

THAT IDEAL CAMPAIGN FRONT PORCH

Candidate to Follow Example of McKinley, One of His Political Heroes—Mrs. Harding, "The Duchess," as a Waffle-Maker

By FRANK PARKER STOCKBRIDGE.

SENATOR WARREN GAMALIEL HARDING announces that he is going to make a front-porch campaign. It is twenty-four years since his distinguished fellow-Ohioan, William McKinley, conducted his famous front-porch campaign at Canton. Mr. Bryan set the fashion of rear-platform campaigning in 1896, and since then every candidate for the Presidency but one has done most of his campaigning by train. The one was Alton B. Parker, who didn't travel much—nor far.

I spent a considerable part of the Summer of 1896 on Major McKinley's front porch, and watched the lawn disintegrate into a mudhole under the feet of visiting "delegations" from every part of the United States. They used to say that Major McKinley got so tired of hearing "brass bands" play "Hail to the Chief" that he asked General Horace Porter, who was marshal of the inaugural parade of 1897, to keep them from playing it on that occasion; likewise that the General's appointment as Ambassador to France was partly by way of reward for his success in that matter.

Be that as it may, Senator Harding may not yet get so tired of band music as Major McKinley did. The Major never played in a brass band himself, but the Senator did. Of that, more anon; I was about to speak of front porches.

An Ideal Campaign Porch.

Roomy and ample as was the McKinley porch at Canton, the Harding porch at Marion is ampler and roomier. Moreover, it has a circular bulge or rostrum at one end that makes the finest sort of a platform from which to make speeches to the assembled multitude. There is room for a considerable multitude, too, on the Harding lawn, the next-door neighbor's lawn and the sidewalk and street in front of the house. It would not be difficult, I should say, to dispose some 10,000 persons so they would all be within hearing of the candidate's voice as he spoke from the circular end of the porch. He has a strong

voice, pitched to carry well either up or down wind.

It is the best porch in Marion on which to eat hot waffles. Indeed, and I say this with full knowledge of the waffle-bearing capacity of Ohio front porches, it is the best porch in Ohio on which to eat hot waffles. We sat on the porch one day—Mr. Harding and the writer—and ate hot waffles as fast as Mrs. Harding could cook them.

Mrs. Harding's waffles—she has her own special and secret recipe—are the apotheosis of waffledom. I say "are" advisedly, for when I called Senator Harding upon the long-distance the other day to congratulate him, he at once recalled that waffle-fest and asked whether I remembered it.

That proves it, for if Mrs. Harding is the queen of all waffle-makers, which I maintain she is, Mr. Harding is the only scientific judge of waffles and waffle-eating qualified to speak on the subject. The Senator has reduced waffle-eating to a precise formula. This is the way he states it:

"You eat the first fourteen waffles without syrup, but with lots of butter. Then you put syrup on the next nine, and the last half-dozen you eat just simply swimming in syrup. Eaten that way, waffles never hurt anybody."

The devoted attachment between Senator Harding and Mrs. Harding is one of the things that have endeared both to those who know them intimately. They have no children. There are usually pets of some sort around the house. The last time I was in Marion the place of honor was held by a Boston terrier who answered to the name of "Hub." "Hub" was a diplomat. By day he was Mr. Harding's devoted companion; in the evening he had eyes for none but the mistress of the house.

The camera has never done justice to Mrs. Harding; photographs of the candidate's wife can give hardly a suggestion of the vivacity and goodfellowship that make her popular with both sexes.

Mutual Domestic Interests.

Waffles and pets are not the only interests the Hardings share in common. Their tastes run alike along almost every line. Both are enthusiasts on the

subject of sculpture. They used, before the war, to make frequent trips to Europe, and never came back without another piece of marble to add to those which constitute the chief artistic adornment of their otherwise plain and simple home. Both are fond of bridge and of music, and the Senator can make music, too. He is partial to brass bands—one of the first telegrams of congratulation he received was from John Philip Sousa—and that interest dates back to his boyhood days, when he helped to organize a brass band, and played in it, too.

"I played every instrument except the slide trombone and the E-flat cornet," he told me. Once he took the Marion band to Findlay to take part in a band tournament. They didn't have any uniforms and they needed them to take part in the contest. Young Harding personally borrowed the money and bought the uniforms, getting a local merchant to indorse the note. He was perfectly sure they would get the prize. Some of the bandsmen were not so confident. He had to guarantee one of them his wages, to hire a physician to look after the wife of another. The Marion band won.

"If we hadn't I couldn't have bought The Star," said Mr. Harding, when he told me of the incident.

It is as editor and publisher of The Marion Star that the Republican candidate really feels himself at home, after all. He bought it in 1884, two years after his parents had moved into Marion, and he was just out of the Ohio Central College at Iberia. He was 19, and he paid \$300 for the paper, goodwill, franchise, plant and all. It was a little four-page daily, printed one page at a time on a job press—one of the first attempts in America at printing a daily paper in a country town.

Mrs. Harding worked with him from the beginning. "The Duchess"—that is the Senator's pet name for his wife—"The Duchess is a good business woman," he says. "When I took hold of the paper the circulation was managed by contract. She thought we were not getting enough revenue, so I canceled the contract and put her in charge. The first month showed an increase of \$200

in the circulation revenues, and until I went to Columbus, to the Legislature, fifteen or sixteen years later, and took her with me, she was the circulation manager of the paper."

His Political Ideals.

The Star is today one of the best newspaper properties in Ohio, and Senator Harding is still its editor and controlling owner. Until recently he used to go into the composing room and set type for the fun of it—"to keep his hand in," he explained. His big desk in the editorial sanctum is surrounded by pictures that reflect the owner's ideals and interests. Here are autographed photographs of Roosevelt, Taft, Mark Hanna, Senator Foraker, Senator Burton and many other Ohio notables. Over his head as he sits at his desk is a signed photograph of McKinley. On the front wall is a colored print of James G. Blaine.

"He's my real hero of politics," said Senator Harding. "I went to the convention that nominated him, in 1884, and returned to Marion wearing the high white hat that was the emblem of the Blaine campaign. It got me into a lot of trouble. But of all the men who ever lived, there is my real hero." He pointed across the room to a small picture on the opposite wall, a carbon print of Napoleon at the tomb of Frederick the Great. "He was the greatest man that ever lived," Mr. Harding says.

Marion is a thriving little city, a manufacturing centre of considerable importance. Steam shovels and other heavy machinery are made there and shipped to all parts of the world. Senator Harding and The Star have grown up with the town. Before he went to the Senate he was a director in a dozen or more of the city's big industries and banks. And he believes in letting the other fellow have a share, too. When The Star was incorporated one-fourth of the stock was set aside for the employes to purchase, the Senator retaining three-fourths for himself. Almost every employe—every one who has been there for any length of time—is a stockholder in the paper, paying for it out of his wages and drawing dividends while paying for it.