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Simon Cameron and the Senatorial Nomination of 1867

TO ACCEPT the various stories of bribery and corruption that arose during the course of the United States senatorial race in Pennsylvania, which ended in January, 1867, it would be necessary to believe, as the *Pittsburgh Gazette* observed, that Simon Cameron had "an inexhaustible mine of wealth, and that he scattered it with marvelous prodigality."[1] Despite this note of warning, historians have tended to overemphasize bribery and corruption as explanations for the Pennsylvania politician's political successes.[2] A careful study of the campaign for the senatorial nomination in 1867, a critical contest for both Simon Cameron and Pennsylvania, clearly suggests that his triumph was due less to money, which even

[1] *Pittsburgh Gazette*, Jan. 10, 1867.

[2] Although aware of Cameron's other abilities, historians have so heavily stressed his corruption as to make it appear the major feature in his political career. See, for example, Matthew Josephson, *The Politicos, 1865–1896* (New York, 1938), 77–78; Wayland Fuller Dunaway, *A History of Pennsylvania* (New York, 1935), 525; Erwin Stanley Bradley, "Post-Bellum Politics in Pennsylvania, 1866–1872" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Pennsylvania State College, 1952), 133–155; Frank Bernard Evans, "Pennsylvania Politics, 1872–1877: A Study in Leadership without Responsibility" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1962), I, 14–17. Although Bradley (402–404) and Evans (II, 505–506) conclude that Cameron's success was due to other causes as well, their handling of his career in the body of their work leads the reader to believe that, in fact, Cameron's corruption was the most important element in his political life.

his competitors for the nomination may have used, than to the ineptitude of his opponents, his great patience and persistence, his sense of timing, his abilities in the delicate arts of manipulating and maneuvering, and his rare knowledge of men.[3]

This nomination was particularly important because it ended a long-standing division in the Pennsylvania Republican Party and began the extended reign of Simon Cameron and his successors.[4] Since its founding, the party had been deeply divided between former Whigs, led by Andrew Gregg Curtin, and former Democrats, with Cameron at their head. The split had been firmly fixed in the party structure in 1860 when Cameron fought against the nomination of Curtin for governor. Curtin and his friends then opposed the nomination of Cameron for President at Chicago and, after the election, resisted Cameron's appointment to Lincoln's Cabinet.[5]

The Whig faction appeared destined to gain lasting control of the new party when, with Curtin safe in the governor's chair at Harrisburg, Cameron was ousted in 1862 from his place as Secretary of War and accepted the lesser post of minister to Russia. But Cameron, his political instincts aroused, returned from St. Petersburg within a few months, won the Union Party nomination for senator, only to be defeated in January, 1863, by the Democratic candidate. This disappointment and the subsequent re-election of Governor Curtin were severe blows to the former Democrats.

But Cameron did not surrender. Almost immediately he began to pursue the Senate seat which the legislature would fill in January, 1867. If he failed to achieve that goal, it might mean the end of his long political career. His chief opponent in the race was his old enemy, retiring Governor Andrew Gregg Curtin. During their fight for the position, the future party leaders Matt Quay and Don Cameron (Simon's son) emerged as important political figures.

[3] Bradley, 133, points out the important fact that senatorial elections were, at this time, still held in the state legislatures. Thus, the candidates could attempt to influence every vote.

[4] At various times, the party was called the People's Party, the Union Party, and the Union Republican Party before emerging as the Republican Party. Except for its name, however, it changed little over the years.

[5] It is not suggested that the Whig-Democrat split can be measured exactly, but though the division is imprecise, its presence is clear. For a contemporary recognition of it, see O. N. Worden to Eli Slifer, Jan. 22, 1865, Slifer-Dill Papers (microfilm), Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP). Worden complained that too many old Democrats were getting offices which should have been given to old Whigs.

Thaddeus Stevens also became involved as he sought to fulfill a final ambition. Old and in ill health, his power within the state extending only slightly beyond the borders of his own county, his only chance of being elected senator was as a compromise candidate.[6]

Cameron's victory over Curtin in the party nominating caucus not only destroyed the old Whig group, but marked the beginning of his domination of the party. His chief opponents were demoralized by defeat. Matt Quay and other ambitious young men in the Curtin faction began to move slowly into the Cameron ranks. And Cameron, with only sporadic and ineffectual opposition, used his new position to develop the strong, unified, and efficient organization which is famous in Pennsylvania political history. Thus, the senatorial nomination of 1867 was significant for more than a half-century of Pennsylvania politics. It marked the founding of a dynasty.

Cameron began his long campaign as early as 1864. As chairman of the Union Party State Committee that year, he used his position to influence local elections and to ingratiate himself with the editors of rural newspapers.[7] In 1865, he was even more active.[8] But his task was enormously complicated by the assassination of President Lincoln. This event disrupted all the power relationships and patronage understandings so laboriously constructed during the President's first term. Under the four-year law, many of Cameron's friends in office, upon whom he depended for much of his political influence, were coming to the end of their terms. Thus, he was forced to spend a large proportion of his time working for their reappointment.[9] Although he was generally successful, it may have been these distractions that led to his severe defeat at the state convention in

[6] An astute analysis of Thaddeus Stevens as a politician is in Eric L. McKitrick, *Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction* (Chicago, 1960), 260–269.

[7] George Lawrence to Cameron, Apr. 30, 1864, Simon Cameron Papers (microfilm), Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, hereinafter cited as Cameron microfilm; Cameron to Richard McAllister, Nov. 13, 1864, Robert Todd Lincoln Collection of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln, 1790–1916 (microfilm), University of Chicago, hereinafter cited as Lincoln Papers; M. H. Cobb to Cameron, Nov. 16, 1864, Simon Cameron Papers, Library of Congress, hereinafter cited as Cameron Papers.

[8] Numerous letters relating to the district conferences for state senator during the autumn of 1865 are in Cameron microfilm.

[9] The major fight was over the Philadelphia postmastership, a position held by Cameron's good friend Cornelius Walborne. This dispute may be followed in letters in the Cameron Papers between June 16 and Aug. 11, 1865.

August. He had hoped to have one member of his faction nominated for Attorney General and another named chairman of the State Committee, but a coalition of the followers of Curtin and Thaddeus Stevens checked these plans.[10] As a result, instead of being strengthened for the important battles of 1866, he entered the new year weakened by defeat.

The year 1866 was equally critical for both Cameron and Curtin. For each, election to the Senate was an absolute political necessity. But the achievement of this goal had to be preceded by a number of steps. First, each wanted to nominate and elect a governor who would be friendly to him. At the same time, each had to induce the various county conventions and district conferences to select his followers to run for the state legislature. Then, if the party triumphed at the polls, victory in the organization of the legislature was needed. He who controlled the speakers of the House and Senate would be able to purchase the senatorial votes of legislators with committee posts and promises of favors during the session. As it turned out, this difficult progression was complicated, and its meaning for Pennsylvania obscured, by the bitter conflict between Andrew Johnson and the Radical Republicans.

Governor Curtin was at a definite disadvantage as the pursuit of the Senate nomination began. Severe illness, which the *Harrisburg Telegraph* attributed to a nervous condition, forced him to go to Cuba for December, 1865, and January, 1866.[11] Meanwhile, his followers needed his guidance. Fretting, the Governor wrote to Eli Slifer, his secretary of the Commonwealth, "do not neglect the composition of the convention—Cameron will pack it if he can and a little work will head him—I wrote to McClure to caution him on the subject."[12]

In the race for governor, Curtin favored W. W. Ketcham, but did not make his wishes clear to his followers.[13] Some of them, including young Matt Quay, who would later become a leader of the Cameron organization, supported Ketcham, an old Whig lawyer and politi-

[10] For an account of this convention, see Alexander Kelly McClure, *Old Time Notes of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1905), II, 186–189; his report is substantiated by the *Beaver Argus*, Aug. 23, 1865. Cf. Bradley, 58. The temporary chairman was not, as Bradley says, John Covode, but John Cessna.

[11] *Harrisburg Telegraph*, Jan. 22, 1866.

[12] Curtin to Slifer, Dec. 28, 1865, Slifer-Dill Papers.

[13] Ketcham to Slifer, Feb. 17, 1866, *ibid.*

cian. On the other hand, Alexander K. McClure, who was called Curtin's "Oily Gammon and chief executive officer," worked for Frank Johnson for governor.[14]

The confusion among Curtin followers aided General John W. Geary, a former Democrat, who quickly became the leading candidate in the contest. Geary, standing six feet five, his face decorated by a great black beard, had a career to match his appearance. He had been the last alcalde and first mayor of San Francisco, a governor of the "Bleeding Kansas" Territory, a colonel in the Mexican War, and a brigadier general in the Civil War.[15] A big man, a commanding man, a flamboyant man, a perfect candidate—as Simon Cameron soon realized.[16]

The party convention was held on March 8. For Cameron and the other Geary supporters, everything went perfectly. On the key test of strength, election of the temporary chairman of the convention, the Geary forces easily defeated the opposition. Louis W. Hall was elected over William B. Mann, reputed boss of Philadelphia and chief "bully" of the Curtin group,[17] by a vote of 80 to 57. Hall then appointed a committee on permanent organization which selected an early Geary backer for the post of permanent president of the convention.

The first major problem faced by the meeting was to draw up a platform. The committee on resolutions took a moderately Radical stand on the conditions of the day, commending President Johnson's past record, but requesting him to allow Congress to deal with the restoration of the states.[18] Neither the Radicals, led by McClure, nor the conservatives, represented by R. B. Carnahan, district attorney of the Western District of Pennsylvania, could persuade the convention clearly to support or condemn the President.[19] Though the reso-

14 *Harrisburg Telegraph*, n.d., quoted in Harrisburg *Patriot*, Mar. 4, 1869; *Beaver Argus*, Jan. 31, 1866.

15 Harry Marlin Tinkcom, *John White Geary, Soldier-Statesman* (Philadelphia, 1940).

16 Ketcham to Slifer, Feb. 17, 1866, Slifer-Dill Papers.

17 *Harrisburg Telegraph*, n.d., quoted in Harrisburg *Patriot*, Mar. 4, 1869.

18 Edward McPherson, *The Political History of the United States During the Period of Reconstruction* (Washington, D. C., 1880), 123.

19 McClure claimed that Cameron wanted to commend the President, but was forced to desist when faced with a threat by Quay, McClure, and Ketcham to bolt the convention and nominate their own candidate for governor. McClure, II, 194–195. There is no evidence but McClure's unsupported, and often untrustworthy, word that this incident ever took place.

lutions damned Johnson's Pennsylvania ally, Republican Senator Edgar Cowan, and requested his resignation, the delegates were not willing to take the extreme step of starting an open fight with the President.

Next, the convention turned to the comparatively easy and uncomplicated task of nominating a candidate for governor. Here the careful preliminary work of the Geary men paid off. The General triumphed easily on the first ballot. Those who had opposed his candidacy then made speeches pledging support and, on this mellow note, the convention adjourned.[20]

After the convention, there was much revealing discussion among Republicans about the meaning of the platform. Editor George Bergner, who often spoke for Cameron, asserted in the *Harrisburg Telegraph* that it meant the party had "entire confidence" in President Johnson, while John Forney, in the Philadelphia *Press*, and Alexander McClure, in the *Franklin Repository*, insisted that it condemned him.[21] Hence, in March, it appeared that General Geary would be able to go before the people with the state party's position on national affairs pleasantly ambiguous.

Thus far, Geary had avoided committing himself in the growing dispute with the President. And while he may have wished to remain aloof from the senatorial contest, he was soon forced to become involved. When approached in January, prior to his nomination, by a supporter of Thaddeus Stevens, Geary gave the impression that he was "a *Stevens man* and that his absence in the Army had placed him in a position of freedom being untrammeled by any 'clique' alliances."[22] By March, however, the picture had changed; at the convention Cameron was clearly in charge of the Geary campaign.[23]

Carnahan, a leader of the pro-Johnson forces, would probably have known of it, yet he did not report it to Johnson when he described the convention. Carnahan to Johnson, Mar. 16, 1866, Andrew Johnson Papers (microfilm), University of Chicago, hereinafter cited as Johnson Papers. The usually knowledgeable press never carried even the rumor of such an incident. Bradley, 105, accepts McClure's account. He also repeats George Fort Milton's description of this convention as "almost a hand-picked Stevens rally." Because of the bitter fight on the part of gubernatorial candidates for delegates, this would appear to be untrue.

20 *Pittsburgh Gazette*, Mar. 9, 1866.

21 *Harrisburg Telegraph*, Mar. 8, 1866; Philadelphia *Press*, Mar. 9, 1866; Bradley, 70.

22 L. Kauffman to Stevens, Jan. 30, 1866, Thaddeus Stevens Papers, Library of Congress, hereinafter cited as Stevens Papers.

23 Gen. S. W. Crawford to Wayne MacVeagh, Mar. 9, 1866, Wayne MacVeagh Papers, HSP, hereinafter cited as MacVeagh Papers.

For this service, Geary had to pay. He agreed to appoint one of Cameron's loyal followers to the very important post of secretary of the Commonwealth.[24] Thus, Cameron emerged from the first contest of 1866 with his power clearly enhanced.

During the summer of 1866, the state Republican Party, mirroring its counterparts in other states, split completely with the President. To ensure the defeat of Johnson's followers, the divisions in the Pennsylvania party were partially closed. Battles were, of course, fought in every county convention and district conference over the nominees for state representatives and senators, but then the Cameron and Curtin factions uncomfortably united against Johnson and his allies.

By August, when the "Arm-in-Arm" Convention to form a national party of Johnson men was held in Philadelphia, the leaders of the Union Republican Party of Pennsylvania had all become strong opponents of the President. Curtin spoke out against him after the election of a Radical governor in Connecticut in April.[25] When Cameron made his choice is not known, but by August he was writing to his friends that "if he [*Stevens*] and I had been listened to at Balto, we would not be cursed with Johnson."[26] George Bergner, who went into opposition at the same time as Curtin and lost his place as Harrisburg postmaster as a result, claimed in the *Telegraph* that "Gen. Cameron was the first to resist the nomination of Johnson, because he had doubts of the stability of his brawlings, and because, too, he had some knowledge of the man by contact with him in the U. S. Senate."[27] And Geary, too, took his place on the bandwagon. As early as the end of March, the hopes of the Johnson men that he would support the President collapsed, and by September he was firmly claiming, like Cameron, that he had known all along that Johnson was no good.[28] Thus, the Republican Party leaders were not divided in their attitude toward Andrew Johnson. Rather, each tried to prove that he had resisted the President before the others and was more Radical than they.

24 Note, signed Simon Cameron, on back of Henry C. Johnson to Cameron, Mar. 11, 1866, Cameron Papers.

25 *Pittsburgh Gazette*, Apr. 7, 1866.

26 Cameron to Charles A. Dana, Aug. 12, 1866, Cameron Papers.

27 *Harrisburg Telegraph*, Apr. 4 and Aug. 14, 1866.

28 J. R. Flanigen to Johnson, Mar. 26, 1866, Johnson Papers; Philadelphia *Press*, Sept. 13, 1866.

With his party united against Johnson, Geary was elected by 17,000 votes in a poll heavier by 150,000 than the year before.[29] Despite intervention of the administration in the election through active manipulation of the patronage,[30] the Democratic percentage of the vote remained almost exactly what it had been in 1864, but less than it would be in 1868. At the same time, to the delight of the Union Republican Party candidates for senator, the party's majority in the state legislature was enlarged and the election of a Republican senator assured.[31]

The pursuit of votes by both Cameron and Curtin had continued throughout the gubernatorial race. In each town they visited, in ostensible support of Geary and the other active candidates, they sought out men who might help them in their own contest.[32] The aid of business was enlisted, too. Curtin reported from Atlantic City that the Camden and Amboy, the Philadelphia and Baltimore, and the Baltimore and Ohio railroads would assist him because they were opposed to two railroad schemes in which General Cameron was involved. In the same letter, Curtin revealed that he was working closely with the Philadelphia Republican organization: "I see politicians here and think I am making strength—*Ridgway is here and seems right.* Mann is here and indeed many others. With more money I really believe we can carry all but three nominations in Phila." He confessed, however, that "although fighting hard my heart is not on the office—I wish it was and I could put more vigor into the fight—Every day I conclude to drop and would but for my real friends."[33]

Cameron had no such doubts. He was in the fray wholeheartedly, and he was optimistic. He wrote Charles A. Dana that although he would not relax till it was over, he did not see how he could be beaten. He noted that he would support Thaddeus Stevens for the place were it not for his age, health, and the fact that he was so neces-

29 *Tribune Almanac for 1867*, 62, in *The Tribune Almanac for the Years 1838 to 1868, Inclusive . . .* (New York, 1868), II.

30 *New York Tribune*, Oct. 10, 1866.

31 Cf. the nomination and election of Geary in Bradley, 95–132.

32 [Col. H. Biddle] Roberts to M. S. Quay, Aug. 15, [1866], Matthew Stanley Quay Papers in the possession of James A. Kehl, University of Pittsburgh, hereinafter cited as Quay Papers. I wish to express my deep gratitude to Dean Kehl for allowing me to use these papers which added much to my knowledge of Pennsylvania politics in general and this election in particular. Cameron to MacVeagh, July 9, 1866, MacVeagh Papers.

33 Curtin to Slifer, July 28, 1866, Slifer-Dill Papers.

sary in the House of Representatives. He still feared Curtin and thought his election would be a tragedy, for "he is truthless, corrupt and mercenary without even faith to those who would buy him."[34]

This letter indicated Cameron's tactics for the campaign: he would attack Curtin as a Johnson man who would betray his party as soon as the election was over;[35] Stevens he would praise, but dismiss as too old for the job, and not really serious about wanting it.[36]

With the passing of election day, 1866, the Senate fight became even more intense. There was bitterness over the election itself: one candidate for the legislature believed that he had been beaten by a combination of Copperheads and Cameron men. He claimed that he had run only so that he could vote for Curtin and defeat the "wicked" Cameron faction.[37]

Alexander McClure moved in Franklin County to force newly elected Representative F. S. Stambaugh to vote for Curtin. But Stambaugh refused to consider any instructions as binding; he was playing his own devious game.[38] He told Thaddeus Stevens that he would not follow the McClure-inspired directions and gave him the impression he would vote for him.[39] At the same time, he gave Cameron the idea that he would cast his ballot for him.[40]

No one could count on any vote. Each worked frenetically to swing legislators and influential men to his side. In spite of Cameron's attempts to manipulate local conventions, the *Pittsburgh Gazette* reported in mid-October that of the forty-two votes needed for victory, Cameron had only nineteen.[41] Thaddeus Stevens put the num-

34 Cameron to Charles A. Dana, Aug. 13, 1866, Cameron Papers. Cf. Bradley, 136–137. Although Cameron was optimistic, it should be noted that he still thought "Curtin . . . may be elected. . . ." Bradley is led to overstress Cameron's confidence by misreading Cameron's letter to C. F. Walborn, Sept. 21, 1866, Society Collection, HSP. Cameron actually wrote, "It will give you a much higher position . . . ," not, "I will give you . . . ."

35 This accusation was also made against Cameron. See J. R. Day to Quay, Nov. 29, 1866, Quay Papers.

36 Both Cameron and Curtin said this about Stevens. See E. Griest to Stevens, Oct. 23, 1866, Stevens Papers.

37 James Marshall to Slifer, Oct. 16, 1866, Slifer-Dill Papers.

38 William Henry Russell, "A Biography of Alexander K. McClure" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1953), 347–348.

39 Stambaugh to Stevens, Oct. 19, 1866; Stevens to Stambaugh, Jan. 6, 1867 (copy), Stevens Papers.

40 Cameron to MacVeagh, Oct. 21, 1866, MacVeagh Papers.

41 *Pittsburgh Gazette*, Jan. 15, 1867.

ber at sixteen.[42] Curtin, the *Gazette* believed, had a clear majority. Cameron's confidence, however, suggests that, concealed from the prying eyes of reporters and opponents alike, he had rounded up many more votes.

Since each member of the legislature—each vote—was important, the candidates all had much to do. The important support of Wayne MacVeagh, who would later become Attorney General under President Garfield, came as a windfall, however—he fell in love with one of Simon Cameron's daughters during the summer of 1866. Perhaps as a wedding present, MacVeagh's friends in the legislature voted for Cameron.[43]

Not to be outdone by the female members of the family, Don Cameron, Simon's retiring son, overcame his habitual shyness and took an active part in the campaign.[44] It was the real beginning of his long political career.

On December 3, the *Pittsburgh Gazette* analyzed the contest in a front page editorial. It thought the fight was so completely between Cameron and Curtin that even if all the supporters of the other candidates united they could not command a balance of power. The paper believed that Curtin had by far the greatest popular support; "General Cameron, on the contrary, has a powerful hold on numerous and influential men. These are intensely devoted to him, and always ready for any amount of exertion or sacrifice to promote his elevation."[45] And the friendly *Harrisburg Telegraph* reported that Cameron had the support of the business community.[46]

As the race entered its final stages, the Cameron camp began to see danger at every hand. They feared that even if the General secured the caucus nomination his victory might be prevented by a "bolt," a postponement of the election, or some other maneuver. Since Cameron had used all these tactics during his long career, it is no wonder they were considered as possible eventualities. But Cameron could always fall back on his former associates in the Democratic

42 Stevens to Joseph Shortlidge, June 25, 1867, Stevens Papers.

43 Don Cameron to MacVeagh, Nov. 6, 1866, MacVeagh Papers; Thos. Robinson to Slifer, Nov. 22, 1866, Slifer-Dill Papers.

44 McClure, II, 205.

45 This view is supported by J. R. Day to Quay, Nov. 29, 1866, Quay Papers, and J. M. Broomall to Stevens, Oct. 17, 1866, Stevens Papers.

46 *Harrisburg Telegraph*, Dec. 11, 1866.

Party for aid. He was advised to have them all in Harrisburg when the legislature convened.[47] If needed, a United States consul during the administrations of Polk, Pierce, and Buchanan offered to use his influence with his Democratic friends.[48] And, more to the point, at least one Democratic legislator offered his vote because McClure had assisted in his defeat in 1864 and he wanted to "retaliate."[49]

The beginning of the last phase of the contest was marked by the gathering of legislators, candidates, and influential men in Harrisburg. At this point, Simon Cameron received what may have been decisive assistance. With exquisite timing, Governor Geary announced his cabinet just prior to the election of the speaker of the state House of Representatives. One of his appointments was a well-known friend of General Cameron's, Benjamin Harris Brewster, who, despite the burns which disfigured his face, would rise to the post of Attorney General under Chester A. Arthur. One of Thaddeus Stevens' promoters was crushed. He had expected Geary to help Stevens. "Why," he moaned, "did he not hold the appointment of Mr. Brewster until after the contest for the Speakership. But it is done and we must fight it."[50]

Moreover, Cameron's cause was furthered by the sacrifice of the follower who had been promised the post of secretary of the Commonwealth. It was necessary to let Francis Jordan have that place to placate his brother-in-law, the influential speaker of the state Senate, Louis W. Hall.[51]

The first trial of strength between the contending parties came over the selection of the speaker of the House. Victory in this contest, it was generally assumed, would greatly influence the outcome of the senatorial race. But the speakership did not stand alone. It was tied, by the sectional nature of Pennsylvania politics, to the post of treasurer of the state and, in descending order of importance, to various positions in the House of Representatives. In making up the

47 James Duffy to Cameron, Dec. 17, 1866, Cameron Papers.

48 G. H. Goundie to Cameron, Dec. 26, 1866, *ibid.*

49 H. P. Ross to Cameron, Dec. 17, 1866, *ibid.*

50 L. Kauffman to Stevens, Jan. 4, 1867, Stevens Papers. Bradley, 144, places this event after the speakership contest, thus missing its great significance for that key nomination.

51 John Covode to Painter, Dec. 30, 1866, Uriah H. Painter Papers, HSP, hereinafter cited as Painter Papers; H. C. Johnson to Cameron, Jan. 1, 1867, Cameron Papers. This ruthless tactic indicates one of the many ways, in addition to money, by which a politician may advance his cause.

party slate, all these places had to be carefully balanced between East and West, and even between Northwest and Southwest.[52]

Matt Quay, John P. Glass, and D. B. McCreary, all from the West, were the major contestants early in the race. Quay was clearly the Curtin candidate, while Cameron supported Glass and, to a lesser extent, McCreary. Quay was warned in August: ". . . you have more opposition than you Expected—*Cameron is fighting* you. Glass is operating with him. McCreary is also at Pittsburgh. They are determined to give you fright. They are working quietly—and will shut your Eye up if they can."[53]

The candidates for the speakership had to move quietly, flexibly, and with great sensitivity, approaching a legislator here, avoiding one there.[54] Support was generally gained by the promise of a place on a committee or in one of the positions in the House. The legislators were not shy about making their desires known. One was typically precise: "I shall Continue to write to the different members stating . . . why I think you will make the best speaker; and in return, I expect a position on the Rail Road, Ways & Means and Corporation Committees, if possible."[55] And, in the same tone, another legislator asked for a place for his father as assistant sergeant at arms, doorkeeper, or assistant doorkeeper: ". . . if in making up the Slate," he wrote, "you can put him on, you will secure my services. . . ."[56]

Naturally, Cameron tried to get Quay out of the race. Discussing the matter with McCreary, he told him he would "send for" Quay to find out his views. McCreary, on his part, attempted to persuade Quay to withdraw and insisted it would not bring about the election of Glass.[57]

52 See George Y. McKee to Quay, Nov. 5, 1866; Gordon S. Berry to Quay, Mar. 12, 1866; W. W. Irwin to Quay, Mar. 12, 1866, Quay Papers. Irwin pleaded with Quay not to try for the speakership because that would prevent him from becoming treasurer, since they both came from the same county.

53 E. M. Davis to Quay, Aug. 13, 1866, *ibid.*

54 See for example, L. W. Hall to Quay, Aug. 21, 1866; H. [?] Alem to Quay, Sept. 3, 1866, *ibid.*

55 J. T. Cameron to Quay, Nov. 5, 1866, *ibid.*

56 F. Mechling to Quay, Oct. 22, 1866, *ibid.* In the same vein are W. W. Worrall to Quay, Nov. 8, 1866; S. C. Wingard to Quay, Nov. 9, 1866; J. W. Wallace to Quay, Nov. 12, 1866, *ibid.*

57 D. B. McCreary to Quay, Nov. 5, 1866, *ibid.* Quay and Cameron did meet, for one of Quay's correspondents wrote: "How I should have liked to overhear the fracas between you and Cameron. Lord! it must have been a rich scene!" J. R. Kelly to Quay, Dec. 19, 1866, *ibid.*

Not only did Quay remain in the contest, but another man entered the fight. The candidacy of William B. Waddell of Chester County was announced to Quay in November, but it was dismissed as unimportant since the state treasurer wanted to be re-elected and the two men came from the eastern part of the state.[58] Nevertheless, the Quay men feared this new threat and tried, to no avail, to induce Waddell to cease his pursuit of votes.[59] He would remain until the end, however, an indefinite threat to everyone.

On Friday, December 28, a meeting was held of all those opposed to Matt Quay, who was then leading in the race for speaker of the House of Representatives. The opposition decided to make John Glass of Allegheny County its candidate. Waddell's name was suggested at the meeting, but someone withdrew him from consideration.[60] McClure analyzed this important conference some years later. He noted that Cameron had succeeded in getting all those who had senatorial ambitions, no matter how farfetched, to unite against Quay. These lesser hopefuls thought this would stop Curtin and produce a deadlock between Cameron and Curtin in the fight for the senatorial nomination. The caucus might then select one of them as a compromise candidate.[61]

While Cameron moved smoothly toward his goal, the Stevens men floundered, leaderless and disorganized.[62] On the day after the opposition caucus, one Stevens follower telegraphed Old Thad for guidance. Was there any choice, he asked, between a Cameron man and a Curtin man for speaker?[63] Two days later, on December 31, all unknowing of what had happened in Harrisburg, two other Stevens supporters approached Waddell on the train bound for the capital and asked him to run for speaker. Waddell eagerly agreed, of course.[64] Upon their arrival in Harrisburg, they wired Stevens that Quay would support Waddell to beat Glass. They asked him to send instructions to the delegation immediately because the party caucus was scheduled for eight o'clock that evening.[65] Stevens replied,

58 P. M. Osterhout to Quay, Nov. 6, 1866, *ibid.*
59 [James Subers] to Quay, Dec. 15, 1866, *ibid.*
60 Edward Reilly to Stevens, Dec. 31, 1866, Stevens Papers.
61 McClure, II, 206.
62 Covode to Painter, Jan. 5, 1866 [*1867*], Painter Papers.
63 R. M. Shenk to Stevens, telegram, Dec. 29, 1866, Stevens Papers.
64 Reilly to Stevens, Dec. 31, 1866, *ibid.*
65 Shenk and E. Billingfelt to Stevens, telegram, Dec. 31, 1866, *ibid.*

"Defeat Quay; but a Chester County man would be better unless Glass will go with his delegation."[66] It was too late. While telegrams flew back and forth between Stevens and his followers, Don Cameron visited Waddell in his hotel room and convinced him not to re-enter the race.[67]

The contest was now between Quay and Glass. But when the party caucus met at 8:00 P.M. on New Year's Eve, Glass had no opposition for the speakership. Cameron's brilliant maneuvering had united all anti-Quay votes for Glass. In the face of this solid front, Quay, with the permission of Curtin, withdrew from the race. Concession, Curtin seems to have felt, was better than clearly revealing his weakness. Thus, Glass was chosen unanimously to be the party's candidate for speaker of the House of Representatives. "The result," it was reported to Stevens, "has elated Cameron very much and correspondingly depressed Curtin. I believe the latters friends consider the game up for him."[68]

Immediately, George Bergner repaired to his desk to write an editorial offering friendship and advice to Matt Quay. The talented young politician would have won "had he stood alone, basing his pretenses to the Speakership on his own good qualities. . . ." By being Curtin's man he had not only lost himself, but had helped to defeat Curtin.[69] No doubt, Quay and many others with ambition understood this message from a Cameron spokesman.

Quay's failure to be elected speaker was a disaster for Curtin. Slowly, quietly, his supporters began to drift away. Though he tried to prevent the loss by delivering a Radical final message to the legislature, it was to no avail.[70] Nevertheless, he continued to believe he might be nominated.

The followers of Thaddeus Stevens had not given up hope, either. If only the two leading candidates could be kept even, the caucus

66 Stevens to J. R. Sypher and Shenk, telegram, Dec. 31, 1866 (copy), *ibid.*

67 Reilly to Stevens, Dec. 31, 1866, *ibid.*

68 *Ibid.* This loss was probably fatal for Curtin. Quay reported some years later that he was actually stronger than Curtin at this time. *Beaver Argus*, Dec. 22, 1869.

69 *Harrisburg Telegraph*, Jan. 1, 1867.

70 *Pennsylvania Archives, Fourth Series* (Papers of the Governors, 1858–1871), VIII, 752-753. This speech had been discounted in advance by the *Telegraph*, which reported a meeting of Curtin and his friends at which it was decided that he must become a Radical and that his annual message should be a Radical document. *Harrisburg Telegraph*, Dec. 28, 1866.

might finally decide on the Old Commoner.[71] But they feared the use of cash by Cameron—a resource he had used before in his pursuit of office.[72] One Stevens man fulminated, "'*Oh! shame where is thy blush when men can be bought as so many oxen or asses.*['']"[73] And the *Norristown Republican* carried a story that Cameron was corrupting the whole legislature.[74] In fact, however, any need there may have been for General Cameron to use money was now largely past. With the governor on his side and the speaker in his pocket, the outlook was very good for an easy victory. All those legislators who wanted only to vote for the winner would now move quickly to his support.

At this point in the contest, Stevens was asked to come to Harrisburg to campaign actively. He replied in an open letter, published in the pro-Stevens Philadelphia *Press*, that he would not do so because he felt the office should seek the man. He then launched into an exposition on the past corruptness of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, which he naturally qualified by saying that he knew the present group of legislators was honest. He threatened the members, however, by declaring that if any shifted their proclaimed allegiance, it could only be assumed that they had succumbed "to illegitimate arguments."[75]

From afar, Stevens kept fighting. Trying to hold his followers, he wrote Stambaugh a harsh and bitter note declaring that the legislator would never have been elected without the votes he had delivered to him.[76]

But all Stevens' work was useless. The Cameron men were too clever and too strong. When the Stevens men moved to investigate the corruption they thought was taking place, they were thwarted. They introduced a resolution in the state Senate asking for an inquiry into the various charges of corruption in the Senate campaign.

71 H. M. Watts to Stevens, Jan. 4, 1867, Stevens Papers.

72 See *The Report of the Select Committee of the House of Representatives on the Subject of the Alleged Frauds in the Election of United States Senator* (Harrisburg, 1863).

73 L. Kauffman to Stevens, Jan. 4, 1867, Stevens Papers.

74 *Norristown Republican*, Jan. 7, 1867, reprinted in Philadelphia *Press*, Jan. 10, 1867. Bradley, 143, 145, seems to accept these complaints from the disgruntled opposition as proof that "Cameron gold was in circulation." Since such reports had not appeared prior to this time, I believe they cannot be taken seriously without additional evidence.

75 Stevens to Gen. Harry White, Jan. 5, 1867, printed in the Philadelphia *Press*, Jan. 8, 1867.

76 Stevens to Stambaugh, Jan. 6, 1867 (copy), Stevens Papers.

Stambaugh, in the House, was immediately informed of this action, and promptly introduced a similar resolution. Meanwhile, the Cameron men in the upper house delayed delivery of the dangerous proposal to the House of Representatives until that body notified the Senate of Stambaugh's resolution. The effect of this action was to bring about the substitution of the House proposition for the Senate's, and to place Stambaugh at the head of the investigating committee. Grateful Speaker Glass appointed a committee friendly to Cameron which, naturally, discovered nothing. The *Pittsburgh Gazette* observed that this skillful maneuver showed "with what superior tact and energy Gen. Cameron's case was conducted over Gov. Curtin's."[77]

It was now clear that the opposition must unite on a single candidate if Cameron was to be stopped. The Philadelphia *Press* reported that although Curtin had not withdrawn from the race, his friends had approached Stevens with a proposal to support him against Cameron.[78] Stevens was warned by one correspondent that he was being set up for defeat to keep Curtin from being subjected to it. Cameron, he was told, now had a clear majority.[79] But another Stevens follower disagreed and urged the old man to stay in the race.[80]

With matters so confused, Stevens decided to go to Harrisburg. He arrived on January 8 and Curtin sought him out before the day was over.[81] Apparently, they could reach no satisfactory conclusions, for a meeting of all those opposed to Cameron was called on January 10, the day the party caucus was to make its decision. Stevens suggested to the gathering that the election be held openly on the floor of the legislature with the senators and representatives unbound by a caucus decision. Still with some hope, Curtin hedged, saying that they should ascertain their strength before reaching a decision.[82] In

[77] *Pittsburgh Gazette*, Jan. 14, 1867; see also *Harrisburg Telegraph*, Jan. 9, 1867; Philadelphia *Press*, Jan. 10 and 12, 1867.

[78] Philadelphia *Press*, Jan. 6, 1867.

[79] D. M'Conaughy to Stevens, Jan. 4, 1867, Stevens Papers.

[80] L. Kauffman to Stevens, Jan. 4, 1867, *ibid.*

[81] Philadelphia *Press*, Jan. 9, 1867.

[82] Among the leading Republicans present were Stevens, Curtin, Forney, Grow, Mann, McClure, J. K. Moorehead, J. F. Hartranft, Lemuel Todd, and Gen. C. H. T. Collis. Phila-

truth, as the *New York Tribune* pointed out, it appears that they were unable to agree on a course of action because they lacked the votes to beat Cameron.[83] Alexander McClure disagreed: the coalition "showed sufficient strength to defeat the power of a subsidized caucus, had not the same influence demoralized the Democratic members."[84]

Thus, on the evening of January 10, 1867, Cameron was selected by the caucus as the party's choice for the United States Senate. He received forty-six votes to Curtin's twenty-three, Stevens' seven, and Galusha A. Grow's five. Matt Quay moved to make the nomination unanimous and, but for the abstention of the two senators from Stevens' own county, this was done.[85]

Five days later, Simon Cameron was elected to the Senate for the third time. He was greatly pleased by his election and, in a somewhat rambling speech, claimed that it repelled all the slanders heaped on him over the years and vindicated his honesty to his friends and children. Then, looking to the future, he called for more Radical measures: he wanted to see the word "white" stricken from the Pennsylvania constitution; he hoped the North would keep the South in subjection for a generation; he denounced Andrew Johnson as a traitor; he criticized all Republicans who accepted jobs from Johnson; and he called for a higher protective tariff for the manufactured products of Pennsylvania.[86]

Defeated, Curtin packed his bags and headed for Europe. Dejected, McClure sold his newspaper and went to Montana. Though they would be back, their departure symbolized the end of the Whig faction in the Republican Party. Simon Cameron, having triumphed

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delphia *Press*, Jan. 11, 1867. Bradley, 146, believes Curtin had given up at this point and "would not consent to split the party." I interpret Curtin's remarks as indicating that he still believed he might win in the party caucus.

83 *New York Tribune*, Jan. 11, 1867.

84 Harrisburg *Patriot*, Jan. 19, 1867, quoting *Franklin Repository*, n.d., quoted in Bradley, 147.

85 *Harrisburg Telegraph*, Jan. 11, 1867. Bradley, 148, accepts McClure's story in *Notes*, II, 558–559, that Quay almost entered the race against Cameron with the aid of George K. Anderson, a wealthy oilman. There is no evidence aside from McClure to support this belief.

86 Slightly differing versions of this speech are in a clipping, n.p., n.d., Cameron Papers; *Pittsburgh Gazette*, Jan. 16, 1867; *Harrisburg Telegraph*, Jan. 16, 1867.

because of his greater political skill, could now turn, almost unhindered, to the construction of the powerful and efficient political organization that was to rule Pennsylvania well into the twentieth century.[87]

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[87] Other accounts of the senatorial election are in McClure, II, 203–212, and Bradley, 133–155. McClure's account is entertaining, but unreliable. See the evaluation of his books in Russell, "A Biography of Alexander K. McClure," 462, 473. Nevertheless, McClure's evaluation of Cameron's political skill is correct. Bradley's narrative, though generally accurate, has a number of shortcomings: 1) since it was written eleven years ago new manuscript collections have become available; 2) he assumed Cameron was going to win; 3) he did not realize that the speakership contest was the crucial event in the senatorial campaign; 4) he was willing to accept rumors of corruption for proof of its existence; 5) he tended to depend upon McClure, whose work has too much influenced all writing on this period in Pennsylvania history. Thus, in sum, his account of the election makes it seem an inevitable Cameron victory brought about by the future boss's expenditures of large amounts of cash.