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Alfred Emanuel Smith

HIS LIFE

The Boy and the Young Man

ALFR ED EMANUEL SMITH, Governor of New York State and Democratic nominee for the highest office in the land, was born in an old tenement on South Street, New York City, on December 30, 1873, into circumstances as humble as those of Andrew Jackson or Abraham Lincoln. His parents, simple people of American birth, determined to give him all the educational advantages of which they were capable. He consequently was sent at an early age to the St. James School, where his quick and eager mind and his ready wit made him a great favorite both with pupil and teacher. His talent for public speaking showed itself immediately and while still attending school he took part in oratorical contests. The death of his father cut short his formal education at the age of thirteen. The responsibility of supporting his mother and a younger sister started him early on that long course of training in the experiences of life that has made him today the best informed and most astute leader of contemporary democracy. The hardships of making a living in many-sided and cosmopolitan New York gave the young man an insight and understanding of the common people, which has been his greatest asset in his long career of public service.

He started work in his father's trucking business, but anxious to improve his lot, he turned to another neighborhood industry—he lived near the waterfront—and became an assistant in the Fulton Fish Market. Later he worked as a laborer for a steam company in Brooklyn. He participated in all the neighborhood activities and was exceedingly popular. His magnetic personality made friends of all he met. He took part in the local charity benefits, either giving recitations or acting in plays. He acknowledges that these early experiences have been of the greatest value to him in a career where the ability to speak clearly and forcefully in public has been an absolute necessity.

The Albany Years

It can easily be seen that a young man with as likeable a personality as young Smith and with as lively an interest in the things

that were happening around him, would turn to politics. In 1903, he was first elected to the New York Assembly and from then until 1915 he served in the State Legislature for twelve successive terms. He has gone steadily upward, not because of good luck or fortune but due to his deep understanding of the needs of the people, his earnestness in studying new facts, and the great sincerity of his purpose to serve.

He wasted not a minute of his time in the long years at Albany, but read every bill word for word so that when it came up for debate he would be prepared to speak and think intelligently about it. He studied the methods of the various leaders of the legislature and, regardless of party differences, they became his friends and teachers. He was minority floor leader, majority leader, and finally, in 1913, he was unanimously chosen Speaker of the Assembly.

Delegate to the Constitutional Convention

When he was elected a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, in 1915, his opponents felt that at last he would be outclassed. How could a young assemblyman with not even a high-school education hold his own with the most brilliant legal minds of the state, such people as Charles Evans Hughes and Elihu Root? Yet it was in this convention that he appeared at his best. His years of legislative experience had given him the facts in connection with nearly every department of government, enabling him to debate on any question fluently and readily. He fought for an equitable reapportionment of the State so as to secure a fair basis of representation between rural and urban communities, the retention of control by the State over its own water power, and a wage commission to fix a living wage for women and children. He carried these questions to the floor of the convention and debated them, his natural eloquence backed up with incontrovertible facts.

As the convention was about to adjourn, its presiding officer, Hon. Elihu Root, said of Smith: "Of all the men in the convention, Alfred E. Smith is the best-informed on the business of the State of New York."

Political Development

In 1915, he left the Legislature and became Sheriff of New York County, where, by agreeing to the abolition of the fee system, he instituted a great reform. In 1917, he was elected President of the Board of Aldermen. In every office he ever held he received the full support, not only of his own party but of the best elements in press and public, regardless of politics. The Citizens Union, a

non-partisan organization of New York City, has always endorsed him, and even such a staunchly Republican paper as the *Herald Tribune*, at the time of his nomination for Sheriff printed a lengthy article praising him, in which it said: "In the past ten years there has been no Republican, Progressive, or Democrat in the State Legislature who has rendered as effective, useful, downright valuable service to this town as ex-Speaker Smith."

Governor of New York

In November, 1918, he was elected Governor, the fifteenth time he had run for public office with never a defeat against him, and with a record of public service that the most conscientious and ambitious reformer must envy. His work in his four terms as Governor is of such an important nature that it must be discussed separately. It is important to note, however, that the entire reform in the government of New York State is due to Governor Smith alone. He appointed a Reconstruction Commission in 1918, whose proposals for a social program caring for ex-soldiers, housing, health, and education, and whose executive program calling for a complete change in the State government Smith immediately accepted. He succeeded in having these measures passed by the Legislature and he toured the State from one end to the other to bring the issues before the people. When Smith was out of office, from 1920-1922, not one thing was accomplished in the State reform.

When he was renominated for Governor in 1920, he met with his first defeat. Although he was swallowed up in the Republican landslide, he ran over a million votes ahead of the Democratic Presidential nominee. Some five hundred thousand Republicans split their tickets to vote for him. When he was re-elected in 1922, he received 1,397,670 votes, and a plurality of 285,945, a figure never before attained by any candidate for State or local office anywhere in the United States. The same story could be repeated, with slight variations, for 1924 and 1926. Each time he has been elected on the basis of specific accomplishments. Each time he has presented certain issues to the people and on the basis of these issues he has been elected. Never once has he failed to carry out a pledge. The people have voted for him because they believe in his policies and because they know he will make every effort to carry them out. What his accomplishments have been will be considered later, but his long career of service, the many efforts he has made for the people entitle him to the wholehearted support of every Democrat and every Progressive throughout the country.

There will be two
registration days before
election

Be sure every Smith
supporter is registered

The
Young People's
Democratic League

(FURTHER INFORMATION WILL FOLLOW)