

Interview with W. P. Palmer, President of American
Steel & Wire

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Mr. Palmer said he first saw Judge Gary in 1895. Came to Chicago with Gates, Edenborn, Clifford and others of the Consolidated. Palmer was with the Carnegie Steel Co., and they had at Beaver Falls a small wire plant which seems to have been a nuisance to the Consolidated, and they wanted to buy it. The sale was arranged, and soon after that Palmer left the Carnegie and became vice-president of the Illinois Steel Co.

About this time, a dilapidated concern in Indianapolis (or Indiana) wired itself up, as he says, and began to turn out rails to the annoyance of the Illinois Steel. The men back of this were Buffington, Dan Reed, Leeds and possibly others. They got these men to Chicago and after some talk prepared an arrangement by which whatever they were doing that annoyed Palmer and his friends was squared. A contract was to be drawn up and they sent for their general counsel, Parmelee Prentiss (Palmer says that must not be mentioned - doesn't want to hurt anybody)

He came in a dress suit although it was a hot night and the gentlemen were sitting around in their shirt sleeves. They fussed with an agreement but could get nothing that satisfied him. Finally they sent him home and Gates wrote out a short agreement which everybody signed. Palmer was so annoyed with the failure of Prentiss that he got hold of Gates and said, "We must have a new general counsel." They went to see H.H. Porter who said "All right." Palmer says he suggested Gary.

Palmer is so interested in the Worcester Museum

that I found it hard to get any information about Gary. Others can tell more, he thinks.

I got him on the labor policy. He says it is the leaders not the men that are the trouble, that they are ignorant and for themselves, that if the men would elect their own leaders in the plants, there might be something in it. Thinks that the lowest type of labor takes little stock, but that everything above that to the top takes all it can get and is very proud of its stock. Says the wire men take little interest in the Museum. Am convinced that I have got in what they have there a chapter or two for "Big Business" - the development of the wire industry with its ramifications, the story of how industry grew, its relations to demand, the effect of changes in steel and iron making upon it, the wars over patents, the pressure to combine, together with a whole list of picturesque characters, like Ediborn, Gates and others who come to the top in this period, make it an illuminating subject. All the material for this can be obtained in Worcester.

Palmer has been a little sore, I judge, because people don't recognize what his Museum means. Calls it an island in an ocean, but says, "If you will go up there and do this work, I shall feel that it has justified itself."