwegians. I would say, 'Suppose I tell you I am a Swede. You look at me and say 'Langte fra' (Far from it!) I could change my name, what good would it do me the minute that you look at my Irish face." Then he glanced at a most beautiful girl with classic features and fairest color, sitting in the first row. He pointed at her. "Of course I would like to have a pretty face like that too, if I could." It was a direct hit with all the students. Sol had scored again! He had made each one in the class feel that he was just a little better than Sol. For in that class, as in every other advanced university class or in every community outside of the university as well, there are people who feel inferior, or who are afraid that they never will quite reach the mark, or achieve the success on which they had earlier counted. They naturally associate correct English with superiority. Now they behold a man speaking what seems to be broken English with a foreign tang. His accent, his double negative, his slurring of words cause these people, many of whom are uncertain about such intricate questions as the plural subject and plural verb present, to feel superior—even patronizingly so. Sol inflates the self-feeling of the student and the voter; they recognize this new feeling of power that comes to them as they listen to him jest at himself or at his race. They show their appreciation by their vote.

IV

I spoke truly when I first told Mr. Levitan that the students would like him as well as the voters did. They did, and do. (When a politician visits my class to speak about his actual life in politics,

each student prepares a paper on the traits or characteristics of the speaker that might account for his success in getting elected to public office.) The comments from the students, not only from this first group in 1930, but from each succeeding class as well, indicate that Mr. Levitan is the students' choice as well as the people's choice. Almost unanimously the students express their unqualified surprise, delight in and approval of the man. After his appearance in 1936, when he gave the class of 105 students his campaign address, all the reports were favorable except three, and these three recognized the speaker as a most effective campaigner. And so it has been for each group of student reports following each of his appearances in the classroom. Last year my one Communist student said, "We look to the political leader for guidance in the world to-day, and he gives us a smile and funny stories." Other students have remarked, "It would not be unreasonable to suppose that part of his success at least is due to the fact that he was drawn along, as a faithful henchman, by the still more successful Progressive party." One student observed that, "My father always refused to vote for any La Follette candidate with the exception of Sol." This year a girl student wrote, "I am sorry that I voted a straight ticket. Next time I will split my ticket and vote for Sol." One paper, that was unique, stated, "It has been a tradition at our synagogue that once each year Mr. Levitan leads the congregation in prayer, and he has done this every year since I can remember." However, in an overwhelming majority of papers the following expressions appeared again and again, so often and with such gusto that I cannot easily think of another politician that would have brought them forth in the same full measure of unfeigned delight: "personal magnetism", "sense of intimacy", "sincerity", "friendliness", "simple, honest man of the people", "honesty", "convincing", "his many Jewish jokes break down any racial feeling", "his jokes are about himself, they are not the ones you have been hearing in the past 500 campaigns", "he makes the listener believe that he is the equal of the speaker", "he believes in the Golden Rule and the La Follettes." One student was reminded of the comedian Weber in the team of Weber and Fields; another student thought of him as a prophet stepping out of the pages of the Old Testament.

At first blush Mr. Levitan's address in the classroom or on the hustings may seem to be only a haphazard lecture that is tossed off without careful preparation or pertinent regard to the particular audience. Or it may seem to be a rather naive performance that may hit or miss the fancy of the group. However,

both of these ideas are precisely opposite to the truth of the matter. First, the speeches are carefully, even laboriously, prepared; no effort is saved, or time or consultation with appropriate experts (newspapermen or professors, etc.) is spared in Sol's aim to get just the right speech. When it is finally given, it embodies a highly developed and selective appeal, aimed at those stereotypes and blind spots in the listener's mind that are most certain to arouse a feeling of sympathetic superiority and good will which will later be transformed into a vote at the polls. The faulty English, the foreign accent, the mispronounced words are aids in helping him to win and hold attention and sympathy. Some years ago he asked a professor of speech to teach him how to speak English correctly. He was told not to change anything, or he would ruin his speech. To-day he knows this to be true. He refers with joy in his heart to his lack of formal training at the very start of each address. "I went to the wrong school, I went to the school of hard knocks."

His public speaking formula seems to be, first, Sol himself in his most expansive, cheerful and engaging manner. Next he begins his speech with a joke—probably about himself and his race; then he presents something in a more serious tone on La Follette and the Progressive party, or on the superiorities and excellencies of the group before him. In a broad sense all of his speeches are the same, and yet each one is different. The nature of this difference is determined by the difference in the various groups that he addresses. For example, when he first adressed my students he said, "One time, just before Christmas, some of your young men from the university were feeling pretty jolly in front of a movie house. The police thought they were disturbing the peace, and took them around the corner to the stationhouse. I followed the patrol wagon and signed bail bonds to let them go. Then I went to your Dean and said, 'Dean what are you going to do to the boys?' He didn't know. I said, 'You want the university budget approved?' (The preceding legislature had not approved the appropriation for the university. The preceding appropriation could be approved by an emergency board of three men. One of these was the state treasurer.) He got the idea. The students in the classroom got the idea too."

In explaining the emergency board to the students, he characteristically used a homely illustration that he uses also in talking to the voters. "I am a member of the emergency board, and I oppose a good many things the board wants. The Governor and the Secretary of State are members of it too. I want to tell you what it is. I used to send my children to school and they

always needed money for books, and I say, 'My, my, they must have enough books to make a new library!' Well, their mother used to go through my pockets at night and take a nickel or a dime out of them and give the money to the children. That is what I call an emergency board."

A few weeks later he talked to the students at Tripp Dormitory. One fact that he emphasized repeatedly in talking to the students at Tripp, and did not mention elsewhere, was the pertinent point that it was through him that the money was raised for the construction of the dormitories.

In his last talk to the students he told them about the scrupulous honesty required of the Wisconsin state treasurer, and then, with a mischievious Puck-like smile on his beaming face, he pointed his finger at the professor who was standing against a side wall and loudly exclaimed, "It is no job for a Philadelphia politician." The student response in handclapping was immediate. Mr. Levitan knew that the object of his remark had written a book on Philadelphia politicians; he likewise knew that the students were thoroughly aware of this fact. Thus, a campaign speech that had already been given about 194 times seemed at that moment to be an address prepared specifically for the students present.

The third element in his speech is again a joke. But the joke is uniquely arresting; and it is more than something "humoristic". It may be folk lore; something that has been for an unknown time associated with the sorrows and struggles of the human race. This idea is illustrated by the following:

McAdoo and Admiral Grayson, Wilson's doctor, came to Wisconsin to help to launch a Liberty Bond Campaign. Mr. Levitan sat next to Dr. Grayson at a banquet. The Admiral was from Virginia, and Sol had once peddled in his home town. The Admiral thought that he remembered Sol and said, "When you come to Washington, be sure and visit the White House." Later Mr. Levitan took all the ballots to Camp Wadsworth, S. C., for the Wisconsin soldiers. Coming back, he stopped off at Washington to see Admiral Grayson. "He was friendly to me, says 'Sol I want you to meet Tumulty. Tumulty, I want you to meet a man from Wisconsin—that loyal state!' I said, 'Yes, we're loyal. My son is in the navy, my daughter is working for government insurance allotment, and sings at Camp Meade to soldiers, and I at home have bought Liberty Bonds. All I have left at home is my mother-in-law, and my country can have her too.' 'A man who is willing to spare the peace-maker of the family is 100% American.'"

Or possibly the joke is used to present a significant fact, or is based on a current public question prominent in the minds of the

audience. (During the latter part of the prohibition era Mr. Levitan described the recognition that he had received in this manner. "I was made an honorary member of one of your social science fraternities—you called it Pi Gamma Mu? I was made honorary president of the State Treasurers' Association for life. I was also made a chief of the tribe of Winnebago Indians. I said I would rather be a member of the tribe of Israel."

In any case it is stamped with the original flavour of Sol. Finally, Mr. Levitan says that the one thing that he has contributed to the ancient art of campaigning is this: "Never talk anything against nobody."

In his 1936 campaign for re-election, he answered the critics who said that he was too old to hold the office with the following observation: "Wisdom comes from experience. Handling the people's money is not a job for a politician. There's too much temptation. It might be good to let an elderly man handle your money. He's looking for the golden gate, not the golden calf."

V

Mr. Levitan's genius for publicity, his energy in pursuing it, and his amazing wit in achieving it are subjects that require special mention. Publicity not only helps him in his trade of politics, but is a form of recognition. And the desire for recognition is the dominant motif in his life. He loves people, but even more than that, he loves to talk to people. The warm embrace of the crowd is to him like the baying of the hounds to the fox hunter, or a sharp increase in the price of milk to the dairyman. Different times when I talked to him in long evenings when he was out of office, he would be sure to say, "Professor, get me some speaking engagements— Chautauquas and like that. I only want my expenses, and you can have the rest." I pleaded total inability and lack of connections to do this sort of thing, and I suggested that he obtain the desired introductions from a prominent Progressive who often gives public addresses and must have the necessary connections, but Sol said, "Oh no, he thinks only of himself."

One might near the end of December, 1936, I called at Mr. Levitan's home. He at once started pouring me a glass of wine, and I protested. He argued that the wine was very good and that drinking made one happier than anything else. He said that even King David back in the Old Testament said, "Wine will make a man happy." He said you couldn't be any happier than when you drink wine. He wanted to know if I agreed.

I then asked him what he craved, what he liked above all things. He said," I like a little honor. I like to be recognized. I was always proud to be recognized as a President of the Bank, state treasurer, a presidential elector." He said he didn't care for society. I enquired if he was sure of that, and reminded him that he was possibly disappointed when the great utility man would not speak to him. He said, "In all my life time I didn't expect to act any different. I expect him, a wealthy man, to act like a wealthy man. I have never lived among that kind of people. I would rather meet one Professor than ten with all of his millions. When he died, he couldn't take it with him." Later in the evening I asked why he had wanted to make more speeches after he had been elected. He smiled and said, "I enjoy talking to people, to big crowds. Speaking is the same fault in me, like craving for liquor or cards is a fault in other men."

On the midnight and after, of November 3rd this year, right at the very moment of victory, when he was surrounded in his home by his closest friends (and the interloper—the Professor) he suddenly turned to me and said, "Now I am elected. Now you will find places for me to speak." There was no thought then of quitting now that the campaign was over, that the victory had been gained, that he must have been tired to death because of the laborious and forced marches over the state during the preceding three months. The one thing in his mind seemed to be—"Now maybe I can get opportunities to talk to more people than ever before. The treasury office is a detail on my march to better recognition. Not money—that has limited uses and it may pass away, but glory. Not the people now, but Sol!"

One might end this fragment of a biography with the title —*The Life of Sol Levitan or the Golden Rule that Pays.* But it has not been a bed of roses for the man who succeeded in the land of opportunity. Man's unkindness to man has troubled him more than he has ever publicly indicated. At times he has felt that he was "sorrow's bone". He approached a group at a county seat this year who were holding a picnic. He chatted with one of them. "And this fellow told me that Hitler was a great man." Mr. Levitan told Father Bloodgood when the two were in my office, "Reverend, people are not as kind as you think they are. You will have to give doubled-barrelled sermons on kindness." But to "the people" Sol is always the merry old gentleman that says something funny and cheerful.