

# EX-GOV. BLACK DIES AT HIS TROY HOME

Former State Executive, Taken Ill Several Days Ago, Had Been Unconscious for Hours.

## AN "ACCIDENT" IN POLITICS

But His Brief Career Was Picturesque—Made Memorable Fight for Renomination.

TROY, N. Y., Saturday, March 22.—Ex-Gov. Frank S. Black died at his home here just before 1 o'clock this morning of valvular disease of the heart.

The former Executive had been very ill for several days. For the last thirty-six hours he had been unconscious, being kept alive only by the use of oxygen.

Mr. Black had been a sufferer from heart disease for many years, although it was not thought serious until several months ago. He first discovered that he had a weak heart when he was walking up the Capitol steps one day while he was Governor.

A widow and one son, Arthur, survive him.

### Gov. Black's Career.

Frank Swett Black has been described as the most successful "accident" of any man prominent in public and professional life in this State in the past two decades. His election as Governor of New York in 1896, succeeding Gov. Morton, was mildly accidental. He never cared for politics; entered it through circumstance, and got out as quickly as possible.

Gov. Black was tall and lank of figure, and his thin smooth-shaven face was of serious mien. He was one of eleven children born to Jacob Black, a farmer with lean acres near Limington, York County, Me., and Charlotte B. Black. As a boy he had made up his mind to become a lawyer, and this, together with his homely appearance, deliberateness but directness of speech, and crude ability as an orator, gained him the nickname of "Judge" even before he knew the definition of a brief.

Born on March 8, 1853, he lived the life of a toil-driven country boy until he taught his first school at the age of 17. With the money earned thus he entered Dartmouth College with the class of 1875. He was an honor man at commencement.

He went from college to Johnstown, Fulton County, N. Y., where he got a job as editor of The Johnstown Journal. Young Black believed at that time that the Maine statesman, James G. Blaine, was the greatest living man. When the proprietor of The Journal was out of town Black overturned the political policy of the paper and committed it to Blaine. Black was dismissed promptly for this. He left town to work his way East, and tarried in Troy because he liked the looks of the place.

His first work in Troy was on The Troy Whig and later on The Troy Times. At this time Mr. Black got his first insight into politics. It was Rensselaer County Republican politics, but the field was large. In the meantime Mr. Black had been admitted to the bar. The Democrats of the county had been victorious for many years under the leadership of United States Senator Edward Murphy, Jr. Mr. Black formed an alliance with a number of independent voters with the result that he became practically Republican leader of the county. From then on his rise in politics was rapid. He had formed a law partnership and had been on the stump in the Presidential campaigns of 1888 and 1892. In 1894 he was nominated for Congress by acclamation and he was swept into office by the tidal wave of that year, defeating Charles D. Haines, his Democratic opponent. It was in an election riot of that year that "Bat" Shea killed Robert Ross and Black helped to prosecute Shea. He became President of a Committee of Safety and waged warfare against the political system whose activities had made rioting a feature in all elections in that city.

Mr. Black always attended State Con-

ventions as a delegate and acted with the regular organization. He was a friend of Louis F. Payn, the Republican boss of Columbia County, and also of Thomas C. Platt, the Republican boss in the State. It was Payn who brought about the nomination of Black for Governor in 1896. At a conference in the Worden Hotel, Saratoga Springs, it had been decided that Benjamin B. Odell, Jr., should be the candidate of the convention. Payn and Platt had a memorable conference on that night, Payn all the time insisting that Black should be the candidate.

"I have never asked you for anything in my life," said Payn, "but I ask you for this nomination for Black. He will make a great Governor."

So the slate was upset at the last moment and Black's name went before the convention and he was nominated.

Black was elected succeeding Levi P. Morton, who declined a renomination. As soon as he was elected, Black decided upon appointing Payn to the important office of State Superintendent of Insurance. There was an outcry from one end of the State to the other, even Republicans joining in. All sorts of appeals were made to Black to change his mind. But Black was adamant and the appointment was made.

One political incident in which Black figured was the agreement which Platt made with Richard Croker to have a legislative bill passed that would prohibit the publishing of cartoons by newspapers of the State.

Black took a firm stand against the bill and Platt became very angry. In fact that was the beginning of the trouble between the two which culminated in 1898. In that year Platt, determined to get even with Black, planned to have Theodore Roosevelt selected as the candidate for Governor. He sent word to Black that if the latter would support Roosevelt's nomination he would be sent to the United States Senate to succeed Edward Murphy, Jr., of Troy. But Black refused and took personal charge of his forces at the Saratoga convention. About 300 delegates out of 1,000 stood by him to the

last. In the campaign that followed, it was freely charged that Black and his friends were not supporting Roosevelt. The result seemed to prove it, for Roosevelt squeezed in with a bare 17,000 plurality as against over 212,000 for Black two years before.

Black and Roosevelt were not on a very friendly footing thereafter until 1904, when the fight was made against nominating Roosevelt for the Presidency. Roosevelt's friends implored Black to make the nominating speech at Chicago, and Black did so. Following Roosevelt's election in 1904 a campaign was started to make Black United States Senator. Benjamin B. Odell, Jr., threw in his support, but after Black insisted he did not want the office Odell withdrew and supported Chauncey M. Depew. It was well known, however, that Black never became thoroughly reconciled with Roosevelt. Black in 1907 at Concord, N. H., made his famous "man on the barrel head speech." In this speech he said:

"Keep your eye fixed on him, who in all ages has been the people's seducer and their enemy, the man exhorting the crowd from the head of a barrel.

"His cry is not justice but popularity, not fair play but power. He acts not to command respect, but to draw the crowd. There is only one test of right and wrong for him, viz.: What does the majority want? No matter what may come tomorrow if he can be cheered to-day."

By easy stages after that Black dropped out of political life. He relinquished the helm as Republican leader of Rensselaer County and devoted himself entirely to his law practice. In his career he had many important law cases in both civil and criminal practice. At one time he defended Roland B. Molineaux. Just before his retirement he would not take a case unless there was a large fee attached. In the Spring of 1912 he announced that he had amassed a fortune of \$500,000, which was ample to keep him for the remainder of his life, and that on his sixtieth birthday he would retire. In 1898 Mr. Black married a daughter of Dr. Hamilton of Provincetown, Mass.

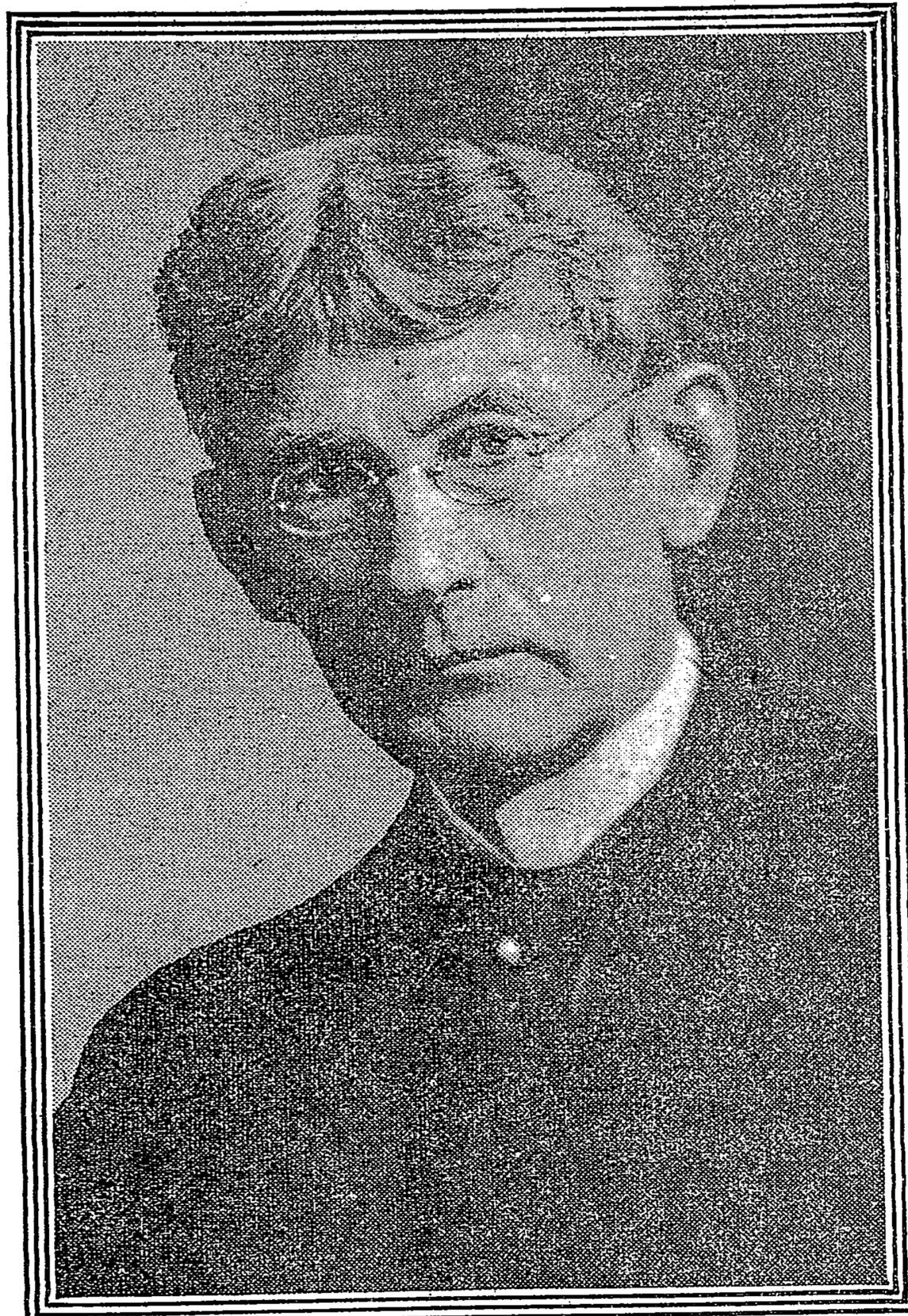


Photo by Gessford.