

# "How to Make a Million"

NEWSPAPER ADVERTISING THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Told by a Man Who Began Life at a Shoemaker's Bench, Became Governor of his State and Is Now Head of a Business Empire.

BY ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE

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A face enough like Bismarck's to make the resemblance startling, a slender, wiry, boyish figure topped by a white head, a manner self-assured, yet never coarsely aggressive. There, in a nutshell, is the personality of one of the most picturesque, interesting figures in all New England—that of W. L. Douglas, ex-Governor of Massachusetts.

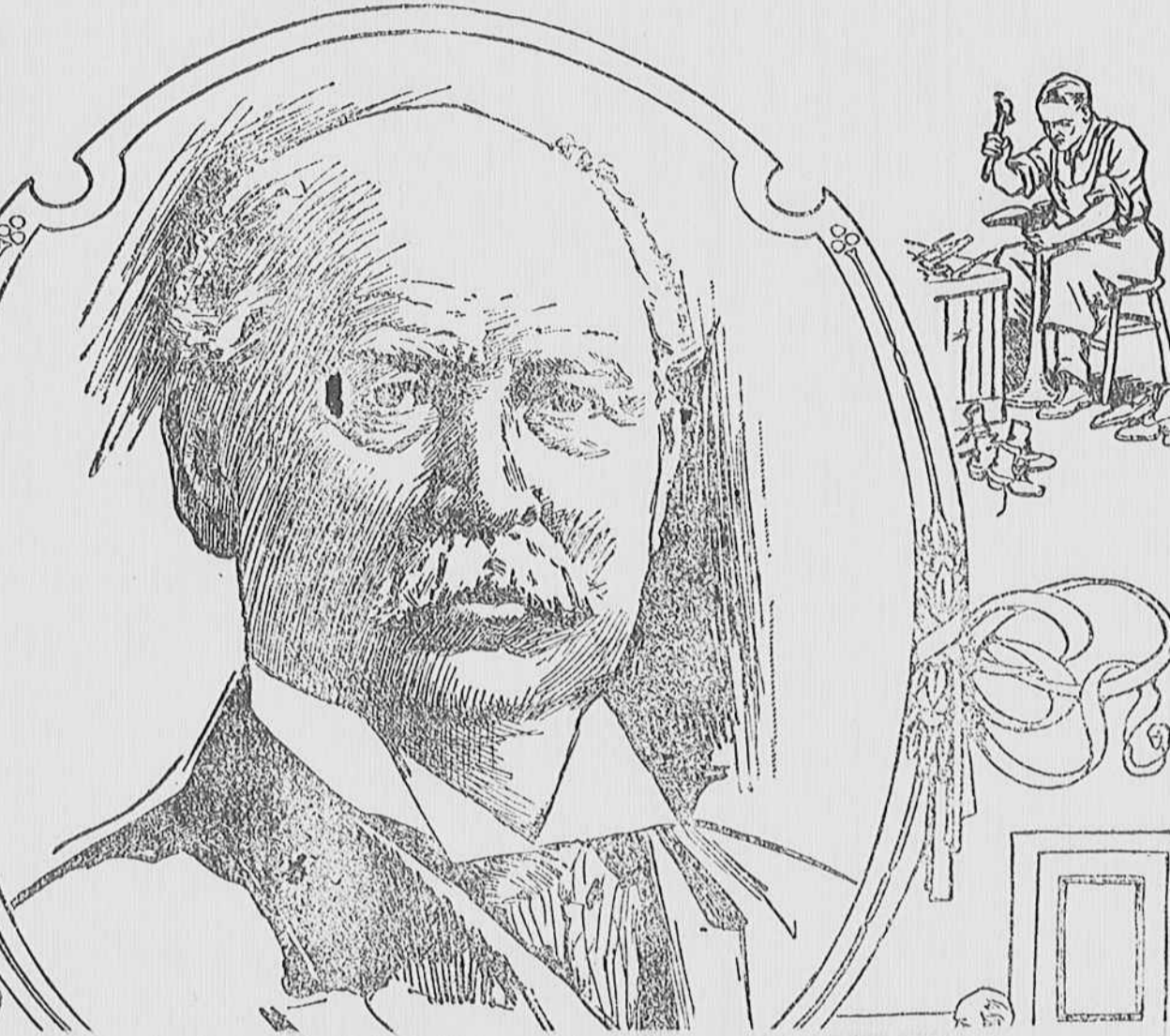
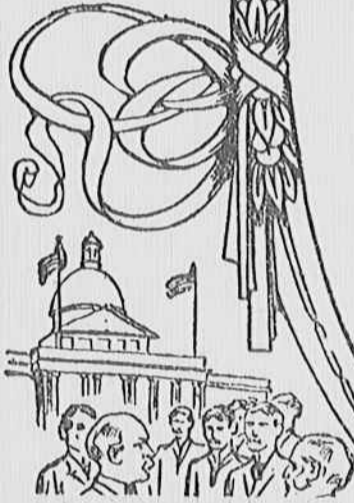
But it is not chiefly as ex-Governor, or indeed as statesman at all, that the world at large knows Mr. Douglas. A quarter-mile of factories, a yearly output of something over three million pairs of shoes, and a face that looks out from the advertising columns of eight thousand newspapers—these are the outward attributes that have made the name of W. L. Douglas so familiar from Maine to California.

The story of the man who could make himself so well known; his secret of achievement, his life history and his hints on business success will not only be of interest, but of profit to every class of reader.

For the description of a hard climb, of a winning fight against circumstances and the "climber's" rules for victory are always worth hearing. The world loves a fighter and takes an interest in his battles.

And W. L. Douglas is a fighter, as even the most casual student of human nature could glean from one glance at the strong, prominent jaw, the level brows, the firm set of the lips.

That cast of features set Bismarck to topping European thrones. The same physiognomy (with a gentler mould of eye and mouth) has caused Douglas to revolutionize business, to wring wealth from poverty and political power from



actually possess. An article must have merit—real merit—and its proprietor must fight, every minute, to keep the quality high. Success must not lure him into letting up, one atom, on high quality. If he does, in the course of time he will lose. Some people get to making money fast. Then they think they can lower the quality (and, incidentally, the cost of production), and make more. I have made more because my goods are worth more.

"It is a strange fact that fully two-fifths of the shoes sold throughout the entire week are sold on Saturday. Whether because that is pay day or merely because it is a favorite shopping day I don't know, but the fact remains, and we regulate our advertising accordingly; making it heaviest toward the latter part of the week. Of course, with a magazine (published only once a month) this would be impracticable.

The Douglas shoe is sold all over the United States and also has a large sale in Canada and Mexico, besides having created more or less of a European demand. I employ 4,000 persons in making and selling my shoes, and I own and operate seventy retail shoe stores in the large cities. The vast area covered by my dealers renders it all the more necessary for me to use local newspapers from one end of the land to the other to advertise my shoes, and made it the more needful for me to study out carefully just what would be the best medium through which I might reach the people at large."

Concerning those 4,000 employees whom Mr. Douglas so graciously mentioned, an entire article of more than common interest might be written. They form a sort of Utopian community whereof he is the head. At his expense all of them are provided with medical care in illness, and they are in other ways made to feel his personal interest in them.

The labor question assumes none of its harsher features in the Douglas plant. By special agreement between the

"Newspaper advertising" is his life motto in business. "First, be sure you have something worthy to advertise. Something just as good as you say it is. Struggle to keep it as good, and then advertise it constantly. The newspaper is the field in which my advertising has brought me the only perfectly satisfactory returns. And I have tried many lines before settling down exclusively to that theory."

The same "cradle" served for New England and for the man who was one day to be Governor of its oldest State. For it was in ancient Plymouth, scene of the Pilgrims' landing, that Douglas was born, in 1845. His was as pathetic and hopeless a childhood as ever Dickens pictured for David Copperfield or other of his luckless boy heroes. That Douglas rose from it to any later position whatever speaks volumes for the stuff he was made of.

In 1859 news came to a Plymouth woman that her husband, the breadwinner of their large family, had been drowned at sea. All the children were young. The mother was almost without means. So two years later she verbally "bound out" one of the brood—a precocious boy of seven—to his uncle, a shoemaker. The child's life from then on became one long era of drudgery and hardship. His uncle set him at once to pegging shoes by hand. This was a task for grown workers, but the baby fingers were kept at the incessant toil of it from dawn to dark. No holiday, no let-up of any sort, and, worst of all, no wages.

The seven-year-old boy was carrying unduly heavy weapons in his life-battle. His ability to do so explains why he became Governor William L. Douglas, instead of merely Journeyman Bill Douglas.

His uncle was a stern task-master. Apart from the shoe-pegging, the child was called upon to perform a score of equally severe duties. Among them was the twice-a-day journey into the woods, in bitterest New England winter weather, to cut and drag in wood for the shop's fires.

Only at rare intervals was he allowed to leave his workbench to be taken to school. But at such periods he proved so apt a scholar as to make up for the long lapses. He was greedy for education and seemed to absorb his scanty portion of it without effort. It was only by this strange proficiency that he gleaned any learning at all.

For four years the slavery went on. Then Douglas returned to his mother. But so valuable had he become in the shop that his uncle induced him to come back to him at the munificent wage of \$5 a month. Until he was fifteen he continued to work thus, all the time busy with new ideas along his own line. These ideas were one day to bear fruit.

Once, seeking to better himself, he went to work in a Plymouth cotton mill at 33 cents a day. This meant fully \$3 a month, and the \$3 raised seemed not unlike a dream of wealth. But fate

intended him for his original calling. Here was a literal command of "Shoemaker, stick to thy last!" For when he disobeyed the injunction an accident in the cotton mill put a quick end to his plans of becoming a lawyer. Douglas was pulled out of the debris with a broken leg. That ended his cotton-mill experiences.

He went back to his mother. While recovering from his injury he attended school and once more planned for a full education. But the lash of poverty that has whipped so many men on to greatness was busy about the young student's shoulders and drove him back to the earning of a living, just as he was beginning to rejoice in his school progress.

No longer content to work aimlessly at one job and another, Douglas now set about learning the boot and shoe business from bottom to top, in all its branches. From town to town he worked his way, studying the methods of each shop until he had mastered every rudiment of his chosen profession.

Lure of the Golden West.

By the spring of 1865 he felt ready to start in for himself. Like many another ambitious boy, at that time he fancied the future was brighter in the new West than nearer home. So to Denver he went, carrying along his hard-earned stock of cobbling knowledge—and little else.

Arriving there, he found capital was as needful in Colorado as in Massachusetts. To acquire this capital he took the first work that offered. The work in question chanced to be the not very congenial position of day laborer in a lime-kiln.

Not exactly a brilliant fulfillment of the golden promise of the West, nor a direct advancement toward success in the shoe trade. But Douglas went on the principle that success consists less in holding a good hand than in playing a poor hand well.

Working hard and spending little, he at last saved enough to travel to the town of Black Hawk, where, he had heard, lived one Zephaniah Myers, one of the most skilled bootmakers in America. From Myers the young man learned the finishing touches that spelled perfection in his trade, and he soon acquired so wide a reputation in the Douglas business as to outstrip his tutor. Myers and another man formed a partnership and started a flourishing boot and shoe store at Golden City.

But New England always calls to her sons. Douglas heard the call and

came back to Massachusetts. Working as journeyman and later as foreman, he passed the next few years, and in July, 1878, made the plunge that began his real career. He borrowed \$25 and started a factory of his own. This "factory" was small enough to be swallowed up in the most insignificant workshop of his present building. It was just 50 by 99 feet (4,950 square feet) in area. Yet it was the nucleus of the plant that now has an area of 22,350 square feet.

Prosperity came, but did not arrive fast enough to suit the ambitious young financier. He looked about for means of increasing it more rapidly. The method he chose was extensive and unending newspaper advertising. From the first the plan was a success. It has grown more and more remunerative each year.

"Have I tried any advertising mediums other than the newspapers?" he said recently, echoing a question of the writer. "I should say so! Magazines, circulars, street car signs and many another. Why, once I actually painted a whole town red! I spread my advertisements over its fences and roofs and barns and everywhere my men could find space for an 'ad'. Oh, yes, I've tried them all. And the newspapers give by far the best results."

"Even better than the magazines?" "Much better. And for many reasons. In the first place, a newspaper advertisement strikes the eye the moment the sheet is opened. The same advertisement would be hidden among the pages of a magazine until the reader found his way to it, if he ever did. The busiest man's eye will be caught and his attention held by sight of a strong advertisement in his daily paper. Whereas that same busy man might not find time to go laboriously through all the advertisements of a magazine.

"Then, too, practically every man reads a newspaper. Every man does not read magazines. Take a village, for instance, where the one local newspaper has perhaps 200 readers. If I put an advertisement in that paper, 200 people are going to see it. No one magazine, nor, for that matter, all the magazines combined, will circulate 200 copies in that same town. The reasoning is very simple.

"There's no hamlet or tiny settlement on the continent that is not reached by newspapers. There is no place where newspapers are not read with eager interest. So by placing my advertisement in the newspapers it is a self-evident proposition that I will reach more peo-

ple than any other medium could secure for me.

Key to Financial Success.

"That is why I advertise exclusively in newspapers. I advertise not only in the papers of all the principal cities, but also in \$300 country newspapers."

If the cynical claim that "money is the final argument" carries any truth, then Mr. Douglas's sincerity in declaring the newspaper the foremost advertising medium cannot be doubted.

"In 1903 alone," he went on, "I spent \$200,000 in newspaper advertisements. I should not have done so were I not sure the outlay was going to bring me adequate returns. That was a fair sample of a year's advertising expenditure. Figuring on that basis I have spent \$1,000,000 in newspaper advertising during the past ten years. A fortune? Yes. But, as I say, the results warranted it. It has given every form of advertising the fairest sort of trial. I began with newspapers in 1882. The results were so good that later I also advertised in magazines. THIS RETURNED NOT WARRANT ME IN CONTINUING. I withdrew my advertisements from the magazines, but later on I tried the experiment again. Once more I took out my advertisements, and since then I have used only newspapers to bring my goods before the public eye.

"During the past decade, while I was spending \$200,000 for newspaper advertisements, I sold (based on the estimate on my 1905 returns) 1,241,220 cases of shoes. There are twenty-four pairs of shoes to a case, that makes a total of 3,178,928 pairs for 1905, or 31,589,280 pairs for the ten years. At the wholesale price of \$2.50 a pair, that would be, for the decade, \$79,448,200. Or, at the retail rate of \$3.50 a pair, it would equal \$111,236,160.

"In my advertisements, as a rule, I call attention to my shoes, leaving the local dealers in their own newspaper advertisements to mention the fact that they carry the Douglas shoe.

"By the way, another excellent reason for the superiority of newspaper over magazine advertising rests in the fact that in those same local papers the reader sees the 'ad' every day of his life, while he sees it, at best, only once a month in a magazine. In other words, he sees it thirty times as often in a newspaper, and it hits, therefore, thirty times as many chances of impressing him. Every man reads his newspaper first. Then, if he has time and inclination, he reads magazines. Sometimes he has neither, and the magazine goes unread.

"I am not a believer in spasmodic

HON. WM. L. DOUGLAS.

advertisement. My principle is: Keep pounding away at the reader all the time. Formerly it used to be a custom to advertise shoes at only certain seasons of the year. I never adhered to that. I advertise—and I keep on advertising.

"When a season is dull I increase my advertisements. That may seem odd, but you don't do it, do you?" "That is one of the secrets, I think, of success. Instead of hanging back, waiting for a slack season to pass, I keep on advertising all the time. This past year, for example, was a bad year for shoes. I did extra advertising.

"Not at such times, do I raise the price of shoes. It would not be fair to make the public pay for the slowness of a season. I do not lower wages in that event, either, as the 1905 scale will prove. The scale for that year shows the average shoemaker's pay in the United States was \$20. In Massachusetts it was \$22. In Brockton, \$24; while at my Montello factory it was \$29. That does not include superintendents and high skilled men. Just the workers, on the union scale.

"Another advertising theory of mine is that a good 'ad' should be changed very seldom. Of course in the case of dry goods stores or other places where special sales are held and new attractions offered from time to time it is necessary to change the form and inducements of an advertisement. But where a man deals in a single staple article, I think he should write one strong, convincing advertisement and let that stand for a long time.

"Let him make sure first that it is the strongest, best-worded advertisement he can concoct. Then let it stand. "There are good reasons for this. Suppose a man has glanced at my advertisement for several days in succession without reading it. Then one morning he does read it. That may be the day when (if I constantly change my 'ads') I might have a weaker, less attractive, less convincing one than usual. Perhaps I lose his possible custom.

"A good advertisement is an argument. Remember that. An argument, not a boast. It does not shout an unreasonable command to buy something. It explains to you WHY you should buy the article. It appeals to your sense of reason. It should never exaggerate in any way, but tell the mere truth.

Base Claims on Merit.

"An advertisement should never claim for goods more advantages than they

actually possess. An article must have merit—real merit—and its proprietor must fight, every minute, to keep the quality high. Success must not lure him into letting up, one atom, on high quality. If he does, in the course of time he will lose. Some people get to making money fast. Then they think they can lower the quality (and, incidentally, the cost of production), and make more. I have made more because my goods are worth more.

Since the beginning of his first campaign of newspaper advertising, in 1882, Mr. Douglas has gradually but steadily become known to nearly every one in America. The face that looks out from the diamond-shaped frame in his advertisements is familiar to all. Yet the face that accompanies this article gives a far more accurate idea of the William L. Douglas of today. The character reader may perceive there the reasons why a lowly start in life had no power to check this man's rise.

By judicious newspaper advertising Douglas quickly "outgrew" factory after factory until, in 1892, he erected the huge works now in use at Montello, just out of Boston.

His Payroll Crew.

Here his payroll grew until it numbered its present 4,000 names. Here, too, grew the facilities for turning out shoes in unparalleled numbers—about 1,500 pairs a day being the capacity now. In the jobbing house alone a half million pairs of shoes are carried at all times in stock.

The factory—or factories, for there are two of them practically joined under one series of roofs—cover as much space as the walls of an ancient city, and are arranged in rectilinear lines, with wide-reaching wings, like outlandish earthworks.

The man who employed newspaper advertising as the magic wand to raise this mighty structure from the earth still works as hard, in his own way, as did the seven-year-old carrier of wood and papper of shoes. Outside office hours he is of simple, domestic tastes, his one "rich man's amusement" taking the form of frequent cruises on his big steam yacht, the *Maehigonne*.

He has found time, too, as all New England knows, to make a decided impression in the field of politics. A staunch Democrat, he has served in both houses of the State legislature, framed the arbitration and weekly payment laws, was Mayor of Brockton in 1890, and has four times been chosen as delegate to the national conventions.

His victorious campaign for the Governorship of Massachusetts was such as to awaken national interest. Throughout his term of Governor he conducted his great personal business interests as well as those of the State in such a way that neither suffered from inattention. His wide use of newspaper advertising during the gubernatorial contest was one of the most striking features of the campaign and contributed in no light measure to his triumph.

Why a man like Douglas, having made such giant strides in the world of business, should have sought the Governorship was a puzzle to many. And not a few wondered that he was not satisfied with the success he had already won.

But the man who is satisfied with success would be satisfied with failure. I do not think William L. Douglas would be satisfied with either.