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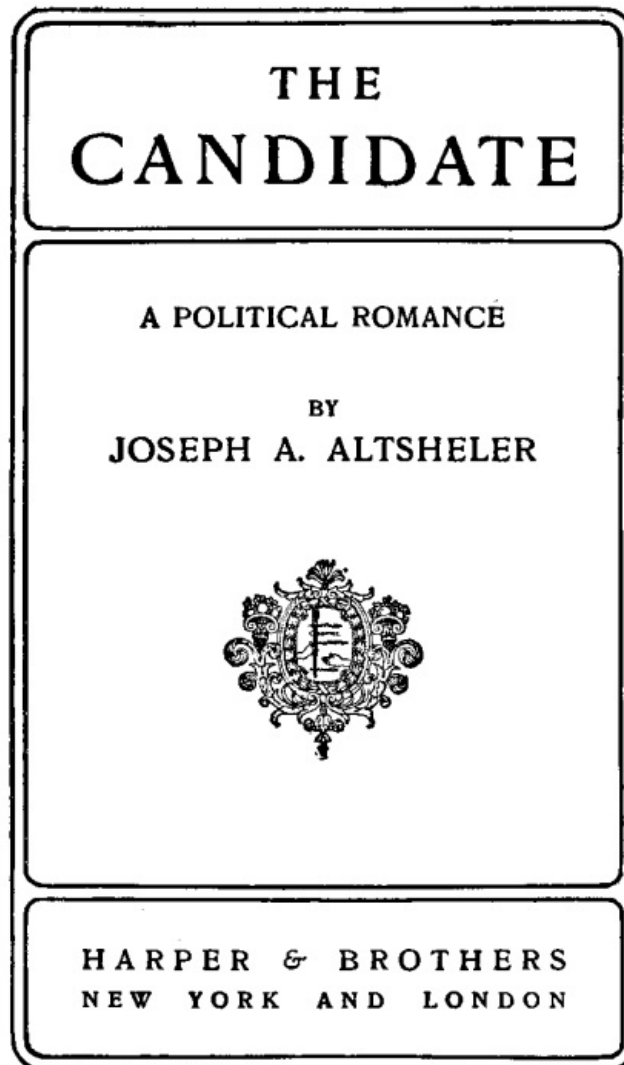
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# THE CANDIDATE

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## I

### THE NOMINEE

The huge convention-hall still rang with the thunders of applause, and most of the delegates were on their feet shouting or waving their hats, when Harley slipped from his desk and made his way quietly to the little side-door leading from the stage. It was all over now but the noise; after a long and desperate fight Grayson, a young lawyer, with little more than a local reputation, had been nominated by his party for the Presidency of the United States, and Harley, alert, eager, and fond of dramatic effects, intended to be the first who should tell him the surprising fact.

He paused a moment, with his hand on the door, and, looking out upon the hall with its multitude of hot, excited faces, ran quickly over the events of the last three or four days. Ten thousand people had sat there, hour after hour, waiting for the result, and now the result had come. The rival parties had entered their conventions, full of doubt and apprehension. There was a singular dearth of great men; the old ones were all dead or disabled, and the new ones had not appeared; the nation was conscious, too, of a new feeling, and all were bound to recognize it; the sense of dependency upon the Old World in certain matters which applied to the mental state rather than anything material was almost gone; the democracy had grown more democratic and the republic was more republican; within the nation itself the West was taking a greater prominence, and the East did not begrudge it. It was felt by everybody in either party that it would be wiser to nominate a Western man, and, the first having done so, the second, as all knew it must, now followed the good example.

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Moreover, both conventions had nominated "dark horses," but the second nominee was the "darker" of the two. James Madison Grayson, affectionately called Jimmy Grayson by his neighbors and admirers, was quite young, without a gray hair in his head, tall, powerfully built, smooth-shaven, and with honest eyes that gazed straight into yours. He was known as a brave man, with fine oratorical powers and a winning personality, but he had come to the convention merely as a delegate, and without any thought of securing the nomination for himself. Not a single vote had been instructed for him, but in that lay his opportunity. All the conspicuous candidates were weak; good men in themselves, a solid political objection could be raised against every one of them, and for a while the voting was scattered and desultory. Then Grayson began to attract attention; as a delegate he had spoken two or three times, always briefly, but with grace and to the point, and the people were glad both to see him and to hear him.

At last a far-sighted old man from the same state knew that the moment had come when the

convention, staggering about in the dark, could be led easily along any road that seemed the path of light. He mentioned the name of Grayson, putting it forward mildly as a suggestion that he would withdraw at the first opposition, but his very mildness warded off attack. Received rather lightly at first, the suggestion soon made a strong appeal to the delegates. Nothing could be urged against Grayson; he was quite young, it was true, but youth was needed to make a great campaign—the odds were heavily in favor of the other party. Nor were there lacking those who, expecting defeat, said that a young man could bear it better than an old one, and a beating now might train him for a victory four years hence.

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Grayson himself was surprised when he heard the report, nor could he ever be convinced that he would be nominated; he regarded the whole thing as absurd, a few votes, no more, might be cast for him, but, as was fit and decent, he withdrew from the hall. All those whose names were before the convention were expected to remain at home or elsewhere in the city, and Jimmy Grayson and his wife stayed quietly in their rooms at the hotel.

Harley had believed this evening that the nomination of Grayson was at hand. It was an intuitive sense, a sort of premonition that the battalions were closing in for the final conflict, and he did not doubt the result. He had just returned from a war on the other side of the world, where he had been present as the correspondent of a great New York journal on many battle-fields, and he often noticed this strained, breathless feeling that the moment had come, just before the combat was joined. Now this convention-hall was none the less a battle-field though the weapons were ballots, not bullets, and Harley believed in his intuition. At midnight the flood-tide swept in, bearing Grayson on its crest, and, when they saw that he was the man, everybody flocked to him, making the nomination unanimous by a rising vote.

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Harley now stood a moment at the door, listening to the cheers as they swelled again, then he stepped out and ran swiftly down the street. A fat policeman, taking him for a fleeing pickpocket, shouted to him to stop, but he flitted by and was gone.

It was only two or three blocks to the hotel, where Mr. Grayson sat quietly in his room, and Harley was running swiftly, but in the minute or two that elapsed much passed through his mind. After his long stay abroad he had returned with a renewed sense, not alone of the power and might of his own country, but also of its goodness; it was here, and here alone, that all careers were open to all; nowhere else in the world could a relatively obscure young lawyer have been put forward, and peacefully, too, for the headship of ninety million people. It was this thought that thrilled him, and it was why he wished to be the first who should tell the young lawyer of it. He had made the acquaintance of Jimmy Grayson the day before; the two had talked for a while about public questions, and each had felt that it was the beginning of a friendship, so he had no hesitation now in making himself an unannounced herald.

He ran into the hotel, darted up the stairway—Jimmy Grayson's rooms were on the first floor—and knocked at the door of the nominee. A light shone from the transom, and he heard a quick, strong step approaching. Then the door was thrown open by Mr. Grayson himself, and Mrs. Grayson, who stood in the centre of the room, looked with inquiry at the correspondent.

"Why, Mr. Harley, I'm glad to see you," said Mr. Grayson, with a welcoming tone in his voice. "Come in, but I warn you that you cannot interview me any further I'm not worth it; I've told you all I know."

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Harley said nothing, but stepped into the room, closing the door behind him. He saw that they yet knew nothing—there had been no messenger, no telephone call, and the news was his to tell. He bowed to Mrs. Grayson, and then he felt a moment of embarrassment, but his long experience and natural poise came quickly to his aid.

"I do want to interview you, Mr. Grayson," he said, quietly; "and it is upon a subject to which we did not allude in our former talk."

Mr. Grayson glanced at his wife, and her look, replying to his, indicated the same puzzling state. Both knew that the chief correspondent of one of the greatest journals in the world would not leave a Presidential convention in the hour of birth to secure an irrelevant interview.

"If I can serve you, Mr. Harley, I shall be glad to do so," said Jimmy Grayson, somewhat dryly; "but I really do not see how I can."

"I am quite sure that you can," said Harley, with emphasis.

He listened a moment, but he did not hear any step in the hall nor the jingling of any telephone bell. Both Mr. and Mrs. Grayson waited expectantly, curious to see what he had in mind.

"If you were to be nominated for the Presidency, I should like to tell the *Gazette* what your programme would be—that is, what sort of a campaign you would conduct," said Harley, deliberately.

Mr. Grayson laughed and glanced again at his wife.

"It is a wise rule for a man in public life never to answer hypothetical questions; of that I am sure, Mr. Harley," he said.

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"I am sure of it, too," said Harley.

Jimmy Grayson bit his lip. It seemed to him that the correspondent would make a jest, and the

hour was unfitting.

"I shall answer your question when I am nominated," he said.

"Then you will answer it now," said Harley.

A sudden flush passed over Mr. Grayson's face and left it white. Mrs. Grayson trembled and glanced again at her husband, still in a puzzled state.

"Your meaning is not clear, Mr. Harley," he said.

"It should be. When I left the convention-hall, two minutes ago, they had just made the nomination unanimous. I wished to be the first to tell the news, and I have had my wish."

The eyes of the nominee looked straight into those of Harley, but the correspondent did not flinch. It was obvious that he was telling the truth.

"The notifying committee will be here in a few minutes," he said. "Ah, I hear their step on the stair now."

The tread of men walking quickly and the sound of voices raised in eagerness came to the room. The powerful figure of Jimmy Grayson trembled slightly, then grew rigid.

"I did not dream of it," he said, as if to himself; "nor have I now sought to take it from others."

"Nor have you done so," said Harley, boldly; "because it belonged to no man."

Mrs. Grayson stepped forward, as if in fear that her husband was about to be taken from her, because at that moment the volume of the voices and the trampling increased and paused at her door. Then the crowd poured into the room and hailed the victor.

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Harley slipped to one side, and no one in the committee knew that the nominee had been notified already, but the correspondent never ceased to watch Jimmy Grayson. He saw how the nature of the man rose to the great responsibility that had been put upon him, how he nerved himself for his mighty task. He stood among them all, cool, dignified, and ready. Harley was proud that this was one of his countrymen, and when his last despatch was filed that night he wired to his editor in New York: "Please send me on the campaign with Grayson. I think it is going to be a great one." And back came the answer: "Stay with him until it is all over, election night."

The eyes of Harley, like those of so many of his countrymen, had always been turned eastward. To him New York was the ultimate expression of America, and beyond the great city lay the influence of Europe, of that Old World to which belonged the most of art and literature. The books that he read were written chiefly by Europeans, and the remainder by the men of New England and New York. He had never put it into so many words, even mentally, but he had a definite impression that the great world of affairs was composed of central and western Europe and a half-dozen Northern coast states of the American Union; beyond this centre of light lay a shadow land, growing darker as the distance from the central rays increased, inhabited by people, worthy no doubt, but merely forming a chorus for those who had the speaking parts.

The course of Harley's life confirmed him in this opinion, which perhaps was due more to literature than to anything else. With his eyes fixed on New York, the desire to go there followed, and when he succeeded, early, and became the correspondent of a great journal, he was soon immersed in the affairs of that world which seemed the world of action to him; and, being so much occupied thus, he forgot the regions which apparently lay in the shadow, including the greater portion of his own country.

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Hence the two great Presidential conventions, in each of which Western influences were paramount, and in each of which a Western man was chosen, created upon him a new and surprising impression. He found himself in the presence of unexpected forces; he became aware that there was another way of looking at things, and this powerful sensation was deepened by the personality of Mr. Grayson, in whom he saw intuitively that there was something fresh, original, and strong; he seemed less hackneyed and more joyous than the types that he found in the old states of the Union or the Old World, and, because of this, the interest of Harley, whose mind had a singularly keen and inquiring quality, was aroused; the regions that apparently lay in the shadow might have enough light, after all, and, seeing before him a campaign not less exciting than a war, he resolved to stay in it until the last battle was fought.

He took out the telegram from his editor and read it over again with keen satisfaction. "Out of one war and into another," he murmured. The conventions had been held early; it was now only the first week in June, and the election would be in the first week of November; before him lay five months of stress and perhaps storm, but he thought of it only with pleasure.

Harley always travelled light, carrying only two valises, and an hour sufficed for his packing. Then, like the old campaigner that he was, he slept soundly, and early the next morning he went again to the hotel at which the Graysons were staying. He felt a little hesitation in sending up a card so soon, knowing what swarms of people Mr. Grayson had been compelled to receive and how badly he must stand in need of rest, but there was no help for it.

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While he sat in the huge lobby waiting the return of the boy, the hum of many voices about him rose almost to a roar, varied by the rustling of many newspapers. The place was filled with men, talking over the thrilling events of the night before, the nomination and the nominee, while every

newspaper bore upon its front page a great picture of the new candidate.

The boy came back with a message that Mr. Grayson would see him; and Harley, a minute later, was knocking at the door, which the candidate himself opened. This man, who was his own usher, was the nominee of a great party, he might become the President of the United States—of ninety million people, of what was in nearly every material sense the first power in the world; and yet Harley, when in Europe, seeking information from the youngest and least *attaché* of a legation, had been compelled to go through an infinite amount of form and flummery. The contrast was lasting.

"Come in," said Mr. Grayson, courteously, and Harley at once acted upon the invitation. Mrs. Grayson, at the same moment, came from the inner room, quiet and self-contained, and Harley bowed with respect.

"I dare say there is nothing you wish to ask me which a lady should not hear," said Mr. Grayson, with a slight smile. "Mrs. Grayson is my chief political adviser." [Pg 10]

"It is no secret," replied Harley, also smiling. "I have merely come to tell you that the *Gazette*, my paper, has instructed me to keep watch over you from now until election night, and to describe at once and at great length for its readers every one of your wicked deeds. So I am here to tell you that I wish to go along with you. You are public property, you know, and you can't escape."

"I know that," said Jimmy Grayson, heartily; "and I do not seek to escape. I am glad the representative of the *Gazette* is to be you. I do not know what course your paper will take, but I am sure that we shall be friends."

"The *Gazette* is independent; its editor is likely to attack you for some things and to praise you for others. But I am here to tell the news."

"Then we are comrades for a long journey," said Jimmy Grayson.

Thus it was settled simply and easily by the two who were most concerned, and Harley throughout the little interview was struck by the difference between this man and many other famous men with whom in the course of business he had held journalistic dealings. Here was a lack of conventionality, and an even stronger note of simplicity and freshness. The candidate, with his new honors, still held himself as one of the people, it never occurred to him that he might assume a pose and the public would accept it; he was democracy personified, and he was such because he was unconscious of it. His perfect freedom of manner, which Harley had not liked at first, now became more attractive.

"We leave at eleven o'clock for my home," said Mr. Grayson, "and arrive there to-morrow morning. I have some preparations to make, but I shall begin the campaign a day or two later." [Pg 11]

"I intend to go with you to your town," said Harley. "You know the compact; I cannot let you out of my sight."

Mrs. Grayson, a grave, quiet woman, spoke for the first time.

"You shall come along, not merely as a sentinel, but as one of our little party, if you will, on one condition," she said.

"What is that?"

"On condition that you come to our house and take dinner with us to-morrow."

Harley gave her a grateful look. He felt that the candidate's wife approved of him, and he liked the approval of those who evidently knew how to think. And it would be far pleasanter to travel with Jimmy Grayson as a friend than as one suspected.

"I am honored, Mrs. Grayson," he said, "and I shall be happy to come."

Then he left them, and when he passed into the hall he saw that the burden of greatness was being thrust already upon the Grayson family, as callers of various types and with various requests were seeking their rooms. But he hurried back to his own hotel, and as it was some distance away he took the street-car. There he was confronted by long rows of newspapers which hid the faces of men, and whenever a front page was turned towards him the open countenance of Mr. Grayson looked out at him with smiling eyes. Everybody was reading the account of the convention, and now and then they discussed it; they spoke of the candidate familiarly; he was "Jimmy" Grayson to them—rarely did they call him Mr. Grayson; but there was no disrespect or disesteem in their use of the diminutive "Jimmy." They merely regarded him as one of themselves, and their position in the matter differed in no wise from that of Mr. Grayson; it was a matter of course with both. To Harley, fresh from other lands, it seemed in the first breath singular, and yet in the second he liked it; the easy give-and-take promoted the smoothness of life, and men might assume false values, but they were not able to keep them. His thoughts returned for a moment to the least little *attaché* whose manner was more important than that of a Presidential nominee. [Pg 12]

Harley, with his two valises, was at the station somewhat ahead of time, as he wished to see Mr. and Mrs. Grayson arrive, curious to know in what sort of state or lack of it they would come.

Mr. Grayson's intention of going at once to his home was not published in the press, and there was only the ordinary crowd at the station, some coming, some leaving, but all bearing upon their

faces the marks of haste and impatience. As the people hurried to and fro, the sound of many tongues arose. There was nearly every accent of Europe, but the American rose over and enveloped all. Many writers from other lands, seeking only the bad, had pronounced the Babel coarse, vulgar, and sordid; but Harley, seeking the good, saw in it men and women toiling to better their condition in the world, and that fact he knew was not bad.

Through the station windows he saw the tall buildings rise floor on floor, and there was a clang of car-bells that never ceased. In the fresh morning air it was inspiriting, and Harley felt himself a part of the crowd. He was no hermit. Life and activity and the spectacle of people filled with hope always pleased him.

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An ordinary cab arrived, and Mr. and Mrs. Grayson, alighting from it, bought their tickets at the window, just like anybody else, and then sought inconspicuous seats in the corner of the waiting-room, as their train would not be ready for five minutes. In the hastening crowd they were not noticed at first, but even in the dusk of the corner the smoothly shaven face and massive features of Mr. Grayson were soon noticed. His picture had been staring at them all from the front page of the newspapers, and here was the reality, too like to be overlooked. There was a sudden delay in the crowd; the two streams, one flowing outward and the other inward, wavered, then stopped and began to stare at the candidate, not intrusively, but with a kindly curiosity that it considered legitimate. Harley had quietly joined the Graysons, and they gave him a sincere welcome. The people unfamiliar with his face began to speculate audibly on his identity.

The crowd in the station, reinforced from many side-doors, thickened, and Mr. and Mrs. Grayson, under the gaze of so many eyes, became uneasy and shy. Harley, who had been made a member of their party, found himself sharing this awkward feeling, and he was glad to hear the announcement that the train was ready.

The three abreast moved towards the gate, and the crowd opened a way just wide enough, down which they marched, still under the human battery of a thousand eyes. To Harley, although little of this gaze was meant for him, the sensation was indescribable. It was something to be an object of so much curiosity, but the thrill was more than offset by the weight that it put upon one's ease of manner.

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He saw many of the people—it was a curious manifestation—reach out and touch the candidate's sleeve lightly as he passed. But Mr. Grayson, if he knew it, took no notice and marched straight ahead, all expression discharged from his face. Harley saw that this was the disguise eminent public men must assume upon occasions, and he was willing that they should keep the task.

When the great iron gate leading to his train was closed behind him, Harley felt a mighty sense of relief. It seemed to him that he had run a gantlet not much inferior to that through which the Indians put the captive backwoodsmen, and the dark-red walls of the car rose before him a fortress of safety.

It was an ordinary Pullman, and Mr. and Mrs. Grayson had not secured the drawing-room, but the usual berths like Harley's, and he joined them in their seats. He felt now a certain pleasure in the situation. The pressure of circumstances was making him, in a sense and for the time being, a member of their family. He was glad that the other correspondents would wait to join the candidate at his home, as it gave him a greater chance to establish those personal relations needful on a long campaign that must be made together.

The whistle blew, the train moved, and they passed through miles of city, and then through suburbs growing thinner until they melted away into the clean, green prairie, and Harley, opening the window, was glad to breathe the unvetted air that came across a thousand miles of the West. He leaned back in his seat and luxuriously watched the quietly rolling country, tender with the breath of spring, as it spun past. That mighty West of which he had thought so little seemed to reach out with its arms and invite him, and he was glad to go.

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Presently he was aware of an unusual movement of people down the aisles of the car, accompanied by a certain slowing of the pace when they passed the seats in which the Graysons and he sat. They were coming from the other cars, too, and now and then the aisle would choke up a little, but in a moment the shifting figures would relieve it, and the endless procession of faces moved on.

The Graysons, following Harley's example, were gazing out of the window at the cheerful country, but the correspondent knew that Mr. Grayson was fully conscious of this human stream, and that he himself was the cause of it. Yet he lost none of his good temper even when some, venturing further, asked if he were not the nominee, adding that it was a pride to them to meet him and speak to him. In fact, the change from silence to conversation was a relief to Mr. Grayson, varying the monotony of that fixed gaze to which he had been subjected so long, and it was now that Harley saw him in a most favorable guise. His consciousness of a great talent did not interfere with a perfect democracy; it did not cause him to assume an air that said to these people, "I am better than you, keep your distance," but he gave the impression of ability solely through his simplicity of manner and the ease with which he adapted himself to the caliber of the person who spoke to him.

Thus the train swung westward hour after hour, and the procession through the car never ceased. The manner of the candidate did not change; however weary he may have grown, he was always affable, but not gushing, and Harley, watching keenly, judged that the impression he made was always favorable. He strove, too, to interpret this manner and to read the mind behind

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it. Was Mr. Grayson really great or merely a man of ready speech and pleasing address? Harley was willing to admit that the latter were qualities in themselves not far from great, but on the main contention he reserved his judgment. He was still divided in his opinions, sometimes approving the complete democracy of the candidate and sometimes condemning. He had been born in the South, in a border state, and he grew up there amid many of the forms and formalities of the old school, and the associations of youth are not easily lost. Nor had a subsequent residence in the East brushed them away. This world of the West was still, in many respects, new to him.

He ate luncheon in the dining-car with the Graysons, and he noticed the bubbling joy of the black waiter who served them, and who showed two rows of white teeth in a perpetual smile. Harley appreciated him so much that he doubled his tip, but, as they were still watched by many eyes in the dining-car, he felt a certain nervousness in handling his knife and fork, as if the penalty of greatness, even by association, were too heavy for him. Once his eyes caught those of Mrs. Grayson, and a faint, whimsical smile passed over her face, a smile so infectious, despite its faintness, that Harley was compelled to reply in like fashion. It told him that she understood his constraint, and that she, too, felt it, but Harley doubted whether it was in like degree, as he believed that in the main women are better fitted than men to endure such ordeals. Mr. Grayson himself apparently took no notice.

Harley returned to their car with the Graysons, but in the afternoon he detached himself somewhat, and came in touch with the fluctuating crowd that passed down the aisle—it was always a part of his duty, as well as his inclination, to know the thoughts and feelings of outsiders, because it was outsiders who made the world, and it was from them, too, that the insiders came. [Pg 17]

Harley found here that the chief motive as yet was curiosity; the campaign had not entered upon its sharp and positive state, and the personality of Mr. Grayson and of his opponent still remained to be defined clearly.

The train sped westward through the granary of the world, cutting in an almost direct line across the mighty valley of the Mississippi, and they were still hundreds of miles away from the Grayson home. In going west both parties had gone very far west, and the two candidates not only lived beyond the Mississippi, but beyond the Missouri as well.

The prairies were in their tenderest green, and the young grass bent lightly before a gentle west wind. In a sky of silky blue little clouds floated and trailed off here and there into patches of white like drifting snow, and Harley unconsciously fell to watching them and wondering where they went.

The sun, a huge red ball, sank in the prairie, twilight fell, the ordeal of the dining-car was repeated, and not long afterwards Harley sought his bed in the swaying berth. The next morning they were in the home town, and there were a band and a reception committee, and Harley slipped quietly away to his hotel, being reminded first by the Graysons that he was to take dinner with them.

He spent most of the day wandering about the town, gathering hitherto unnoticed facts about the early life of Mr. James Grayson, which in the afternoon he despatched eastward. Then he prepared for dinner, but here he was confronted by a serious problem—should one so far west wear evening clothes or not? But he decided at last in the affirmative, feeling that it would be the safe course, and, hiding the formality of his raiment under a light overcoat, he went forth into the street. Five minutes' walk took him to the house of Mr. Grayson, which stood in the outskirts, a red brick structure two stories in height, plain and comfortable, with a well-shaded lawn about it. It was now quite dark, but lights shone from several windows, and Harley, without hesitation, rang the bell. [Pg 18]

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## II

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### THE MAID

Harley's ring was not answered at once, and as he stood on the step he glanced back at the city, which, in the dark, showed only the formless bulk of houses and the cold electric lights here and there. Then he heard a light step, and the door was thrown open. He handed his card to the maid, merely saying, "Mr. and Mrs. Grayson," and waited to be shown into the parlor. But the girl, whose face he could not see, as the hall was dimly lighted, held it in her hand, looking first at the name and then at him. Harley, feeling a slight impatience, stepped inside and said:

"I assure you that I am the real owner of it—that is, of the name on the card."

"What proof have you?" she asked, calmly.

Harley had heard recently many phases of the servant-girl question, and this development of it amused him. She must be one of those ignorant and stubborn foreigners—a Swede or a German.

"Suppose you take the proof for granted and risk it," he said. "Mr. and Mrs. Grayson can quickly

decide for you, and tell you whether I am right."

"They have gone out for a little walk," she said, still standing in the way, "and so many strange people are coming here now that I don't know whether to show you in or not. Maybe you are a reporter?"

"Well, and what then?"

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"Or worse; perhaps you are a photographer."

"If I am, you can see that I have no camera."

"You might have a little one hidden under your overcoat."

"It is night, and cameras are used in the sunshine."

"We have electric lights."

Harley began to feel provoked. There were limits to perverseness, or should be.

"I am expected to dinner by Mr. and Mrs. Grayson," he said. "Will you kindly cease to keep me waiting and show me in? I shall not steal any of the furniture."

The maid was annoyingly calm.

"Mr. and Mrs. Grayson have not yet returned from a little walk which they were afraid to undertake until it grew dark," she said. "But I think I'll risk it and show you in if you will hold up your hand and swear that you haven't a camera hidden under your overcoat."

Harley's sense of humor came to his aid, and he held up his hand.

"I do solemnly swear," he said.

He tried to see the face of this maid, who showed a perversity that was unequalled in an experience by no means limited, but she stood in the duskiest part of the dim hall, and he failed. He knew merely that she was tall and slender, and when she turned to lead the way he heard a faint sound like the light tinkle of a suppressed laugh. Harley started, and his face flushed with anger. He had encountered often those who tried to snub him, and usually he had been able to take care of himself, but to be laughed at by a housemaid was a new thing in his experience, and he was far from liking it.

She indicated a small parlor with a wave of her hand and said:

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"You can go in there and wait. You have promised not to steal the furniture, and, as the room contains only a piano, a table, and some chairs, all of which are too big to be hidden under your overcoat, I think that you will keep your promise."

She sped lightly away, leaving Harley trembling so much with amazement and anger that he forgot for at least two minutes to sit down. When he took off his overcoat he murmured: "Before Mr. Grayson thinks of ruling the United States he should discipline his own household."

The house was quiet; he heard no one stirring anywhere. The light from an electric lamp in the street shone into the parlor, and by its rays he saw Mr. and Mrs. Grayson coming up the street. Then the maid had told the truth about the "little walk," and he was early.

He leaned back in his chair and watched the pair as they approached their own house. Evidently they had stolen these few minutes in the dark to be alone with each other, and Harley sympathized with them, because it would be a long time before the wife could claim again that her husband was her own. They entered a side-gate, passed through the lawn, and a minute later were welcoming Harley.

"We did not expect to be gone so long," said Mrs. Grayson; "but we see that you have found the right place."

"Oh yes," said Harley; "a maid showed me in." Then he added: "I am very glad, indeed, to have been invited here, but if you want any more privacy I don't think you should have asked me; my kind will soon be down upon you like a swarm of locusts."

Mr. Grayson laughed and took a stack of telegraph envelopes six inches thick from a table.

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"You are right, Mr. Harley," he said. "They will be here to-morrow, ready for the start. There are more than twenty applications for space on our train, and all of them shall have it. I don't think that the boys and I shall quarrel."

Mrs. Grayson excused herself, and presently they were summoned to dinner. Stepping out of a dusky hall into a brilliantly lighted room, Harley was dazzled for a moment, but he found himself bowing when she introduced him to "My niece, Miss Morgan, of Idaho." Then he saw a tall, slender girl, with a singularly frank and open countenance, and a hand extended to him as familiarly as if she had known him all her life. Harley, although he had not expected the offer of the hand, took it and gave it one little shake. He felt an unaccountable embarrassment. He saw a faint twinkle in the girl's eye, as if she found something amusing in his appearance, and he feared that he had made a mistake in coming in evening-dress. He flushed a little and felt a slight resentment towards Mrs. Grayson, because she had not told him of this niece; but he was



relieved for the moment by an introduction to the third guest, Mrs. Boyle, an elderly lady, also a relative, but more distantly so.

Mrs. Boyle merely bowed, and at once returned Harley to the custody of the niece from Idaho, of whom he felt some fear, her singular freedom of manner and the faint twinkle that still lurked in her eye putting him on edge. Moreover, he was assigned to a seat next to her, and, as obviously he was expected to entertain her, his fear increased. This girl was not only Western, but Far Western, and, in his opinion, there was none so wise who could tell what she would do or say. He repeated to himself the word "Idaho," and it sounded remote, rough, and wild.

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"Uncle James tells me that you are a correspondent, the representative of the New York *Gazette*," she said.

"Yes."

"And that you are to go with him on the campaign and write brilliant accounts of the things that never happen."

"I am sure that Mr. Grayson was not your authority for such a statement," said Harley, with a smile, although he did not wholly relish her banter.

"Oh no, Uncle James is a very polite man, and very considerate of the feelings of others."

"Then it is a supposition of your own?"

"Oh no, not a supposition at all; the New York newspapers sometimes reach us even in Idaho."

Harley did not respond to her banter, thinking it premature, as she had never seen him before. He could not forget the reserve and shyness natural to him, and he felt a sense of hostility. He glanced at her, and saw a cheek ruddier than the cheeks of American women usually are, and a chin with an unusually firm curve. Her hair was dark brown, and when the electric light flashed upon her it seemed to be streaked with dull gold. But the chin held him with an odd sort of fascination, and he strove to read her character in it. "Bold and resolute," he decided, "but too Western, entirely too Far Western. She needs civilizing." He was rather glad that he was going away with Mr. Grayson on the morrow and would not see her again.

"I should think," she said; "that the life of a newspaper correspondent is extremely interesting. You have all the pleasures and none of the responsibilities; you go to war, but you do not fight; you enter great political campaigns, but you cannot be defeated; you are always with the victor and never with the vanquished; you are not bound by geographical limits nor by facts, nor—"

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"Excuse me, Miss Morgan," interrupted Harley, with dignity. "In my profession, as in all others, there are irresponsible persons, but the great majority of its followers are conscientious and industrious. If you only knew how—"

"That sounds as if it had been prepared in advance," she exclaimed. "I am sure that you have used it many times before."

"You must not mind Sylvia," said Mrs. Grayson, smiling her grave, quiet smile. "She seldom means what she says, or says what she means."

"Aunt Anna," exclaimed Miss Morgan, "you are really too hard upon your beloved niece. I never before dined with the staff correspondent of a great New York newspaper, and I am really seeking information. Now I wish to know if in his profession imagination is the most valuable quality, as I have heard it said."

"Do you wish to embroil me with the press so early?" asked Mr. Grayson, laughing.

"I have heard great tales about them and their daring," she persisted. "I am not sure that even now he has not a camera concealed under his coat."

"Why, Sylvia, what a strange thing to say!" exclaimed Mrs. Grayson.

But Harley started in his seat and flushed a deep red. "Miss Morgan, I shall have to ask your pardon," he exclaimed.

Mr. and Mrs. Grayson looked at them in surprise.

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"Here is something that we do not understand," said Mr. Grayson.

"Why, Uncle James, there is nothing strange about what I have said," continued Miss Morgan, with the most innocent face. "I thought all of them carried cameras, else how do we get all the wonderful pictures?"

Harley felt inclined to tell the entire table his experience, but on second thought he remained silent, as the girl from Idaho began to pique him, and he was not willing that the advantage should remain wholly with her, especially when she was from the very Far West. So he affected complete indifference, and, when they asked him about his adventures in the recent war on the other side of the world, he talked freely about them, which he had never done before, because, like most Americans, he was a modest man, enduring in silence lectures on the sin of boasting from others who boasted as they breathed. Most of the time he spoke apparently to Mr. and Mrs. Grayson, but he kept a side-look upon the girl from Idaho who had played with him and humiliated him.

She became silent, as if satisfied with the flight of the arrows that had gone already from her quiver, and seemed to listen with an air of becoming respect; but Harley surprised once or twice the lurking twinkle in her eye, and he was not sure that she was wholly subdued. Opposition and difficulties always increased his resolve, and he doubled his efforts. He spoke lightly of the kingdoms and republics whose fortunes he had followed in a casual way and of the men whom the heave of affairs had brought to the surface for a space, and always he kept that side-look upon her. These relations, surely, would impress, because what could she, a child of the Idaho wilds, know of the great world? And its very mystery would heighten to her its coloring and effect.

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Harley could talk well, all the better because he talked so rarely of himself, and even now it was of himself only by indirection, because he spoke chiefly of men whom he had known and deeds that he had witnessed. Watching the girl closely with that side-look, he did not see the twinkle reappear in her eye; instead she sat demure and silent, and he judged that he had taken her beyond her depth. At last he stopped, and she said, in a subdued tone:

"Did I not tell you, Uncle James, that imagination was the great quality the correspondents need?"

Harley flushed, but he could not keep from joining Mr. Grayson in his laugh. The candidate, besides laughing, glanced affectionately at the girl. It was evident that his niece was a favorite with Jimmy Grayson.

"I shall ask Miss Morgan to tell me about Idaho," said Harley.

"It's quite wild, you know," she said, gravely; "and all the people need taming. But it would be a great task."

When they went back to the drawing-room Harley and the girl were behind the others, and he lingered a moment beside her.

"Miss Morgan," he said, "I want to ask your pardon again. You know it was in the dark, and mine was an honest mistake."

"I will if you will tell me one thing."

"What is it?"

"Have you really got a camera with you?"

"If I had I should take a picture of you and not of Mr. Grayson."

Harley remained awhile longer, and Miss Morgan's treatment remained familiar and somewhat disconcerting, rather like the manner of an elder sister to her young brother than of a girl to a man whom she had known only two or three hours. When he rose to leave, she again offered him her hand with perfect coolness. Harley, in a perfunctory manner, expressed his regret that he was not likely to see her again, as he was to leave the next day with Mr. Grayson. The provoking twinkle appeared again in the corner of her eyes.

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"I don't intend that you shall forget me, Mr. Harley," she said, "because you *are* to see me again. When you come to Washington in search of news, I shall be there as the second lady of the land—Aunt Anna will be first."

"Oh, of course, I forgot that," said Harley, but he was not sure that she had Washington in mind, remembering Mrs. Grayson's assertion that she did not always mean what she said nor say what she meant.

The night was quite dark, and when he had gone a few yards Harley stopped and looked back at the house. He felt a distinct sense of relief, because he was gone from the presence of the mountain girl who was not of his kind, and whom he did not know how to take; being a man, he could not retort upon her in her own fashion, and she was able to make him feel cheap.

The drawing-room was still lighted, and he saw the Idaho girl pass in front of one of the low windows, her figure completely outlined by the luminous veil. It seemed to him to express a singular, flexible grace—perhaps the result of mountain life—but he was loath to admit it, as she troubled him. Harley, although young, had been in many lands and among many people. He had seen many women who were beautiful, and some who were brilliant, but it had been easy to forget every one of them; they hardly made a ripple in the stream of his work, and often it was an effort to recall them. He had expected to dismiss this Idaho girl in the same manner, but she would not go, and he was intensely annoyed with himself.

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He went to the telegraph-office, wrote and filed his despatch, and then, lighting a cigar, strolled slowly through the streets. It was not eleven o'clock, but it seemed that everybody except himself was in bed and asleep. The lights in all the houses were out, and there was no sound whatever save that of the wind as it came in from the prairie and stirred the new foliage of the trees. "And this is our wicked America, for which my foreign friends used to offer me sincere condolences!" murmured Harley.

But he returned quickly to his own mental disturbance. He felt as he used to feel on the eve of a battle that all knew was coming off, there on the other side of the world. He was then with an army which he was not at all sure was in the right; but when he sat on a hill-top in the night,

looking at the flickering lights of the enemy ahead, and knowing that the combat would be joined at dawn, he could not resist a feeling of comradeship with that army to which, for a time—and in a sense, perhaps, alien—he belonged. Those soldiers about him became friends, and the enemy out there was an enemy for him, too. It was the same now when he was to go on a long journey with Jimmy Grayson, who stood upon a platform of which he had many doubts.

He turned back to the hotel, and when he entered the lobby a swarm of men fell upon him and demanded the instant delivery of any news which he might have and they had not. They were correspondents who had come by every train that afternoon—Hobart, Churchill, Blaisdell, Lawson, and others, making more than a score—some representing journals that would support Grayson, and others journals that would call him names, many and bad.

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"We hear that you have been to dinner with the candidate," said Churchill, the representative of the New York *Monitor*, a sneering sheet owned by one foreigner and edited by another, which kept its eye on Europe, and considered European opinion final, particularly in regard to American affairs; "so you can tell us if it is true that he picks his teeth at table with a fork."

"You are a good man for the *Monitor*, Churchill," said Harley, sharply. "Your humor is in perfect accord with the high taste displayed, and you show the same dignity and consideration in your references to political opponents."

"Oh, I see," said Churchill, sneering just as he had been taught to sneer by the *Monitor*. "He is the first guest to dine with the Presidential nominee, and he is overpowered by the honor."

"You shut up, Churchill!" said Hobart, another of the correspondents. "You sha'n't pick a quarrel with Harley, and you sha'n't be a mischief-maker here. There are enough of us to see that you don't."

Harley turned his back scornfully upon Churchill, who said nothing more, and began to tell his friends of Grayson.

"He is an orator," he said. "We know that by undoubted report, and his manner is simple and most agreeable. He has more of the quality called personal magnetism than any other man I ever saw."

"What of his ability?" asked Tremaine, the oldest of the correspondents.

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Harley thought a little while before replying.

"I can't make up my mind on that point," he said. "I find in him, so far as I can see, a certain simplicity, I might almost say an innocence, which is remarkable. He is unlike the other public men whom I have met, but I don't know whether this innocence indicates superficiality or a tact and skill lying so deep that he is able to plan an ambush for the best of his enemies."

"Well, we are to be with him five months," said Tremaine, "and it is our business to find out."

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### III

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## THE START

They were to start at dawn the next day, going back to Chicago, where the campaign would be opened, and Harley, ever alert, was dressing while it was yet dusk. From a corner of the dining-room, where he snatched a quick breakfast, he saw the sun shoot out of the prairie like a great red cannon-ball and the world swim up into a sea of rosy light. Then he ran for the special train, which was puffing and whistling at the station, and the flock of correspondents was at his heels.

Harley saw Mr. and Mrs. Grayson alighting from a cab, and, satisfied with the one glance, he entered the car and sought his place. Always, like the trained soldier, he located his camp, or rather base, before beginning his operations, and he made himself comfortable there with his fellows until the train was well clear of the city and the straggling suburbs that hung to it like a ragged fringe. Then he decided to go into the next coach to see Mr. and Mrs. Grayson, making, as it were, a dinner call.

The candidate and his wife had taken the drawing-room, not from any desire of his for seclusion or as an artificial aid to greatness, but because he saw that it was necessary if he would have any time for thought or rest. Harley approached the compartment, expecting to be announced by the porter, but a veiled lady in the seat next to it rose up before him. She lifted the veil, which was not a disguise, instead being intended merely as a protection against the dust that one gathers on a railroad journey, and Harley stopped in surprise.

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"And so you see, Mr. Correspondent," she said, "that your farewell was useless. You behold me again inside of twelve hours. I wanted to tell you last night that I was going on this train, as Uncle James has great confidence in my political judgment and feels the constant need of my advice, but I was afraid you would not believe me. So I have preferred to let you see for yourself."

She gave Harley a look which he could not interpret as anything but saucy, and his attention was called again by the bold, fine curve of her chin, and he was saying to himself: "A wild life in the

mountains surely develops courage and self-reliance, but at the expense of the more delicate and more attractive qualities." Then he said aloud, and politely:

"I see no reason, Miss Morgan, why you should have credited me with a lack of faith in your word. Have I said anything to induce such a belief in your mind?"

"No, you have merely looked it."

"I do not always look as I feel," said Harley, in embarrassment, "and I want to tell you, Miss Morgan, that I am very glad you are going with us on this Chicago trip."

"You look as if you meant that," she said, gravely; "but if I am to take you at your word, you mean nothing of the kind."

"I do mean it; I assure you I do," said Harley, hastily. "But are Mr. and Mrs. Grayson ready to receive visitors?"

"That depends. I am not sure that I want Uncle James interviewed so early in the day. At least I want to know in advance the subject of the interview. You can give me, as it were, the heads of your discourse. Come, tell me, and I will render a decision."

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She regarded Harley with a grave face, and he was divided between vexation and a sort of reluctant admiration of her coolness. She was bold and forward, not to say impertinent, but she seemed wholly unconscious of it, and, after all, she was from one of the wildest parts of Idaho. He kindly excused much of her conduct on the ground of early association.

"I do not seek to interview any one," he said; "I merely wish to pay my respects to Mr. and Mrs. Grayson, having been their guest, as you know."

"Oh, then you can go in," she said, and, calling to the porter, she told him to announce Mr. Harley, of the *New York Gazette*. "Of the *New York Gazette*," she said again, with what Harley considered unnecessary repetition and emphasis, and he had a new count against her.

Mr. and Mrs. Grayson received him with courtesy, even with warmth, and Harley saw that he had made new progress in their esteem. He remained with them only a few minutes, and he said nothing about the objectionable conduct of Miss Morgan, who had set herself as a guard upon their door. He deemed it wiser to make no reference to her at all, because she was only an insignificant and momentary incident of the campaign, not really relevant. Chicago was merely a beginning, and they would drop her there. When he returned from the drawing-room, she was still sitting near the door, and at his appearance she looked up pertly.

"Did you find him in a good-humor?" she asked.

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"I think Mr. Grayson is always in a good-humor, or at least he is able to appear so."

"I doubt whether perpetual good-humor, or the appearance of it, is desirable. One ought to make a difference in favor of friends; I do not care to present an amiable face to my enemies."

She pursed up her lips and looked thoughtful.

"When Uncle James goes to Washington to take the Presidency," she continued, "he will need me to protect him from the people who have no business with him."

"I hope the last remark is not personal?"

"Oh no," she said; "I recognize the fact that the press must be tolerated."

Harley again felt piqued, and, not willing to retire with the sense of defeat fresh upon him, he sat down near her and began to talk to her of her Western life. He wished to know more about the genesis and progress of a girl who seemed to him so strange, but he was not able to confine her to certain channels of narrative. She was flippant and vague, full of allusions to wild things like Indians or buffaloes or grizzly bears, but with no detailed statement, and Harley gathered that her childhood had been in complete touch with these primitive facts. Only such early associations could account for the absence of so many conventions.

The correspondents who travelled with Harley were mostly men of experience, readily adaptable, and the addition of a new member to Mr. Grayson's party could not escape their attention. Harley was surprised and shocked to find that all of them were well acquainted with Miss Morgan inside of six hours, and that they seemed to be much better comrades with her than he had been. Hobart, the most frivolous of the lot, and the most careless of speech, returning from the Grayson car, informed him that she was a "great girl, as fine as silk."

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"That's a queer expression to apply to a lady," said Harley. "It smacks of the Bowery."

"And what if it does?" replied Hobart, coolly. "I often find the Bowery both terse and truthful. And in this case the expression fits Miss Morgan. She's the real article—no fuss and frills, just a daughter of the West, never pretending that she is what she isn't. I heard her speak of you, Harley, and I don't think she likes you, old man. What have you been doing?"

"I hope I have been behaving as a gentleman should," replied Harley, with some asperity; "and if I have been unlucky enough to incur her dislike, I shall endure it as best I can."

He spoke in an indifferent tone, as if his endurance would not be severely tested.

"But you are missing a good time," said Hobart. "There are not less than a dozen of us at her feet, and the Grayson car is full of jollity. I'm going back."

He returned to the car, and Harley was left alone just then, as he wished to be, and with an effort he dismissed Miss Morgan from his thoughts. Mr. Grayson would speak that night in Chicago, and an audience of twenty thousand people was assured; this fact and the other one, that it would be his initial address, making the event of the first importance.

Harley as a correspondent was able not only to chronicle facts, which is no great feat, but also to tell why, to state the connection between them, and to re-create the atmosphere in which those facts occurred and which made them possible. He was well aware that a fact was dependent for its quality—that is, for its degree of good or evil—upon its surrounding atmosphere, just as a man is influenced by the air that he breathes, and for this reason he wished to send in advance a despatch about Mr. Grayson and his personality as created by his birth and associations.

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He rested his pad on the car-seat and began to write, but Miss Morgan intruded herself in the first line. This question of character, created by environment, would apply to her as well as to her uncle; but Harley, angrily refusing to consider it, tore off the sheet of paper and, throwing it on the floor, began again. The second trial was more successful, and he soon became absorbed in the effort to describe Mr. Grayson and his remarkable personality, which might be either deep and complex or of the simplest Western type.

As he wrote Harley became more and more absorbed in his subject, and with the absorption came spontaneity. He did not know how well he was writing, nor what a vivid picture he was presenting to the vast Eastern population to whom Jimmy Grayson was as yet but a name. It was a despatch that became famous, reprinted all over the Union, and quoted as the first description of the candidate as he really was—that is, of the man. And yet Harley, reading it days later, recognized in it something that nobody else saw. It was a blend. In every fourth line Sylvia Morgan again, and despite his efforts, had obtruded herself. He had borrowed something from her to add to Jimmy Grayson, and he felt that he had been seeking excuses for her manner.

But this fact did not impinge upon Harley now, when he read the despatch preparatory to filing it at Chicago. He merely felt that he had made an attempt to solve Jimmy Grayson, and in doing so had fulfilled his duty.

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As he folded up the article the loud voice of Hobart hailed him from the other end of the car, and he beheld that irresponsible man entering with the candidate's niece.

"You see what he has been about all this time, Miss Morgan?" said Hobart. "He has been at work. Harley, you know, is the only conscientious man among us."

"I have remarked already his devotion to duty," she said, sedately; "but do you think, Mr. Hobart, we should disturb him now? We do not know that he has finished his task."

Harley flushed. He did not wish to be thought a prig or one who made a pretence of great industry, and, although Miss Morgan's voice was without expression, he believed that irony lay hidden somewhere in it.

"You are mistaken," he said; "my work is over, for the time, at least. It was something that had to be done, or I should not have stolen off here alone."

Then he went back with them to the Grayson car, where a joyous group had gathered. Mr. and Mrs. Grayson were in the drawing-room, with the door shut, working upon the candidate's speech at Chicago, Harley surmised, and hence there was no restraint. Of this group the girl from Idaho was the centre and the sun. She seemed to be on good terms with them all, to the great surprise of Harley, who had known her longer than they, and who had not been able to get on with her at all, and he sat rather on the fringe of the throng, saying but little.

Again she inspired him with hostility; she seemed, as before, too bold, too boisterous, too much the mountain maid, although he could not analyze any particular incident as wrong in itself. And clearly she had won the liking, even the admiration, of his associates, all of whom were men of wide experience. Tremaine, the dean of the corps, a ruddy, white-haired old fellow, who had written despatches from the Russo-Turkish war, which was ancient history to Harley, warmed visibly to Miss Morgan. "It is always the way with those old gallants," was Harley's silent comment. But he had never before characterized Tremaine in such a manner.

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He was afraid of her sharp tongue, knowing that a woman in such respects is never averse to taking an unfair advantage of a man; but she paid no heed to him, talking with the others and passing over him as if he had not been present; and, while this was what he wanted in the first place, yet, now that he had it, he resented it as something undeserved. But if she would not speak to him, he, too, would keep silence, a silence which he was convinced had in it a disdainful quality; hence it was not without a certain comfort and satisfaction.

But Harley was forced to admit that if she was of the bold and boisterous type, she was a favorable specimen within those unfavorable limits. While she was familiar, in a measure, with these men, yet she was able to keep them at the proper distance, and no one presumed, in any respect. She radiated purity and innocence, and it was to ignorance only that Harley now charged her faults.

They reached Chicago the next morning, and at noon Hobart knocked at the door of Harley's

room at the hotel.

"There is some idle time this afternoon," said Hobart, "and Tremaine and I have asked Miss Morgan to go driving. She has accepted, but it takes four to make a party, and you are the lucky fourth."

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He allowed no protestations, and, after all, Harley, who had been under much strain for some time, was not averse to an hour or two in the fresh air.

"Miss Morgan has never been in Chicago before," said Hobart, "and it is our duty to show it to her."

Hobart, who drove, put Miss Morgan upon the seat beside him, and Tremaine and Harley, who sat behind, occupied what was to some extent the post of disadvantage; but Tremaine, safe in his years, would not permit the rear seat to be neglected. He talked constantly, and her face, of necessity, was often turned to them, giving Harley opportunity to see that it had a most becoming flush.

She had an eager interest in everything—the tall buildings, the wind-swept streets, and the glimpses of the wide, green lake. Harley saw that Chicago bulked much more largely in her imagination than in his, and he began to fear that he had been neglectful; it was the most concrete expression of the West, and, as the greatest achievement of a new people in city building, it deserved attention for qualities peculiarly its own, and there could be no doubt either of Miss Morgan's admiration or pleasure. She was seeking neither for the old nor the picturesque, which are not always synonymous, but was in full sympathy with the fresh, active, and, on the whole, joyous life around her. It was sufficient to her to be a part of the human tide, and to feel by contact the keenness and zest of the human endeavor. She was not troubled by the absence of ruins.

"But the city is flat and unpicturesque," once said Harley.

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"All the better," she rejoined. "I have so much of silence and grandeur in Idaho that I enjoy the sight of two million people at work on this billiard-table that is Chicago. I like my own kind, I like to talk to it and have it talk to me. I suppose that the mountains have a voice, but the voice is too big for perpetual conversation with a poor little mortal like myself. After a while I want to come down to my own level, and I find it here."

Harley glanced at her. The flush was still on her face, and there was a soft light in her eyes. He could not doubt that she was sincere, and she started in his mind thoughts that were not altogether new to him; he wondered if excessive reverence for the antique did not indicate a detachment from the present, and therefore from life itself, and, as a logical sequence, a lack of feeling for one's own kind. He had heard an elderly man from Chicago, dragged about by his wife and daughters in Rome, exclaim in disgust, "I would not give a single street corner in Chicago for all Rome!" The elderly Chicagoan had been drowned in derisive laughter, but Harley could understand his point of view, and now, as he remembered him, he had for him a fellow-feeling.

Hobart took them through many streets, one much like another, and then over a white asphalt drive beside the great lake. The shores were low, but to Harley the lake had the calm restlessness and expanse of the sea, and the wind had the same keen tang that comes over miles of salt. He saw the girl's eyes linger upon the vast sheet of green, and the incipient hostility that he felt towards her disappeared for a time. Somewhere in her nature, strait though the place might be, there was a feeling for fine things, and he felt a kindred glow.

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They were rather quiet when they drove back towards the hotel, but she spoke at last of her uncle James and his speech that night, which might justify the expectations of either his friends or his enemies. There had grown up lately in the theatrical world a practice of "trying a new piece on the dog"—that is, of presenting it first in some small town which was not too particular—but now the political world was moving differently in this particular case. The candidate was to make his first appearance in one of the greatest of cities, before two million people, so to speak, and the ordeal would be so severe that Harley found himself apprehensive for Jimmy Grayson's sake. The feeling was shared by his niece.

"You don't think he will fail, do you?" she said, in an appealing tone to Hobart.

"Fail!" replied that irrepressible optimist. "He can't fail! The bigger the crowd the better he will rise to the occasion."

But she did not seem to be wholly convinced by Hobart's cheerfulness, which was too general in its nature—that is, inclusive of everything—and turned to Harley and Tremaine as if seeking confirmation.

"It will be a terrible test," said Harley, frankly, "but I feel sure that Mr. Grayson will pass it with glory. He is a born orator, and he has courage."

"I thank you for your belief," she said, giving Harley a swift glance of gratitude, and unaccountably he felt a pleasing glow at the first gracious words she had ever spoken to him.

"I could not bear it if he failed," she continued. "He is my uncle, and he is our own Western man. What things would be in the newspapers to-morrow!"

"If Mr. Grayson should fail to-night, he would recover himself at his second speech; he has your

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spirit, you know," said the ancient Tremaine.

But she did not seem to relish his elderly gallantry. "How do you know I have spirit?" she asked. "I have done nothing to indicate it."

"I inferred it," replied he, bowing, but she only lifted her chin incredulously, and Tremaine subsided, his suppression giving Harley some quiet enjoyment.

They returned, chiefly in silence, to the hotel. The dusk was coming down over the great city, and with it a grayish mist that hid the walls of the buildings, although the electric lights in lofty stories twinkled through it like signal-fires from hill-tops. Miss Morgan seemed subdued, and at the hotel door she said to them in dismissal: "I thank you; you have given me much pleasure."

"I rather think that she is wrapped up in Mr. Grayson's success," said Hobart, "and, as she intimates, it will come pretty near to breaking her heart if he fails."

In the lobby Harley met Churchill, of the *Monitor*, and Churchill, as usual, was sneering.

"I imagine that Grayson will make a display of provincialism to-night," he said. "America will have to blush for herself. I have copies of the *Monitor*, and all our London cables show the greatest amazement in Great Britain and on the Continent that we should put up such an *outré* Western character for President, one of the Boys, you know."

"The Grayson of the *Monitor* is not the Grayson of reality," replied Harley, "and the opinion of Europe does not matter, because Europe knows nothing about Mr. Grayson."

"Oh, I see! You are falling under the influence," said Churchill, nastily.

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"What do you mean?" demanded Harley.

But Churchill would not answer. He sauntered away still sneering. Harley looked after him angrily, but concluded in a few moments that his wrath was not worth while—Churchill, trained to look always in the wrong direction could never see anything right.

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## IV

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### THE FIRST SPEECH

When Harley started at an early hour for the vast hall in which Mr. Grayson was to speak, he realized that there was full cause for the trepidation of his feminine kind—perhaps in such moments women tremble for their men more than they ever tremble for themselves—and he had plenty of sympathy for Mrs. Grayson and Miss Morgan. The city, astir with the coming speech, was free to express in advance its opinion of it, both vocally and through its press, which was fairly divided—that is, one-half was convinced that it would be an overwhelming triumph, and the other half was equally sure that it would be a failure just as overwhelming.

Harley had in his pocket a copy of his own paper—the *Gazette*—the latest to reach him, and he had read it with the greatest care, but he saw that it remained independent; so far, it neither endorsed nor attacked Grayson; and, also, he had a telegram from his editor instructing him to narrate the events of the evening with the strictest impartiality, not only as concerned facts, but, above all, to transmit the exact color and atmosphere of the occasion. "I know that this is hard to do," he said, but with the deft and useful little compliment that a wise employer knows how to put in at the end, he added: "I am sure that you can do it." And he knew his man; Harley would certainly do it.

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Harley, seated in an obscure corner of the stage, but one offering many points of vantage for his own view, saw the vast crowd come quickly into the hall, among the largest in the world, and he heard the hum of voices, in which he thought he could distinguish two notes, one of favor and one of attack. Yet the audience was orderly, and on the whole the element of curiosity prevailed. The correspondent, quick to read such signs, saw that the people had an open mind in regard to Jimmy Grayson; it was left to the candidate to make his own impression. Churchill took a seat near him and began to annoy him with depreciatory remarks about Grayson, not spoken to Harley in particular, but to the wide world. Hobart once said that Churchill needed no audience, preferring to talk to the air, which could make no reply of its own, but must return an echo.

Harley saw Mrs. Grayson and her niece slip quietly into a box, sitting well back, where they could be seen but little by the audience; and then, knowing that Mr. Grayson had arrived, he went behind the wings, where the candidate sat waiting.

Mr. Grayson received him with a calm and pleasant word; if his family were in a tremble, he was not; at least he was able to hide any apprehension that he might feel, and he remarked, jestingly: "It is apparent that I will have an audience, Mr. Harley; they will not ignore me."

"No, you are a good puller," rejoined Harley.

There were some dry preliminaries—introductory remarks by the chairman and other necessary bores—and then the audience began to call for Grayson. The speech would be reported in full by

short-hand, for which mechanical work the staff correspondent always hires a member of that guild, and Harley was free for the present. He resolved to go into the box with Mrs. Grayson and Miss Morgan, but he changed his mind when he glanced at their faces. There was pallor in their cheeks, and their whole attitude was of strained and intense waiting. For them the crucial moment had come, and Harley had too much humanity to disturb them, even with well-meant efforts, at such a moment.

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The hum in the crowd increased to a roar, a thunderous call for Grayson, but there was a pause on the stage, where no figures moved. The chairman glanced uneasily towards the wings and shuffled in his seat as if he did not know what to do, but his apprehension did not last long.

The candidate appeared, coming forward with a steady step, his face pale and apparently inexpressive; but Harley could see that the eyes, usually so calm, were lighted up by a fire from within. Suddenly all his fear for Grayson sank away; it came upon him with the finality of a lightning flash that here was a man who would not fail, and by an unknown impulse he looked from the candidate to the box in which Miss Morgan sat. She seemed to have read his faith in his eyes, for a look of relief, even joy, came over her face.

This intuition of the two was justified, as the candidate did not have to conquer his audience. He held it in his spell from the opening sentence; the golden and compelling oratory, afterwards so famous, was here poured before the greater world for the first time. Harley listened to the periods, smooth but powerful, and he could not throw off their charm; some things were said of which he was not sure, and others with which he positively disagreed, but for the time they all seemed true. Jimmy Grayson believed them—there could be no doubt of it; every word was tinged with the vivid hue of sincerity—that was why they held the audience in a spell that it could not escape; these were convictions, not arguments that he was speaking, and the people received them as such. Moreover, he was always clear and direct, he had a Greek precision of speech, and there was none in the audience who could not follow him.

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Harley, no orator himself, had in the course of his profession heard much oratory, some good, much bad, and even now he struggled against the charm of Grayson's voice and manner, and sought to see what lay behind them. Was there back of this golden veil any great originating or executive power, or was he, like so many others who speak well, a voice and nothing more? An orator might win the Presidency of the United States, but his gift would not necessarily qualify him to administer the office. It was a tribute to Harley's power of will or detachment that he was able at such a time to ask himself such a question.

But he forgot these after-thoughts in the pleasurable sympathy that his view of the candidate's wife and niece aroused. Their faces were illumined with joy. Feeling his spell so strongly themselves, they knew without looking that the audience felt it, too, and the evening could be no fuller for them. Here he was, a hero not only for his womenkind, but for all whom his womenkind could see, and Harley thought that under the influence of this feeling Miss Morgan's features had become very soft and feminine. The curve of the jaw was gentle rather than firm, and now in her softer moments it seemed to Harley that something might be made of this mountain girl, say by the deft hands of an Eastern and older woman. Then he blushed at himself for such a condescending thought, and turned to his task—that is, the effort to reproduce for readers in New York, the next morning, the atmosphere of that evening in a Chicago hall, and the exact relation that Mr. Grayson, the people, and the events of the hour bore to each other.

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Harley was a conscientious man, interested in his work, and when he gave the last page of the despatch to a telegraph-boy the speech was nearly over. He said emphatically that it was a success, that the audience was brought thoroughly under the spell, but whether this spell would endure after the candidate was gone he did not undertake to prophesy. The coldest and most critical seeker after truth and nothing but the truth could have found no fault with what he wrote.

He gave the last page of the despatch to the telegraph-boy, and entered the secluded box that held Mrs. Grayson and Miss Morgan. Two elderly Chicago men, who played at politics and who were warm enthusiasts for Grayson, were there, and Harley was introduced to them. But he talked to them only as long as politeness demanded, and then, with all sincerity, he congratulated Mrs. Grayson on her husband's triumph.

"I never had a doubt of it," she replied, her voice tremulous, and honestly forgetful in the glory of the moment of all the fears that had been assailing her a few hours ago. "I knew what he could do."

Harley turned presently to Miss Morgan, and he spoke in the same vein to her, but she asked, with some asperity, "Did you think he could fail?"

"Failure is possible, I suppose, in the case of anybody."

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"But you do not know our Western spirit."

"I am learning."

Her gentleness was gone. She resented what she chose to consider an attempt at patronage of the West, and Harley again was made the target for the arrows of her sarcasm. Yet he did not resent it with his original acerbity; custom was dulling the sharp edge of her weapons, and, instead of wounding him, they rather provoked and drew him on. He was able to reply lightly, to suggest vaguely the crudities of Idaho, and to incite her to yet more strenuous battle for her



beloved mountains.

But both ceased to talk, because the candidate was approaching his climax, and the grand swell of his speech had in it a musical quality that did not detract from its power to carry conviction. Then he closed, and the thunders of applause rose again and again. At last, after bowing many times to the gratified audience, he came back to the box, and his niece, her eyes shining with delight, sprang up, as if driven by an impulse, and, throwing her arms about his neck, kissed him. The act was seen by many, and it was applauded, but Harley did not like it; her emotion seemed to him too youthful, to smack too little of restraint—in short, to be too Western. Despite himself, he frowned, and when she turned back towards the box she saw the frown still upon his face. There was an instant fiery flash in her eye, and she drew herself up as if in haughty defiance, but she said nothing then, nor did she speak later when she left with the Graysons, merely giving him a cold good-night bow.

Harley lingered a little with the other correspondents, and was among the last to leave the building. He was thinking of the Idaho girl, but he did not fail to notice what was going on, and he saw a group of middle-aged or elderly men, the majority of them portly in figure and autocratic in bearing, follow the trail of Jimmy Grayson. Although familiar with the faces of only one or two in the group, he knew instinctively who they were. It was a gathering of the great, moneyed men of the party, eager to see the attitude of Grayson upon affairs that concerned them intimately, and prompt to take action in accordance. They were the guardians of "vested" interests, interests watched over as few things in this world are, and they were resolved to see that they took no harm. But the speech of the night had been general in its nature, a preliminary as it were, and Harley judged that they would do nothing as yet but skirmish upon the outskirts, keeping a wary eye for the main battle when it should be joined.

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"Did you notice them?" asked white-haired Tremaine in his ear.

"Oh yes," replied Harley, who knew at once what he meant; "I watched them leave the hall."

"One gets to know them instinctively," said Tremaine. "I've seen them like a herd of bull-dogs—if such animals travelled in herds—on the heels of every presidential candidate for the last forty years, and that covers ten campaigns. But I suppose they have as much right to look after their interests as the farmer or mechanic has to look after his."

"Yet it is worth while to watch them," said Harley, and all in the group concurred.

They were to leave in the afternoon for Milwaukee, which gave plenty of time for rest, and Harley, who needed it, slept late. But when he rose and dressed he went forth at once, after his habit, for the morning papers, buying them all in order to weigh as well as he could the Chicago opinion of Grayson. The first that he picked up was sensational in character, and what he saw on the front page did not please him at all. There was plenty of space devoted to Grayson, but almost as much was given to an incident of the evening as to Grayson himself. There was a huge picture of a beautiful young girl throwing her arms around Jimmy Grayson's neck, and kissing him enthusiastically. The two occupied the centre of the stage close to the footlights, and twenty thousand people were frantically cheering the spectacle. By the side of this picture was another, a perfectly correct portrait of Miss Morgan, evidently taken from a photograph, and under it were the lines: "Jimmy Grayson's Egeria—the Beautiful Young Girl Who Furnishes the Western Fire for His Speeches."

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And then in two columns of leaded type, under a pyramid of head-lines, was told the story of Sylvia Morgan. Flushed with enthusiasm, the account said, she had come from Idaho to help her uncle, the candidate. Although only eighteen years of age—she was twenty-two—she had displayed a most remarkable perception and grasp of politics and of great issues. It was she, with her youthful zeal, who inspired Mr. Grayson and his friends with courage for a conflict against odds. He consulted her daily about his speeches; it was she who always put into them some happy thought, some telling phrase that was sure to captivate the people. In a pinch she could make a speech herself, and she would probably be seen on the stump in the West. And she was as beautiful as she was intellectual and eloquent; she would be the most picturesque feature of this or any campaign ever waged in America. It continued in this vein for two columns, employing all the latest devices of the newest and yellowest journalism, of which the process is quite simple, provided you have no conscience—that is, you take a grain of fact and you build upon it a mountain of fancy, and the mountain will be shaped according to the taste of the builder.

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Harley would have laughed—these things always seemed to him childish or flippant rather than wicked—if it had not been for the photograph. That was too real; it was exactly like Sylvia Morgan, and it implied connivance between the newspaper and some body else. In Idaho it might have one look, but here in Chicago it would have another, and in New York it would have still another and yet worse. She ought to see the true aspect of these things. To Harley, reared with the old-fashioned Southern ideals, from which he never departed, it was all inexpressibly distasteful—he did not stop to ask himself why he should be more concerned about the picture of Miss Morgan than those of many other women whom he saw in the newspapers—and his feeling was not improved by the entrance of Churchill and his sneering comment.

"A good picture of her," said Churchill. "These Western girls like such things. Of course she sent it to the newspaper office."

"I do not know anything of the kind, nor do you, I think," replied Harley, with asperity. "Nor am I aware that the West is any fonder than the East of notoriety."

"Have it any way you wish," said Churchill, superciliously. "But I fail to see why you should disturb yourself so much over the matter."

His tone was so annoying that Harley felt like striking him, but instead ignored him, and Churchill strolled carelessly on, humming a tune, as he had seen insolent people on the stage do in such moments.

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Harley thrust the newspaper into his pocket, and went into one of the ladies' parlors, where he saw Miss Morgan sitting by a window and looking out at the hasty life of Chicago. She did not hear his approach until he was very near, and then, starting at the sound of his footsteps, she looked up, and her cheeks flushed.

"It should be a happy day for you," said Harley, "and I suppose that you are enjoying the triumph."

"Why should I not?" she replied. "I have a share in it."

"So you have, and the press has recognized it."

"What do you mean?"

"I was just looking at a very good picture of you," said Harley, and he spread the paper before her, hoping that she would express surprise and distaste. But she showed neither.

"Oh, I've seen that already," she said, quite coolly. "Don't you think it a good picture?"

"I have no fault to find with the likeness," replied Harley, with some meaning in his tone.

"Then what fault have you to find?"

Harley was embarrassed, and hesitated, seeking for the right words—what did it matter to him if she failed to show the reserve that he thought part of a gentlewoman's nature.

"You infer more than I meant," he said, at last. "I merely felt surprise that they should have obtained a photograph so quickly."

The slightly deepened flush in her cheeks remained and she surveyed him with the same cool air of defiance.

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"They would have had a picture, anyhow, something made up; was it not better, then, to furnish them a real one than to have a burlesque published?"

"It's hardly usual," said Harley, more embarrassed than ever. "But really, Miss Morgan, I have no right to speak of it in any connection."

"No, but you were intending to do so. It was in your eye when I looked up and saw you coming towards me."

Her voice had grown chilly, and her gaze was fixed on Harley. The Western girl certainly had dignity and reserve when she wished them, but he did not believe that she chose the right moments to display these admirable qualities.

"I did not know that I had such a speaking countenance," said Harley. "And even if so, you must not forget that you might read it wrong."

"I do not think so," she said, still chilly, and, glancing up at the clock, she added: "It is almost twelve, and I promised Aunt Anna to be with her a half-hour ago."

At the door she paused, turned back, and a flashing smile illuminated her face for a moment.

"Oh, Mr. Harley," she said, "don't you wish some newspaper would print your picture?"

Then she was gone, leaving him flushed and irritated. He was angry, both at her and himself; at himself because he had expected to rebuke her, to show her indirectly and in a delicate way where she was wrong, and he had never even got as far as the attack. It was he who had been put upon the defence, when he had not expected to be in such a state, and his self-satisfaction suffered. But he told himself that she was a crude Western girl, and that it was nothing to him if she forced herself into the public gaze in a bold and theatrical manner.

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A little later all left for Milwaukee, where Mr. Grayson was to make another great speech in the evening, and Harley again refrained from joining the group that soon gathered around Miss Morgan, and Mrs. Grayson, also, who, being in a very happy mood, made a loan of her presence as a chaperon, she said, although, being a young woman still, it gave her pleasure to hear them speak of her husband's brilliant triumph the night before, and to enjoy the atmosphere of success that enveloped the car.

The run from Chicago to Milwaukee is short, but Harley, despite his pique—he was young and naturally of a cheerful temperament—might have joined them before their arrival if his attention had not been attracted by another group, that body of portly, middle-aged men, heavy with wealth and respectability, who had silently cast a dark shadow upon the meeting at Chicago. They were men of power, men whose brief words went far, and they held in their hands strings that controlled many and vast interests when they pulled them, and their hands were always on the strings. They were not like the great, voluble public; they worked, by choice and by

opportunity, in silence and the dark, and their kind has existed in every rich country from Babylonia to the United States of America. They were the great financial magnates of Jimmy Grayson's party, and nothing that he might do could escape their notice and consideration. It was more than likely that in the course of the campaign he would feel a great power pressing upon him, and he would not be able to say who propelled it.

Harley knew some of these men by name; one, the leader of the party, a massive, red-faced man, was the Honorable Clinton Goodnight, a member of the Lower House of Congress from New York, but primarily a manufacturer, a man of many millions; and the younger and slenderer man, with the delicately trimmed and pointed beard, was Henry Crayon, one of the shrewdest bankers in Wall Street. These two, at least, he knew by face, but no trained observer could doubt that the others were of the same kind.

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Although silent and as yet casting only a shadow, Harley felt that sooner or later these men would cause trouble. He had an intuition that the campaign before them was going to be the most famous in the Union, dealing with mighty issues and infused with powerful personalities. Great changes had occurred in the country in the last few years, its centre of gravity was shifting, and the election in November would decide many things. He felt as if all the forces were gathering for a titanic conflict, and his heart thrilled with the omens and presages. It was a pleasurable thrill, too, because he was going to be in the thick of it, right beside the general of one of the great armies.

When they reached Milwaukee, Harley and all the correspondents went to the same hotel with the Graysons, and they remarked jocularly to the nominee that they would watch over him now night and day until the first Tuesday in November, and he, being a man of tact and human sympathies, without any affectations, was able to be a good fellow with them all, merely a first among his equals.

There was a great crowd at the station, ready to welcome the candidate, and the sound of shouting and joyous welcome arose; but Harley, anxious to reach the hotel, slipped from the throng and sprang into a carriage, one of a number evidently waiting for the Grayson party. It was a closed vehicle, and he did not notice until he sat down that it was already occupied, at least in part, by a lady. Then he sprang up, red-faced and apologetic, but the lady laughed—a curious little laugh, ironic, but not wholly unpleasant—and put out a detaining hand, detaining by way of gesture, because she did not touch him.

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"You are very much surprised to find me here, Mr. Harley," said Miss Morgan. "You thought, of course, that I would be in the centre of that crowd, receiving applause and shaking hands, just as if I were a candidate, like my uncle James. You would not believe me if I told you that I came here to escape it."

"Why shouldn't I believe it?"

"Because I am going to tell you that your displeasure over the picture has made me feel so badly that I am resolved to do better, to be more modest, more retiring."

"Miss Morgan, you do me wrong," said Harley, with reddening face. "I have had no such thoughts."

"You fib in a good cause, but you cannot deceive me; I read your thoughts, but I am very forgiving, and I am resolved that we shall have a pleasant ride to the hotel together. Now, entertain me, tell me about that war, of which you saw so much."

She was not in jest, and she compelled him to talk. It was far from the station to the hotel, and she revealed a knowledge of the world's affairs that Harley thought astonishing in one coming from the depths of the Idaho mountains. She touched, too, upon the things that interested him most, and drew him on until he was talking with a zest and interest that permitted no self-consciousness. Resolved that he would not tell what he had seen, and by nature reserved, he was, within five minutes, under her deft questions, in the middle of a long narrative of events on the other side of the world. He saw her listening, her eyes bright, her lips slightly parted, and he knew that he held her attention. He was aware, too, that he was flattered by the interest that he had been able to create in the mind of this Idaho girl whose opinion he had been holding so cheaply.

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"I envy a man," she said, at last, sighing a little. "You can go where you please and do what you please. Even our 'advanced women' have less liberty than the man who is not advanced at all. And yet I do not want to be a man. That, I suppose, is a paradox."

Harley was about to make a light reply, something in the tone of perforced compliment, but a glimpse of her caused him to change his mind. She seemed to have a touch of genuine sadness, and, instead, he said nothing.

When the carriage reached the ladies' entrance of the hotel they were still silent, and as Harley helped her from the carriage her manner was unchanged. The little touch of sadness was yet there, and it appealed to him. She surprised his look of sympathy, and the color in her cheeks increased.

"I am tired," she said. "I just begin to realize how greatly so much travelling and so many crowds weigh upon one."

Then, with the first smile of comradeship that she had given him, she went into the hotel.

The Graysons, Miss Morgan, Harley, Hobart, and a few others formed a family group again at the table, when they dined that evening, and all the tensy and anxiety visible the day before was gone. Mr. Grayson's success in Chicago had been too complete, too sweeping to leave doubt of its continuance; he would be the hero and leader of his party, not a weight upon it, and the question now was whether or not the party had votes enough; hence there was a certain light and joyous air about them which gave to their short stay in the dining-room a finer flavor than any that a *chef* could add.

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Churchill, of the *Monitor*, was not one of this party. Churchill did not confine his criticisms to his professional activities, but had a disposition to carry them into private life, injecting roughness into social intercourse, which ought to be smooth and easy. Therefore, somewhat to his own surprise, which ought not to have been the case, he had not become a member of this family group, and had much to say about the "frivolous familiarity" of Jimmy Grayson and "his lack of dignity."

But on this evening Churchill had no desire to sit at table with the Graysons, because he felt that something great was going to happen in his life. For more than a day, now, he had been on the trail of a mighty movement that he believed hidden from all save himself and those behind this movement. He, too, had noticed the appearance at Chicago of the heavy, rich, elderly men, and he had spoken to one or two of them with all the respect and deference that their eminent position in the financial world drew from every writer of the *Monitor*. And his deference had been rewarded, because that afternoon he received a hint, and it came from no less a personage than the Honorable Clinton Goodnight himself, a hint that Churchill rightly thought was worth much to him.

There was another large hotel in Milwaukee, and it was to this that the financiers had gone, having ascertained first that Grayson would not be there; nor did they intend to go to the speech that evening. They had already, in the address at Chicago, weighed accurately the power of Jimmy Grayson with his party, and with wary old eyes, long used to watching the world and its people, they had seen that it would be great. Hence he was a man to be handled with skill and care, to be led, not knowing that he was led, by a bridle invisible to all save those who held it—but they, the financiers, would know very well who held it.

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It was these men to whom Churchill came, having slipped quietly away from his associates, drawn by a hint that he might secure an interview of great importance, two columns in length and exclusive. Churchill was a true product of the *Monitor*, a worshipper of accomplished facts, a supporter of every old convention, believing that anything new or in rough attire was bad. Although he would have denied it if accused, he nearly always confounded manners with morals, and to him the opinion of Europe was final. Hence the *Monitor* and Churchill were well suited to each other. Moreover, Churchill enjoyed the society of the great—that is, of those who seemed to him to be the great—and he had an admirable flexibility of temperament; while easily able and willing to be very nasty to those whom he thought of an inferior grade, he was equally able and willing to be extremely deferential to those whose grade he considered superior. He was also intolerant in opinion, thinking that any one who differed from him on the subjects of the day was necessarily a scoundrel, wherein he was again in perfect accord with the *Monitor*.

It was, therefore, with an acute delight, blossoming into exultation, that Churchill slipped away from his associates and hastened towards the hotel where the financial magnates were staying. These were really great men, not the productions of a moment, thrown briefly into the lime-light, but solid like the pyramids. Mr. Goodnight must be worth forty millions, at the least, and he was a power in many circles. Churchill thrilled with delight that such a being should hint to him to come and be talked to, and he was more than ever conscious of his own superiority to his professional associates.

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Churchill was not awed by the hotel clerk, but haughtily asked that his card be sent at once to Mr. Goodnight, and he concealed his pride when the message came back that he be shown up as soon as possible. He received it as the natural tribute to his importance, and he took his time as he followed the guiding hall-boy. But at the door of Mr. Goodnight his manner changed; it became deferential, as befitted modest merit in the presence of true and recognized greatness.

Mr. Goodnight was hospitable; there was no false pride about him; he was able in being great to be simple also, and Mr. Crayon and the others present shared his attractive manner.

"Ah, Mr. Churchill," he said, as he shook hands heartily with the correspondent, "it gives me pleasure, indeed, to welcome you here. We noticed your bearing in Chicago, and we were impressed by it. We therefore had an additional pleasure when we learned that you were the correspondent of the *Monitor*, New York's ablest and most conservative journal. The American press grows flippant and unreliable nowadays, Mr. Churchill, but the waves of sensationalism wash in vain around the solid base of the old *Monitor*. There she stands, as steady as ever, a genuine light-house in the darkness."

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Mr. Goodnight, being a member of Congress, was able to acquire and to exhibit at convenient times a certain poetical fervor which impressed several kinds of people. Now his associates rubbed their hands in admiration, and Churchill flushed with pleasure. A compliment to the *Monitor* was also a compliment to him, for was he not the very spirit and essence of the *Monitor*?

"Before we get to business," continued Mr. Goodnight, in the most gratifyingly intimate manner,

"suppose we have something just to wet our throats and promote conversation. This town, I believe, is famous for beer, but it is not impossible to get champagne here; in any event, we shall try it."

He rang, the champagne was brought, opened, and drunk, and Churchill glowed with his sense of importance. These were men of many millions, twice his age, but he was now one with them. Certainly none of his associates would have been invited by them to such a conference, and he was able to appreciate the fact.

"We want you, Mr. Churchill, to tell us something about Grayson," said Mr. Goodnight, in a most kindly tone; "not what all the world knows, those superficial facts which the most careless observer may glean, but something intimate and personal; we want you to give us an insight into his character, from which we may judge what he is likely to do or become. You know that he is from the West, the Far West, likely to be afflicted with local and provincial views, not to say heresies, and great vested interests within his own party feel a little shaky about him. We cannot have a revolutionary, or even a parochial, character in the presidential chair. Those interests which are the very bulwark of the public must be respected. We must watch over him, and in order to know how and what to watch, we must have information. We rely upon you to furnish us this information."

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Churchill was intensely gratified at this tribute to his merit, but he was resolved not to show it even to these great men. Instead, he carelessly emptied his champagne glass, rubbed his chin thoughtfully, and then asked with a certain fulness of implication:

"Upon what precise point do you wish information, Mr. Goodnight? Of course, I have not been with Mr. Grayson very long, but I can say truthfully that I have observed him closely within that time, and perhaps no phase of a rather complicated character has escaped me."

"We feel quite sure of that," said Mr. Crayon, speaking for the first time, and using short, choppy sentences. "*Monitor*, as I happen to know, is extremely careful in the selection of its men, and this, I am journalist enough to understand, is most important errand upon which it can now send member of its staff."

Churchill bowed courteously to the deserved compliment, and remained silent while Mr. Goodnight resumed the thread of talk.

"What we want to know, Mr. Churchill," he said, "is in regard to the elements of stability in his character. Will he respect those mighty interests to which I have just alluded? Is he, as a comparatively young man, and one wholly ignorant of the great world of finance, likely to seek the opinion and advice of his elders? You know that we have the best wishes in the world for him. His interests and ours, if he but perceives it, run together, and it is our desire to preserve the utmost harmony within the party."

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Churchill bowed. Their opinion and his agreed in the most wonderful manner. It was hard to say, in his present exalted state, whether this circumstance confirmed their intelligence or his, but it certainly confirmed somebody's.

"I have already taken note of these facts," he said, in the indifferent tone of one whose advice is asked often, "and I have observed that Mr. Grayson's character is immature, and, for the present at least, superficial. But I think he can be led; a man with a will not very strong can always be led, if those with stronger wills happen to be near, and Mr. Grayson's faults are due to weakness rather than vice."

There was an exchange of significant looks among Mr. Goodnight, Mr. Crayon, and their friends, and then an emphatic nodding of heads, all of which indicated very clearly to Churchill that they admired his acuteness of perception, and were glad to have their own opinion confirmed by one who observed so well.

"Wouldn't it be well to lay these facts before the readers of the *Monitor*?" suggested Mr. Goodnight, mildly. "We all know what a powerful organ the *Monitor* is, and what influence it has in conservative circles. It would be a hint to Mr. Grayson and his friends; it would show him the path in which he ought to walk, and it would save trouble later on in the campaign."

Churchill's heart thrilled again. This was a greater honor even than he had hoped for; he was to sound the mighty trumpet note of the campaign, but his pride would not let him show the joy that he felt.

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"In giving these views—and I appreciate their great importance—shall I quote you and Mr. Crayon?" he asked, easily.

Mr. Goodnight mused a few moments, and twiddled his fingers.

"We want the despatch to appear in the shape that will give it the greatest effect, and you are with us in that wish, Mr. Churchill," he said, confidingly. "Now this question arises: if our names appear it will look as if it were a matter between Mr. Grayson and ourselves personally, which is not the case; but if it appears on the authority of the *Monitor* and your own, which is weighty, it will then stand as a matter between Mr. Grayson and the people, and that is a fact past denying. Now, what do you think of it yourself, Mr. Churchill?"

Since they left it so obviously to his intelligence, Churchill was bound to say that they were right,

and he would write the warning, merely as coming from the great portion of the public that represented the solid interests of the country, the quiet, thinking people who never indulged in any foolish chase after a will-o'-the-wisp.

Mr. Goodnight and Mr. Crayon made many further suggestions about the points of the despatch, but they admitted ingenuously that they were not able to write, that they possessed no literary and effective style, that it would be for Mr. Churchill to clothe their crude thoughts—that is, if he approved of them—in trenchant phrase and brilliant style.

There was such an air of good-fellowship, and Churchill admitted to himself so freely that these men might make suggestions worth while, that he decided, moreover, as the hour was growing late, to write the despatch there and then, and tell to the world through the columns of the *Monitor*, not what Jimmy Grayson ought to do, but all the things that he ought not to do, and they were many. The most important of these related to the tariff and the currency, which, in the view of Mr. Goodnight and his friends, should be left absolutely alone.

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Paper was produced, and Churchill began to write, often eliciting words of admiration from the others at the conciseness and precision with which he presented his views. It was cause for wonder, too, that they should find themselves agreeing with him so often, and they admired, also, the felicity of phrasing with which he continued to present all these things as the views of a great public, thus giving the despatch the flavor of news rather than opinion. When it was finished—and it would fill two full columns of the *Monitor*—the line was quite clearly drawn between what Jimmy Grayson could do and what he could not do—and Churchill was proud of the conviction that none but himself had drawn it. Mr. Grayson, reading this—and he certainly would read it—must know that it came from inspired sources, and he would see straight before him the path in which it was wise for him to walk. Churchill knew that he had rendered a great service, and he felt an honest glow.

"I think I shall file this at once," he said, "as it is growing late, and there is an hour's difference between here and New York."

They bade him a most complimentary adieu, suggesting that they would be glad to hear from him personally during the campaign, and announcing their willingness to serve him if they could; and Churchill left the hotel, contented with himself and with them. When he was gone, they smiled and expressed to each other their satisfaction. In fifteen minutes swift operators were sending Churchill's despatch eastward.

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## V

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### "KING" PLUMMER

Meanwhile the evening was proving of no less interest to Harley than to Churchill, although in a quite different way. He had noticed, when they parted at the hotel door, the apparent sadness, or, rather, the touch of the pathetic in the manner of Miss Morgan, and he observed it again when they were all reunited at the hotel table. Heretofore she had been light, ironical, and bearing a full share in the talk, but now she merely replied when spoken to directly, and her tone had the tinge of melancholy. Mr. and Mrs. Grayson looked at her more than once, as if they were about to refer to some particular subject, but always they refrained; instead, they sought by light talk to divert attention from her, and they succeeded in every case but that of Harley.

It was not a long dinner, and as they returned to the ladies' parlor they were welcomed by a loud, joyous cry, and out of the dark of the room a big man projected himself to greet them. His first words were for Miss Morgan, whom he affectionately called "Little Girl," and whom he seized by the hands and kissed on the forehead. It was a loud voice, but round, full, and mellow, and Harley judged that it came from a big nature as well as a big body.

When the man stepped into the light, Harley saw that he was over six feet high, and with a width according. His broad face was covered with short, iron-gray beard, and his head was thatched with hair equally thick and of the same gray shade. In years he might have been fifty, and it was Harley's first impression at this moment that the big man was Miss Morgan's father—it came to him with a rather queer feeling that it had never occurred to him to ask about her parents, whether they were living or dead, and what kind of people they were or had been.

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The stranger shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Grayson, and expressed vocally the pleasure that his eyes also conveyed. Harley and Hobart were the only others present, and, turning to them, Mr. Grayson introduced the stranger, Mr. William Plummer—"King Plummer, you know."

Then Harley remembered vaguely, and he began to place Mr. Plummer. He recalled allusions in the press to one William Plummer, otherwise "King" Plummer, who lived in the far Northwest, and who, having amassed millions in ranching and mining, had also become a great power in the political world, hence his term "King," which was more fitting in his case than in that of many real kings. He had developed remarkable skill in politics, and, as the phrase went, held Idaho, his own state, in the hollow of his hand, and in a close election could certainly swing Montana and Wyoming as he wished, and perhaps Utah and Washington, too.

Harley's interest instantly became keen, and he did not take his eyes off "King" Plummer. Clearly he was a man of power; he fairly radiated it, not merely physically, but mentally. His gestures, his voice, every movement indicated a vast reserve strength. This was one of the great men whose development the rough field of the new West had permitted.

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Harley was not alone interested in "King" Plummer, but also in the kiss that he had put upon the white forehead of Sylvia Morgan and his boisterous joy at seeing her. Since he was not her father, it was likely that he was her uncle, not by blood, as Jimmy Grayson was, but as the husband of an aunt, perhaps. Yes, this must be it, he concluded, and the kiss seemed more reasonable.

When "King" Plummer was introduced to Harley and Hobart, he shook hands with them most cordially, but as keen a man as Harley could see that he regarded them as mere youths, or "kids," as the "King" himself would have said. There was nothing depreciatory in this beyond the difference between age and great achievement and youth which had not yet had the time to fulfil its promise, and Harley, because of it, felt no decrease of liking and respect for "King" Plummer.

"The far Northwest is for you solidly, Jimmy," said the big man, with a joyous smile. "Idaho is right in line at the head of the procession, and Wyoming, Montana, and the others are following close after. They haven't many votes, but they have enough to decide this election."

Jimmy Grayson smiled. He had reason to smile. He, too, liked "King" Plummer, and, moreover, this was good news that he brought.

"I fancy that you have had something to do with this," he said. "You still know how to whisper a sweet word in the ear of the people."

The big man shook himself, laughed again, and looked satisfied.

"Well, I have done a lot of whispering," he admitted, "if you call it whispering, though most people, I'll gamble, would say it is like the clatter of a mill. And I've done some riding, too, both train and horse. The mountains are going to be all right. Don't you forget that, Jimmy."

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"And it's lucky for me that 'King' Plummer is my friend," said Mr. Grayson, sincerely.

During this talk of politics, Sylvia Morgan was silent, and once, when "King" Plummer laid his big hand protectingly on her arm, she shrank slightly, but so slightly that no one save Harley noticed, not even the "King." The action roused doubts in his mind. Surely a girl would not shrink from her uncle in this manner, not from a big, kindly uncle like Plummer.

"I wanted to get down to Chicago and hear you at your first speech," went on "King" Plummer, in his big, booming voice, that filled the room, "but I couldn't manage it. There was a convention at Boisé that needed a little attention—one likes to look on at those things, you know"—his left eye contracted slightly—"and as soon as that was over I hurried down as fast as an express could bring me. But I've read in all the papers what a howlin' success it was, an' I'm goin' to hear you give it to the other fellows to-night—won't we, Sylvia?"

He turned to the girl for confirmation of what needed no confirmation, and her eyes smiled into his with a certain pride. She seemed to Harley to admire his bigness, his openness of manner and speech, and his wholesome character. After all, he was her uncle; the look that she gave him then was that of one who received protection, half paternal and half elder-brotherly.

"And now, Jimmy, I guess I've taken up enough of your time," exclaimed "King" Plummer, his big, resonant chest-tones echoing in the room, "and it's for you to do all the talkin' that's left. But I'll be in a box listenin', and just you do your best for the credit of the West and the mountains."

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Grayson smiled and promised, and "King" Plummer joined them in the carriage that bore them to the hall. He took his place with them in such a natural and matter-of-fact manner that Harley was confirmed in his renewed opinion that he was Sylvia Morgan's uncle, or, at least, her next of kin, after Mr. Grayson.

At the hall "King" Plummer, as he had promised, sat in a box with Mrs. Grayson and Miss Morgan, and always he led the applause, which in reality needed no leading, the triumph at Chicago being repeated in full degree. Harley, watching him from his desk, saw that the big man was filled with sanguine expectation of triumph, and, with the glow of Jimmy Grayson's oratory upon him, could not see any such result as defeat. But Miss Morgan was strangely silent, and all her vivacity of manner seemed to be gone.

When the speech was nearly over Churchill sauntered in lazily by the stage entrance and took a seat near Harley. Harley had not noticed his previous absence until then.

"How's the speech to-night?" he asked, languidly; "same old chestnuts, I suppose."

"As this is Mr. Grayson's second speech," replied Harley, sharply, "it is a little early to call anything that he says 'same old chestnuts.' Besides, I don't think that repetition will ever be one of his faults. Why haven't you been here?"

"Oh, I've been cruising around a bit on the outside. The Associated Press, of course, will take care of the speech, which is mere routine."

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He spoke with such an air of supercilious and supreme satisfaction that Harley looked at him keenly.

"Pick up anything?" he asked, briefly.

"Oh, a trifle or two; nothing, however, that you would care about."

"Now, I wonder what it is that makes him so content with himself," thought Harley, but he had little time to devote to Churchill, as his own despatch was occupying his attention.

Harley could not go back to the hotel with the Grayson party when the speech was over, as he had to file his despatch first, but he saw them all the next morning at the breakfast-table. "King" Plummer was there, too, as expansive as ever, and showing mingled joy and sorrow—joy over the second triumph of the candidate, which was repeated at great length in the morning papers, and sorrow because he could not continue with them on the campaign, which moved to Detroit for the third night.

"I'd be a happy man if I could do it," he said, in his booming tones, "happy for more reasons than one. It would be a big holiday to me. Wouldn't I enjoy hearing you tear the enemy to pieces night after night, Jimmy! and then I'd be with you right along, Sylvia."

He looked at the girl, and his look was full of love and protection. She flushed and seemed embarrassed. But there was no hesitation or awkwardness about the big man.

"Never you mind, little girl," he said; "when you are Mrs. Plummer—an' that ain't far away, I hope—you'll be with me all the time. Besides, I'm goin' to join Jimmy Grayson when he comes out West, an' make the campaign there with him."

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The color in Miss Morgan's face deepened, and she glanced, not at "King" Plummer or her uncle, but at Harley, and when her eyes met his the color in her cheeks deepened still further. Then she looked down at her plate and was silent and embarrassed.

Harley, as he heard these words of the "King," felt a strange thrill of disapproval. It was, as he told himself, because of the disparity in ages. It was true that a man of this type was the very kind to restrain Sylvia Morgan, but twenty and fifty should never wed, man and wife should be young together and should grow old together. It was no business of his, and there was no obligation upon him to look after the happiness of either of these people, but it was an arrangement that he did not like, violating as it did his sense of fitness.

"King" Plummer was to leave them an hour later, taking a train for St. Paul, and thence for Idaho. He bade them all a hearty good-bye, shaking hands warmly with Jimmy Grayson, to whom he wished a career of unbroken triumph, repeating these good wishes to Mrs. Grayson, and again kissing Sylvia Morgan on the forehead—the proper kiss, Harley thought, for fifty to bestow upon twenty, unless twenty should happen to be fifty's daughter.

"We won't be separated long, Sylvia, girl," he said, and she flushed a deep red and then turned pale. To Harley he said:

"And I'll try to show you the West, young man, when you come out there. This is no West; Milwaukee ain't West by a jugful. Just you wait till you get beyond the Missouri, then we'll show you the real West, and real life at the same time."

There was a certain condescension in the tone of "King" Plummer, but Harley did not mind it; so far as the experience of life in the rough was concerned, the "King" had a right to condescend.

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"I shall hold you to your promise," he said.

Then "King" Plummer, waving good-byes with a wide-armed sweep, large and hearty like himself, departed.

"There goes a true man," said Mr. Grayson, and Harley spontaneously added confirmation. But Miss Morgan was silent. She waved back in response to the King of the Mountains, but her face was still pale, and she was silent for some time. Harley now knew that "King" Plummer was not her uncle nor her next of kin after Jimmy Grayson in any way, but he was unable to tell why this marriage-to-be had been arranged.

But he quickly learned the secret, if secret it was; it was told to him on the train by Mrs. Grayson as they rode that afternoon to Detroit.

"If you were ever in Idaho," she said, "you would soon hear the story of "King" Plummer and Sylvia. It is a tragedy of our West; that is, it began in a great tragedy, one of those tragedies of the plains and the mountains so numerous and so like each other that the historians forget to tell about them. Sylvia's mother was Mr. Grayson's eldest sister, much older than he. She and her husband and children were part of a wagon-train that was going up away into the Northwest where the railroads did not then reach.

"It was long ago—when Sylvia was a little girl, not more than seven or eight—and the train was massacred by Utes just as they reached the Idaho line. The Utes were on the war-path—there had been some sort of an outbreak—and the train had been warned by the soldiers not to go on, but the emigrants were reckless. They laughed at danger, because they did not see it before their faces. They pushed on, and they were ambushed in a deep canyon.

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"There was hardly any fight at all, the attack was so sudden and unexpected. Before the people knew what was coming half of them were shot down, and then those awful savages were among them with tomahawk and knife. Mr. Harley, I've no use for the Indian. It is easy enough to get



sentimental about him when you are away off in the East, but when you are close to him in the West all that feeling goes. I heard Sylvia tell about that massacre once, and only once. It was years ago, but I can't forget it; and if I can't forget it, do you think that she can? Her father was killed at the first fire from the bushes, and then an Indian, covered with paint and bears' claws, tomahawked both her mother and her little brother before her eyes—yes, and scalped them, too. He ran for the girl next, but Sylvia—I think it was just physical impulse—dashed away into the scrub, and the Indian turned aside for a victim nearer at hand.

"Sylvia lay hid until night came, and there was silence over the mountain, the silence of death, Mr. Harley, because when she slipped back in the darkness to the emigrant train she found every soul that had been in it, besides herself, dead. Think, Mr. Harley, of that little girl alone in all those vast mountains, with her dead around her! Do you wonder that sometimes she seems hard?"

"No, I don't," replied Harley. Despite himself a mist came to his eyes over this pathetic tragedy of long ago.

"Sylvia has never said much about that night she spent there with the dead, in the midst of the wrecked and plundered train, but when a number of border men, alarmed about the emigrants, pushed on the next day to save them if possible, what do you suppose they found her doing?" [Pg 77]

"I can't guess."

"She had got a spade somewhere from one of the wagons, and, little as she was, she was trying to bury her own dead. She was so busy that she didn't see them ride up, and William Plummer, their leader—he was a young man then—actually shed tears, so they say. Well, these men finished the burial, and Mr. Plummer put Sylvia on his horse before him and rode away. He adopted the little thing as his daughter. He said she was the bravest creature he had ever seen, and, as he was not likely to have any real daughter, she should take a place that ought to be filled.

"Were the Utes who did this massacre punished?"

"No one knows; the soldiers killed a number of them in battle, but whether the slain were those who ambushed the train is not decided in border history."

"I think I understand the rest of the story of Mr. Plummer and Miss Morgan," said Harley.

"Yes, it is not hard to guess. Mr. Grayson and her other relatives farther East did not hear of her rescue until long afterwards; they supposed her dead—but no one could have cared for her better than Mr. Plummer. He kept her first at his mining-hut in the mountains, but after two or three years he took her into town to Bois ; he put her in the care of a woman there and sent her to school. He loved her already like a real daughter. She was just the kind to appeal to him, so brave and so fond of the wild life. They say that at first she refused to stay in Bois . She ran away and tried to go on foot to him away up in the mountains, where the mining-camp was. When he heard of it, they say he laughed, and I suspect that he swore an oath or two—he lived among rough men you know—but if he did, they were swear words of admiration; he said it was just like her independence and pluck. But he made her stay in Bois ." [Pg 78]

"He knew what was right and what was due both him and her, because now he was becoming a great man in the Northwest. He rose to power in both financial and public life, and his daughter must be equal to her fortune. But he spoiled her, you can see that, and how could he help it?"

"She was fifteen before we heard that she was alive, and then Mr. Grayson and her other relatives wanted to take her and care for her, but Mr. Plummer refused to give her up, and he was right. He had saved her when he found her a little girl alone in all those vast mountains, and he was entitled to her. Don't you think so, Mr. Harley?"

"I do," replied Harley, with conviction.

"We yielded to his superior claim, but he sent her more than once to see us. We loved her from the first, and we love her yet."

Here Mrs. Grayson paused and hesitated over her words, as if in embarrassment.

"But it is not you and Mr. Grayson alone who love her," suggested Harley.

"It is not we alone; in Bois  everybody loves her, and at the mines and on Mr. Plummer's ranches they all love her, too."

"I did not mean just that kind of love."

Mrs. Grayson flushed a little, but she continued:

"You are speaking of Mr. Plummer himself; she was his daughter at first, and so long as she was a little girl I suppose that he never dreamed of her in any other light. But when she began to grow into a young woman, Mr. Harley—and a beautiful one, too, as beautiful as she is good—he began to look at her in a different way. When these elderly men, who have been so busy that they have not had time to fall in love, do fall in love, the fall is sudden and complete. Mr. Plummer was like the others. And what else could she do? She was too young to have seen much of the world. There was no young man, none of her own age, who had taken her heart. Mr. Plummer is a good man, and she owed him everything. Of course, she accepted him. I ask you, what else could she do?" [Pg 79]

There was a defensive note in her voice when she said: "I ask you, what else could she do?" and Harley replied, with due deliberation:

"Perhaps she could do nothing else, but sometimes, Mrs. Grayson, I have my doubts whether twenty and fifty can ever go happily together."

"We like Mr. Plummer, and he is a great friend of my husband's."

Harley said nothing, but he, too, liked Mr. Plummer, and he held him in the highest respect. It required little effort of the imagination to draw a picture of the brave mountaineer riding from the Indian massacre with that little girl upon his saddle-bow. And much of his criticism of Sylvia Morgan herself was disarmed. She was more a child of the mountains even than his first fancy had made her, and it was not a wonder that her spirit was often masculine in its strength and boldness. It was involuntary, but he thought of her with new warmth and admiration. Incited by this feeling, he soon joined her and the group that was with her. He had expected to find her sad and comparatively silent, but he had never seen her in a more lively mood, full of light talk and jest and a gay good-humor that could not have failed to infect the most hardened cynic. Certainly he did not escape its influence, nor did he seek to do so, but as he watched her he thought there was a slight touch of feverishness to her high spirits, as if she had just escaped from some great danger.

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Before they reached Detroit he talked a while with Mr. Grayson, in the private drawing-room of the car—Mrs. Grayson had joined the others—and "King" Plummer was the subject of their talk.

"Is he really such a great political power in the Northwest?" asked Harley.

"He is. Even greater than popular report makes him. I believe that in a presidential election he could decide the vote of five or six of those lightly populated states. He has so many interests, so many strings that he holds, and he is a man of so much energy and will. You see, I want to keep "King" Plummer my friend."

"I surely would, if I were in your place," said Harley, with conviction.

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## VI

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### ON THE ROAD

The great success of Grayson as an orator was continued at Detroit. A vast audience hung breathless upon his words, and he played upon its emotions as he would, now thrilling the people with passion, and then stirring them to cheers that rolled like thunder. It became apparent that this hitherto obscure man from the Far West was the strongest nominee a somewhat disunited party could have named, and Harley, whose interest at first had been for the campaign itself rather than its result, began to have a feeling that after all Grayson might be elected—at least he had a fighting chance, which might be more if it were not for the shadow of Goodnight, Crayon, and their kind. Part of these men had gone back, among them the large and important Mr. Goodnight; but Harley saw the quiet Mr. Crayon still watching from a high box at Detroit, and he knew that no act or word of the candidate would escape the scrutiny of this powerful faction within the party.

Ample proof of his conclusion, if it were needed, came the next morning in a copy of the *New York Monitor*, Churchill's paper, which contained on its front page a long, double-ledged despatch, under a Milwaukee date line. It was Hobart who brought it in to Mr. Grayson and his little party at the breakfast-table.

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"Excuse me for interrupting you, Mr. Grayson," he said, flourishing the paper as if it were a sort of flag; "but here is something that you are bound to see. It's what might be called a word in your ear, or, at least, it seems to me to have that sound. I guess that Churchill got a beat on us all in Milwaukee."

"I wish you would join us, Mr. Hobart, and read the whole article to us, if you will be so kind," said the candidate, calmly.

Nothing could have pleased Hobart better, and he read with emphasis and care, resolved that his hearers should not lose a word. Churchill had a good style, and he possessed a certain skill in innuendo, therefore he was able throughout the article to make his meaning clear. He stated that among those surrounding the candidate—he could give names if he would, but it was not necessary—there was a certain feeling that Mr. Grayson was not quite—at least not yet—as large as the position for which he had been nominated. Keen observers had noticed in him a predisposition to rashness; he had spoken lightly more than once of great vested interests.

"Uncle James, how could you be so lacking in reverence?" exclaimed Sylvia Morgan.

Mr. Grayson merely smiled.

"Go on, Mr. Hobart," he said.

"But some of the ablest minds in the country are closely watching Mr. Grayson," continued the

article, "and where he needs support or restraint he will receive it. There are certain issues not embodied in the platform from which he will be steered."

"Now, I think that is too much!" exclaimed Mrs. Grayson, the indignant red rising in her cheeks.

"Their printing it does not make it true, Anna," said the candidate, mildly.

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"As if you did not know enough to run your own campaign!" exclaimed the indignant wife.

But Jimmy Grayson continued to smile. "We must expect this sort of thing," he said; "it would be a dull campaign without it. Please go on, Mr. Hobart."

A number of eminent citizens, the article continued, would make a temporary sacrifice of their great business interests for the sake of the campaign and the people, and with their restraining care it was not likely that Mr. Grayson could go far wrong, as he seemed to be an amiable man, amenable to advice. Thus it continued at much length, and Harley, keen and experienced in such matters, knew very well whence Churchill had drawn his inspiration.

"The editor, also, makes comment upon this warning," said Hobart, who was undeniably enjoying himself.

"I should think that the despatch was enough," said Mrs. Grayson, whose indignation was not yet cooled.

"But it isn't, Mrs. Grayson," said Hobart; "at least, the editor of the *Monitor* does not think so. Listen.

"The campaign in behalf of our party has begun in the West, and we have felt the need of thoroughly reliable news from that quarter, free from the sensationalism and levity which we are sorry to say so often disgrace our American newspapers, and make them compare unfavorably with the graver and statelier columns of the English press."

"He is an Englishman himself," said Harley—"American opinion through an English channel."

Even Jimmy Grayson laughed.

"At last we have obtained this information," continued Hobart, reading, "and we are able to present it to-day to those earnest and sincere people, the cultivated minority who really count, and who constitute the leaven in the mass of the light and frivolous American people. A trusted correspondent of ours, judicious, impartial, absolutely devoid of prejudices, has obtained from high sources with which common journalistic circles are never in touch——"

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"How the bird befouls its own nest!" said the elderly Tremaine.

"—information that will throw much light upon a campaign and a candidate both obscure hitherto. This we present upon another page, and, as our cultivated readers will readily infer, the candidate, Mr. Grayson, is not a bad man——"

"Thanks for that crowning mercy," said Mr. Grayson.

"—but neither is he a great one; in short, he is, at least for the present, narrow and provincial; moreover, he is of an impulsive temperament that is likely to lead him into untrodden and dangerous paths. Our best hope lies in the fact that Mr. Grayson, who has not shown himself intractable, may be brought to see this, and will rely upon the advice of those who are fitted to lead rather than upon the reckless fancies of the Boys who are sure to surround him if he gives them a chance. In this emergency we are sure that all the best in the state will rally with us. The eyes of Europe are upon us, and we must vindicate ourselves."

"Uncle James," said Sylvia Morgan, sweetly, "I trust that you will remember throughout the campaign that the eye of Europe is upon you, and conduct yourself accordingly. I have noticed that in many of your speeches you seemed to be unconscious of the fact that Vienna and St. Petersburg were watching you. Such behavior will never do."

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Mr. Grayson smiled once more. He seemed to be less disturbed than any one else at the table, yet he knew that this was in truth a warning given by an important wing of the party, and, therefore, he must take thought of it. A prominent politician of Michigan was present, the guest of Mr. Grayson, and he did not take the threat as calmly as the candidate.

"The writer of this despatch is with your party, I suppose," he said to Mr. Grayson.

"Oh yes; it is Mr. Churchill. He has been with us since the start."

"I would not let him go a mile farther; a man who writes like that—why, it's a positive insult to you!—should not be allowed on your train."

The Michigan man's face flushed red, and in his anger he brought his hand down heavily on the table; but Harley did not look at him, his full attention being reserved for the candidate. Here was a test of his bigness. Would he prove equal to it?

"I am afraid that would be a mistake," said Jimmy Grayson, amiably, to the Michigan man, "a mistake in two respects: our Constitution guarantees the freedom of the press, and the *Monitor* and its correspondent have a right to write that way, if they wish to do so; and if we were to expel Mr. Churchill, it would give them all the greater ground for complaint. Now, perhaps I am, after

all, a narrow and ignorant person who needs restraint."

He spoke the last sentence in such a whimsical tone and with such a frank smile that they were all forced to laugh, even the Michigan man. But Harley felt relief. The candidate had shown no littleness.

"I was sure that you would return such an answer, Uncle James," said Sylvia Morgan, and the look that she gave him was full of faith. "Now, I mean to help you by converting Mr. Churchill." [Pg 86]

"How will you do that?"

"I shall smile upon him, use my winning ways, and draw him into the fold."

There was a slight edge to her voice, and Harley was not sure of her meaning; but he and she were together in the parlor an hour later, when they met Churchill, and he had a chance to see. Churchill evidently was not expecting to find them there, but he assumed an important air, knowing that his despatches had been received and read, and feeling, therefore, that he was the author of a sensation. He anticipated hostility; he believed that Mr. Grayson's relatives and friends would assail him with harsh words, and he had spoken already to one or two persons of the six months' ordeal that he would have to endure. "But we must stand such things when they are incurred in the line of duty," he said, "and I have a way which, perhaps, will teach them to be not so ready in attacking me." He expected such a foray against him now, and his manner became haughty in the presence of Sylvia Morgan and Harley.

"We—that is, all of us—have just been reading your despatch in the *Monitor*," she said, in a most winning tone, "and on behalf of Uncle James I want to thank you, Mr. Churchill."

Churchill looked surprised but doubtful, and did not abate the stiffness of his attitude nor the severity of his gaze.

"We do feel grateful to you," she continued, in the same winning tone. "There was never a man more willing than Uncle James to learn, and, coming out of the depths of the West, he knows that he needs help. And how beautifully you write, Mr. Churchill! It was all put so delicately that no one could possibly take offence." [Pg 87]

It was impossible to resist her manner, the honey of her words, and Churchill, who felt that she was but giving credit where credit was due, became less stern.

"Do you really like it, Miss Morgan?" he asked, and he permitted himself a smile.

"Oh yes," she replied, "and I noticed that the *Monitor* alone contained an article of this character, all about those big men who are watching over Uncle James, and will not let him go wrong. That is what you correspondents call a beat, isn't it?"

Churchill gave Harley a glance of triumph, but he replied, gravely:

"I believe it is what we call a beat, Miss Morgan."

"And you will continue to help us in the same way, won't you, Mr. Churchill?" she continued. "You know who those great men are; Mr. Harley, here, I am sure does not, nor does Mr. Blaisdell nor Mr. Hobart; you alone, as the *Monitor* says, can come into touch with such important circles, and you will warn us again and again in the columns of the *Monitor* when we are about to get into the wrong path. Oh, it would be a great service, and I know that Uncle James would appreciate it! You will be with us throughout the campaign, and you will have the chance! Now, promise me, Mr. Churchill, that you will do it."

Her manner had become most appealing, and her face was slightly flushed. It was not the first time that Harley realized how handsome she was, and how winning she could be. It was his first thought, then, what a woman this mountain maid would make, and his second that "King" Plummer should continue to look upon her as his daughter—she was too young to be his wife. [Pg 88]

Nor was Churchill proof against her beauty and her blandishments. He felt suddenly that for her sake he could overlook some of Mr. Grayson's faults, or at least seek to amend them. It was not hard to make a promise to a pair of lovely eyes that craved his help.

"Well, Miss Morgan," he said, graciously, "since it is you who ask it, I will do my best. You know I am not really hostile to Mr. Grayson. The *Monitor* and I are of his party, and we shall certainly support him as long as he will let us."

"You are so kind!" she said. "You have seen so much of the world, Mr. Churchill, that you can help us greatly. Uncle James, as I told you, is always willing to learn, and he will keep a sharp watch on the *Monitor*."

"The *Monitor*, as I need not tell you," said Churchill, "is the chief organ in New York of good government, and it is never frivolous or inconsequential. I had hoped that what I sent from Milwaukee would have its effect, and I am glad to see, Miss Morgan, that it has."

Churchill now permitted himself a smile longer and more complacent, and Harley felt a slight touch of pity that any man should be blinded thus by conceit. And Sylvia did not spare him; by alternate flattery and appeal she drew him further into the toils, and Harley was surprised at her skill. She did not seem to him now the girl from Idaho, the child of the mountains and of massacre, but a woman of variable moods, and all of them attractive, no whit inferior to her [Pg 89]

Eastern sisters in the delicate airs and graces that he was wont to associate with feminine perfection.

As for Churchill, he yielded completely to her spell, not without some condescension and a memory of his own superiority, but he felt himself willing to comply with her request, particularly because it involved no sacrifice on his own part. He and the *Monitor* would certainly keep watch over Mr. Grayson, and he would never hesitate to write the words of warning when ever he felt that they were needed.

"Why did you treat him that way?" asked Harley, when Churchill had gone.

"What do you mean by 'that way'?" she asked, and her chin took on a saucy uplift.

"Well, to be plain, why did you make a fool of him?"

"Was my help needed?"

Harley laughed.

"Don't be too hard on Churchill," he said, "he's the creature of circumstance. Besides, you must not forget that he is going to watch over Mr. Grayson."

Churchill did not join the general group until shortly before the departure for the evening speech, and then he approached with an undeniable air of hostility and defence, expecting to be attacked and having in readiness the weapons with which he had assured himself that he could repel them. Miss Morgan, it is true, had received him well, but she, so he had begun to believe, was a girl of perception and discrimination, and the fine taste shown by her would not be exhibited by others. The candidate, surprising him much, received him cordially, though not effusively, and he was made welcome in similar manner by the others. There was no allusion whatever to his despatch, but he found himself included in the general gossip, just as if he were one of a group of good comrades.

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Yet Churchill was not wholly pleased. His great stroke seemed to be ignored by all except Miss Morgan, when they ought to be stirred deeply by it, and he felt a sense of diminished importance. There should be confusion among them, or at least trepidation. He closely studied the faces of Mr. Grayson and the others to see if they were merely masking their fire, but no attack came either then or later.

Thus two or three days passed, and the campaign deepened and popular interest increased. Not since the eve of the Civil War had there been such complexity and intensity of interests, and never before had the personal factor been so strong. Out of the vast turmoil quickly emerged James Grayson as the most picturesque figure that ever appeared upon the stage of national politics in America. His powerful oratory, his daring, and his magnetic personality drew the eyes of all, and Harley saw that wherever he might be there the fight would be thickest. The correspondent's intuition had been right; he had come from a war on the other side of the world to enter another and greater campaign, one in which mind counted for more.

The candidate, in his rising greatness, was even a hero to his own family; and from none did he draw greater admiration than from his niece, Sylvia Morgan. A fierce champion of the West, she always bitterly resented the unconscious patronage of the East, which was really the natural patronage of age rather than of convinced superiority; and her uncle's triumph filled her with delight, because, to her mind, it was the triumph of the West that she loved so well. Inspired with this feeling, she appealed to Harley about the sixth or seventh day of the campaign for his opinion on its result, and the correspondent hesitated over his answer. He found that his feeling towards her in this week had changed greatly, the elements in her character, which at first seemed to him masculine and forward, were now much modified and softened; always the picture of that child in the mountains, alone among her dead, rose before him, and then followed the picture of the little girl borne away on his saddle-bow by the brave borderer. He would think of her now with a singular softness, a real pity for those misty days which she herself had almost forgotten. Hence he hesitated, because what he deemed to be the truth would have in it a sting for her. But her clear eyes instantly read his hesitation.

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"You need not be afraid to tell me your real opinion, Mr. Harley," she said. "If you think the chances are against Uncle James, I should like you to say so."

"I do think they are against him now, although they may not be so later on," replied he, equivocating with himself a little. "It is an uphill fight, and then one can easily deceive one's self; in a nation of eighty or ninety millions even a minority can surround a candidate with a multitude of people and a storm of enthusiasm."

"But Uncle James is the greatest campaigner ever nominated for the Presidency," she said, "and we shall yet win."

Harley said nothing in reply, but he gladly noticed her refusal to be discouraged, like other people having an admiration for courage and spirit. In fact, it seemed to him that she had a cheerfulness somewhat beyond the occasion.

Three days later—they were in Pittsburg then—she received a letter addressed in a strong, heavy hand, her name being spelled in large letters. Sylvia Morgan was alone in the hotel parlor when it was brought to her, and a strange shadow, or rather the shadow of a shadow, came over her face

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as she held it uneasily in her fingers and looked at the Idaho postmark in the corner. She knew the handwriting well, and she knew that it was a true index to the character of its author—rough, strong, and large. That handwriting could not lie, neither could he. She continued to hesitate, with the letter in her hand; it was the first time that she had ever done so with a letter of his, and she felt that she was disloyal. She heard a voice in the other parlor—the wide doors between were open; it was the voice of Harley speaking to her uncle, and a flush crept into her cheeks. Then she shook herself in a sudden little whirl of anger, and abruptly opened the letter with a swift, tearing sound. It was a longer letter than he usually wrote, and he said:

"MY DEAREST LITTLE SYLVIA—I have been here just two hours, and, I tell you, the sight of Idaho is good for the eyes, though it would be better if you were here with me, as you soon will be all the time, little one."

She paused a moment, looking away, and the shadow of the shadow came back to her face. Then she murmured: "He is the best man in the world," and resolutely went on:

"The more I see of the other states the better I like Idaho, and I like next best those that are most like it. Every peak out here nodded a welcome to me as I came in on the train. I've known them all for thirty years. I was a little afraid of them at first, they were so tall and solemn with their white crests, but we are old friends now—I'll have a white crest myself before long, and I'm fairly tall now, though perhaps I'll never be solemn. And I drew a deep breath and a long breath, the first one in days, the moment I crossed the Idaho line. The East sits rather heavy on me [he called Chicago the East], and my eyes get tired with so many people passing before them. Now, I'm not running down the East, which is all right in its own way, but I am glad we have so much mountain and unwatered plain out here, because then the people can never get so thick that they tread on you; not that they mean to do it, but crowds shove just because they can't help it."

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Sylvia smiled, and for a moment there was a little moisture in her eyes. "Good old daddy," she murmured. Somehow, the pet name "daddy" seemed just to fit him. Then the resolute little frown came over her face again and she went on.

"As I said, Idaho is a good state. I like it when I am here, and I like it all the better when I come back to it. God's people live in these Rocky Mountain states, and that is a reason why I am so red-hot to have your uncle James elected. He is one of God's people, too, and they have never yet had a man of ours sitting in the White House down there at Washington and bossing the job. I think maybe he will teach them a new trick or two in running the old ship of state. But, Sylvia, I am not thinking so much even of him as I am of you. I know that I am a good deal older than you, as people count years, but I can truly say that my heart is young, and I think that I will be a husky chap for a good long time to come. You know I've had you nearly all your life, Sylvia, and we have the advantage of knowing each other. You are on to all my curves—that is, you don't have to get married to me to learn my failings.

"I guess I haven't the polish that those Eastern fellows put on, or that is put on them, but out here in the mountains I amount to somebody—you must let me brag a little, Sylvia—and if a man doesn't bow pretty low to Mrs. William Plummer, I'll have to get out my old six-shooter—I haven't carried one now for ten years—and shoot all the hair off the top of his head."

"He thinks he's joking, but I believe he would do it. Dear old daddy!" murmured Sylvia.

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"I think you ought to become Mrs. Plummer now, Sylvia, but I guess I'm willing to wait until this campaign is over. For one ought to be willing to wait, if by waiting he can get such a good thing. Still, I hate to think of you away off there in the East, so many thousands of miles away from me, where there are no friendly old mountains to look down on you and watch over you, and I'm glad that my little girl is coming West again soon. I'll try to get down part of the way, say to Nebraska or Kansas, to meet you. I feel safer when I have you close by; then, if any of those young Eastern fellows should try to kidnap you and run away with you, my old six-shooter might have a word to say."

The sudden flush rose to her cheeks at this new joke, but she murmured nothing. The rest of the letter was about people whom they knew in Boisé and elsewhere in Idaho, and it closed:

"Don't think I'm growing gushing at my age, Sylvia, but Idaho, fine as she is, isn't near complete without you, and this is why I want you back in it just as soon as you can come.

Yours, lovingly,

"WILLIAM PLUMMER."

She folded the letter carefully and put it back in the envelope. Then she sat for a long time, and her look was one of mingled tenderness and sadness. Her mind, too, ran back into the past, and she had a dim vision of the little child, who was herself, borne away on his saddle-horn by the strong mountaineer, who held her safely in the hollow of his arm. And then the years followed,

and she always looked to the mountaineer for the protection and the love that were never wanting, but it was always the protection and love of one older and stronger than herself, one who belonged to the generation preceding her own.

Mr. Grayson, Harley, and the others were gone, and she heard no voices in the next parlor. She realized with suddenness how strongly and in how brief a time this little group, travelling through a vast country, had become welded together by the very circumstances of their travel—the comradeship of the road—and she sighed. She and Mrs. Grayson were about to leave them and return to the Grayson home in the West, because women, no matter how nearly related, could not be taken all the way on an arduous campaign of six months. She had enjoyed this life, which was almost the life of a soldier—the crowds, the enthusiasm, the murmur, then the cheers of thousands of voices, the flight on swift trains from one city to another, the dash for the station sometimes before daylight, and all the freshness and keenness of youth about her. She had affiliated, she had become one of the group, and now that she was to leave it for a while she had a deep sense of loss.

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There was a step beside her, and Mrs. Grayson, the quiet, the tactful, and the observant, entered.

"Why, Sylvia," she said, "you are sitting in the dark!"

She touched the button, turned on the electric lights, and noticed the letter lying in the girl's hand. Her glance passed swiftly to Sylvia's face and as swiftly passed away. She knew instinctively the writer of the letter, but she said nothing, waiting for Sylvia herself to speak.

"I have a letter from Mr. Plummer," said Sylvia.

"What does he say?"

"Not much besides his arrival at Boisé—just some foolishness of his; you know how he loves to jest."

"Yes, I have long known that," said Mrs. Grayson, but she noticed that Sylvia made no offer to show the letter. Hitherto the letters of "King" Plummer had been read by all the Graysons as a matter of course, just as one shares interesting news.

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"He is a good man, and he will be a good husband," said Mrs. Grayson. She was for the moment ruthless with a purpose, and when she said the words, although affecting not to watch, she saw the girl flinch—ever so little, but still she flinched.

"The best man in the world," repeated Sylvia Morgan, softly.

"And yet there are other good men," said Mrs. Grayson, quietly. "One good man does not exclude the existence of another."

Sylvia looked up at her, but she failed to take her meaning. Her quiet aunt sometimes spoke in parables, and waited for events to disclose her meaning.

Mrs. Grayson and Miss Morgan were to leave for the West the next afternoon, and shortly before their departure Harley came to tell them a temporary good-bye. Sylvia and he chanced to be alone for a little while, and she genuinely lamented her departure—they had become franker friends in these later days.

"I do not see why women cannot go through a political campaign from beginning to end," she said; "I'm sure we can help Uncle James, and there will be, too, so many interesting things to see. It will be like a war without the wounds and death. I don't want to miss any of it."

"I half agree with you," said Harley, smiling, "and I know that it would be a great deal nicer for the rest of us if you and Mrs. Grayson could go along."

He paused, and he had a sudden bold thought.

"If anything specially interesting happens that the newspapers don't tell about, will you let me write you an account of it?" he asked. "I should really like to tell you."

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She flushed ever so little, but she was of the free-and-open West, and Harley always gave her the impression of courteous strength—he would take no liberties.

"You can write," she said, briefly, and then she immediately regretted her decision. It was the thought of "King" Plummer that made her regret it, but she had too much pride to change it now.

Harley was at the train with Mr. Grayson when she and Mrs. Grayson left, and Sylvia found that he had seen to everything connected with their journey. Without making any noise, and without appearing to work much, he accomplished a good deal. She had an impulse once to thank him, but she restrained it, and she gave him a good-bye that was neither cool nor warm, just sufficiently conventional to leave no inference whatever. But when the train was gone and Mr. Grayson and he were riding back in the cab to the hotel, the candidate spoke of her.

"She's a good girl, Harley," he said—he and Harley had grown to be such friends that he now dropped the "Mr." when he spoke directly to the correspondent. "She's real, as true as steel."

He spoke with emphasis, but Harley said nothing.

The group seemed to lose much of its vividness, color, and variety when the women departed, but

they settled down to work, the most intense and exacting that Harley had ever known. All the great qualities of the candidate came out; he seemed to be made of iron, and on the stump he was without an equal; if any one in the audience was ready with a troublesome question, he was equally ready with an apt reply; nor could they disturb his good humor; and his smiling irony!—the rash fool who sought to deride him always found the laugh turned upon himself.

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Throughout the East the party was stirred to mighty enthusiasm, and their antagonists, who had thought the election a foregone conclusion, were roused from their security. Again the combat deepened and entered upon a yet hotter phase. Meanwhile Mr. Goodnight, Mr. Crayon, and their powerful faction within the party, kept quiet for the time. Mr. Grayson was not yet treading on their toes, but he knew, and his friends knew, that they were watching every motion of his with a hundred eyes. Churchill's *Monitor* was constantly coming, laden with suggestion, advice, and warning, and Churchill himself alternately wore a look of importance and disappointment. No one ever made the slightest reference to his wise despatches. He had expected to be insulted, to be persecuted, to be a martyr for duty's sake, and, lo! he was treated always with courtesy, but his great work was ignored; he felt that they must see it, but then they might be too dull to notice its edge and weight. He now drew a certain consolation from his silent suffering, and strengthened himself anew for the task which he felt required a delicate and thoughtful mind.

Harley wrote several times to Sylvia Morgan, both at Boisé and at her aunt's home—long, careful letters, in which he strove to confine himself to the purely narrative form, and to make these epistles interesting as documents. He spoke of many odd personal details by the way, and even at the distance of two thousand miles he continued to touch the campaign with the breath of life, although told at second-hand.

The replies came in due time, brief, impersonal, thanking him for his trouble, and giving a little news of Mrs. Grayson, "King" Plummer, and herself. Harley was surprised to see with what terseness, strength, and elegance she expressed herself. "Perhaps there is a force in those mountains which unconsciously teaches simplicity and power," he found himself thinking. He was surprised, too, one day, when he was packing his valise for a hurried start, to see all her letters reposing neatly in one corner of the aforesaid valise. "Now, why have I done that?" he asked; "why have I saved those letters? They take up valuable space; I will destroy them." But when he closed the valise the undamaged letters were still neatly reposing in their allotted corner.

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Now the campaign in the East came to its end, and their special train swung westward into the states supposed to be most doubtful—first across the Mississippi, and then across the Missouri. The campaign entered upon a new phase amid new conditions—in a new world, in fact—and it required no intuition for Harley to feel that strange events were approaching.

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## VII

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### HIS GREATEST SPEECH

It was the candidate's eighth speech that day, but Harley, who was in analytical mood, could see no decrease either in his energy or spontaneity of thought and expression. The words still came with the old dash and the old power, and the audience always hung upon them, the applause invariably rising like the rattle of rifle-fire. They had started at daylight, hurrying across the monotonous Western plains, in a dusty and uncomfortable car, stopping for a half-hour speech here, then racing for another at a second little village, and then a third race and a third speech, and so on. Nor was this the first day of such labors; it had been so week after week, and always it lasted through the day and far into the darkness, sometimes after midnight. But there was no sign to tell of it on the face of the candidate, save a slight redness around the edge of the eyelids, and a little hoarseness between the speeches when he talked to his friends in an ordinary tone.

The village in which Grayson was speaking was a tiny place of twelve or fifteen houses, all square, unadorned, and ugly, standing in the centre of an illimitable prairie that rolled away on either side exactly like the waves of the sea, and with the same monotony. It was a weather-beaten gathering. The prairie winds are not good for the complexion, and the cheeks of these people were brown, not red. On the outskirts of the crowd, still sitting on their ponies, were cowboys, who had ridden sixty miles across the Wyoming border to hear Grayson speak. They were dressed exactly like the cowboys of the pictures that Harley had seen in magazine stories of the Western plains. They wore the sombreros and leggings and leather belts, but there was no disorder, no cursing, no shouting nor yelling. This was a phase that had passed.

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They listened, too, with an eagerness that few Eastern audiences could show. This was not to them an entertainment or anything savoring of the spectacular; it was the next thing to the word of God. There was a reverence in their manner and bearing that appealed to Harley, and he read easily in their minds the belief that Jimmy Grayson was the greatest man in the world, and that he alone could bring to their country the greatness that they wished as much for the country as for themselves. Churchill sneered at this tone of the gathering, but Harley took another view. These men might be ignorant of the world, but he respected their hero-worship, and thought it a good quality in them.

They heard the candidate tell of mighty corporations, of a vague and distant place called Wall



Street, where fat men, with soft, white fingers and pouches under their eyes, sat in red-carpeted offices and pulled little but very strong strings that made farmers on the Western plains, two thousand miles away, dance like jumping-jacks, just as the fat men wished, and just when they wished. These fat men were allied with others in Europe, pouchy-eyed and smooth-fingered like themselves, and it was their object to own all the money-bags of the world, and gather all the profits of the world's labor. Harley, watching these people, saw a spark appear in their eyes many times, but it was always brightest at the mention of Wall Street. That both speaker and those to whom his words were spoken were thoroughly sincere, he did not doubt for a moment.

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Grayson ceased, the engine blew the starting signal, the candidate and the correspondent swung aboard, and off they went. Harley looked back, and as long as he could see the station the little crowd on the lone prairie was still watching the disappearing train. There was something pathetic in the sight of these people following with their eyes until the last moment the man whom they considered their particular champion.

It was but an ordinary train of day cars, the red plush of the seats now whitened by the prairie dust, and it was used in common by the candidate, the flock of correspondents, and a dozen politicians, the last chiefly committeemen or their friends, one being the governor of the state through which they were then travelling.

Harley sought sleep as early as possible that night, because he would need all his strength for the next day, which was to be a record-breaker. A tremendous programme had been mapped out for Jimmy Grayson, and Harley, although aware of the candidate's great endurance, wondered how he would ever stand it. They were to cut the state from southeast to northwest, a distance of more than four hundred miles, and twenty-four speeches were to be made by the way. Fresh from war, Harley did not remember any more arduous journey, and, like an old campaigner, he prepared for it as best he could.

It was not yet daylight when they were awakened for the start of the great day. A cold wind moaned around the hamlet as they ate their breakfast, and then hastened, valise in hand, and still half asleep, to the train, which stood steam up and ready to be off. They found several men already on board, and Churchill, when he saw them, uttered the brief word, "Natives!" They were typical men of the plains, thin, dry, and weather-beaten, and the correspondents at first paid but little attention to them. It was common enough for some local committeeman to take along a number of friends for a half-day or so, in order that they might have a chance to gratify their curiosity and show their admiration for the candidate.

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But the attention of Harley was attracted presently by one of the strangers, a smallish man of middle age, with a weak jaw and a look curiously compounded of eagerness and depression.

The stranger's eye met Harley's, and, encouraged by his friendly look, he crossed the aisle and spoke to the correspondent.

"You are one of them newspaper fellers that travels with Grayson, ain't you?" he asked.

Harley admitted the charge.

"And you see him every day?" continued the little man, admiringly.

"Many times a day."

"My! My! Jest to think of your comin' away out here to take down what our Jimmy Grayson says, so them fellers in New York can read it! I'll bet he makes Wall Street shake. I wish I was like you, mister, and could be right alongside Jimmy Grayson every day for weeks and weeks, and could hear every word he said while he was poundin' them fellers in Wall Street who are ruinin' our country. He is the greatest man in the world. Do you reckon I could get to speak to him and jest tech his hand?"

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"Why, certainly," replied Harley. He was moved by the little man's childlike and absolute faith and his reverence for Jimmy Grayson as a demigod. It was not without pathos, and Harley at once took him into the next car and introduced him to Grayson, who received him with the natural cordiality that never deserted him. Plover, the little man said was his name—William Plover, of Kalapoosa, Choctaw County. He regarded Grayson with awe, and, after the hand-shake, did not speak. Indeed, he seemed to wish no more, and made himself still smaller in a corner, where he listened attentively to everything that Grayson said.

He also stood in the front row at each stopping-place, his eyes fixed on Grayson's face while the latter made his speech. The candidate, by-and-by, began to notice him there. It is often a habit with those who have to speak much in public to fix the eye on some especially interested auditor and talk to him directly. It assists in a sort of concentration, and gives the orator a willing target.

Grayson now spoke straight to Plover, and Harley watched how the little man's emotions, as shown in his face, reflected in every part the orator's address. There was actual fire in his eyes, whenever Grayson mentioned that ogre, Wall Street, and tears rose when the speaker depicted the bad condition of the Western farmer.

"Wouldn't I like to go on to Washington with Jimmy Grayson when he takes charge of the government!" exclaimed Plover to Harley when this speech was finished—"not to take a hand myself, but jest to see him make things hum! Won't he make them fat fellers in Wall Street squeal! He'll have the Robber Barons squirming on the griddle pretty quick, an' wheat'll go

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straight to a dollar a bushel, sure! I can see it now!"

His exultation and delight lasted all the morning; but in the afternoon the depressed, crushed feeling which Harley had noticed at first in his look seemed to get control.

Although his interest in Grayson's speeches and his devout admiration did not decrease, Plover's melancholy grew, and Harley by-and-by learned the cause of it from another man, somewhat similar in aspect, but larger of figure and stronger of face.

"To tell you the truth, mister," said the man, with the easy freedom of the West, "Billy Plover—and my cousin he is, twice removed—my name's Sandidge—is runnin' away."

"Running away?" exclaimed Harley, in surprise. "Where's he running to, and what's he running from?"

"Where he's runnin' to, I don't know—California, or Washington, or Oregon, I guess. But I know mighty well what he's runnin' away from; it's his wife."

"Ah, a family trouble?" said Harley, whose delicacy would have caused him to refrain from asking more. But the garrulous cousin rambled on.

"It's a trouble, and it ain't a trouble," he continued. "It's the weather and the crops, or maybe because Billy 'ain't had no weather nor no crops, either. You see, he's lived for the last ten years on a quarter-section out near Kalapoosa, with his wife, Susan, a good woman and a terrible hard worker, but the rain's been mighty light for three seasons, and Billy's wheat has failed every time. It's kinder got on his temper, and, as they 'ain't got any children to take care of, Billy he's been takin' to politics. Got an idea that he can speak, though he can't, worth shucks, and thinks he's got a mission to whack Wall Street, though I ain't sure but what Wall Street don't deserve it. Susan says he ain't got any business in politics, that he ought to leave that to better men, an' stay an' wrastle with the ground and the weather. So that made them take to spattin'."

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"And the upshot?"

"Waal, the upshot was that Billy said he could stand it no longer. So last night he raked up half the spare cash, leavin' the rest and the farm and stock to Susan, an' he loped out. But first he said he had to hear Jimmy Grayson, who is mighty nigh a whole team of prophets to him, and, as Jimmy's goin' west, right on his way, he's come along. But to-night, at Jimmy's last stoppin'-place, he leaves us and takes a train straight to the coast. I'm sorry, because if Susan had time to see him and talk it over—you see, she's the man of the two—the whole thing would blow over, and they'd be back on the farm, workin' hard, and with good times ahead."

Harley was moved by this pathetic little tragedy of the plains, the result of loneliness and hard times preying upon the tempers of two people. "Poor devil!" he thought. "It's as his cousin says; if Susan could only be face to face with him for five minutes, he'd drop his foolish idea of running away and go home."

Then of that thought was born unto him a great idea, and he immediately hunted up the cousin again.

"Is Kalapoosa a station on the telegraph line?" he asked.

"Oh yes."

"Would a telegram to that point be delivered to the Plover farm?"

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"Yes. Why, what's up?"

"Nothing; I just wanted to know. Now, can you tell me what time to-night, after our arrival, a man may take a train for the coast from Weeping Water, our last stop?"

"We're due at Weepin' Water," replied the cousin, "at eleven to-night, but I cal'late it'll be nigher twelve when we strike the town. You see, this is a special train, runnin' on any old time, an' it's liable now and then to get laid out a half an hour or more. But, anyhow, we ought to beat the Denver Express, which is due at twelve-thirty in the mornin', an' stops ten minutes at the water-tank. It connects at Denver with the 'Frisco Express, an' I guess it's the train that Billy will take."

"Does the Denver Express stop at Kalapoosa?"

"Yes. Kalapoosa ain't nothin' but a little bit of a place, but the Pawnee branch line comes in there, and the express gets some passengers off it. Say, mister, what's up?"

But Harley evaded a direct answer, having now all the information he wished. He went back to the next car and wrote this despatch:

"KALAPOOSA.

"SUSAN PLOVER,—Take to-day's Denver Express and get off to-night at Weeping Water. You will find me at Grayson's speaking, standing just in front of him. Don't fail to come. Will explain everything to you then.

"WILLIAM PLOVER."

Harley looked at this message with satisfaction. "I guess I'm a forger," he mused; "but as the

essence of wrong lies in the intention, I'm doing no harm."

He stopped at the next station, prepaid the message, and, standing by, saw with his own eyes the operator send it. Then he returned to the train and resumed his work with fresh zest. [Pg 108]

And he had plenty to do. He had seen Jimmy Grayson make great displays of energy, but his vitality on this terrible day was amazing. On and on they went, right into the red eye of the sun. The hot rays poured down, and the dust whirled over the plain, entering the car in clouds, where it clothed everything—floors, seats, and men alike—until they were a uniform whitey-brown. It crept, too, into Harley's throat and stung his eyelids, but at each new speech the candidate seemed to rise fresher and stronger than ever, and at every good point he made the volleys of applause rose like rifle-shots.

Harley, at the close of a speech late in the day, sought his new friend, Plover. The little man was crushed down in a seat, looking very gloomy. Harley knew that he was thinking of Kalapoosa, the spell of Grayson's eloquence being gone for the moment.

"Tired, Mr. Plover?" said Harley, putting a friendly hand on his shoulder.

"A little bit," replied Plover.

"But it's a great day," continued Harley. "I tell you, old man, it's one to be remembered. There never was such a campaign. The story of this ride will be in all the papers of the United States tomorrow."

"Ain't he great! Ain't he great!" exclaimed Plover, brightening into enthusiasm. "And don't he hit Wall Street some awful whacks?"

"He certainly is great," replied Harley. "But you wait until we get to Weeping Water. That's the last stop, and he'll just turn himself loose there. You mustn't miss a word." [Pg 109]

"I won't," replied Plover. "I'll have time, because the Denver Express, on which I'm going to 'Frisco, don't leave there till twelve-forty. No, I won't miss the big speech at Weeping Water."

They reached Weeping Water at last, although it was full midnight, and they were far behind time, and together they walked to the speaker's stand.

Harley saw Plover in his accustomed place in the front rank, just under the light of the torches, where he would meet the speaker's eye, his face rapt and worshipful. Then he looked at his watch.

"Twelve-fifteen," he said to himself. "The Denver Express will be here in another fifteen minutes, and Susan will fall on the neck of her Billy."

Then he stopped to listen to Grayson. Never had Harley seen him more earnest, more forcible. He knew that the candidate must be sinking from physical weakness—his pale, drawn face showed that—but his spirit flamed up for this last speech, and the crowd was wholly under the spell of his powerful appeal.

Harley met, presently, the cousin, Sandidge.

"This is Grayson's greatest speech of the day," Harley said, "and how it must please Mr. Plover!"

"That's so," replied Sandidge; "but Billy's all broke up over it."

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Harley, in sudden alarm.

"The Denver Express is nearly two hours and a half late—won't be here until three, and at Denver it'll miss the 'Frisco Express; won't be another for a day. So Billy, who's in a hurry to get to the coast—the old Nick's got into him, I reckon—is goin' by the express on the B. P.; the train on the branch line that goes out there at two-ten connects with it, and so does the accommodation freight at two-forty. It's hard on Billy—he hates to miss any of Jimmy Grayson's speeches, but he's bound to go." [Pg 110]

Harley was touched by real sorrow. He drew his pencil-pad from his pocket, hastily wrote a few lines upon it, pushed his way to the stage, and thrust what he had written into Mr. Grayson's hands. The speaker, stopping to take a drink of water, read this note:

"DEAR MR. GRAYSON,—The Denver Express is two hours and a half late. For God's sake speak until it comes; you will hear it at three, when it pulls into the station. It is a matter of life and death, and while you are speaking don't take your eye off the little man with the whiskers, who has been with us all day, and who always stands in front and looks up at you. I'll explain everything later, but please do it. Again I say it's a matter of life and death.

"JOHN HARLEY."

Grayson looked in surprise at Harley, but he caught the appealing look on the face of the correspondent. He liked Harley, and he knew that he could trust him. He knew, moreover, that what Harley had written in the note must be true.

Grayson did not hesitate, and, nodding slightly to Harley, turned and faced the crowd, like a soldier prepared for his last and desperate charge. His eyes sought those of the little man, his

target, looking up at him. Then he fixed Plover with his gaze and began.

They still tell in the West of Jimmy Grayson's speech at Weeping Water, as the veterans tell of Pickett's rush in the flame and the smoke up Cemetery Hill. He had gone on the stage a half-dead man. He had already been speaking nineteen hours that day. His eyes were red and swollen with train dust, prairie dust, and lack of sleep. Every bone in him ached. Every word stung his throat as it came, and his tongue was like a hot ember in his mouth. Deep lines ran away from his eyes.

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But Jimmy Grayson was inspired that night on the black prairie. The words leaped in livid flame from his lips. Never was his speech more free and bold, and always his burning eyes looked into those of Plover and held him.

Closer and closer pressed the crowd. The darkness still rolled up, thicker and blacker than ever. Grayson's shoulders sank away, and only his face was visible now. The wind rose again, and whistled around the little town and shrieked far out on the lonely prairie. But above it rose the voice of Grayson, mellow, inspiring, and flowing full and free.

Harley looked and listened, and his admiration grew and grew. "I don't agree with all he says," he thought, "but, my God! how well he says it."

Then he cowered in the lee of a little building, that he might shelter himself from the bitter wind that was searching him to the marrow.

Time passed. The speaker never faltered. A half-hour, an hour, and his voice was still full and mellow, nor had a soul left the crowd. Grayson himself seemed to feel a new access of strength from some hidden source, and his form expanded as he denounced the Trusts and the Robber Barons, and all the other iniquities that he felt it his duty to impale, but he never took his eyes from Plover; to him he was now talking with a force and directness that he had not equalled before. Time went on, and, as if half remembering some resolution, Plover's hand stole towards the little old silver watch that he carried in the left-hand pocket of his waistcoat. But just at that critical moment Grayson uttered the magical name, Wall Street, and Plover's hand fell back to his side with a jerk. Then Grayson rose to his best, and tore Wall Street to tatters.

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A whistle sounded, a bell rang, and a train began to rumble, but no one took note of it save Harley. The two-ten on the branch line to connect with the 'Frisco Express on the B. P. was moving out, and he breathed a great sigh of relief. "One gone," he said to himself; "now for the accommodation freight."

The speech continued, but presently Grayson stopped for a hasty drink of water. Harley trembled. He was afraid that Grayson was breaking down, and his fears increased when he saw Plover's eyes leave the speaker's face and wander towards the station. But just at that moment the candidate caught the little man.

"Listen to me!" thundered Grayson, "and let no true citizen here fail to heed what I am about to tell him."

Plover could not resist the voice and those words of command. His thoughts, wandering towards the railroad station, were seized and brought back by the speaker. His eyes were fixed and held by Grayson, and he stood there as if chained to the spot.

Time became strangely slow. The accommodation freight must be more than ten minutes late, Harley thought. He looked at his watch, and found that it was not due to leave for five minutes yet. So he settled himself to patient waiting, and listened to Grayson as he passed from one national topic to another. He saw, too, that the lines in the speaker's face were growing deeper and deeper, and he knew that he must be using his last ounces of strength. His soul was stirred with pity. Yet Grayson never faltered.

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The whistle blew, the bell rang, and again the train rumbled. The two-forty accommodation freight on the branch line to connect with the 'Frisco Express on the B. P. was moving out, and Plover had been held. He could not go now, and once more Harley breathed that deep sigh of relief. Twenty minutes passed, and he heard far off in the east a faint rumble. He knew it was the Denver Express, and, in spite of his resolution, he began to grow nervous. Suppose the woman should not come?

The rumble grew to a roar, and the train pulled into the station. Grayson was faithful to the last, and still thundered forth the invective that delighted the soul of Plover. The train whistled and moved off again, and Harley waited in breathless anxiety.

A tall form rose out of the darkness, and a woman, middle-aged and honest of face, appeared. The correspondent knew that it must be Susan. It could be nobody else. She was looking around as if she sought some one. Harley's eye caught Grayson's, and it gave the signal.

"And now, gentlemen," said the candidate, "I am done. I thank you for your attention, and I hope you will think well of what I have said."

So saying, he left the stage, and the crowd dispersed. But Harley waited, and he saw Plover and his wife meet. He saw, too, the look of surprise and then joy on the man's face, and he saw them throw their arms around each other's neck and kiss in the dark. They were only a poor, prosaic, and middle-aged couple, but he knew they were now happy and that all was right between them.

When Grayson went to his room, he fell from exhaustion in a half-faint across the bed; but when

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Harley told him the next afternoon the cause of it all, he laughed and said it was well worth the price.

They obtained, about a week later, the New York papers containing an account of the record-breaking day. When Harley opened the *Monitor*, Churchill's paper, he read these head-lines:

GRAYSON'S GAB  
HE IS TALKING THE FARMERS OF THE WEST TO  
DEATH  
TWENTY-FOUR SPEECHES IN TWENTY-FOUR  
HOURS  
HE TALKS FIFTY THOUSAND WORDS IN ONE DAY,  
AND SAYS NOTHING

But when he looked at the *Gazette*, he saw the following head-lines over his own account:

HIS GREATEST SPEECH  
GRAYSON'S WONDERFUL EXHIBITION OF PLUCK  
AND ENDURANCE  
AFTER RIDING FOUR HUNDRED MILES AND MAKING  
TWENTY-THREE SPEECHES HE HOLDS  
AN AUDIENCE SPELLBOUND FOR  
THREE HOURS AT HIS  
TWENTY-FOURTH  
SPEAKS FROM MIDNIGHT UNTIL THREE IN THE  
MORNING IN THE OPEN AIR AND NOT A  
SOUL LEAVES, THOUGH A BLIZZARD  
WAS RAGING

Harley sighed with satisfaction.

"That managing editor of mine knows his business," he said to himself.

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## VIII

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### SYLVIA'S RETURN

Harley slept late the next day, and it was the heavy, somewhat nervous slumber of utter exhaustion, like that which he had more than once experienced in the war on the other side of the world, after days of incessant marching. When he awoke, it was afternoon on the special train, and as he joined the group he was greeted with a suppressed cheer.

"I understand that you stayed the whole thing through last night, or rather this morning," said Churchill, in a sneering tone. "There's devotion for you, boys!"

"I was amply repaid," replied Harley, calmly. "His last speech was the most interesting; in fact, I think it was the greatest speech that I ever heard him make."

"I fear that Jimmy Grayson is overdoing it," said the elderly Tremaine, soberly. "A Presidential nominee is not exactly master of himself, and I doubt whether he should have risked his voice, and perhaps the success of his party, speaking in that cold wind until three or four o'clock this morning."

"He just loves to hear the sound of his own voice," said Churchill, his ugly sneer becoming uglier. "I think it undignified and absurd on the part of a man who is in the position that he is in."

Harley was silent, and he was glad now that he had said nothing in his despatch about the real reason for Grayson's long speaking. He had had at first a little struggle over it with his professional conscience, feeling that his duty required him to tell, but a little reflection decided him to the contrary. He had managed the affair, it was not a spontaneous occurrence, and, therefore, it was the private business of himself and Mr. James Grayson. It gave him great relief to be convinced thus, as he knew that otherwise the candidate would be severely criticised for it both by the opposition press and by a considerable number of his own party journals.

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But there was one person to whom Harley related the whole story. It was told in a letter to Sylvia Morgan, who was then at the home of the candidate with Mrs. Grayson. After describing all the details minutely, he gave his opinion: he held that it was right for a man, even in critical moments weighted with the fate of the many, to halt to do a good action which could affect only one or two. A great general at the height of a battle, seeing a wounded soldier helpless on the ground, might take the time to order relief for him without at all impairing the fate of the combat; to do otherwise would be a complete sacrifice of the individual for the sake of a mighty machine which would banish all humanity from life. He noticed that even Napoleon, in the midst of what might

be called the most strenuous career the world has known, turned aside to do little acts of kindness.

He was glad to find, when her reply came a few days later, that she agreed with him at least in the main part of his argument; but she called his attention to the fact that it was not Mr. Grayson, but Harley himself, who had injected this strange element into the combat when it was at its zenith; her uncle James had merely responded to a strong and moving appeal, which he would always do, because she knew the softness of his heart; yet she was not willing for him to go too far. A general might be able to turn aside for a moment at the height of the battle, and then he might not. She wished her uncle James to be judicious in his generosity, and not make any sacrifice which might prove too costly alike to himself and to others.

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"She is a compound of romance and strong common-sense," thought Harley, musing over the letter. "She wants the romance without paying the price. Now I wonder if that is not rather more the characteristic of women than of men."

On the day following the receipt of this letter, a look of joy came over the face of the candidate and there was a visible exhilaration throughout his party. Men, worn, exhausted, and covered with the dust of the great plains, began to freshen up themselves as much as they could; there was a great brushing of soiled clothing, a hauling out of clean collars, a sharpening of razors, and a general inquiry, "How do I look?" The whole atmosphere of the train was changed, and it became much brighter and livelier. It was the candidate himself who wrought the transformation, after reading a letter, with the brief statement, "Mrs. Grayson and Sylvia will join us to-morrow."

All had begun to pine for feminine society, as soldiers, long on the march, desire the sight of women and the sound of their voices. It is true that they saw women often, and many of them—some who were beautiful and some who were not—as they sped through the West, but it was always a flitting and blurred glimpse. "I haven't got an impression of the features of a single one of them," complained the elderly beau, Tremaine. Now two women whom they knew well and liked would be with them for days, and they rejoiced accordingly.

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It was at a little junction station in eastern Colorado, in the clear blue-and-silver of a fine morning, that Mrs. Grayson and Sylvia met them. Mr. Grayson and his party had been down about fifty miles on a branch line for a speech at a town of importance, and they had begun the return journey before daylight in order to make the connection. But when the gray dawn came through the dusty car-windows, it was odd to see how neat and careful all appeared, even under such difficult circumstances.

Harley was surprised to realize the eagerness with which he looked forward to the meeting, and put it down to the long lack of feminine society. But he wondered if Sylvia had changed, if the nearer approach of her marriage with "King" Plummer would make her reserved and with her outlook on the future—that is, as one apart.

He had a favorable seat in the car and he was the first to see them. The junction was a tiny place of not more than a half-dozen houses standing in the midst of a great plain, and it made a perfect silhouette against the gorgeous morning sunlight. Harley saw two slender figures outlined there in front of the station building, and, despite the distance, he knew them. There was to him something typically American and typically Western in these two women coming alone into that vast emptiness and waiting there in the utmost calmness, knowing that they were as safe as if they were in the heart of a great city, and perhaps safer.

He knew, too, which was Sylvia; her manner, her bearing, the poise of her figure, had become familiar to him. Slender and upright, she was in harmony with the majesty of these great and silent spaces, but she did not now seem bold and forward to him; she was clothed in a different atmosphere altogether.

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There was a warm greeting for Mr. Grayson and the hand of fellowship for the others. Harley held Sylvia's fingers in his for a moment—just a moment—and said, with some emphasis:

"Our little party has not been the same without you, Miss Morgan."

"I'm glad to hear you say it," she replied, frankly, "and I'm glad to be back with all of you. It's a campaign that I enjoy."

"It can be said for it that it is never monotonous."

"That's one reason why I like it."

She laughed a little, making no attempt to conceal her pleasure at this renewed touch with fresh, young life, and, because it was so obvious, Harley laughed also and shared her pleasure. He noticed, too, the new charm that she had in addition to the old, a softening of manner, a slight appeal that she made, without detracting in any wise from the impression of strength and self-reliance that she gave.

"Where did you leave 'King' Plummer?" he asked, unguardedly.

"In Idaho," she replied, with sudden gravity. "He is well, and I believe that he is happy. He is umpiring a great quarrel between the cattlemen and the sheepmen, or, rather, he is compelling both to listen to him and to agree to a compromise that he has suggested. So he is really enjoying himself. You do not know the delight that he takes in the handling of large and rather rough

affairs."

"I can readily guess it; he seems to have been made for them."

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But she said no more of "King" Plummer, quickly turning the talk to the campaign, and showing at once that she had followed every phase of it with the closest and most anxious attention. Mrs. Grayson had walked on a little and was talking to her husband, but she glanced back and saw what she had expected. She and her husband turned presently in their walk, and she said, looking significantly at Harley and Miss Morgan:

"It is a great pleasure to Sylvia to be with your party again."

There was such a curious inflection to her voice that the candidate exclaimed, "Why, what do you mean, Anna?" and she merely replied, "Oh, nothing!" which meant everything. The candidate, understanding, looked more attentively, and his eyes contracted a little, as if he were not wholly pleased at what he saw.

"It's a free world," he said, "but I am glad that 'King' Plummer will be with us again in a few days."

But his wife, able to see further than he, merely looked thoughtful and did not reply.

Harley's solitary talk with Miss Morgan was brief; it could not be anything else under the circumstances; Hobart, with all sail set, bore down upon them.

"Come! Come, Harley!" he cried, with the perfect frankness that usually distinguished him, "we don't permit any selfish monopolists here. We are all cast away on a desert island, so to speak, and there are a lot of us men and only two women, one of whom is mortgaged!"

Then he was welcoming Miss Morgan in florid style; and there, too, was the ancient beau, Tremaine, displaying all his little arts of elegance and despising Hobart's obvious methods; and Blaisdell, and all the others, forming a court about her and giving her an attention which could not fail to please her and bring a deeper red to her cheeks and a brighter flash to her eyes. It seemed to Mrs. Grayson, looking on, that the girl had been hungry for something which she had now found, and in finding which she was happy, and, despite her sense of loyalty, she felt a glow of sympathy.

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But the sense of duty in Mrs. Grayson was strong, and while she hesitated much and sought for mental excuses to avoid it, she wrote a long letter to "King" Plummer that evening in the waiting-room of a little wayside hotel. In many things that she said she was beautifully vague; but she told him how glad she was that he would join them so soon; she spoke of the quarrel between the cattlemen and the sheepmen as a closed affair, and complimented him on his skill in bringing it to an end so quickly; it was all the better because now he could come to them at once, and she boldly said how much Sylvia was missing him. But when she sealed and addressed the letter she reflected awhile before dropping it in the box on the wall.

"Now, ought I to do this?" she asked herself. "Have I the right to hasten or to divert the course of affairs?"

She decided that she had the right, and mailed the letter.

"King" Plummer came a few days later—he said that he "just blew in a few days ahead of time"—and received a hearty welcome from everybody, which he returned in double measure in his broad, spontaneous way. He placed a sounding kiss upon the somewhat flushed brow of Sylvia Morgan, and exclaimed, "Well, my little girl, aren't you glad to see me ahead of time?" She replied quickly, though not loudly, that she was, and then he announced that he would stay with them for a long while. "These are my mountains," he said, "and I'll have to show you the way through them."

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"King" Plummer, although inclined to be masterful, was admitted at once into the full membership of the party, and he entered upon what he called his first long vacation. He showed the keenest enjoyment in the speeches, the crowds, the enthusiasm, the travelling, and the quick-shifting scenes. He was a boy with the boys, but the watchful Mrs. Grayson noticed a shade of difference between Sylvia with the "King" present and Sylvia with the "King" absent. With him present there was a little restraint, a slight effort on her part to watch herself; but with him away there was great spontaneity and freedom, especially with the younger members like Harley and Hobart, and even Churchill, who reluctantly admitted that Miss Morgan was a fine girl, "though rather Western, you know."

Mrs. Grayson began to take thought with herself again, and the thought was taken with great seriousness. Had she been right in bringing "King" Plummer on so soon, although he did not even know that he was brought? She resolutely asked herself, too, how much of her action had been due to the knowledge that the "King" was a very important man to her husband, controlling, as he probably could, the vote of several mountain states. This question, which she could not answer, troubled her, and so did the conduct of Sylvia, who, usually so frank and straightforward, seemed to be suffering from a strange attack of perverseness. For years she had obeyed "King" Plummer as her protector and as the one who had rightful control, but now she began to give him orders and to criticise many things that he did, to the unlimited astonishment of the "King," who had never expected anything of the kind.

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"What is the matter with Sylvia? I never knew her to act in such a way before," he said to Mrs. Grayson.

"As she is to be your wife, and not a sort of ward, she is merely giving you a preliminary training," replied the candidate's wife, dryly.

"King" Plummer looked at her in doubt, but he pondered the question deeply and was remarkably meek the next time Sylvia scolded him, whereat she showed less pleasure than ever. "King" Plummer was still in a maze and did not know what to say. The very next day he found himself deeper in the tangle, being scolded by Mrs. Grayson herself.

They were waiting at a small station for some carriages which were to take them across the prairie, and, the air being clear and bracing, they stood outside, where Miss Morgan, as usual, held an involuntary court. A cloud of dust arose, and behind it quickly came a great herd of cattle, driven with much shouting and galloping of horses by a half-dozen cowboys. The herd was passing to the south a few hundred yards from the station, but Sylvia, thoroughly used to such sights, was not interested. Not so some of the others who went out to see, and among them was "King" Plummer, who began at once to calculate the number of cattle, their value, and how far they had come, all of which he did with great shrewdness.

The "King's" absorption in this congenial occupation was increased when he recognized the leader of the cowboys as an old friend and former associate in Idaho and Montana, with whom he could exchange much interesting news. Borrowing a horse from one of the men, he rode on with them for a mile or two.

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Mrs. Grayson had seen "King" Plummer leave the group about Sylvia, and she marked it with a disapproving eye. She would have spoken to him then, but she had no chance, and she watched him until he borrowed the horse and rode on with the cowboys. Then she looked the other way and saw two figures walking up and down the station platform. They were Sylvia and Harley, engrossed in talk and caring not at all for the passage of the herd. The two brown heads were not far apart, and Mrs. Grayson was near enough to see that Sylvia's color was beautiful.

The candidate's wife was annoyed, and, like any other good woman, she was ready to vent her annoyance on somebody. She walked out a little from the station, and presently she met "King" Plummer coming back. He dismounted, returned the horse to its owner, and approached her, the sparkle of enthusiasm in his eyes lighting up his brown face.

"That was a pleasant surprise, Mrs. Grayson," he exclaimed. "The leader of those boys was Bill Ascott, whom I've known twenty years, an' he's brought those cattle so cleverly all the way from Montana that they are in as good condition now as they were the day they started. And I had a fine gallop with them, too."

He had more to say, but he stopped when he noticed her deeply frowning face.

"What is wrong, Mrs. Grayson?" he asked, in apprehension.

"Oh, you had a fine gallop, did you!" she said, in a tone of biting irony. "I am glad of it. Mr. William Plummer ought to have his gallop, under any circumstances!"

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He stared at her in increasing amazement.

"I don't know that I'm counted a dull man, but you've got me now, Mrs. Grayson."

She pointed to the station platform, where the two brown heads were still not far apart.

"Without a word you left the woman that you are going to marry to look at a lot of cattle."

"Why, Sylvia is only a child, an' we've been used to each other for years. She understands."

"Yes, she will understand, or she isn't a woman," said Mrs. Grayson, and if possible the biting irony of her tone increased. "You will see, too, Mr. William Plummer, that one man at least did not neglect her for the sake of some dusty cattle."

Mr. Plummer stared again at the pair on the platform, and a mingled look of pain and apprehension came into his eyes.

"You surely can't mean anything of that kind! Why, little Sylvia has promised—"

"All things are possible, Mr. Plummer. My husband is a lawyer, and I have heard him quote often a maxim of the law which runs something like this, 'He must keep who can.'"

She turned away and would not have another word to say to him then, leaving Mr. Plummer in much perplexity and trouble.

Mrs. Grayson herself was in a similar perplexity and trouble throughout the day. Her doubts about the letter she had written to "King" Plummer increased. Perhaps it would have been wiser to let affairs take their own course. The sight of the two brown heads and the two young faces on the station platform had made her very thoughtful, and she drew comparisons with "King" Plummer; there might be days in autumn which resembled those of spring, but it was only a fleeting resemblance, because autumn was itself, with its own coloring, its own fruits, and its own days, and nothing could turn it into spring. "I will not meddle again," she resolved, and then her mind was taken off the matter by an incident in her husband's progress. In Nebraska the men

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left the train for a few days, travelling by carriage, and here occurred the event which created a great stir in its time.

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## IX

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### JIMMY GRAYSON'S SPELL

A night, after a beautiful, brown October day, came on dark and rainy, with fierce winds off the Rocky Mountains; and Harley, who was in the first carriage with the candidate, could barely see the heads of the horses, gently rising and falling as they splashed through the mud. Behind him he heard faintly the sound of wheels amid the wind and rain, and he knew that the other correspondents and the politicians, who always hung on the trail of Jimmy Grayson, shifting according to locality, were following their leader in single file.

Mrs. Grayson and Sylvia had remained on the special car, and expected to join them on the following day, although Sylvia was quite prepared to take the carriage journey across the country and dare all the risks of the darkness and possible bad weather. Indeed, with the fine spirit of the West and her own natural high courage, she wanted to go, saying that she could stand as much as a man, and only Mrs. Grayson's refusal to accompany her and the consequent lack of a chaperone compelled her to abandon the idea. Now Harley and Mr. Grayson were very glad that she was not out in the storm.

Although the hood of the carriage was down and the collar of Harley's heavy coat was turned up to his ears, the cold rain, lashed by the wind, struck him in the face now and then.

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"You don't do anything by halves out here on these Western plains," he said.

"No," replied Jimmy Grayson, "we don't deal in disguises; when we're hot we're hot, and when we're cold we're cold. Now, after a perfect day, we're having the wildest kind of a night. It's our way."

It was then ten o'clock, and they had expected to reach Speedwell at midnight, crossing the Platte River on the big wooden bridge; but the rain, the darkness, and the singularly sticky quality of the black Nebraska mud would certainly delay them until one o'clock in the morning, and possibly much later. It was not a cheerful prospect for tired and sleepy men.

"Mr. Grayson," said Harley, "without seeking to discredit you, I wish I had gone to another war instead of coming out here with you. That would have been less wearing."

The candidate laughed.

"But you are seeing the West as few men from New York ever see it," he said.

The driver turned, and a little stream of water ran off his hat-brim into Harley's face.

"It's the wind that holds us back, Mr. Grayson," he said; "if we leave the road and cut across the prairie on the hard ground it will save at least an hour."

"By all means, turn out at once," said the candidate, "and the others will follow."

"Wise driver; considerate man!" remarked Harley.

There was marked relief the moment the wheels of the carriage struck the brown grass. They rolled easily once more, and the off horse, lifting up his head, neighed cheerfully.

"It means midnight, and not later, Harley," said the candidate, in a reassuring tone.

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Harley leaned back in his seat, and trusted all now to the wise and considerate driver who had proposed such a plan. The night was just as black as a hat, and the wind and rain moaned over the bleak and lonesome plains. They were far out in Nebraska, and, although they were near the Platte River, it was one of the most thinly inhabited sections of the state. They had not seen a light since leaving the last speaking-place at sundown. Harley wondered at the courage of the pioneers who crossed the great plains amid such a vast loneliness. He and the candidate were tired, and soon ceased to talk. The driver confined his attention to his business. Harley fell into a doze, from which he was awakened after a while by the sudden stoppage of the carriage. The candidate awoke at the same time. The rain had decreased, there was a partial moonlight, and the driver was turning upon them a shamefaced countenance.

"What's the matter?" asked the candidate.

"To tell you the truth, Mr. Grayson," replied the driver, in an apologetic tone. "I've gone wrong somehow or other, and I don't know just where we're at."

"Lost?" said Harley.

"If you wish to put it that way, I reckon you're right," said the driver, with a touch of offence.

"What has become of the other carriages?" asked Harley, looking back for them.

"I reckon they didn't see us when we turned out, and they kept on along the road."

There was no doubt about the plight into which they had got themselves. The plain seemed no less lonely than it was before the white man came.

"What's that line of trees across yonder?" asked the candidate.

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"I guess it marks where the Platte runs," replied the driver.

"Then drive to it; if we follow the trees we must reach the bridge, and then things will be simple."

The driver became more cheerful, the rain ceased and the moonlight increased; but Harley lacked confidence. He had a deep distrust of the Platte River. It seemed to him the most ridiculous stream in the United States, making a presumptuous claim upon the map, and flowing often in a channel a mile wide with only a foot of water. But he feared the marshes and quicksands that bordered its shallow course.

They reached the line of gaunt trees, dripping with water and whipped by the wind, and Harley's fears were justified. The river was there, but they could not approach it, lest they be swallowed up in the sand, and they turned back upon the prairie.

"We must find a house," said the candidate; "if it comes to the pinch we can pass the night in the carriage, but I don't like to sleep sitting."

They bore away from the river, driving at random, and after an hour saw a faint light under the dusky horizon.

"The lone settler!" exclaimed Harley, who began to cherish fond anticipations of a bed. "Go straight for it, driver."

The driver was not loath, and even the horses, seeming to have renewed hope, changed their sluggish walk to a trot. They had no hesitation in seeking shelter at that hour, entire strangers though they were, such an act being in perfect accordance with the laws of Western hospitality.

As they approached, a bare wooden house, unprotected by trees, rose out of the plain. A wire fence enclosed a half-acre or so about it, and apparently there had been a few rather futile attempts to make a lawn.

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"Looks cheerless," said Harley.

"But it holds beds," said the candidate.

"You save your voice," said Harley; "I'll call the farmer, and I hope it will be a man who can speak English, and not some new Russian or Bohemian citizen."

He sprang out of the carriage, glad to relieve himself from his cramped and stiff position, and walked towards the little gate in the wire fence. There was a sudden rush of light feet, a stream of fierce barks and snarls, and Harley sprang back in alarm as two large bull-dogs, red-mouthed, flung themselves against the fence.

"I said you had no cause to regret that war," called the candidate from the carriage.

The wires were strong, and they held the dogs; but the animals hung to the fence, as fierce as wolves; and Harley, lifting up his voice, added to the chorus with a "Hi! Hi! Mr. Farmer! Strangers want to stop with you!"

The din was tremendous, and presently a window in the second story was shoved up, and a man, fully dressed, carrying a long-barrelled rifle in his hands, appeared at it. He called to the dogs, which ceased at once their barking and snarling, and then he gazed down at the intruders in no friendly manner. Harley saw him clearly, a tall, gaunt old man, white-haired, but muscular and strong. He held the rifle as if he were ready to use it—a most unusual thing in this part of the country, where householders seldom kept fire-arms.

"What do you want?" he called, in a sharp, high voice.

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"Beds!" cried Harley. "We are lost, and if you don't take us in we'll have to sleep on the prairie, which is a trifle damp."

"Waal, I 'low it hez rained a right smart," said the old man, grimly.

Harley noticed at once the man's use of "right smart," an expression with which he had been familiar in another part of the country, and it encouraged him. He was sure now of hospitality.

"Who are you?" the old man called.

"Mr. Grayson, the nominee for President of the United States, is in the carriage, and I am his friend, one of the newspaper correspondents travelling with him."

"Wait a minute."

The window was closed, and in a few moments the old man came out at the front door. He carried the rifle on his shoulder, but Harley attributed the fact to his haste at the mention of Jimmy Grayson's name.

"My name is Simpson—Daniel Simpson," he said, hospitably. "Tell the driver to put the horses in

the barn."

He waved his hand towards a low building in the rear of his residence, and then he invited the candidate and the correspondent to enter. He looked curiously, but with reverence, at the candidate.

"You are really Jimmy Grayson," he said. "I'd know you off-hand by your picture, which I guess hez been printed in ev'ry newspaper in the United States. I 'low it's a powerful honor to me to hev you here."

"And it's a tremendous accommodation to us for you to take us," said Jimmy Grayson, with his usual easy grace.

But Harley was looking at Simpson with a gaze no less intent than the old man had bent upon Grayson. The accent and inflection of the host were of a region far distant from Nebraska, but Harley, who was born near that wild country, knew the long, lean, narrow type of face, with the high cheek-bones and the watchful black eyes. Moreover, there was something directly and personally familiar in the figure before him. [Pg 133]

Under any circumstances the manner of the old man would have drawn the attention of Harley, whose naturally keen observation was sharpened by the training of his profession. The old man seemed abstracted. His fingers moved absently on the stock of his rifle, and Harley inferred at once that he had something of unusual weight on his mind.

"Me an' the ol' woman hev been settin' late," said Simpson. "When you git ol' you don't sleep much. But it'll be a long time, Mr. Grayson, before that fits you."

He led the way into a room better furnished than Harley had expected to see. A coal fire smouldered on the hearth, and the arrangement of the room showed some evidences of refinement and taste. An old woman was bent over the fire, but she rose when the men entered, and turned upon them a face which Harley knew at once to be that of one who had been frightened by something. Her eyes were red, as if she had been weeping. Harley looked from host to hostess with curious glance, but he was still silent.

"This is Marthy, my wife, gen'lemen," said Simpson. "Marthy, this is Mr. Grayson, the greatest man in this here United States, and the other is one of the newspaper fellers that travels with him."

Jimmy Grayson bowed with great courtesy, and apologized so gracefully for the intrusion that an ordinary person would have been glad to be intruded upon in such a manner. The woman said nothing, but stared vacantly at her guests. The old man came to her relief. [Pg 134]

"Marthy ain't used to visitors, least of all a man like you, Mr. Grayson, and it kind o' upsets her," he said. "You see, Marthy an' me lives here all by ourselves."

The woman started and looked at him.

"All by ourselves," repeated the man, firmly; "but we'll do the best we kin."

"Daniel," suddenly exclaimed the old woman, in high, shrill tones, "why don't you put down your gun? Mr. Grayson'll think you're a-goin' to shoot him."

The old man laughed, but the ever-watchful Harley saw that the laugh was not spontaneous.

"I 'clar' to gracious," he said, "I clean forgot I had old Deadeye. You see, Mr. Grayson, when I heerd the dogs barkin', sez I to myself 'it's robbers, shore'; and before I h'ists the window upstairs I reaches old Deadeye off the hooks, and then, if it had 'a' been robbers, it wouldn't 'a' been healthy for 'em."

"I'm sure of that, Mr. Simpson," said Jimmy Grayson; "you don't look like a man who would allow himself to be run over."

"An' I wouldn't," said the old man, with sudden, fierce emphasis. But he put the rifle on the hooks over the fireplace. Such hooks as these were not usual in Nebraska; but Jimmy Grayson was too polite to say anything, and Harley was still watching every movement of the old man. The driver returned at this moment from the stable, and, reporting that he had fed the horses, took his place with the others at the fire.

"I 'low you-uns would like to eat a little," said the old man, laughing in the same unnatural way. "Marthy, tote in suthin' from the kitchen as quick as you kin." [Pg 135]

The old woman raised her startled, frightened eyes, and for a moment her glance met Harley's; it seemed to him to be full of entreaty; the whole atmosphere of the place was to him tense, strained, and tragic; why, he did not know, but he shook himself and decided that it was only the result of weariness, the long ride, and the night in the storm. Nevertheless, the feeling did not depart because he willed that it should go.

"No, we thank you," Jimmy Grayson was saying; "we are not hungry; but we should like very much to go to bed."

"It's jest with you," said Simpson. "Marthy, I'll show the gen'lemen to their room, and you kin stay here till I come back."

The old woman did not speak, but stood in a crouched attitude looking at Grayson and then at Harley and then at the driver; it seemed to the correspondent that she did not dare trust her voice, and he saw fear still lurking in her eyes.

"Come along, gen'lemen," said Simpson, taking from the table a small lamp, that had been lighted at their entrance, and leading the way.

Harley glanced back once at the door, and the woman's eyes met his in a look that was like one last despairing appeal. But there was nothing tangible, nothing that he could not say was the result of an overwrought fancy.

It was a small and bare room, with only a single bed, to which the old man took them. "It's the best I've got," he said, apologetically. "Mr. Grayson, you an' the newspaper man kin sleep in the bed, an' t'other feller, I reckon, kin curl up on the floor."

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"It is good enough for anybody," said Jimmy Grayson, gallantly. As a matter of fact, both he and Harley had known what it was to fare worse.

"Good-night," the man said, and left them rather hastily, Harley thought; but the others took no notice, and were soon in sound slumber, the candidate because he had the rare power of going to sleep whenever there was a chance, and the driver because he was indifferent and tired.

But Harley lay awake. An hour ago his dream of heaven was a bed, and now, the bed attained, sleep would not come near. Out of the stillness, after a while, he heard the gentle moving of feet below, and he sat up on the bed, all his suspicions confirmed. Something unusual was going on in this lone house! And it had been going on even before he and the candidate came!

He listened to the moving feet for a few moments. Then the noise ceased, but Harley knew that there was no further chance of sleep for him, with his nerves on edge, and likely to remain there. He lay back on the edge of the bed, trying to accustom his eyes to the darkness, and presently he heard a sound, the most chilling that a man can hear. It was the sound of a woman, alone and in the dark, between midnight and morning, crying gently, but crying deeply, uncontrollably, and from her chest.

Harley's resolve was taken at once. He slipped on his clothes and went to the door. His eyes were used now to the dark, and there was a window that shed a half-light.

He stopped with his hand on the bolt, because he heard the low, wailing note more plainly, and he was sure that it came from another room across the narrow hall. He turned the bolt, but the door refused to open. There was no key on the inside! They had been locked in, and for a purpose!

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Harley was fully aroused—on edge with excitement, but able to restrain it and to think clearly. There was an old grate in the room, apparently used but seldom, and, leaning against the wall beside it, an iron poker. Tiptoeing, he obtained the poker and returned to the door. The lock was a flimsy affair, and, inserting the point of the poker under the catch, he easily pried it off and put it gently on the floor.

Then he stepped out into the dusky hall and listened. The woman was yet crying, monotonously, but with such a note of woe that Harley was shaken. He had thought in his own room that it was the old woman who wept thus; but now in the hall he knew it to be a younger and fresher voice.

He saw farther down another door, and he knew that it led to the room from which came the sounds of grief. He approached it cautiously, still holding the poker in his hands, and noticed that there was no key in the lock. The woman, whoever she might be, was locked in, as he and his comrades had been; but the empty keyhole gave him an idea. He blew through it, making a sort of whistling sound with his puckered lips. The crying ceased, all save an occasional low, half-smothered sob, as if the woman were making a supreme effort to control her feelings.

Then Harley put his lips to the keyhole again and whispered: "What is the matter? It is a friend who asks." There was no reply, only a tense silence, even the occasional sobs ceasing. Then, after a few moments of waiting, Harley whispered, "Don't be alarmed; I am about to force the door."

The door was of flimsy pine, and it gave quickly to the poker's leverage. Then, this useful weapon still in hand, Harley stepped into the room, where he heard a deep-drawn sigh that expressed mingled emotions.

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There was a window at the end of the room, and the moonlight shone clearly through, clothing with its full radiance a tall, slim girl, who had risen from a chair, and who stood trembling before Harley, fully dressed, although her long hair hung down her back and her eyes were red with weeping.

She was handsome, but not with the broad face of the West. Hers was another type, a type that Harley knew well. The cheek-bones were a little high, the features delicate, the figure slender, and there was on her cheeks a rosy bloom that never grew under the cutting winds of the great plains.

Harley knew at once that she was the daughter of the old couple below stairs.

"Do not be afraid of me," he said, gently. "I know that you are in great trouble, but I will help you. I, too, am from Kentucky. I was born there, and I used to live there, though not in the mountains,

as you did."

The appeal and terror in her eyes changed to momentary surprise. "What do you know of me?" she exclaimed.

"Very little of you, but more of your father. Years ago I was at his house in the Kentucky mountains. He was a leader in the Simpson-Eversley feud. I knew him to-night, but I have said nothing. Now, tell me, what is the matter?"

His voice was soothing—that of a strong man who would protect, and the girl yielded to its influence. Brokenly she told the story. Many men had been killed in the feud, and the few Eversleys who were left had been scattered far in the mountains. Then old Daniel Simpson said that he would come out on the Great Plains, more than a thousand miles, and they had come.

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"There was one of the Eversleys—Henry Eversley—he was young and handsome. People said he was not bad. He, too, came to Nebraska. He found out where we lived; he has been here."

"Ah!" said Harley. He felt that they were coming to the gist of the matter.

The girl, with a sudden passionate cry, threw herself upon her knees. "He is here now! He is here now!" she cried. "He is in the cellar, bound and gagged, and my father is going to kill him! But I love him! He came here to-night, and my father caught us together, and struck him down. But we meant nothing wrong. I declare before God that we did not! We were getting ready to run away together and to be married at Speedwell!"

Harley shuddered. The impending tragedy was more terrible than he had feared.

"You can do nothing!" exclaimed the girl. "My father is armed. He will have no interference! He cares nothing for what may come after! He thinks—"

She could not say it all; but Harley knew well that what she would say was, "He thinks that he has been robbed of his honor by a mortal enemy."

"Can you stay quietly in this room until morning?" he asked. "I know it is hard to wait under such circumstances, but you must do it for the sake of Henry Eversley."

"And will you save him?"

"He shall be saved."

"I will wait," she said.

Harley slipped noiselessly out, and, closing the door behind him, went to his room, where he at once awakened the candidate.

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Jimmy Grayson listened with intense attention to Harley's story. When the tale was over, he and Harley whispered together long and earnestly, and Jimmy Grayson frequently nodded his head in assent. Then they awoke the driver, a heavy man, but with a keen Western mind that at once became alert at the news of danger.

"Yes, I got my bearings now," he said, in reply to a question of Harley's. "I asked the old fellow about it when I came up from the stable, and Speedwell is straight north from here. I can take one of the horses and hit the town before daylight. I know everybody there."

"But how about the dogs?" asked Jimmy Grayson. "Can you get past them?"

"No trouble there at all. After we came, the old fellow locked 'em up in a stall in the stable and left 'em there. I guess he didn't want to look to us as if he was too suspicious."

"Then go, and God go with you!" said Jimmy Grayson, with deep feeling.

The driver left at once, not by the stairway, near the foot of which the old man might be watching, but by a much simpler road. He raised the window of the room and swung out, sustained by Jimmy Grayson's powerful arms until his feet were within a yard of the ground. Then he dropped, ran lightly across the lawn, sprang over the wire fence, and soon disappeared in the grove where the girl had said that the horses were waiting. Jimmy Grayson closed the window with a deep sigh of relief.

"He will do his part," he said; "now for ours."

He did not seek to sleep again, and Harley could not think of it. One task occupied him a little while—the replacing of the lock on the door—but after that the hours passed heavily and in silence. The flush of dawn appeared in the east at last, and then they heard a faint step in the hall outside and the gentle turning of a key in a lock. Jimmy Grayson and Harley looked at each other and smiled grimly, but they said nothing. A half-hour later there was a loud knock on their door, and old Daniel Simpson bade them rise and get ready for breakfast.

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"It is chiefly in your hands now," said Harley, in a low tone to Jimmy Grayson.

"We'll be down in a few minutes, and we have had a good night's sleep, for which we thank you," he called to the old man.

"You're welcome to it," replied Simpson. "You'll find water and towels on the porch down-stairs, and then you can come straight in to breakfast."

They heard his step passing down the hall to the stairway, where it died away, and then they dressed deliberately. On the porch they found the water and towels as Simpson had said, and bathed and rubbed their faces. A golden sun was just rising from the prairie, and beads of water from the night's rain sparkled on the trees and grass. The wind came out of the southwest, fresh and glorious.

They entered the dining-room, where the breakfast smoked on the table, and the old man and his wife were waiting. Harley could not see that they had changed in appearance in the morning glow. Simpson was still rugged and grim, while the woman yet cowered and now and then raised terrified and appealing eyes.

"Whar's your driver?" asked Simpson.

"He has gone down to the stable to feed and care for his horses," replied the candidate, easily. "He's a very careful man, always looks after his horses before he looks after himself. He told us not to wait for him, as he'll be along directly." [Pg 142]

"Then be seated," said the old man, hospitably. "We've got corn-bread and ham-and-eggs and coffee, an' I guess you kin make out."

"I should think so," said Jimmy Grayson. "Why, if I had not been as hungry as a wolf already, it would make me hungry just to look at it."

The three sat down at the table, while Mrs. Simpson served them, going back and forth to the little kitchen adjoining for fresh supplies of hot food. Mr. Grayson did most of the talking, and it was addressed in an easy, confidential manner to old Daniel Simpson. The candidate's gift of conversational talk was equal to his gift of platform oratory, but never before had Harley known him to be so interesting and so attractive. He fairly radiated with the quality called personal magnetism, and soon the old man ate mechanically, while his attention was riveted on Jimmy Grayson. But by-and-by he seemed to remember something.

"That driver of yourn is tarnal slow," he said; "he ought to be comin' in to breakfast."

"You have diagnosed his chief fault," said Jimmy Grayson, with an easy laugh. "He is slow, extremely slow, but he will be along directly, and he doesn't mind cold victuals."

Then he turned back to the easy flow of anecdote, chiefly about his political campaign, and Harley saw that the interest of the old man was centred upon him. The woman, without a word, brought in hot biscuits from the kitchen, but she did not lose her frightened look, glancing from one to another of the three with furtive, lowered eyes. But Jimmy Grayson, the golden-mouthed, talked gracefully, and the note of his discourse that morning was the sweetness and kindness of life; he saw only the sunny side of things; people were good and true, and peace was better than strife. His smiling, benevolent face and the mellow flow of his words enforced the lesson. [Pg 143]

The old man's face softened a little, and even Harley, though a prey to anxieties, felt the influence of Jimmy Grayson's spell. The little dining-room where they sat was at the rear of the house. Harley saw the golden sunshine of a perfect October day, and the wind that sang across the plain had the soft strain of a girl's voice. He felt that it was good to live that morning, and his spirits rose as he saw the old man fall further and further under the spell of Jimmy Grayson's eloquence.

But Simpson raised himself presently and glanced at the door.

"That driver of yourn is tarnal slow," he repeated. "Seems to me he'll never finish feedin' an' curryin' them horses!"

"He is slow, extremely slow," laughed Jimmy Grayson. "If he were not so we should not have got lost last night, and we should not be here now, Mr. Simpson, trespassing on your hospitality. Perhaps the man does not want any breakfast; it's not the first time since he's been with us that he's gone without it."

Then he launched again into the stream of a very pretty story that he had been telling, and the wavering attention of the old man returned. Harley gave all assistance. Despite his anxiety and his listening for sounds without, he kept his eyes fixed upon Jimmy Grayson's face as if he would not miss a word. [Pg 144]

The breakfast went on to an unusual length. The candidate and Harley called again and again for hot biscuits and more coffee, and always the old woman served them silently, almost furtively.

The story was finished, and just as it came to its end Simpson said, with a grim inflection:

"It 'pears to me, Mr. Grayson, all you said about that driver of yourn is true. He hasn't come from the stable yet."

There was the sound of a step in the hall, and the candidate said, quickly:

"He's coming now; he'll be in presently, as soon as he washes his hands and face on the porch. No, sit down, Mr. Simpson; he needs no directions. We were speaking of the sacrifices that people make for one another, and it reminds me of a very pretty story that I must tell you."

The old man sank into his chair, but his look wandered to the door. It seemed to Harley that light sounds came from the other part of the house, and the old man, too, seemed for a moment to be

listening, but Jimmy Grayson at once began his story, and Simpson's attention came back.

"This is a story of the mountains of eastern Kentucky," began the candidate, "and it is a love story—a very pretty one, I think."

Simpson moved in his chair, and a sudden wondering look appeared in his eyes at the words "eastern Kentucky." The old woman, too, slightly raised her bent form and gazed eagerly at the candidate. But Jimmy Grayson took no notice, and continued.

"This," he said, "is the love story of two people who were young then, but who are old now. Yet I am sure there is much affection and tenderness in their hearts, and often they must think fondly of those old days. The youth lived on the side of a mountain, and the girl lived on the side of another mountain not far away. He was tall, strong, and brave; she, too, was tall, as slender as one of the mountain saplings, with glorious brown hair and eyes, and a voice as musical as a mountain echo. Well, they met and they loved, loved truly and deeply. It might seem that the way was easy now for them to marry and go to a house of their own, but it was not. There was a bar."

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"A feud!" breathed the old man. The old woman put her hands to her eyes.

"Yes, a feud; they seem strange things to us here, but to those distant people in the mountains they seem the most natural thing in the world. The youth and the girl belonged to families that were at war with each other, and marriage between them would have been considered by all their relatives a mortal sin."

The old man's eyes were fastened upon Jimmy Grayson's, but his look for the moment was distant, as if it were held by old memories. The woman was crying softly. Again the soft shuffle of feet in the other part of the house came to Harley's ears, but the old couple did not hear; the driver was forgotten; for all Simpson and his wife remembered, he might still be finishing his morning toilet on the porch.

"They were compelled to meet in secret," continued Jimmy Grayson, "but the girl was frightened for him because she loved him. She told him that he must go away, that if her father and brothers heard of their meetings they would kill him; it was impossible for them to marry, but she loved him, she would never deny that. He listened to her gently and tenderly; he was a brave youth, as I have said, and he would not go away. He said that God had made them for each other, and she should be his wife; he would not go away; he was not afraid."

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"No, I was not afraid," breathed the old man, softly. The old woman had straightened herself up until she stood erect. There was a delicate flush on her face, and her eyes were luminous.

"This youth was a hero, a gallant and chivalrous gentleman," continued Jimmy Grayson; "he loved the girl, and she loved him; there was no real reason in the world why they should not marry, and he was resolved that there should be none."

The candidate's head was bent forward over his plate. His face was slightly flushed, and his burning eyes held Simpson's. Harley saw that he thrilled with his own story and the crisis for which it was told. Elsewhere in the building the faint noises went on, but Harley alone heard.

"The youth did what I would have done and what you would have done, Mr. Simpson," continued Jimmy Grayson. "He did what nature and sense dictated. He overbore all resistance on the part of the girl, who in her heart was willing to be overborne. One dark night he stole her from her father's house and carried her away on his horse."

"How well I remember it!" exclaimed the old man, with eyes a-gleam. "I had Marthy on the horse behind me, and my rifle on the pommel of the saddle before me."

The old woman cried softly, but it seemed to Harley that the note of her weeping was not grief.

"He stole her away," continued Jimmy Grayson, "and before morning they were married. Then he took her to a house of his own, and he sent word that if any man came to do them harm he would meet a rifle bullet. They knew that he was the best shot in the mountains, and that he was without fear, so they did not come. And that youth and that girl are still living, though both are old now, but neither has ever for a moment regretted that night."

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"You speak the truth," exclaimed the old man, striking his fist upon the table, while his eyes flashed with exultant fire. "We've never been sorry for a moment for what we did, hev we Marthy?"

Harley had risen to his feet, and a signal look passed between him and the candidate.

"And then," said Jimmy Grayson, "why do you deny to Henry Eversley the right to do what you did, and what you still glory in after all these years? Mr. Simpson, shake hands with your new son-in-law. He and his bride are waiting in the doorway."

The old man sprang to his feet. His daughter and a youth, a handsome couple, stood at the entrance. Behind them were three or four men, one the driver, and another in clerical garb, evidently a minister.

"They were married in your front parlor while we sat at breakfast," said Jimmy Grayson. "Mr. Simpson, your son-in-law is still offering you his hand."

The bewildered look left the old man's eyes, and he took the outstretched hand in a hearty grasp.

## THE "KING'S" REQUEST

An hour later the candidate, Harley, and the driver were on the way to the town at which they had intended to pass the preceding night. With ample instructions and a brilliant morning sunlight there was no further trouble about the direction, and they pursued their way in peace.

The air was crisp and blowy, and the earth, new-washed by the rain, took on some of the tints of spring green, despite the lateness of the season. Harley, relaxed from the tension of the night before, leaned back in his seat and enjoyed the tonic breeze. No one of the three had much to say; all were in meditation, and the quiet and loneliness of the morning seemed to promote musing. They drove some miles across the rolling prairie without seeing a single house, but at last the driver pointed to a flickering patch of gold on the western horizon.

"That," said he, "is the weather-vane on the cupola of the new court-house, and in another hour we'll be in town. I guess your people will be glad to see you, Mr. Grayson."

"And I shall be glad to see them," said the candidate. A few minutes later he turned to the correspondent.

"Harley," he asked, "will you send anything to your paper about last night?"

"I have to do so," replied Harley, with a slight note of apology in his tone—this had not been his personal doing. "For a presidential candidate to get lost on the prairie in the dark and the storm, and then spend the night in a house in which only his presence of mind and eloquence prevent a murder, that is news—news of the first importance and the deepest interest. I am bound not only to send a despatch about it, but the despatch must be very long and full. And I suppose, too, that I shall have to tell it to the other fellows when we reach the town."

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The candidate sighed.

"I know you are right," he said, "but I wish you did not have to do it. The story puts me in a sensational light. It seems as if I were turning aside from the great issues of a campaign for personal adventure."

"It was forced upon you."

"So it was, but that fact does not take from it the sensational look."

Harley was silent. He knew that Mr. Grayson's point was well made, but he knew also that he must send the despatch.

The candidate made no further reference to the subject, and five minutes later they saw horsemen rise out of the plain and gallop towards them. As Harley had said, a presidential nominee was not lost in the dark and the storm every night, and this little Western town was mightily perturbed when Mr. Grayson failed to arrive. The others had come in safely, but already all the morning newspapers of the country had published the fact that the candidate was lost, swallowed up somewhere on the dark prairie. And Mr. Grayson's instinct was correct, too, because mingled with the wonder and speculation was much criticism. It was boldly said in certain supercilious circles that he had probably turned aside on an impulse to look after some minor matter, perhaps something that was purely personal that had nothing to do with the campaign. Churchill, late the night before, had sent to the *Monitor* a despatch written in his most censorious manner, in that vein of reluctant condemnation that so well suited his sense of superiority. He was loath to admit that the candidate was proving inadequate to his high position, but the circumstances indicated it, and the proof was becoming cumulative. He also sent a telegram to the Honorable Mr. Goodnight, in New York, and the burden of it was the need of a restraining force, a force near at hand, and able to meet every evil with instant cure.

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But the Western horsemen who met Jimmy Grayson—they clung to their affectionate "Jimmy"—were swayed by no such emotions. They repeated a shout of welcome, and wanted to know how and where he had passed the night, to all of which questions the candidate, with easy humor, returned ready and truthful replies, although he did not say anything for the present about the adventure of the old man and of the young one who was now the old one's son-in-law.

The driver took them straight towards a large and attractive hotel, and it seemed to Harley that half the population of the town was out to see the triumphant entry of the candidate. With all the attention of the crowd centred upon one man, Harley was able to slip quietly through the dense ranks and enter the hotel, where he fell at once into the hands of Sylvia Morgan. She came forward to meet him, impulsively holding out her hands, the light of welcome sparkling in her eyes.

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"We did not know what had become of you," she exclaimed. "We feared that you had got lost in the quicksands of the river." And then, with a sudden flush, she added, somewhat lamely, "We are



all so glad that Uncle James has got back safely."

Harley had read undeniable relief and welcome in her eyes, and it gave him a peculiar thrill, a thrill at first of absolute and unthinking joy, followed at once by a little catch. Before him rose the square and massive vision of "King" Plummer, and he had an undefined sense of doing wrong.

"We've brought him back safely," he said, after slight hesitation. "We spent the night very comfortably in a farm-house on the prairie."

She noticed his hesitation, and her eyes became eager.

"I do believe that you have had an adventure," she exclaimed. "I know that you have; I know by your look. You must tell it to me at once."

"We have had an adventure," admitted Harley, "and there is no reason why I shouldn't tell you of it, as in a few hours a long account of it written by me will be going eastward."

"I am waiting."

Harley began at once with his narrative, and they became absorbed in it, he in the telling and she in the hearing. While he talked and she listened "King" Plummer approached. Now the "King" in these later few days had begun to study the ways of women, in so far as his limited experience enabled him to do so, a task to which he had never turned his attention before in his life. But the words of Mrs. Grayson rankled; they kept him unhappy, they disturbed his self-satisfaction, and made him apprehensive for the future. He had been in the crowd that welcomed Jimmy Grayson, he had shaken the candidate's hand effusively, and now, when he entered the hotel, he found Sylvia Morgan welcoming John Harley.

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"King" Plummer did not like what he saw; it gave him his second shock, and he paused to examine the two with a yellow eye, and a mind reluctant to admit certain facts, among them the most obvious one, that they were a handsome couple, and of an age. And this was a fact that did not give the "King" pleasure. He did not dislike Harley; instead, he appreciated his good qualities, but just then he regarded him with an unfriendly glance; that reality of youth annoyed him. There was a glass on the other side of the room, and the "King" looked at his own reflection. He saw a large, powerful head and broad, strong features, the whole expressing a man at the height of his powers, at the very flood-tide of his strength. But it was not young. The hair was iron-gray, and there were many deep lines in the face—not unhandsome lines, yet they were lines.

"With all his shameless youth," were the "King's" unuttered thoughts, "I could beat him at anything, except, perhaps, scribbling. I could live and prosper where he would starve to death." And surging upon the "King" came the memories of his long, triumphant, and joyous struggle with wild nature. Then he approached the couple, and greeted Harley with the good-nature that was really a part of him. Sylvia, with shining eyes, told at second hand, though not with diminished effect, the story of the night, and "King" Plummer was loud in his applause. He did not care what criticism the supercilious might make, the act was to him spontaneous and natural.

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"But I don't see why you should have been with Jimmy Grayson then," he said, frankly, to Harley. "You are an Easterner, new to these parts, and it isn't right that just you should be along when the interestin' things happen."

Harley could not help laughing at the naïve remark, but he liked "King" Plummer all the better for it. The "King," however, gave him no more chance to talk alone that day with Sylvia. Mr. Plummer showed the greatest regard for Miss Morgan's health and comfort, and did not try to hide his solicitude; he was continually about her, arranging little conveniences for the journey, and introducing Idaho topics, familiar to them, but to which Harley was necessarily a stranger. The "King," with his wide sense of Western hospitality, would not have done this at another time, but in view of the close relationship between himself and Sylvia he regarded it as pardonable.

The watchful Mrs. Grayson saw it all, and at first she regarded the "King" with an approving eye, but by-and-by the approval changed to a frown. There was something forced in his manner; it was just the least bit unconvincing. It was clear to her that he was overdoing it, and in her opinion that was as bad as not doing it at all. Nor did she like the spectacle of a middle-aged man of affairs trying to play the gallant; there was another manner, one just as good, that would become him more. She was impelled to admonish him again, but she restrained herself, reflecting that she had not improved matters by her first warning, and she might make them worse by her second. Nevertheless, she summoned the nominee of a great party to the American Presidency to a conference, and he came with more alacrity than he would have obeyed the call of a conference of governors.

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"Sylvia is doing what it is natural for her to do," she said, abruptly.

"Then, my dear, why find fault with me because of it?" replied the mystified candidate.

"I don't find fault with you; I merely want your advice, although I know that you can have none to give."

The candidate wisely kept silent, and waited for the speaker of the house to proceed.

"Sylvia is your niece, and Mr. Plummer is your most powerful political supporter in the West," she said. "If she jilts him because of any fancy or impulse—well, you know such things can make men, especially elderly men, do very strange deeds. I speak of it because I am sure it must have been

in your thoughts."

The candidate stirred uneasily.

"It is a thing that I do not like to take into consideration," he said.

"Nor do I, but it forces itself upon us."

"It is right that Harley should pay her attention. They are members of this party, and they are of an age likely to make them congenial."

"That is where the danger lies. It may not amount at present to anything more than a fancy, but a fancy can make a very good beginning."

They talked on at length and with much earnestness, but they could come to no other conclusion than to use that last refuge, silence and waiting.

Meanwhile Sylvia was enjoying herself. She was young and vigorous, and she had a keen zest in life. She was surrounded by men, some young, too, who had seen much of the world, and they interested her; neither would she have been human, nor of her sex, if their attentions had not pleased her; and there, too, was the great campaign throwing its glow over everything. She was gracious even to the "King," whom she had been treating rather worse than he deserved for several days. She seemed to appreciate his increased gallantry, and it was "dear old daddy" very often now, whether in the comparative privacy of the Grayson family circle or in the larger group of the young correspondents and politicians. The "King" was delighted with the change, and his own manner became easy and happy. He looked once or twice at the lady whom he considered his mentor, Mrs. Grayson, and expected to see approval and satisfaction on her face, too, but she was stern and impenetrable, and the "King" said to himself that after all she was not so startlingly acute.

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Sylvia was telling some anecdote of the West to her new friends, and, as the incident was rather remarkable, she thought it necessary to have confirmation.

"It happened before I was born, but you were there then, and you know all about it, don't you, daddy?"

"King" Plummer quickly nodded confirmation and smiled at the memory. The event had interested him greatly, and he was glad to vouch for its truth. He was pleased all the more when he saw the others looking at him with the respect and deference due to—his thoughts halted suddenly in their course and turned into another channel. Then he found himself frowning. He did not like the conjunction of "dear old daddy" and of a thing that had happened many years ago.

The "King" quietly slipped away from the party, and he noticed with intense gloom that his departure did not seem to make as much difference as it should. For a whole afternoon he was silent, and many corrugations formed temporarily in his brow, indicating resolved thought. Nor were appearances wrong, because the "King" was laboriously dragging himself up to the edge of a mighty resolution. He was physically as brave a man as ever walked; in early and rougher days he had borne a ready Winchester, but this emergency was something new in his experience, and naturally he hesitated at the venture. However, just after supper, when Sylvia was alone in the drawing-room of the car, he approached her. She looked up at him and smiled, but the "King's" face was set with the power of his resolve.

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"Come in, daddy," she said.

The "King" did not smile, nor did he sit down.

"Sylvia," he said, "I have a favor to ask of you."

"Why certainly, daddy, anything in reason, and I know you would not ask anything out of it."

"Sylvia, I want you to promise me never to call me daddy again, either in private, as here between ourselves, or before others."

She looked up at him, her eyes wide with astonishment.

"Why," she exclaimed, "I've called you that ever since you found me a little, little girl alone in the mountains."

"I know it, but it's time to stop. I'm no blood kin to you at all. And I'm not so ancient. The history of the West didn't begin with me."

The wonder in her eyes deepened, and the "King" felt apprehensive, though he stood to his guns. But when she laughed, a joyous, spontaneous laugh, he felt hurt.

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"I'll make you the promise readily enough," she said, "but I can't keep it; I really can't. I'll try awful hard, but I'm so used to daddy that it will be sure to pop out just when I'm expecting it least."

The "King" looked at her moodily, not sure whether she was laughing at him or at her own perplexity.

"Then you just try," he said, at last, yielding to a mood of compromise, and stalked abruptly out of the drawing-room.

Sylvia, watching him, saw how stiffly and squarely he held his shoulders, and what long and abrupt strides he took, and her mood of merriment was suddenly succeeded by one of sadness mingled just a little with apprehension. She spoke twice under her breath, and the two brief sentences varied by only a single word. The first was "Dear old daddy!" and the second was "Poor old daddy!"

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## XI

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### THE HARRYING OF HERBERT

An unexpected addition and honor was now approaching, and it was Hobart who told them of it.

"Our little party is about to receive a touch of real distinction and dignity—something that it needs very much," he said, laying the newspaper that he had been reading upon the dusty car seat and glancing at Harley. They had returned to their special train.

"What do you mean?" asked Harley, though his tone betrayed no great interest.

"I quote from the columns of our staid contemporary, the New York *Monitor*, Churchill's sheet, the representative of solid, quiet, and cultured worth," said Hobart, pompously. "It has been felt for some time by thoughtful leaders of our party in the East that Jimmy Grayson and the "shirt-sleeves" Western politicians who now surround him are showing too much familiarity with the people. A certain reserve, a certain dignity of manner which, while holding the crowd at a distance also inspires it with a proper respect, is desirable on the part of the official head of a great party, a presidential nominee. The personal democracy of Mr. Grayson is having a disconcerting effect upon important financial circles, and also is inspiring unfavorable comments in the English press, extracts from which we print upon another page."

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"What on earth has the opinion of the English press to do with our presidential race?" asked Harley.

"You may search me," replied Hobart. "I merely quote from the columns of the *Monitor*. But in order to save time, I tell you that all this preamble leads to the departure for the West of the Honorable Herbert Henry Heathcote, who, after his graduation at Harvard, took a course at Oxford, lived much abroad, and who now, by grace of his father's worth and millions, is the national committeeman from his state. For some days Herbert has been speeding in our direction, and to-morrow he will join us at Red Cloud. It is more than intimated that he will take charge of the tour of Jimmy Grayson, and put it upon the proper plane of dignity and reserve."

Harley said no more, but, borrowing the paper, read the account carefully, and then put it down with a sigh, foreseeing trouble. Herbert Heathcote's father had been a great man in his time, self-created, a famous merchant, an able party worker, in thorough touch with American life, and he had served for many years as the honored chairman of the national committee, although in a moment of weakness he had sent his son abroad to be educated. Now he was dead, but remembered well, and as a presidential campaign costs much money—legitimate money—and his son was a prodigal giver, the leaders could not refuse to the younger Heathcote the place of national committeeman from his state.

"What do you think of it?" asked Harley, at last.

"I refuse to think," replied Hobart. "I shall merely wait and see."

But the Honorable William Plummer expressed his scorn in words befitting his open character.

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The paper was passed on until it reached Mrs. Grayson and Sylvia. Mrs. Grayson, with her usual reserve, said nothing. Sylvia was openly indignant.

"I shall snub this man," she said, "unless he is of the kind that thinks it cannot be snubbed."

"I fear that it is his kind," said Harley.

"It looks like it," she said.

At noon the next day, when they were at Red Cloud, Herbert Henry Heathcote arrived on the train from the East, and the arrival of him was witnessed by Harley, Hobart, Mr. Plummer, and several others, who had gone to the station for that purpose and none other.

Mr. Heathcote, as he alighted from the train, was obviously a person of importance, his apparel, even had his manner been hidden, disclosing the fact to the most casual observer. A felt hat, narrow-brimmed and beautifully creased in the crown, sat gracefully upon his head. His light overcoat was baggy enough in the back to hold another man, as Mr. Heathcote was not large, and white spats were the final touch of an outfit that made the less sophisticated of the spectators gasp. "King" Plummer swore half audibly.

"I wish my luggage to be carried up to the hotel," said Mr. Heathcote, importantly, to the station agent.

"He calls it 'luggage,' and this in Colorado!" groaned Hobart.

"Your what?" exclaimed the station agent, a large man in his shirt-sleeves, with a pen thrust behind his ear.

"My luggage; my trunk," replied Mr. Heathcote.

"Then you had better carry it yourself; I've nothing to do with it," said the agent, with Western brusqueness, as he turned away. [Pg 161]

Harley, always ready to seize an opportunity, and resolved to mitigate things, stepped forward.

"I beg your pardon, but this is Mr. Heathcote, is it not?" he asked, courteously.

The committeeman put a glass in his eye and regarded him quite coolly. Harley, despite his habitual self-control, shuddered. He did not mind the supercilious gaze, but he knew the effect of the monocle upon the crowd.

"Yes, I am Mr. Heathcote," said the committeeman, "and you ah—I—don't believe—ah—"

"I haven't been introduced," said Harley, with a smile, "but I can introduce myself; it's all right here in the West. I merely wanted to tell you that you had better get them at the hotel to send the porter down for your trunk. There are no carriages, but it's only a short walk to the hotel. It's the large white building on the hill in front of you."

"Thank you—ah—Mr. Hardy."

"Harley," corrected the correspondent, quietly.

"I was about to say—ah—that the press can make itself useful at times."

Harley flushed slightly.

"Yes, even under the most adverse circumstances," he said.

But Mr. Heathcote was already on the way to the hotel, his white spats gleaming in the sunshine. It was evident that he intended to keep the press in its proper place.

"You made a mistake when you volunteered your help, Harley," said Hobart. "A man like that should be received with a club. But you just wait until the West gets through with him. Your revenge will be brought to you on a silver plate." [Pg 162]

"I'm not thinking of myself," replied Harley, gravely. "It's the effect of this on Jimmy Grayson's campaign that's bothering me. Colorado is doubtful, and so are Utah and Wyoming and Idaho; can we go through them with a man like Heathcote, presumably in charge of our party?"

Proof that Harley's fears were justified was forthcoming at once. The crowd at the station, drawn by various causes, had been usually large, and Mr. Heathcote was received with a gasp of amazement. But nothing was said until the white spats of the committeeman disappeared in the hotel. Then the people crowded around the correspondents, with whom a six hours' stop was sufficient to make them familiar. "Who is he?" they asked. "Is he a plutocrat?" "It's a Wall Street shark, sure." "Does Jimmy Grayson mean to hobnob with a man like that?" "Then we can't trust him either. He's going to be a monopolist, too, and his claiming to be champion of the people is all a bluff."

Harley explained with care that Mr. Heathcote was important. To run a great presidential campaign required much money—special trains must be paid for, halls had to be hired for speakers, there was a vast amount of printing to be done, and many other expenses that must be met. Their party was poor, as everybody knew, most of the wealth being on the other side; and, when a man like Heathcote was willing to contribute his thousands, there was nothing to do but to take him. But they need not be alarmed; he could not corrupt Jimmy Grayson; the candidate was too stanch, too true, too much of a real man to be turned from the right path by any sinister Eastern influence. [Pg 163]

But the people were not mollified; they resented Mr. Heathcote's manner as well as his dress. Why had he not stopped at the station a few minutes, and shaken hands with those who would have been glad to meet him for the sake of fellowship in the party? Harley heard again the word "Plutocrat," and, deeming it wise to say nothing more for the present, walked back to the hotel. On the long porch sat a row of men in rocking-chairs—correspondents, town officials, and politicians, following in the wake of Jimmy Grayson. A state senator, a big, white-bearded man named Curtis, who had been travelling with them for three days, jerked his finger over his shoulder, pointing to the interior of the hotel, and said, mysteriously, to Harley:

"Where did you get it?"

"New York," replied Harley, sadly.

"Can't you lose it?"

"I don't know," replied Harley, hopefully, "but we can try."

Hobart, who was in the next chair, put his right foot across his left knee and nursed it judicially.

"It is eating its dinner now," he said. "It said: 'Landlord, I want a table alone. I do not wish to be disturbed.' And just think, Harley, this is Colorado! Landlord, otherwise Bill Jeffreys, was so taken

aback that he said, 'All right.' But the Honorable Herbert Henry Heathcote is being watched. There are three cowboys, at this very moment, peeping in at his window."

There was a dead silence for at least a minute, broken at last by Barton.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you do not yet know the full, the awful truth; I accidentally heard Heathcote telling Jeffreys about it." [Pg 164]

"Why, what can be worse?" asked Harley, and he was in earnest.

"Mr. Heathcote's man—his valet, do you understand—arrives to-night. He is to have a place in the car, and to travel with us, in order that he may wait on his master."

"King" Plummer uttered an oath.

"The West can stand a good many things, but it won't stand that," he exclaimed. "A national committeeman of our party travelling with his valet on the train with Jimmy Grayson! It'll cost us at least six states. We ain't women!"

There succeeded a gloomy silence that lasted until Heathcote himself appeared upon the porch, fresh, dapper, and patronizing.

"I hope you enjoyed your dinner, Mr. Heathcote," said Harley, ever ready to be a peacemaker.

"Thank you, Mr. Hardy—ah, Harley; it did very well for the frontier—one does not expect much here, you know."

Harley glanced uneasily at the men in the chairs, but Mr. Heathcote went on, condescendingly:

"I am now going for an interview with Mr. Grayson in his room. We shall be there at least an hour, and we wish to be quite alone, as I have many things of importance to say."

No one spoke, but twenty pairs of eyes followed the committeeman as he disappeared in the hotel on his way to Jimmy Grayson's room. Then Alvord, the town judge, a man of gigantic stature, rose to his feet and said, in a mimicking, feminine voice:

"Gentlemen, I am going to the bar, and I shall be there at least an hour; I wish to be quite alone, as I shall have many important things to drink." [Pg 165]

There was a burst of laughter that relieved the constraint somewhat, and then, obedient to an invitation from the judge, they filed solemnly in to the bar.

The candidate was to speak in the afternoon, and as he would raise some new issues, sure to be of interest to the whole country, Harley, following his familiar custom, went in search of Mr. Grayson for preliminary information. The hour set aside by Mr. Heathcote had passed long since, and Harley thought that he would be out of the way.

Jimmy Grayson's room was on the second floor, and Harley walked slowly up the steps, but at the head of the stairway he was met by Mr. Heathcote himself.

"Good-afternoon," said Harley, cheerfully. "I hope that you had a pleasant talk with Mr. Grayson. I'm going in to see him now myself; a presidential nominee can't get much rest."

Mr. Heathcote drew himself up importantly.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "but you cannot—ah—see Mr. Grayson. There has been a feeling with us in the East—we are in a position there to judge, being in thorough touch with the great world—that it was not advisable for Mr. Grayson to speak to or to come in direct contact with the press. This familiar talk with the newspapers rather impairs the confidence of our great magnates and prejudices us in the eyes of Europe. It is better—ah—that his remarks should be transmitted through a third person, who can give to the press what is fitting and reserve the remainder."

Harley gazed at Heathcote in amazement, but there was nothing in his manner to indicate that he was not in earnest. [Pg 166]

"And you are the third person, I suppose?" said Harley.

"I have so constituted myself," replied Mr. Heathcote, and his tone was aggravatingly quiet and assured. "As one conversant with great affairs, I am the most fit."

"Has Mr. Grayson agreed to this?" asked Harley.

"My dear man, I cannot permit you to cross-examine me. But, really, I wish to be on good terms with the press, which is quite a useful institution within its limits. Now, you seem to be rather more sedate than the others, and I wish you would have the goodness to explain to them how I have taken affairs in hand."

Harley flushed at his patronizing tone, and for a moment he was tempted to thrust him out of his way and proceed with his errand to Jimmy Grayson's room, but he reflected that it was better to let the committeeman make the rope for his own hanging, and he turned away with a quiet, "Very well, I shall forego the interview."

But as he went back down the stairs he could not help asking himself the question, "Does Jimmy

Grayson know? Could he have consented to such an arrangement?" and at once came the answer—"Impossible."

He returned to the porch, where all the chairs were filled, although the talk was slow. He noticed, with pleasure, that Churchill was absent. The descending sun had just touched the crests of the distant mountains, and they swam in a tremulous golden glow. The sunset radiance over nature in her mighty aspects affected all on the porch, used as they were to it, and that was why they were silent. But they turned inquiring eyes upon Harley when he joined them.

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"What has become of Heathcote?" asked Barton.

"He is engaged upon an important task just now," replied Harley.

"And what is that?"

"He is editing Jimmy Grayson's speech."

Twenty chairs came down with a crash, and twenty pairs of eyes stared in indignant astonishment.

"King" Plummer's effort to hold himself in his chair seemed to be a strain.

"He may not be doing that particular thing at this particular moment," continued Harley, "but he told me very distinctly that he was here for that purpose, and he has also just told me that I could not see Jimmy Grayson, that he intended henceforth to act as an intermediary between the candidate and the press."

"And you stood it?" exclaimed Hobart.

"For the present, yes," replied Harley, evenly; "and I did so because I thought I saw a better way out of the trouble than an immediate quarrel with Heathcote—a better way, above all, for Jimmy Grayson and the party."

The Western men said nothing, though they looked their deep disgust, and presently they quitted the porch, leaving it, rocking-chairs and all, to the correspondents.

"Boys," said Harley, earnestly, "I've a request to make of you. Let me take the lead in this affair; I've a plan that I think will work."

"Well, you are in a measure the chief of our corps," said Warrener, one of the Chicago men. "I don't know why you are, but all of us have got to looking on you in that way."

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"I, for one, promise to be good and obey," said Hobart, "but I won't deny that it will be a hard job. Perhaps I could stand the man, if it were not for his accent—it sounds to me as if his voice were coming out of the top of his head, instead of his chest, where a good, honest voice ought to have its home."

"Now you listen," said Harley, "and I will my tale unfold."

Then they put their heads together and talked long and earnestly.

The shaggy mountains were in deep shadow, and the sunset was creeping into the west when Jimmy Grayson came out on the porch where the correspondents yet sat. Harley at once noticed a significant change in his appearance; he looked troubled. Before, if he was troubled, he always hid it and turned a calm eye to every issue; but this evening there was something new and extraordinary about Jimmy Grayson; he was ashamed and apologetic obviously so, and Harley felt a thrill of pity that a man so intensely proud under all his democracy, or perhaps because of it, should be forced into a position in which he must be, seemingly at least, untrue to himself.

The candidate hesitated and glanced at the correspondents, his comrades of many a long day, as if he expected them to ask him questions, but no one spoke. The sinking sun dropped behind the mountains, and the following shadow also lay across Jimmy Grayson's face. He was the nominee of a great party for President of the United States, but there was a heart in him, and these young men, who had gone with him through good times and bad times, through weary days and weary nights, were to him like the staff that has followed a general over many battle-fields. He glanced again at the correspondents, but, as they continued to stare resolutely at the dark mountains, he turned and walked abruptly into the hotel.

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"Boys," exclaimed Barton, "it's tough!"

"Yes, damned tough," said Hobart.

"King" Plummer, who was with them, maintained a stony silence.

An hour later the valet of the Honorable Herbert Henry Heathcote, a smooth, trim young Englishman, arrived in Red Cloud, and never before in his vassal life had he been a person of so much importance. The news had been spread in Red Cloud that a rare specimen was coming, a kind hitherto unknown in those regions. When John—that was his name—alighted from the train in the dusk of a vast, desolate Western night, a crowd of tanned, tall men was packed closely about him, watching every movement that he made. Harley saw him glance fearfully at the dark throng, but no one said a word. As he moved towards the hotel, a valise in either hand, the way opened before him, but the crowd, arranging itself in a solid mass behind him, followed, still silent, until he reached the shelter of the building and the protecting wing of his master. Then it

dispersed in an orderly manner, but the only subject of conversation in Red Cloud was the Honorable Herbert Henry Heathcote and his "man," especially the "man."

At the appointed hour the candidate spoke from a stage in the public square, and it would not be fair to say that his address fell flat; but for the first time in the long campaign Harley noticed a certain coldness on the part of the audience, a sense of aloofness, as if Jimmy Grayson were not one of them, but a stranger in the town whom they must treat decently, although they might not approve of him or his ways. And Harley did not have to seek the cause, for there at a corner of the stage sat a dominating presence, the Honorable Herbert Henry Heathcote, his neck encircled by a very high collar, his trousers turned up at the bottom, and his white spats gleaming through the darkness. More eyes were upon him than upon the candidate, but Mr. Heathcote was not daunted. His own gaze, as it swept the audience, was at times disapproving and at other times condescending.

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About the middle of the speech the night, as usual, grew chilly, and Mr. Heathcote's "man," stepping upon the stage, assisted him on with a light overcoat. A gasp went up from the crowd, and the candidate, stopping, looked back and saw the cause. Again that shadow came over his face, but in a moment he recovered himself and went on as if there had been no interruption. When the speech was finished Mr. Heathcote stood a moment by the table at which Harley was still writing, and said:

"I think you and your associates should leave out of your report that part about our foreign relations. However well received in the West, I doubt whether it would have a very good effect in the East."

"But he said it," exclaimed Harley, looking up in surprise.

"Quite true, but there should be a certain reserve on the part of the press. These expressions have about them a trace of rawness, perhaps inseparable from a man like our nominee, who is the product of Western conditions. I trust that I shall be able to correct this unfortunate tendency."

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Harley was burning with anger, but the long practice of self-control enabled him to hide it. He did not reply, but resumed his work. Mr. Heathcote spoke to him again, but Harley, his head bent over his pad, went on with his writing. Nor did any of the other correspondents speak. The committeeman, astonished and indignant, left the stage, and, followed by his "man," returned to the hotel between two silent files of spectators.

"Experience number one," was the only comment of the correspondents, and it came from Barton.

When Harley went into the hotel he saw Jimmy Grayson leaning against the clerk's desk as if he were waiting for something. He glanced at Harley, and there was a tinge of reproach in his look. Harley's resolution faltered, but it was only for a moment, and then, taking his key from the clerk, he went in silence to his room. He understood the position of Jimmy Grayson, he knew how much the party was indebted to Mr. Heathcote for payment of the campaign's necessary expenses, but he was determined to carry out his plan, which he believed would succeed.

But there was one man in Jimmy Grayson's group to whom the appearance of Mr. Heathcote was welcome, and this was Churchill, who was sure that he recognized in him a kindred spirit. He sent a long despatch to the *Monitor*, telling of the very beneficial effect the committeeman's presence already exercised upon the campaign, particularly the new tone of dignity that he had given to it. He also cultivated Mr. Heathcote, and was willing to furnish him deferential advice.

As the special train was to leave early the next morning for the northern part of the state, they ate breakfast in a dim dawn, with only the rim of the sun showing over the eastern mountains. Mr. Heathcote came in late and found every chair occupied. No one moved or took any notice. Jimmy Grayson looked embarrassed, and said in a propitiatory tone to the proprietor, who stood near the window:

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"Can't you fix a place for Mr. Heathcote?"

"Oh, I guess I kin bring in a little table from the kitchen," replied Bill Jeffreys, negligently, "but he'll have to hustle; that train goes in less than ten minutes."

The table was brought in, and Mr. Heathcote ate more quickly than ever before in his life, although he found time for caustic criticism of the hotel accommodations in Red Cloud. Just as he put down his half-emptied coffee-cup the train blew a warning whistle.

"That engineer is at least three minutes ahead of time," said Barton.

"He's a lively fellow," said Hobart. "I was up early, and he told me he wasn't going to wait a single minute, even if he did have a Presidential nominee aboard."

The eyes of Barton and Hobart met, and Barton understood.

"We'd better run for it," said Barton, and they hurried to the train, Mr. Heathcote borne on in the press. As they settled into their seats Barton pointed out of the window, and cried: "Look! Look! The 'man' is about to get left!"

John, a valise in one hand and a hat-box in the other, was rushing for the train, which had already

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begun to move. But the conductor reached down the steps, grasped him by the collar, and dragged him, baggage and all, aboard. John appeared humbly before his master, who was silent, however, merely waving him to a seat. Mr. Heathcote was apparently indignant about something. By-and-by he stated that his valet had been forced to leave Red Cloud without anything to eat. Nobody had looked after the man, and he could not understand such neglect. He would like to have a porter bring him something. Old Senator Curtis, who was with them, spoke up from a full heart:

"He'll have to go hungry. There's no dining-car on this train, and he can't get a bite, even for a bagful of money, till we get to Willow Grange at two o'clock this afternoon."

The senator was not excessively polite, and Mr. Heathcote opened his mouth as if to speak, but, changing his mind, closed it. He glanced at Jimmy Grayson, who looked troubled, although he, also, maintained silence. Neither would any one else speak; but every one was taking notice. Harley in his heart felt sorry for the poor valet, who seemed to be an inoffensive fellow, suited to his humble trade; but a political campaign in the Rocky Mountain West was no place for him; he must take what circumstances dealt out to him.

The committeeman presently recovered his sense of his own worth and dignity, and spoke in a large manner of the plans that he would take to raise the tone of the campaign. The candidate still looked troubled and made no comment. The local public men, the correspondents, and all on the little train were silent, staring out of the windows, apparently engrossed in the scenery, which was now becoming grand and beautiful. Ridge rose above ridge, and afar the peaks, clad in eternal snow, looked down like heaven's silent sentinels.

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Mr. Heathcote was very courteous to Mrs. Grayson, but at first he scarcely noticed Sylvia, although a little later he expressed admiration for her beauty, not doubting, however, that he would find her the possessor of an uncultivated mind.

Towards the noon hour a tragic discovery was made. After the candidate's last speech in the evening the train would leave immediately for Utah, and all continuing on the way must sleep aboard. Room had been found in some manner for Mr. Heathcote, but every other berth, upper and lower, had been assigned long ago, and there was nothing left for his man. But Mr. Heathcote, resolved not to be trampled upon, went in a state of high indignation to the conductor.

"I must have a place for my man. I cannot travel without an attendant."

"Jimmy Grayson does," replied the conductor, a rude Democrat of the West; "and your fellow can't have any, because there ain't any to be had; besides, it's 'cordin' to train rules that dogs an' all such-like should travel in the baggage-car."

Mr. Heathcote refused to speak again to such a man, and complained to the candidate. But Jimmy Grayson could do nothing.

"This train on which we now are is paid for jointly by the committeemen of Colorado, Utah, and Idaho," he said, "and I have nothing to do with the arrangements. I should not like to attempt interference."

Mr. Heathcote looked at old Senator Curtis, who seemed to be in charge, but, apprehending a blow to his dignity, he refrained from pressing the point, and the lackey slept that night as well as he could on a seat in the smoking-car.

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The next few days, which were passed chiefly in Utah, were full of color and events. Life became very strenuous for the Honorable Herbert Henry Heathcote. He learned how to take his meals on the wing, as it were, to run for trains, to snatch two hours' sleep anywhere between midnight and morning, and to be jostled by rude crowds that failed to recognize his superiority. The full-backed light overcoat, during its brief existence the focus of so much attention, was lost in a dinner rush and never reappeared. But, above all, Mr. Heathcote had upon his hands the care of the helpless, miserable lackey, and never did a sick baby require more attention. John was lost amid his strange and terrible surroundings. At mountain towns crowds of boys, and sometimes men, would surround him and jeer at his peculiar appearance, and his master would be compelled to come forcibly to his rescue. He never learned how to run for the car, with his arms full of baggage, and once, boarding a wrong train, he was run off on a branch line a full fifty miles. He was rescued only after infinite telegraphing and two days' time, when he reappeared, crestfallen and terrified.

And there was trouble—plenty of it—aboard the train. There was never a berth for the lackey, who was relegated permanently to the smoking-car. Mr. Heathcote himself sometimes had to fight, bribe, and intrigue for one—and often he failed to get breakfast or dinner through false information or the carelessness of somebody. He made full acquaintance with the pangs of hunger, and many a time, when every nerve in him called for sleep, there was no place to lay his weary head.

Now the iron entered the soul of the Honorable Herbert, and he became a soured and disappointed man, but he stuck gravely to his chosen task. Harley, despite his dislike, could not keep from admiring his tenacity. Nobody, except the candidate, paid the slightest attention to him; even Sylvia and Mrs. Grayson ignored him; if he made suggestions, nobody said anything to the contrary, but they were never adopted, and Mr. Heathcote noticed, too, that the others seemed to be enduring the life easily, while it was altogether too full for him. If there was any

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angle, he seemed somehow to knock against it; and if there was any pitfall, it was he who fell into it. But he gave no sign of returning to the East, and his misfortunes continued. From time to time they got copies of the Western papers containing full reports of Jimmy Grayson's canvass, and none of them, except the *Monitor*, ever spoke flatteringly of the Honorable Herbert or his efforts to put the campaign on a higher plane.

Churchill spoke once to the group of correspondents and politicians about the lack of deference paid to the committeeman, but he was invited so feelingly to attend to his own business that he never again risked it. However, he said in his despatches to the *Monitor* that even Mr. Heathcote's efforts could not keep the campaign on a dignified level.

At last, on one dreadful day, they lost the lackey again, and this time there was no hope of recovery. He had been seen, his hands full of baggage, running for the wrong train, and when they heard from him he was far down in Colorado, stranded, and there was no possible chance for him to overtake the "special." Accordingly, his master, acting under expert advice, telegraphed him money and a ticket and ordered him back to New York. When the news was taken to the candidate Harley saw an obvious look of relief on his face. That valet had been a terrible weight upon the campaign, and none knew it better than Jimmy Grayson.

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Mr. Heathcote now became morose and silent. Much of his lofty and patronizing air disappeared, although the desire to instruct would crop out at times. Usually he was watchful and suspicious, but the struggle for bread and a place to sleep necessarily consumed a large portion of his energies. As time dragged on his manner became that of one hunted, but doggedly enduring, nevertheless. The candidate always spoke to him courteously, whenever he had a chance, but then there was little time for conversation, as the campaign was now hot and fast. Mr. Heathcote was, in fact, a man alone in the world, and outlawed too. The weight upon him grew heavier and heavier as his path became thornier and thornier; the angles, the corners, and the pitfalls seemed to multiply, and always he was the victim. Jimmy Grayson looked now and then as if he would like to interfere, but there was no way for him to interfere, nor any one with whom he could interfere.

Mr. Heathcote still clung bravely to some portions of his glorious wardrobe. The white spats he yet sported, in the face of a belligerent Western democracy, and he paid the full price. Harley acknowledged this merit in him, and once or twice, when the committeeman, amid the comments of the ribald crowd, turned a pathetic look upon him, he was moved to pity and a desire to help; but the last feeling he resolutely crushed, and held on his way.

The campaign swung farther westward and northward, and into a primitive wilderness, where the audiences were composed solely of miners and cowboys. Old Senator Curtis and several other of the Colorado men were still with them, and one night they spoke at a mining hamlet on the slope of a mountain that shot ten thousand feet above them. The candidate was in great form, and made one of his best speeches, amid roars of applause. The audience was so well pleased that it would not disperse when he finished, and wished vociferously to know if there were not another spellbinder on the stage. Then the spirit of mischief entered the soul of Hobart.

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The Honorable Herbert sat at the corner of the stage, the white spats still gleaming defiance, his whole appearance, despite recent modifications, showing that he was a strange bird in a strange land. Hobart constituted himself chairman for the moment, and, pointing to Mr. Heathcote, said:

"Gentlemen, one of the ablest and most famous of our national committeemen is upon the stage, and he will be glad to address you."

The audience cheered, half in expectation and half in derision, but the Honorable Herbert, who had never made a speech in his life, rose to the cry. His figure straightened up, there was a new light in his eye, and Harley, startled, did not know Mr. Heathcote. As he advanced to the edge of the stage the shouts of derision overcame those of expectation. Harley heard the words "Dude!" "Tenderfoot!" mingled with the cries, but the Honorable Herbert gave no sign that he heard. He reached the edge of the stage, waved his hand, and then there was silence.

"Friends," he said—"I call you such, though you have not received me in a friendly manner—"

The crowd breathed hard, and some one uttered a threat, but another man commanded silence. "Give him a chance!" he said.

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"You have not received me in a friendly manner," resumed the Honorable Herbert, "but I am your friend, and I am resolved that you shall be mine. I cannot make a speech to you, but I will tell you a story which perhaps will serve as well."

"Go on with the story," said the men, doubtfully. On the stage there was a general waking-up. Correspondents and politicians alike recognized the Honorable Herbert's new manner, and they bent forward with interest.

"My story," said Mr. Heathcote, "is of a man who had a fond and perhaps too generous father. This father had suffered great hardships, and he wished to save his son from them. What more natural? But perhaps, in his tenderness, he did the son a wrong. So this son grew up, not seeing the rough side of life, and finding all things easy. He lived in a part of the country that is old and rich, where what is called necessity you call luxury. He knew nothing of the world except that portion of it to which he was used. What more natural? Is not that human nature everywhere? He saw himself petted and admired, and in the course of time he felt himself a person of importance. Is not that natural, too?"

He paused and looked over the audience, which was silent and attentive, held by the interest of something unusual and the deep, almost painful, earnestness of Mr. Heathcote's manner.

"What's he coming to?" whispered Hobart.

"I don't know; wait and see," replied Harley.

"Thus the man grew up to know only a little world," the Honorable Herbert went on, "and he did not know how little it was. He was like a prisoner in a gorgeous room, who sees, without, snow and storm that cannot touch him, but who is a prisoner nevertheless. Those whom he met and with whom he lived his daily life were like him, and they thought they were the heart of this world. Everything about them was golden; they saw that people wished to hear of them, to read of them, to know all that they did, and their view of their importance grew every day. What more natural? Was not that human nature?"

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"I think I see which way he is going," whispered Hobart.

Harley nodded. The audience was still and intent, hanging on the words of the speaker.

"This youth," continued Mr. Heathcote, "was sent by-and-by to Europe to have his education finished, and there all the ideas formed by his life in this country were confirmed in him. He saw a society, organized centuries ago, in which every man found a definite place for life assigned to him, in accordance with what fortune had done for him at birth. There he received deference and homage, even more than before, and the great, changing world, with its mighty tides and storms that flowed about his little group, leaving it untouched, was yet unknown to him.

"He came back to his own country, and the strong father who had sheltered him died. He was filled with an ambition to be a political power, as his father had been, and the dead hand brought him the place. Then he came into the West to join in a great political campaign, but it was his first real excursion into the real world, and his ignorance was heavy upon him."

A deep "Ah!" ran through the crowd, and Harley noticed a sudden look of respect upon the brown faces. They were beginning to see where the thread of the story would lead. Then Harley glanced at old Senator Curtis, whose lips moved tremulously for a moment. "King" Plummer was regarding the committeeman with astonished interest.

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"This man, I repeat," continued Mr. Heathcote, "came West with his ignorance, I might almost say with his sins heavy upon him, but it was not his fault; it was the fault, rather, of circumstances. He seemed a strange, a grotesque figure to these people of the West, but they should not have forgotten that they also seemed strange to him. It has been said that it takes many kinds of people to make a world, and they cannot all be alike. One point of view may differ from another point of view, and both may be right. If this man did anything wrong—and he admits that he did—he did it in ignorance. There were some with him who knew both points of view who might have helped him, but who did not; instead, they made life hard; they put countless difficulties in his way; they made him feel very wretched, very mean, and very little. He saw the other point of view at last, but he was not permitted to show that he saw it; he was put in such a position that his pride would not let him."

The crowd suddenly burst into cheers. The keen Western men understood, and the mountain-slope gave back the echo, "Hurrah for Heathcote!" The Honorable Herbert's figure swelled and his eyes flashed. Grateful water was falling at last on the parched desert sands.

"But, friends," he continued, "this man, though his lesson has been rough, comes to you with no resentment. He has broken the bars of his prison; he is in the real world at last, and he comes to you asking to be one of you, to give and take with the crowd. Will you have him?"

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"Yes!" a chorus of a thousand voices roared against the side of the mountain and came back in a thunderous echo.

Old Senator Curtis sprang to his feet, seized Mr. Heathcote by the hand, and shouted:

"Gentlemen, I, too, need to apologize, and also I want to introduce to you a real man, Mr. Herbert Henry Heathcote."

"Put me down for an apology, too," said "King" Plummer, in his big, booming tones.

Jimmy Grayson, on the outskirts of the crowd, returning to learn what the noise was about, saw and heard all, and murmured to a friend:

"There is now a new member of our group, and all is well again."

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## XII

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### CHURCHILL STRIKES

The conversion and adoption of Mr. Heathcote, as Hobart called it, was a pleasant incident in several senses, bringing much quiet gratification to them all, and particularly and obviously to the candidate. A hostile element, one intended by others to be hostile and interfering, had

become friendly, which, of itself, was a great gain. Moreover, the smoothness of social intercourse was increased, and there, too, was a new type, adding to the variety and interest of the group.

The only one not pleased was Churchill, who had expected much from Mr. Heathcote, and who now, as he considered it, saw the committeeman turn traitor. It was not a matter that he could handle fully in his despatches to the *Monitor*, being too intangible to allow of bald assertion, and he was reduced to indirect statement. This not satisfying him at all, he wrote a long letter to Mr. Goodnight, both for the sake of the cause and for the sake of his own feelings, which had been much lacerated. Its production cost him a great deal of thought and labor; but he had his reward, as its perusal after completion proved to him that it was a masterpiece.

Churchill showed quite clearly to Mr. Goodnight the steady decay of the candidate's character and the lower levels to which his campaign was falling. In the security of a private letter it was not necessary for him to spare words, and Churchill spoke his mind forcibly about the manner in which Jimmy Grayson was pandering to the "common people," the "ignorant mob," the "million-footed." Churchill himself, although not old, had taken long ago the measure of these foolish common people, and he despised them, his contempt giving him a very pleasant conviction of his own superiority.

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He also poured a few vials of wrath upon the head of Mr. Heathcote, whom he characterized as a coward, not able to stand up against petty persecution, and from the committeeman he passed on to others of Mr. Grayson's immediate following, taking "King" Plummer next. Mr. Plummer, in his opinion, was an excellent type of democracy run to riot. He was one of the "boys" in every sense. He was wofully wanting in personal dignity, speaking to everybody in the most familiar manner, and encouraging the same form of address towards himself; he failed utterly to recognize the superiority of some other men, and he was grossly ignorant, knowing nothing whatever of Europe and the vast work that had been done there for civilization and order. Moreover, he could not be induced, even by the well-informed, to take any interest in the Old World, and once had had the rudeness to say to Churchill himself, "What in the devil is Europe to us?"

Churchill thus subjected the views of "King" Plummer to the process of elaboration because they had made a vivid impression upon him. He and the "King" had never been able to get on together, the mountaineer treating him with rough indifference, and Churchill returning it with a hauteur which he considered very effective. To Churchill men of "King" Plummer's type seemed the greatest danger the country could have. Their lack of respect for diplomacy, their want of form and ceremony, their brutal habit of calling things by their names, were in his opinion revolutionary. He did not see how dealings with foreign nations, which always loomed very large to him, could be conducted by such men. Always in his mind was the question, What would they say in London and Vienna and Berlin? and the *Monitor*, which he served faithfully, confirmed him through its tone in this mental state. Still drawing his inspiration from the *Monitor*, he regarded a sneer as invariably the best weapon; if you were opposed to anything, the proper way to attack it was by sneering at it; then, not having used argument, you never put yourself in a position to have your arguments refuted.

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From "King" Plummer, Churchill passed to some of his associates—like the *Monitor*, he never hesitated to befoul his own nest—and he told Mr. Goodnight how the candidate was using them, how they had wholly fallen under the spell of his undeniable charm of manner, and how they wrote to please him rather than to tell the truth.

As he sealed his long letter, Churchill felt the conscious glow of right-doing and stern self-sacrifice. He had written thus for the good of the party and the good of the country, and he was strengthened, too, by the feeling that he could not possibly be wrong. The *Monitor* cultivated the sense of omniscience, which it communicated in turn to all the members of its staff.

He passed Sylvia Morgan on his way from the hotel reading-room to the lobby to mail his letter, and when he met her he quickly turned down the address on the envelope, in order that she might not see it. It was done by impulse, and Churchill, for the first time, had a feeling of guilt that made him angry.

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"That must be a love letter, Mr. Churchill," said Sylvia, teasing him with the easy freedom of the West. "Do you write her twenty-four pages, or only twenty?"

"I have no love except my work, Miss Morgan," replied Churchill, assuming his most grandiose air.

"Is that a permanent affection, or a passing fancy?"

Her face expressed the most eager interest, as if she could not possibly be happy until she had Churchill's answer. The words were frivolous, but her manner was most deferential, and Churchill concluded that she was expressing respect in as far as what he considered her shallow nature could do so.

"It is, I hope, a permanent passion, Miss Morgan," he replied, gravely. "There is a pleasure in doing one's duty, particularly under disagreeable circumstances, which I am happy to say I have felt more than once, and custom usually strengthens one who walks in the right path."

Still in this mood of contemplation, he regarded her, and he thought he saw a slight look of awe appear in her eyes. His opinion of her rose at once. While not able to show merit of the highest

degree, she could perceive it in others, and this differentiated her from the rest of the group. Churchill allowed himself to see that she had a fine face and a slender, beautiful figure, and he felt it a pity that she should be thrown away on a crude, rough old mountaineer like Plummer.

"I often think, Miss Morgan," he said, "that if you had lived in the East awhile you could have been quite a match for any woman whom I have ever known."

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"Thank you," she replied, humbly. "Oh, if I could only have lived in the East just a little while!"

"But I assure you, Miss Morgan, I have met some very remarkable women."

"I do not doubt it, and they have had an equal good-fortune."

Churchill looked suspiciously at her, but there was the same touch of deference in her manner, and he still honored her with his conversation. He permitted himself to discourse a little upon the affairs which he had embodied—"embodied" he felt was the word—in his letter, and she, with all a woman's intuition, and much of masculine reasoning power, guessed what the letter contained, although she did not know to whom it was going. Nor did she feel it wrong to be very attentive, as Churchill talked, because he was doing it of his own free will, and she had the fate of her uncle deeply at heart.

Churchill spoke of the campaign, venturing upon polite criticisms of certain features that seemed objectionable to him, and, listening to him, she confirmed her opinion that he was the personal representative with Mr. Grayson of the chief elements within the party that could cause trouble. And she felt sure, too, that the letter he held in his hand would add fuel to the fire already burning. She happened also to be present several days later when a messenger-boy handed him a telegram, and, when he opened it, he made an involuntary motion to hide it, just as he had done with the letter. She pretended not to see, and walked away, but she knew as well as if he had told her that the telegram was the reply to the letter.

Mr. Goodnight himself sent the despatch, and he thanked Churchill warmly for the very important information told so luminously in his letter. The solid and respectable portion of the party had hoped much from the presence of Mr. Heathcote, but as he had yielded to the influence of another, instead of exerting his own, it would be necessary to take additional action later. Meanwhile he requested Mr. Churchill to keep him accurately and promptly informed of everything, and Churchill at once telegraphed: "Despatch received. Will be glad to comply with your request."

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Then he congratulated himself, and felt good, his complacent demeanor forming a contrast to that of several others in the party. The latter were "King" Plummer, Sylvia Morgan, and John Harley, all of whom were unhappy.

Harley was troubled by his conscience, and he could not do anything to keep it from sticking those little pins into him. Sylvia Morgan, despite herself, drew him on, not the less because his first feeling towards her had been one of hostility. She had a piquant touch, a manner full of unconscious allurements—the radiation of a pure soul, though it was—that he had never seen in any other woman, and the harder he fought against it, the more surely it conquered him. He took from his valise a copy of that old Chicago newspaper, with her picture on the front page, and wondered how he could have intimated that she was the cause of its being there. As he knew her better, he knew that she could not have done it, and he knew, too, that she would have scornfully resented any insinuation of having done so by refusing to deny it.

The "King" was unhappy, too, in his way, and that was very bad indeed for him. He had tried an effusive gallantry, and it did not seem to succeed any better than obedience to his own impulses—on the whole, rather worse; and now, not knowing what else to do, he sulked. It was not any sly sulking, but genuine, open sulking in his large, Western way, thus leaving it apparent to all that the great "King" Plummer was sad. And that meant much to the party, because in a sense it was now personally conducted by him. In his joyous mood, which was his usual mood until the present, he had a large and pervasive personality that was a wonderful help to travel and social intercourse. They missed his timely, if now and then a trifle rough, jests, his vast knowledge of the mountains, which had some good story of every town to which they came, and his infinite zest and humor, which also communicated more zest and humor to every one with him. It was a grievous day for them all when "King" Plummer began to mourn. More than one guessed the cause, but wisely they refrained from any attempt to remove it. They could do nothing but endure the gloom in silence, until the clouds passed, as they hoped they would pass.

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The candidate, too, was troubled, and sought the privacy of the special car's drawing-room more than usual. Sylvia Morgan had given him a hint that attacks upon him from a certain source were likely to be renewed, and, moreover, would increase in virulence. He soon found that she was right, as the copies of the *Monitor* that they now obtained were frankly cynical and unbelieving. All of its despatches from the West, Churchill's as well as others, were depreciatory. The candidate was invariably made to appear in a bad light—which is an easy matter to do, in any case, without sacrifice of the truth—that is, verbally, only the spirit being changed—and the editor reinforced them with strong criticisms, in which quotations from English writers and a French phrase now and then were freely employed. The whole burden of it was, "We support this candidate; but, oh, how hard it is for us to do it, how badly we feel about it, and how much easier it would be for us to support any other man!" It also printed many contributions from readers, in all of which the contributors spoke of themselves as belonging by nature and cultivation to the select few, "the saving remnant," who really knew what was good for the country. Here much

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latitude of expression was allowed, as the paper was not directly responsible for what these gentlemen said. They wrote of the way in which the dignity of a great party had been destroyed by the uncouth and talkative Westerner who had been lucky enough to secure the nomination. They felt that they had been shamed in the face of the world, and more than once asked the burning and painful question, "What will Europe say?" They asked, also, if it were yet too late to amend the error, and they threw forth the suggestion that the intelligent and cultured minority within the party might refrain from voting, when election day came, or, in a pinch, might vote for the other man.

These communications were signed, sometimes, with Latin names, and sometimes with names in modern English, but always they indicated a certain sense of superiority and of detachment from the crowd on the part of the signers.

The annoyance of the candidate increased as he read copies of the *Monitor*, which were sent to him in numbers. He knew that the paper was the chief spokesman of an influential minority within the party, and the divergence between the majority and the minority was already manifest. It was evident, too, that it was bound to become greater, and that was why the candidate was troubled. He wished to become President; it was his great desire, and he did not seek to conceal it; he considered it a legitimate, a noble ambition, one that any American had a right to have, and he was in the first flush of his great powers, when such a position would appeal most to a strong man. Now, even when the fight, with a united party, was desperate at best, he foresaw a defection, and hot wrath rose up in his veins against Goodnight, the *Monitor*, and all their following.

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But the worst of the whole position to a man of Grayson's open and direct temperament was the necessity to keep silent, even to dissemble, or, at least, to do that which seemed to him very near to dissembling. Although he was under so fierce a fire, he would not allow any one to find fault with Churchill for his despatches; and this was not always easy to do, because many of the local politicians, who were on the train from time to time, would grow hot at sight of the criticisms, and want to attack the writer. But Jimmy Grayson always interfered, and reminded them that it was the right of the press to speak so if it wished. Churchill still wondered, why he was not a martyr, and wasted his regrets. Mrs. Grayson and Sylvia maintained an eloquent silence.

Meanwhile, an event destined to give Churchill and the *Monitor* a yet greater shock was approaching.

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## XIII

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### THE THIRD DEGREE

The candidate and his company were due one night at Grayville, a brisk Colorado town, dwelling snugly in the shadow of high mountains and hopeful of a brilliant future, based upon the mines within its limits and the great pastoral country beyond, as any of its inhabitants, asked or unasked, would readily have told you. Hence there was joy in the train, from Jimmy Grayson down, because the next day was to be Sunday, a period of rest, no speeches to be made, nothing to write, but just rest, sleeping, eating, idling, bathing, talking—whatever one chose to do. Only those who have been on arduous campaigns can appreciate the luxury of such a day now and then, cutting like a sweep of green grass across the long and dusty road.

There was also quite a little group of women on the train, the wives of several Colorado political leaders having joined Sylvia and Mrs. Grayson for a while, and they, too, looked forward to a day of rest and the restoration of their toilets.

"They tell me that Grayville has one of the best hotels in the mountains," said Barton to Harley, his brother correspondent. "That you can get a dinner in a dozen courses, if you want it, and every course good; that it has real porcelain-lined bath-tubs, and beds sure to cure the worst case of insomnia on earth. Do you think this improbable, this extravagant but most fascinating tale can be true, Harley?"

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"I live in hope," replied Harley.

"Jimmy Grayson has been here before," interrupted Hobart, "and he says it's true, every word of it; if Jimmy Grayson vouches for a thing, that settles it; and here is a copy of the Grayville *Argus*; it has to be a pretty good town that can publish as smart a daily as this."

He handed a neat sheet to Barton, who laughed.

"There speaks the great detective," he said. "You know, Harley, how Hobart is always arguing from the effect back to the cause."

Hobart, in fact, was not a political writer, but a "murder mystery" man, and the best of his kind in New York, but the regular staff correspondent of his paper, the *Leader*, being ill, he had been sent in his place. He was a Harvard graduate and a gentleman with a taste for poetry, but he had a peculiar mind, upon which a murder mystery acted as an irritant—he could not rest until he had solved it—and his paper always put him on the great cases, such as those in which a vast

metropolis like New York abounds. Now he was restless and discontented; the tour seemed to him the mere reporting of speeches and obvious incidents that everybody saw; there was nothing to unravel, nothing that called for the keen edge of a fine intellect.

"Grayville, with all its advantages as a place of rest, is sure to be like the other mountain towns," he said, somewhat sourly—"the same houses, the same streets, the same people, I might almost say the same mountains. There will be nothing unusual, nothing out of the way."

Harley had taken the paper from Barton's hands and was reading it.

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"At any rate, if Grayville is not unusual, it is to have an unusual time," he interrupted.

"How so?"

"It is to hear Jimmy Grayson speak Monday, and it is going to hang a man Tuesday. See, the two events get equal advance space, two columns each, on the front page."

He handed the paper to Hobart, who looked at it a little while and then dropped it with an air of increasing discontent.

"That may mean something to the natives," he said; "it may be an indication to them that their place is becoming important—a metropolis in which things happen—but it is nothing to me. This hanging case is stale and commonplace; it is perfectly clear; a young fellow named Boyd is to be hanged for killing his partner, another miner; no doubt about his guilt, plenty of witnesses against him, his own denial weak and halting—in fact, half a confession; jury out only five minutes; whole thing as bald and flat as this plain through which we are running."

He tapped with his finger on the dusty car-window, and his expression was so gloomy that the others could not restrain a laugh.

"Cheer up, old man," said Barton. "Four more hours and we are in Grayville; just think of that wonderful hotel, with its more wonderful beds and its yet more wonderful kitchen."

The hotel was all that they either expected or hoped, and the dawn brought a beautiful Sunday, disclosing a pretty little frontier city with its green, irrigated valley on one side and the brown mountains, like a protecting wall, on the other. Harley slept late, and after breakfast came out upon the veranda to enjoy the luxury of a rocking-chair, with the soft October air around him and the majesty of the mountains before him. He hoped to find Sylvia there, but neither she nor any of the ladies was present. Instead, there was a persistent, inquiring spirit abroad which would not let him rest, and this spirit belonged to Hobart, the "mystery" man.

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Harley had not been enjoying the swinging ease of the rocking-chair five minutes before Hobart, the light of interest in his eyes, pounced upon him.

"Harley, old fellow," he exclaimed, "this is the first place we've struck in which Jimmy Grayson is not the overwhelming attraction."

"The hanging, I suppose," said Harley, carelessly.

"Of course. What else could there be? It occurred to me last night, when I was reading the paper, that I might scare up a feature or two in the case, and I was out of my bed early this morning to try. It was a forlorn hope, I'll admit, but anything was better than nothing, and I've had my reward. I've had my reward, old fellow!"

He chuckled outright in his glee. Harley smiled. Hobart always interested and amused him. The instinctive way in which he unflinchingly rose to a "case" showed his natural genius for that sort of thing.

"I haven't seen Boyd yet," continued Hobart, excitedly, "but I've found out this much already—there are people in Grayville who believe Boyd innocent. It is true that he and Wofford—the murdered man—had been quarrelling in Grayville, and Boyd was taken at the shanty with the blood-stained knife in his hand; but that doesn't settle it."

Harley could not restrain an incredulous laugh. "It seems to me those two circumstances, omitting the other proof, are pretty convincing," he said.

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Hobart flushed. "You just wait until I finish," he said, somewhat defiantly. "Now Boyd, as I have learned, was a good-hearted, generous young fellow. The quarrel amounted to very little, and probably had been patched up before they reached their shack."

"That is a view which the jury evidently could not take."

"Juries are often wooden-headed."

"Of course—in the eyes of superior people."

"Now don't you try to be satirical—it's not your specialty. I mean to finish the tale. If you read the paper, you will recall that the shanty where the murder occurred was only a short distance from the mountain-road, and there were three witnesses—Bill Metzger, a dissolute cowboy who was passing, and who, attracted by Wofford's death-cry, ran to the cabin and found Boyd, blood-stained knife in hand, bending over the murdered man; Ed Thorpe, a tramp miner, who heard the same cry and who came up two or three minutes later; and, finally, Tim Williams, a town idler, who was on the mountain-side, hunting. The other two heard him fire his gun a few hundred

yards away, and called to him. When he arrived, Boyd was still dazed and muttering to himself, as if overpowered by the horror of his crime."

"If that isn't conclusive, then nothing is," said Harley, decisively.

"It is not conclusive; there was no real motive for Boyd to do such a thing."

"To whom did the knife belong?"

"It was a long bread-knife that the two used at the cabin."

"There you are! Proof on proof!"

"Now, you keep silent, Harley, and come with me, like a good fellow, and see Boyd in the jail. If you don't, I swear I'll pester the life out of you for a week." [Pg 197]

Harley rose reluctantly, as he knew that Hobart would keep his word. He believed it the idlest of errands, but the jail was only a short distance from them, and the business would not take long. On the way Hobart talked to him about the three witnesses. Metzger, the cowboy, on the day of the murder, had been riding in from a ranch farther down the valley; the other two had been about the town until a short time before the departure of Boyd and Wofford for their cabin.

They reached the jail, a conspicuous stone building in the centre of the town, and were shown into the condemned man's cell. The jailer announced them with the statement:

"Tim, here's two newspaper fellers from the East wants to see you."

The prisoner was lying on a pallet in the corner of his cell, and he raised himself on his elbow when Harley and Hobart entered.

"You are writers for the papers?" he said.

"Yes, clean from New York; they are with Jimmy Grayson," the jailer answered for them.

"I don't know as I've got anythin' to say to you," continued the prisoner. "I 'ain't got no picture to give you, an' if I had one I wouldn't give it. I don't want my hangin' to be all wrote up in the papers, with pictures an' things, too, jest to please the people in the East. If I've got to die, I'd rather do it quiet and peaceful, among the boys I know. I ain't no free circus."

"We did not come to write you up; it was for another purpose," Harley hastened to say.

He was surprised at the youth of the prisoner, who obviously was not over twenty-one, a mere boy, with good features and a look half defiant, half appealing. [Pg 198]

"Well, what did you come for, then?" asked the boy.

Harley was unable to answer this question, and he looked at Hobart as if to indicate the one who would reply. The "mystery" man did not seek to evade his responsibility in the least, and promptly said:

"Mr. Boyd, I think you will acquit us of any intention to intrude upon you. It was the best of motives that brought us to you. I have always had an interest in cases of this sort, and when I heard of yours in the train, coming here, I received an impression then which has been strengthened on my arrival in Grayville. I believe you are innocent."

The boy looked up. A sudden flash of gratitude, almost of hope, appeared in his eyes.

"I am!" he cried. "God knows I didn't kill Bill Wofford. He wuz my partner and we wuz like brothers. We did quarrel that mornin'—I don't deny it—and we both had been liquorin'; but I'd never hev struck him a blow of any kind, least of all a foul one."

"Was it not true that you were found with the bloody knife in your hand, standing over his yet warm body?" asked Hobart.

"It's so, but it was somebody else that used the knife. Bill went on ahead, and when I come into the place I saw him on the floor an' the knife in 'im. I was struck all a-heap, but I did what anybody else would 'a' done—I pulled the knife out. And then the fellers come in on me. I was rushed into a trial right away. Of course, I couldn't tell a straight tale; the horror of it was still in my brain, and the effect o' the liquor, too. I got all mixed up—but before God, gen'lemen, I didn't do it." [Pg 199]

His tone was strong with sincerity, and his expression was rather that of grief than remorse. Harley, who had had a long experience with all kinds of men in all kinds of situations, did not believe that he was either bad or guilty. Hobart spoke his thoughts aloud.

"I don't think you did it," he said.

"Everybody believes I did," said Boyd, with pathetic resignation, "and I am to be hanged for it. So what does it matter now?"

"I am going to look for the guilty man," said Hobart, decidedly.

Boyd shook his head and lay back on his pallet. The others, with a few words of hope, withdrew, and, when they were outside, Harley said:

"Hobart, were you not wrong to sow the seed of hope in that man's mind when there is no hope?"

"There is hope," replied Hobart; "I have a plan. Don't ask me anything about it—it's vague yet—but I may work it."

Harley glanced at him, and, seeing that he was intense and eager, with his mind concentrated upon this single problem, resolved to leave him to his own course; so he spent part of the day, a wonderful autumn Sunday, in a rocking-chair on the piazza of the hotel, and another part walking with Sylvia. He told her of the murder case and Hobart's action, and her prompt sympathy was aroused.

"Suppose he should really be innocent?" she said. "It would be an awful thing to hang an innocent man."

"So it would. He certainly does not look like a bad fellow, but you know that those who are not bad are sometimes guilty. In any event I fail to see what Hobart can do." [Pg 200]

After the walk, which was all too brief, he returned to his rocking-chair on the piazza, but Grayville, being a small place, he knew everything that was going on within it, by means of a sort of mental telepathy that the born correspondent acquires. He knew, for instance, that Hobart was all the time with one or the other of the three witnesses—Metzger, Thorpe, or Williams—for the moment the most important persons in Grayville by reason of their conspicuous connection with the great case.

When Hobart returned, the edge of the sun was behind the highest mountains; but he took no notice of Harley, walking past him without a word and burying himself somewhere in the interior of the hotel. Harley learned subsequently that he went directly to Jimmy Grayson's room, and remained there at least half an hour, in close conference with the candidate himself.

The next day was a break in the great campaign. Owing to train connections, which are not trifles in the Far West, it was necessary, in order to complete the schedule, to spend an idle day at some place, and Grayville had been selected as the most comfortable and therefore the most suitable. And so the luxurious rest of the group was continued for twenty-four hours for all—save Hobart.

Harley had never before seen the "mystery" man so eager and so full of suppressed excitement. He frequently passed his comrades, but he rarely spoke to them, or even noticed them; his mind was concentrated now upon a great affair in which they would be of no avail. Harley learned, however, that he was still much in the company of the three witnesses, although he asked him no questions. Late in the afternoon he saw him alone and walking rapidly towards the hotel. It seemed to Harley that Hobart's head was borne somewhat high and in a manner exultantly, as if he were overcoming obstacles, and he was about to ask him again in regard to his progress, but Hobart once more sped by without a word and went into the hotel. Harley learned later that he held a secret conference with Jimmy Grayson. [Pg 201]

In the evening everybody went to the opera-house to hear the candidate, but on the way Hobart said, casually, to Harley: "Old man, I don't think I'll sit in front to-night. I wish you would let me have your notes afterwards." "Of course," replied Harley, as he passed down the aisle and found his chair at the correspondents' table on the stage.

There Harley watched the fine Western audience come into the theatre and find seats, with some noise but no disorder, a noise merely of men calling each other by name, and commenting in advance on what Jimmy Grayson would say. The other correspondents entered one by one—all except Hobart, and took their seats on the stage. Sylvia and Mrs. Grayson were with some ladies in a box. Harley looked for Hobart, and two or three times he saw him near the main entrance of the building. Once he was talking with a brown and longish-haired youth, and Harley, by casual inquiry, learned that it was Metzger, the cowboy. A man not greatly different in appearance, to whom Hobart spoke occasionally, was Thorpe, the tramp miner, and yet another, a tall fellow with a bulging underlip, Harley learned, was Williams, the third witness.

Evidently the witnesses would attend Jimmy Grayson's meeting, which was natural, however, as every body in Grayville was sure to come, and Harley also surmised that Hobart had taken upon himself the task of instructing them as to the methods, the manner, and the greatness of the candidate. He had done such a thing himself, upon occasion, the Western interest in Jimmy Grayson being so great that often appeals were made to the correspondents for information about him more detailed than the newspapers gave. [Pg 202]

Harley studied the faces of the three witnesses as attentively as the distance and the light would admit, but they remained near the door, evidently intending to stand there, back to the wall, a plan sometimes adopted by those who may wish to slip out quietly before a speech is finished. Harley, the trained observer, saw that Hobart, without their knowledge, was shepherding them as the shepherd gently makes his sheep converge upon a common spot.

The correspondent could draw no inference from the faces of the three men, which were all of usual Western types, without anything special to distinguish them, and his attention turned to the audience. He had received an intimation that Jimmy Grayson intended to deliver that evening a speech of unusual edge and weight. He would indict the other party in the most direct and forcible manner, pointing out that its sins were moral as well as political, but that a day of reckoning would come, when those who profited by such evil courses must pay the forfeit; it was a part of the law of nature, which was also the law of retribution.



The candidate was a little late, and the opera-house was filled to the last seat, with many people standing in the aisles and about the doors. Harley, glancing again at the rows and rows of faces, saw the three witnesses almost together, and just to the right of the main entrance, where they leaned against the wall, facing the stage. Hobart fluttered about them, holding them in occasional talk, and Harley was just about to look again, and with increasing attention, but at that instant the great audience, with a common impulse and a kind of rushing sound, like the slide of an avalanche, rose to its feet. The candidate, coming from the wings, had just appeared upon the stage, and the welcome was spontaneous and overwhelming. Jimmy Grayson was always a serious man, but Harley noticed that evening, when he first appeared before the footlights, that his face looked tense and eager, as if he felt that a great task which he must assume lay just before him.

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He wasted no time, but went at once to the heart of his subject, the crime of a great party, the wicked ways by which it had attained its wicked ends, and from the opening sentence he had his big audience with him, heart and soul.

The indictment was terrible: in a masterly way he summed up the charges and the proof, as a general marshals his forces for battle, and the crowd, so clear were his words and so strong his statements, could see them all marching in unison, like the battalions and brigades, towards the common point, the exposed centre of the enemy. The faces of Sylvia and Mrs. Grayson, in the box, glowed with pride.

Again and again, at the pauses between sentences, the cheers of the audience rose and echoed, and then Harley would glance once more towards the door; there, always, he saw Hobart with the three witnesses, gathered under his wing, as it were, all looking raptly and intently at Jimmy Grayson.

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The candidate, by-and-by, seemed to concentrate his attention upon the four men at the door, and spoke directly to them. Harley saw one of the group move as if about to leave, but the hand of Hobart fell upon his arm and he stayed. Harley, too, was conscious presently of an unusual effect having the quality of weirdness. The lights seemed to go down in the whole opera-house, except near the door. Jimmy Grayson and the correspondents were in a semi-darkness, but Hobart and his three new friends beside the door stood in a light that was almost dazzling through contrast. The three witnesses now seemed to be fixed in that spot, and their eyes never wandered from Jimmy Grayson's face.

Familiar as he was with the candidate's oratorical powers, Harley was surprised at his strength of invective that evening. He had proved the guilt, the overwhelming guilt, of the opposition party, and he was describing the punishment, a punishment sure to come, although many might deem it impossible:

"But there would be a day of judgment; justice might sleep for a while, but she must awake at last, and, the longer vengeance was delayed, the more terrible it became. Then woe to the guilty."

The audience was deeply impressed by the eloquence of Jimmy Grayson, coinciding so well with their own views. Harley saw a look of awe appear upon the faces of many—Sylvia's face was pale—and the house, save for the voice of Jimmy Grayson, was as still as death. Harley felt the effect himself, and the weird, unreal quality that he observed before increased. Once, when he went over to make some notes, he noticed that the words written a half-hour before were scarcely visible, but, when he glanced at the opposite end of the theatre, there stood Hobart and the three witnesses, gathered about him, in the very heart of a dazzling light that showed every changing look on the faces of the four. Harley's gaze lingered upon them, and again he tried to find something peculiar, something distinctive in at least one of the three witnesses, but, as before, he failed; they were to him just ordinary Westerners following with rapt attention every word and gesture of Jimmy Grayson.

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The candidate went on with his story of the consequences; the crime had been committed; the profits had been reaped and enjoyed, but slumbering justice, awake at last, was at hand; it was time for the wicked to tremble, the price must be repaid, doubly, trebly, fivefold. Now he personified the guilty party, the opposition, which he treated as an individual; he compared it to a man who had committed a deed of horror, but who long had hidden his crime from the world; others might be suspected of it, others might be punished for it, but he could never forget that he himself was guilty; though he walked before the world innocent, the sense of it would always be there, it would not leave him night or day; every moment, even, before the full exposure it would be inflicting its punishment upon him; it would be useless to seek escape or to think of it, because the longer the guilty victim struggled the more crushing his punishment would be. The correspondents forgot to write, and, like the audience, hung upon every word and gesture of Jimmy Grayson, as he made his great denunciatory speech; they felt that he was stirred by something unusual, that some great and extraordinary motive was impelling him, and they followed eagerly where he led them.

Harley saw the look of awe on the faces of the audience grow and deepen. With their overwhelming admiration of Jimmy Grayson, they seemed to have conceived, too, a sudden fear of him. His long, accusing finger was shaken in their faces, he was not alone denouncing a guilty man, but he was seeking out their own hidden sins, and presently he would point at them his revealing finger.

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Hobart stood with the three witnesses beside the door, still in the dazzling light. Harley was sure that not one of the four had moved in the last half-hour, and Jimmy Grayson still held them all with his gaze. Harley suddenly saw something like a flash of light, a signal glance, as it were, pass between him and Hobart, and the next instant the voice of the candidate swelled into greater and more accusing volume.

"Now you behold the guilty man!" said Jimmy Grayson. "I have shown him to you. He seems to the world full of pride and power, but he knows that justice is pursuing him, and that it will overtake him; he trembles, he cowers, he flees, but the avenging footsteps are behind him, and the sound of them rings in his frightened ears like a death-knell to his soul. A wall rises across his way. He can flee no farther; he turns back from the wall, raises his terror-stricken eyes, and there before him the hand of fate is raised; its finger points at him, and a terrible voice proclaims, 'Thou art the guilty man!'"

The form of Jimmy Grayson swelled and towered, his hand was raised, the long forefinger pointed directly at the four who stood in the dazzling light, and the hall resounded with the tremendous echoes of his cry, "Thou art the guilty man!"

As if lifted by a common impulse, the great audience rose with an indescribable sound and faced about, following Jimmy Grayson's long, accusing finger. [Pg 207]

The man Williams threw his arm before his face, as if to protect himself, and, with a terrible cry, "Yes, I did it!" fell in a faint on the floor.

They were all on the train the next day, and Harley was reading from a copy of the *Grayville Argus* an account of Boyd's release and the ovation that the people had given him.

"How did you trace the crime to Williams, Hobart?" asked Harley.

"I didn't trace it; it was Jimmy Grayson who brought it out by giving him 'the third degree,'" replied Hobart, though there was a quiet tone of satisfied pride in his voice. "You know that in New York, when they expose a man at Police Headquarters to some such supreme test, they call it giving him 'the third degree,' and that's what we did here. It seems that Williams was in the saloon when Boyd and his partner quarrelled, and he knew they had a lot of gold from the claim in their cabin. His object was robbery. When he saw Wofford go on ahead, he followed him quickly to the cabin, and killed him with the knife which lay on a table. He expected to have time to get the gold before Boyd came, but Boyd arrived so soon that he was barely able to slip out. Then Williams, cunning and bold enough, came back as if he were a chance passer-by, and had been called by Metzger and Thorpe. The other two were as innocent as you or I.

"I could not make up my mind which of the three was guilty, and I induced Jimmy Grayson to help me. It was right in line with his speech—no harm done even if the test had failed—and then the man who managed the lights at the opera-house, a friend of Boyd's, helped me with the stage effects. Jimmy Grayson, of course, knew nothing about that. I borrowed the idea. I have read somewhere that Aaron Burr by just such a device once convicted a guilty man who was present in court as a witness when another was being tried for the crime." [Pg 208]

"Well, you have saved his life to an innocent man," said Harley.

"And I have cost a guilty one his." And then, after a moment's pause, Hobart added, with a little shiver:

"But I wouldn't go through such an ordeal again at any price. When Jimmy Grayson thundered out, 'Thou art the guilty man,' it was all I could do to keep from crying, 'Yes, I am, I am!'"

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## XIV

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### THE DEAD CITY

As they left the hall, Churchill overtook Harley and tapped him on the shoulder. Harley turned and saw an expression of supreme disgust on the face of the *Monitor's* correspondent, but Harley himself only felt amusement. He knew that Churchill meant attack.

"I never saw anything more theatrical and ill-timed," said Churchill. "Of course, it was all prearranged in some manner. But the idea of a Presidential nominee taking such a risk!"

"He has saved an innocent man's life, and I call that no small achievement."

"Because the trick was successful; but it was a trick, all the same, and it was beneath the dignity of a Presidential nominee."

"There was but little risk of any kind," said Harley, shortly, "and even had it been larger, it would have been right to take it, when the stake was a man's life. Churchill, you are hunting for faults, you know you are, or you would not be so quick to see them."

Churchill made no audible reply, but Harley could see that he was unconvinced, and, in fact, he sent his newspaper a lurid despatch about it, taking events out of their proper proportion, and hence giving to them a wholly unjustifiable conclusion. But Sylvia Morgan was devotedly loyal to her uncle. There were few deeds of his of which she approved more warmly than this of saving Boyd's life, and Hobart, the master spirit in it, she thanked in a way that made him turn red with pleasure. But the discussion of the whole affair was brief, because fast upon its heels trod another event which stirred them yet more deeply.

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When the special train was at Blue Earth, in Montana, among the high mountains, there came to Jimmy Grayson an appeal, compounded of pathos and despair, that he could not resist. It was from the citizens of Crow's Wing, forty miles deeper into the yet higher and steeper mountains, and they recounted, in mournful words, how no candidate ever came to see them; all passed them by as either too few or too difficult, and they had never yet listened to the spell of oratory; of course, they did not expect the nominee of a great party for the Presidency of the United States to make the hard trip and speak to them, when even the little fellows ignored their existence; nevertheless, they wished to inform him in writing that they were alive, and on the map, at least, they made as big a dot as either Helena or Butte.

The candidate smiled when he read the letter. The tone of it moved him. Moreover, he was not deficient in policy—no man who rises is—and while Crow's Wing had but few votes, Montana was close, and a single state might decide the Union.

"Those people at Crow's Wing do not expect me, but I shall go to them," he said to his train.

"Why, it's a full day's journey and more, over the roughest and rockiest road in America," said Mr. Curtis, the state senator from Wyoming, who was still with them.

"I shall go," said Jimmy Grayson, decisively. "There is a break here in our schedule, and this trip will fit in very nicely."

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The others were against it, but they said nothing more in opposition, knowing that it would be of no avail. Obliging, generous, and soft-hearted, the candidate, nevertheless, had a temper of steel when his mind was made up, and the others had learned not to oppose it. But all shunned the journey with him to Crow's Wing except Harley, Mr. Plummer, Mr. Herbert Heathcote—because there is no zeal like that of the converted—and one other.

That "other" was Sylvia, and she insisted upon going, refusing to listen to all the good arguments that were brought against it. "I know that I am only a woman—a girl," she said, "but I know, too, that I've lived all my life in the mountains, and I understand them. Why, I've been on harder journeys than this with daddy before I was twelve years old. Haven't I, daddy?" As she had predicted, she forgot his request not to call him "daddy."

Thus appealed to, Mr. Plummer was fain to confess the truth, though with reluctance. However, he said, rather weakly:

"But you don't know what kind of weather we'll have, Sylvia."

Then she turned upon him in a manner that terrified him.

"Now, daddy, if I couldn't get up a better argument than that I'd quit," she said. "Weather! weather! weather! to an Idaho girl! Suppose it should rain, I'm made of neither sugar nor salt, and I won't melt. I've been rained on a thousand times. Aunt Anna says I may go if Uncle James is willing, and he's willing—he has to be; besides, he's my chaperon. If you don't say 'yes,' Uncle James, I shall take the train and go straight home."

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They were forced to consent, and Harley was glad that she insisted, because he liked to know that she was near, and he thought that she looked wonderfully well on horseback.

The going of Harley with the candidate was taken as a matter of course by everybody. Silent, tactful, and strong, he had grown almost imperceptibly into a confidential relationship with the nominee, and Mr. Grayson did not realize how much he relied upon the quiet man who could not make a speech but who was so ready of resource. As for Mr. Heathcote, being an Easterner, he wished to see the West in all its aspects.

They started at daybreak, guided by a taciturn mountaineer, Jim Jones, called simply Jim for the sake of brevity, and, the hour being so early, few were present to see them ride up the hanging slope and into the mighty wilderness.

But it was a glorious dawn. The young sun was gilding the sea of crags and crests with burnished gold and the air had the sparkle of youth. Mr. Heathcote threw back his slightly narrow chest, and, drawing three deep breaths of just the same length, he said, "I would not miss this trip for a thousand dollars!"

"And I wouldn't for two thousand!" exclaimed Sylvia, joyously.

Harley said nothing, but he, too, looked out upon the morning world with a kindling eye. Far below them was a narrow valley, a faint green line down the centre showing where the little river ran, with the irrigated farms on either side, like beads on a string. Above them towered the peaks, white with everlasting snow.

"A fine day for our ride," said the candidate to Jim.

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"Looks like it now, though I never gamble on mountain weather," replied the taciturn man.

But the promise held good for a long time, the sun still shining and the winds coming fresh and brisk along the crests and ridges. The trail wound about the slopes and steadily ascended. Vegetation ceased, and before them stretched the bare rocks. Harley knew very well now that only the sunshine saved them from grimness and desolation. The loneliness became oppressive. Even Sylvia was silent. It was the wilderness in reality as well as seeming; nowhere did they see a miner's hut or a hunter's cabin, only nature in her most savage form.

The little group of horsemen forgot to talk. The candidate's head was bowed and his brow bent. Clearly he was immersed in thought. Mr. Heathcote, unused to such arduous journeys, leaned forward in his saddle in a state of semi-exhaustion. But Sylvia, although a girl, was accustomed to the mountains, and she showed few signs of fatigue. Harley said at last to the guide, "A wild country, one of the wildest, I think, that I ever saw."

"Yes, a wild country, and a bad 'un, too," responded Jim. "See off there to the left?"

He pointed to a maze of bare and rocky ridges, and when he saw that Harley's gaze was following his long forefinger, he continued:

"I say it's a bad 'un, because over there Red Perkins and his gang of horse-thieves, outlaws, and cut-throats used to have their hiding-place. It's a tangled-up stretch o' mountain, so wild, so rocky, so full of caves that they could have hid there till judgment-day from all Montana. Yes, that's where they used to hang out."

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"Used to?"

"Yes, 'cause I 'ain't heard much uv them fur some time. They came down in the valley and tried to stampede them new blooded horses from Kentucky on Sifton's ranch, but Sifton and his men was waitin', and when the smoke cleared off most uv the gang was wiped out. Red and two or three uv his fellers got away, but I 'ain't heard uv 'em since. Guess they've scattered."

"Wisest thing they could do," said Harley.

The guide made no answer, and they plodded on in silence until about two o'clock in the afternoon, when they stopped in a little cove to eat luncheon and refresh their horses.

It was the first grateful spot they had seen in hours. A brook fed by the snows above formed a pool in the hollow, and then, overflowing it, dropped down the mountain-wall. But in this sheltered nook and around the life-giving water green grass was growing, and there was a rim of goodly trees. The horses, when their riders dismounted, grazed eagerly, and the riders themselves lay upon the grass and ate with deep content.

Sylvia talked little. She seemed thoughtful, and, when neither of them was looking, she glanced now and then at Harley and "King" Plummer. Had they noticed they would have seen a shade of sadness on her face. Mr. Plummer did not speak, and it was because there was a growing anxiety in his mind. He was sorry now that they had let Sylvia come, and he silently called himself a weak fool.

"Shall we reach Crow's Wing by dark?" asked the candidate of the guide.

Jim had risen, and, standing at the edge of the cove, was gazing out over the rolling sea of mountains. Harley noticed a troubled look on his face.

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"If things go right we kin," he replied, "but I ain't shore that things will go right."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you see that brown spot down there in the southwest, just a-top the hills? Waal, it's a cloud, an' it's comin' this way. Clouds, you know, always hev somethin' in 'em."

"That is to say we shall have rain," said the candidate. "Let it come. We have been rained on too often to mind such a little thing—eh, Sylvia? You see, I take you at your word."

The girl nodded.

"I don't think it'll be rain," said the guide. "We are so high up here that more 'n likely it'll be snow. An' when there's a snow-storm in the mountains you can't go climbin' along the side o' cliffs."

The others, too, looked grave now. Perhaps, with the exception of "King" Plummer, they had not foreseen such a difficulty, but the guide came to their relief with more cheering words—after all, the cloud might not continue to grow, "an' it ain't worth while to holler afore we're hit."

This seemed sound philosophy to the others, and, dismissing their cares, they started again, much refreshed by their stop in the little cove. The road now grew rougher, the guide leading and the rest following in single-file, Sylvia just ahead of Harley. By-and-by their cares returned. Harley glanced towards the southwest and saw there the same cloud, but now much bigger, blacker, and more threatening. The sunshine was gone, and the wrinkled surface of the mountains was gray and sombre. The air had grown cold, and down among the clefts there was a weird, moaning wind. Harley glanced at the guide, and noticed that his face was now decidedly anxious. But the correspondent said nothing. Part of his strength lay in his ability to wait, and he

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knew that the guide would speak in good time.

"Don't any of you be discouraged because of me," said Sylvia; "I'm not afraid of storms—even snowstorms. Am I not a good mountaineer, daddy?"

The "King" nodded his head. He knew that she was a better mountaineer than any in the party except the guide and himself, and he felt less alarm for her than was in the mind of Grayson or Harley.

But Harley was thrilled by her courage. Here, amid these wild mountains, with the threat of darkness and the storm, she was unafraid and still feminine. "This is a woman to be won," was his unuttered thought.

Another hour passed, and the air grew darker and colder. Then Jim stopped.

"Gentlemen," he said, "there's a snow-storm comin' soon. I didn't expect one so early, even on the mountains, but it's comin', anyhow, an' if we keep on for Crow's Wing they'll have to dig our bones out o' the meltin' drifts next summer. We've got to make for Queen City."

"Queen City!" exclaimed Mr. Heathcote. "I didn't know there was another town anywhere near here."

"She's a-standin' all the same," replied the guide, brusquely, "an' I wouldn't never hev started on the trip to Crow's Wing if there hadn't been such a stoppin'-place betwixt an' between, in case o' trouble with the weather. An' let me whisper to you, Queen City's quite a sizable place. We'll pass the night there. It's got a fine hotel, the finest an' biggest in the mountains."

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He looked grimly at Mr. Heathcote, as much as to say, "Ask me as much more as you please, but I'll answer you nothing." Then he added, glancing at Sylvia:

"It's a wild night for a gal."

"But you said that the biggest and finest hotel in the mountains was waiting for me," replied Sylvia, with spirit.

The guide bowed his head admiringly, and said no more.

Something cold and damp touched Harley's cheek. He looked up, and another flake of snow, descending softly, settled upon his face. The clouds rolled over them, heavy and dark, and shut out all the mountains save a little island where they stood. The snow, following the first few flakes, fell softly but rapidly.

"It's Queen City or moulderin' in the drifts till next summer!" cried Jim, and he turned his horse into a side-path. The others followed without a word, willing to accept his guidance through the greatest peril they had yet faced in an arduous campaign. Despite the danger, which he knew to be heavy and pressing, and his anxiety for Sylvia, Harley's curiosity was aroused, and he wished to ask more of Queen City, but the saturnine face of the guide was not inviting. Nevertheless, he risked one question.

"How far is this place, Queen City?" he asked.

"Bout two miles," replied Jim, with what seemed to Harley a derisive grin, "an' it's tarnal lucky for us that it's so near."

Harley said no more, but he was satisfied with nothing in the guide's reply save the fact that the town was only two miles away; any shelter would be welcome, because he saw now that a snow-storm on the wild mountains was a terrible thing.

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The guide led on; Jimmy Grayson, with bent head, followed; Mr. Heathcote, shrunk in his saddle, came next; then "King" Plummer; and after him Sylvia and Harley, who were as nearly side by side as the narrow path would permit.

"It won't be far, Miss Morgan," said Harley; the others could not hear.

She felt rather than heard the note of apprehension in his voice, and she knew it was for her. A thrill of singular sweetness passed over her. It was pleasant for some one, *the* one, to be afraid for her sake. She looked out at the driving snow and the dim peaks, but she had no fear for herself. She was glad, too, that she had come.

"I know the way of the mountains," she replied. "The guide will take us in safety to this city of his, of which he speaks so highly."

Harley saw her smile through the snow. The others rode on before, heads bowed, and did not look back. He and she felt a powerful sense of comradeship, and once, when he leaned over to detach her bridle rein from the horse's mane, he touched her hand, which was so soft and warm. Again the electric thrill passed through them both, and they looked into each other's eyes.

Now and then the vast veil of snow parted before the wind, as if cleft down the centre by a sword-blade, and Harley and Sylvia beheld a grand and awful sight. Before them were all the peaks and ridges, rising in white cones and pillars against the cloudy sky, and the effect was of distance and sublimity. From the clefts and ravines came a desolate moaning. Harley felt that he was much nearer to the eternal here than he could ever be in the plains. Then the rent veil would close again, and he saw only his comrades and the rocks twenty feet away.

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They turned around the base of a cliff rising hundreds of feet above them, and Harley caught the dull-red glare of brick walls, showing through the falling snow. He was ready to raise a shout of joy. This he knew was Queen City, lying snugly in its wide valley. There was the typical, single mountain street, with its row of buildings on either side; the big one near-by was certainly the hotel, and the other big one farther on was as certainly the opera-house. But nobody was in the streets, and the whole place was dark; not a light appeared at a single window, although the night had come.

"We're here," Harley said to Sylvia, "but I confess that this does not look promising. Certainly there is nobody running to meet us."

She was gazing with curiosity.

"It's like no other town that I ever saw," she said.

Harley rode up by the side of the guide.

"The place looks lonesome," he said.

"Maybe they've all gone to bed; there ain't anythin' here to keep 'em awake," replied the guide, with the old puzzling and derisive smile.

Harley turned coldly away. He did not like to have any one make fun of him, and that he saw clearly was the guide's intention. Jimmy Grayson was still thinking of things far off, and Mr. Heathcote, chilled and shrunk, seemed to have lost the power of speech. "King" Plummer, for reasons of his own, was silent too.

The guide rode slowly towards the large brick building that Harley took to be the hotel, and, at that moment, the snow slackened for a little while; the last rays of the setting sun struck upon the dun walls and gilded them with red tracery; some panes of glass gave back the ruddy glare, but mostly the windows were bare and empty, like eyeless sockets. Harley looked farther, and all the other buildings—the opera-house, the stores, and the residences—were the same, desolate and decaying. About the place were snow-covered heaps, evidently the refuse of mining operations, but they saw no human being. [Pg 220]

The effect upon all save the guide was startling. Harley saw the look of chilled wonder grow on Jimmy Grayson's face. Mr. Heathcote raised himself in his saddle and stared, uncomprehending. Harley had been deep in the desert, but never before had he seen such desolation and ruin, because here was the body, but all life had gone from it. He felt as one alone with ghosts. Sylvia was silent, her confidence gone for the moment. The guide laughed dryly.

"You guessed it," he said, looking at Harley. "It's a dead city. Queen City has been as dead as Adam these half-dozen years. When the mines played out, it died; there was no earthly use for Queen City any longer, and by-and-by everybody went away. But I've seen the old town when it was alive. Five thousand people here. Money a-flowin', drinks passin' over the counter one way and the coin the other, the gamblin'-houses an' the theatre chock-full, an' women, any kind you please. But there ain't a soul left now."

The snow thinned still more, and the buildings rose before them gaunt and grim.

"We'll stop to-night at the Grand Hotel—that is, if they ain't too much crowded; it'll be nice for the lady," said the guide, who had had his little joke and who now wished to serve his employers as best he could; "but first we'll take the horses into the dinin'-room; nobody will object; I've done it afore." [Pg 221]

He rode towards a side-door, but over the main entrance Harley saw in tessellated letters the words "Grand Hotel," and he tried to shake off the feeling of weirdness that it gave him.

The door to the dining-room, which was almost level with the ground, was gone, and with some driving the horses were persuaded to enter. They were tethered there, sheltered from the storm, and, when they moved, their feet rumbled hollowly on the wooden floor. Sylvia, the candidate, and his friends, driven by the same impulse, turned back into the snow and re-entered the house by the front door.

They passed into a wide hall, and at the far end they saw the clerk's desk. Lying upon it were some fragments of paper fastened to a chain, and Harley knew that it was what was left of the hotel register. It spoke so vividly of both life and death that the five stopped.

"Would you like to register, Mr. Grayson?" asked Harley, wishing to relieve the tension.

The candidate laughed mirthlessly.

"Not to-night, Harley," he said; "but, gloomy as the place is, we ought to be thankful that we have found it. See how the storm is rising."

He glanced at Sylvia, and deep gratitude swelled up in his breast. Grewsome as it might look, Queen City was now, indeed, a place of refuge. But he had no word of reproach for her, because she had insisted upon coming. He knew that a snow-storm had not entered into her calculations, as it had not entered into his, and, moreover, no one in the party had shown more courage or better spirits. [Pg 222]

The snow drove in at the unsheltered windows, and a long whine arose as the wind whirled

around the old house. The guide came in with cheerful bustle and stamp of feet.

"Don't linger here, gentlemen and ladies," he said. "The house is yours. Come into the parlor. We've had a piece of luck. Now and then a lone tramp or a miner seeks shelter in this town, just as we have done; they come mostly to the hotel, and some feller who gathered up wood failed to burn it all. I'll have a fire in the parlor in five minutes, and then we can ring for hot drinks for the men, a lemonade for the lady, and a warm dinner for all. I'll take straight whiskey, an' after that I ain't partic'ler whether I get patty-de-foy-graw or hummin'-bird tongues."

His good-humor was infectious, and they were thankful, too, for the shelter, desolate though the place was. All the wood had been stripped away except the floors, and the brick walls were bare. In the great parlor they had nothing to sit on save their saddles, but it was a noble apartment, many feet square, built for a time when there was life in Queen City.

"I've heard the Governor of Montana speak to more than two hundred people in this very room," said Jim, reminiscently. "He was to have spoke in the public square, but snow come up, an' Bill Fosdick, who run the hotel, and run her wide open, invited 'em all right in here, an' they come."

Harley could well believe it, knowing, as he did, the miners and the mountains, and, by report, early Montana.

At one end of the room was an immense grate, and in this Jim heaped the wood so generously left by the unknown tramp or miner, igniting it with a ready match. The ruddy blaze leaped upward and threw generous shadows on the floor. The travellers, sitting close to it, felt the grateful warmth and were content.

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All the saddle blankets also had been brought in and piled on one of the saddles. On these Sylvia sat and spread out her hands to the ruddy blaze. To Harley, with the flame of the firelight on her face and the glow of the coals throwing patches of red and gold on her hair, she seemed some brilliant spirit come to light up the gloomy place. Here all was warmth and brightness; outside, the storm moaned through the mountains and the darkness.

"Do you know, I enjoy this," she said, as she looked into the crackling fire.

"So Queen City ain't so bad, ma'am?" said the guide, with dry satisfaction.

"Not bad at all, but very good," she replied, gayly. "Don't you think so, Mr. Harley?"

"I certainly agree with you," replied Harley, devoutly, "but I'm glad that Queen City is just where it is."

She laughed.

"Daddy has been many a time in the mountains without his Queen City—haven't you, daddy?"

"Often," said "King" Plummer, looking at her with a pleased smile. But he wished that she would not call him "daddy," at least before Harley; it seemed that she could never remember his request; but she had warned him.

"An old hand travellin' in the mountains always purvides for a snowy day," said the guide, and he took from his saddle-bags much food and a large bottle.

They drank a little, all except Sylvia, and ate heartily. The last touch of cold departed, and the fire still sparkled with good cheer, casting its comforting shadows across the stained floor.

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"I've brought in the horse-blankets," said the guide, "an' with them under us, our overcoats over us, an' the fire afore us, we ought to sleep here as snug an' warm as a beaver in its house."

Sylvia was accustomed to camping in the mountains, and made no fuss, but quietly leaned back against the saddle and the wall, and drew her heavy cloak around her. She was soon half asleep, and the flames, moving off into the distance, seemed to be dancing about in a queer, light-minded fashion.

Harley walked to the window and looked out. The night was black, save for the driving snow, and when he glanced back at the room it seemed a very haven of delight. But the strangeness of their situation, the weird effect of the dead city, with the ghost-like shapes of its houses showing through the snow, was upon his nerves, and he did not feel sleepy.

Muttering some excuse to the others, he went into the hall. It was dark, and a gust of cold air from the open window at the end struck him in the face. At the same moment Harley saw what he took to be a light farther down the hall, but when he looked again it was gone.

It might be a delusion, but the matter troubled him; if a lone tramp or miner were in the building, he wished to know. Any stranger would have a right in the hotel, but there was comradeship and welcome in Jimmy Grayson's party.

Harley's instinct said that all was not right, and, taking off his boots, he crept down the hall and among the cross-halls with noiseless feet. He did not see the light again, but he heard in another room the hum of voices, softened so that they might not reach any one save those for whom they were intended. But they reached Harley, crouching just behind the edge of the door, and, hearing, he shuddered. A great danger threatened the nominee for the Presidency of the United States. Such a thing as the present had never before happened in the history of the country.

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And that same danger, but in a worse form, perhaps, threatened Sylvia. It was not Harley's fault that a girl had then a greater place than a Presidential nominee in his mind. He shuddered, and then closed his lips firmly in resolve.

The door was still on its hinges, and it was still slightly ajar. Harley, peeping through the crack, saw the eight occupants of the room by the faint light from the window, and because the man who did the talking, and who showed himself so evidently the leader, had red hair, he knew him instinctively. It was Red Perkins and the remnant of his gang, not scattered to the winds of the West, as Jim and everybody else thought, but here in Montana, in their old haunts. And Harley, listening to their talk, measured the extent of their knowledge, which was far too much; they knew who Jimmy Grayson was, they had known of his departure from Blue Earth, and they had followed him here; presently they would take him away, and the whole world would be thrilled. No such prize had ever fallen into the hands of robbers in America, and it would be worth a million to them.

Harley was in a chill as he listened, because he heard them speak next of Sylvia, and one of them laughed in a way that made the correspondent want to spring at his throat. Sylvia and the candidate must be saved. [Pg 226]

But Harley, thinking his hardest, could not think how. There were eight men well armed in the room before him; the guide and Mr. Plummer, probably, had pistols, but he had none, and he was sure that Jimmy Grayson and Mr. Heathcote were without them. He paused there a long time, undecided, and at last he crept down the hall again and towards the great parlor. Then he put on his boots, re-entered the room, and spoke in a low voice to his comrades.

The guide's fighting blood was on fire at once. "I've a revolver," he said; "we kin barricade the room and hold 'em off. There are two windows here, opening out on the snow, but they are so high they can hardly reach 'em with their hands. We kin make a good fight of it."

"I've a pistol, too," said Mr. Plummer, "and we must make it a fight to the death."

He spoke quietly, but with determination and a full knowledge of all the danger that threatened. He glanced at Sylvia, who, coming back from her half-dream, had risen to her feet. Then he walked to the door, because the "King" was ever alert in the face of danger.

"What is it?" Sylvia asked of Harley. She knew by their manner that something strange and terrifying had happened, and in such a situation it was now an involuntary act with her to turn to Harley.

"Sylvia," he said—the others had followed "King" Plummer to the door "you ought to know."

He noticed that, though pale, she was quiet and firm.

"If it is danger, I have faced it before," she said, proudly.

"As you will face it now, like the bravest woman in the West. 'Red' Perkins's gang of outlaws are out there, and they mean to take Mr. Grayson to hold for ransom, and you—" [Pg 227]

Her eyes looked straight into his, and suddenly they shone with all the fulness of love and confidence.

"They will not take me while you are here," she said.

"Not if we have to die together. Sylvia, I believed that your heart was mine, and in this moment of danger I know it."

He spoke truly. In the crisis their souls were bare to each other. He seized her hands, and the brilliant color flamed into her cheeks.

"Sylvia!" he exclaimed, in a thrilling whisper.

"Hush!" she said. "The others are about to come back."

She gently withdrew her hands from his, and when "King" Plummer turned away from the door he saw nothing.

"There's not a shot to be fired," said Jimmy Grayson, "because I've a better plan. How long do you think it will be before they come for me, Harley?"

"About fifteen minutes, I should say; at least that is what I gathered from their talk."

"And they have not examined the building or the town?"

"No; they merely came down the trail behind us and slipped into that room, waiting their chance."

"Very good. Jim, you told me a while ago that the Governor of Montana once spoke to two hundred people in this room; it was a fortunate remark of yours, because I shall speak to as many people to-night in this same room. Shut the door there, put the saddles before it, and then build the fire as high as possible." [Pg 228]

The candidate's voice was sharp, decisive, and full of command. The born leader of men was asserting himself, and the guide, without pausing to reason, hastened to obey. He shut the door,



put the saddles before it, and heaped upon the fire all the remaining wood except a stump reserved by Jimmy Grayson's express command. The fire leaped higher, and the room was brilliantly lighted.

Jimmy Grayson stood by, erect, calm, and grave.

"Now, gentlemen," he said, "you are a crowd come from Crow's Wing to meet me here, and to hear what I have to say. I trust that you will like it, and indicate your liking by your applause."

The stump was placed in the middle of the floor, and Jimmy Grayson stepped upon it. His face at that height was visible through the window to any one outside, although the others would be hidden. Just as he took his place Harley thought he heard the soft crunch of a footstep on the snow beneath the window. He felt a burning curiosity to rise and look out, but he restrained it and did not move. The guide was staring at the candidate in open-mouthed amazement, but he, too, did not speak. A few big white flakes drove in at the open window, but they did not reach the men before the fire that blazed so brightly. Harley again thought he heard the soft shuffle of footsteps on the snow outside, but then the burning wood crackled merrily, and Jimmy Grayson was about to speak.

Sylvia stood erect against the wall, her glowing eyes full of admiration. Her quick mind had grasped the whole plan.

"Gentlemen of Crow's Wing," said the candidate, in his full, penetrating voice, which the empty old building gave back in many an echo, "it is, indeed, a pleasure to me to meet you here. The circumstances, the situation, are such as to inspire any one who has been so honored. I should like to have seen your little town, the home of brave and honest men, nestling as it does among these mighty mountains, and far from the rest of the world, but strong and self-reliant. I appreciate, too, your kindness and your thought for me. Seeing the advance of the storm, and knowing its dangers, you have come to meet me in this place, once so full of life. I find something singularly appealing and pathetic in this. Once again, if only for a brief space, Queen City shall ring with human voices and the human tread."

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The candidate paused a moment, as if the end of a rounded period had come and he were gathering strength for another. Then suddenly arose a mighty chorus of applause. It was Harley, "King" Plummer, Heathcote, and Jim, and their act was spontaneous, the inspiration of the moment, drawn from Jimmy Grayson's own inspiration. The guide beat upon the floor with both hands and both feet, and the other three were not less active. Moreover, the guide opened his mouth and let forth a yell, rapid, cumulative, and so full of volume that it sounded like the whoop of at least a half-dozen men. The room resounded with the applause, and it thundered down the halls of the great empty building. When it died, Harley, listening again intently, heard once more the crunch of feet on the snow outside, but now it was a rapid movement as if of surprise. But the sound came to him only a moment, because the candidate was speaking once more, and he was worth hearing. He only looked away to see Sylvia, who still stood against the wall with her glowing eyes fixed in admiration on her uncle. Once or twice she, too, glanced aside, and her gaze was for Harley. But it was a different look that she gave him. There was admiration in it, too, and also a love that no woman ever gives to a mere uncle. In those moments the color in her cheeks deepened.

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As an orator Jimmy Grayson was always good, but sometimes he was better than at other times, and this evening was one of his best times. The audience from Crow's Wing, the consideration they had shown in meeting him here in the dead city, and the wildness of the night outside seemed to inspire him. He showed the greatest familiarity with the life of the mountains and the needs of the miners; he was one of them, he sympathized with them, he entered their homes, and if he could he would make their lives brighter.

Never had the candidate spoken to a more appreciative audience. With foot and hand and voice it thundered its applause; the building echoed with it, and all the time the fire burned higher and higher, and the merry crackling of the wood was a minor note in the chorus of applause. But Jimmy Grayson's own voice was like an organ, every key of which he played; it expressed every human emotion; full and swelling, it rose above the applause, and Harley, watching his expressive face, saw that he felt these emotions. Once he believed that the candidate, carried away by his own feelings, had become oblivious of time and place, and thought now only of the troubles and needs of the mountain men.

Harley's attention turned once more to the windows. He thought what a lucky chance it was that no one standing on the ground outside was high enough to look through them into the room. He blessed the unknown builder, and then he tried to hear that familiar shuffle on the snow, but he did not hear it again.

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Jimmy Grayson spoke on and on, and the applause kept pace, until at last the guide slipped quietly from the room. When he returned, a quarter of an hour later, the candidate was still speaking, but Jim gave him a signal look and he stopped abruptly.

"They are gone," said Jim. "They must have been gone a full hour. The snow has stopped, and I guess they are at least ten miles from here, runnin' for their lives. They knew that if the men of Crow's Wing put hands on 'em they'd be hangin' from a limb ten minutes after."

Jimmy Grayson sank down on the stump, exhausted, and wiped his hot face.

"Say, Mr. Harley," whispered the guide to the correspondent, "I've heard some great speeches in my time, but to-night's was the greatest."

The candidate spoke the next day at Crow's Wing, and his audience was delighted. But Jim was right. The speech was not as great as the one he had made at Queen City.

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## XV

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### WORDS BY THE WAY

Rumors of the adventure in the dead city had spread throughout the little mountain town in which Jimmy Grayson made his speech the day after the stop in Queen City, and when he began the return journey an escort, from which all the bandits in the wilds of the Rocky Mountains would have turned aside, was ready for him. It was a somewhat noisy band, but orderly and full of enthusiasm, secretly wishing that a second attempt would be made, and their devotion to Jimmy Grayson and his cause found an answering sympathy in Harley.

They had passed the night in Crow's Wing, and the start was made when the first sunlight brought a sudden uplifting of a white world into a dazzling burst of blue and yellow and red. But no more snow was falling, and those who knew said that the day would continue fair.

Sylvia Morgan had not been present at the speech the night before. Even she, bred amid hardships and dangers, was forced to admit that her nerves were somewhat unstrung, and she rested quietly in a warm room at the hotel. Harley knocked once on her door, and received the reply that she was all right. Then he turned away and went slowly down the hall, thoughtful, and, for the first time in many days, thoroughly understanding himself. To the world, when the world should hear of it, the candidate would always be the central figure in the episode of the dead city, but Harley knew that their adventure in the old hotel was more momentous to him than it had been to the candidate. His doubts and his hesitation were gone; he knew what Sylvia Morgan represented to him, and with that knowledge came a certain peace; it would have been a greater peace had not the shadow of "King" Plummer been so dark.

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When Sylvia reappeared for the return there was nothing to indicate that she had ever been tired or nervous. She seemed to Harley the incarnation of fresh, young life, and there was a singular softness and gentleness in her manner, all the more winning because she had let it appear more rarely hitherto. She held out her hand to Harley.

"You see that I have passed through our adventure without harm to my nerves," she said.

"I knew that you would do so," replied Harley.

He would have said more, but the armed escort, to a man, was bowing respectfully, and making no very great effort to conceal its admiration at the sight of a lady, young and beautiful, such an infrequent visitor to their lonely hamlet. Nor was this admiration diminished by the fact, known to them all, that she had taken the hazardous journey over the mountains with Jimmy Grayson. They considered it a special honor and dignity conferred upon themselves, and as the candidate introduced them, one by one, the bows were repeated but with greater depth. Sylvia Morgan knew how to receive them. She was a child of the mountains herself, and without any sacrifice of her own dignity she could make them feel that they knew her and liked her.

All Crow's Wing saw them off, and they rode away over the mountains in the splendid red and gold of the dawn. Mr. Grayson and "King" Plummer were near the head of the troop, and Harley and Sylvia were near the rear, where they remained a part of the general group for a long time, but at last dropped back behind all the others.

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"Won't Mr. Churchill be shocked when he hears of our adventure in the dead city?" said Sylvia.

"He will think that it is the climax," was the reply.

Harley laughed, but in a few moments he became grave. Yet there was an expression of much sweetness about his firm mouth.

"Still I am glad that it happened," he said. "I saw a new illustration of our candidate's powers, and I learned, too, much more than that."

She glanced at him, and as she read something in his face she looked quickly away, and a sudden flush rose to her cheeks. Despite herself, her heart began to beat fast and her hand trembled on the bridle rein.

Harley expected her to ask what it was that he had learned, but when he saw her averted face he went on:

"I learned then, Sylvia, what I should have known long before, that I love you, that you are the one woman in the world for me. And I do not believe, Sylvia, that you care only a little for me."

He was bold, masterful, and the ring of confidence was in his voice. His hand, for a moment, touched her trembling hand on the bridle rein, and she thrilled with the answering touch.

"Sylvia," he said, with grave sweetness, "I mean to win you."

"You must not talk so," she said, and a sudden pallor replaced the color in her face. "You know that I cannot in honor hear it. I am promised, and of my own accord, to another, and to one to whom every sacred obligation commands me to keep my promise."

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"I do not forget your promise—Mr. Plummer was in my mind when I was speaking—nor do I urge you to break it."

"Why, then, do you speak? Why do you say that you mean to win me?"

"Because Mr. Plummer must break this bargain himself. He, of his own accord, must give your promise back to you. I mean to make him do so. I do not yet know how, but I shall find a way. Oh, I tell you, Sylvia, this marriage of his and yours is not right. It's against nature. You do not love him; you cannot—do not protest—not in a way that a woman should love the man whom she is going to marry. You love me instead, and I mean to make you keep on loving me, just as I mean to make Mr. Plummer give you back your promise."

"Have you not undertaken two large tasks?" she said, smiling faintly.

But Harley, usually so short and terse, had made this long speech with fire and heat, as the "still waters" were now running very deep, and he went on:

"I have given you fair warning, Sylvia. Neither you nor Mr. Plummer can say that I have begun any secret campaign. I have told you that I mean to make you marry me."

She thought that she ought to stop him, to tell him that he must never speak of such a thing again. Before her rose the figure of the man whom she had promised to marry, square, massive, and iron-gray, but, solid as the figure was, it quickly faded in the light of the real and earnest young face beside her. Youth spoke to youth, and she did not stop him, because what he was saying to her was very pleasant, though it might be wrong.

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The morning was brilliant and vivid on the mountains. Far away the white peaks melted dimly into the blue sky, and below them lay the valleys, cup after cup, white with snow. The others rode on ahead, not noticing, and Harley was not one to let time slip through his fingers.

"You must not speak in this way to me again," she said, at last, although her tone was not sad, only firm, "because it is not right. I knew that it was wrong, even while you were saying it, but I could not stop you. You know you cannot change what is fixed, and I must marry Mr. Plummer."

Harley laughed joyously. Later he did not know why he was so confident then, but the air of the mountains and a new fire, too, were sparkling in his veins, and at that moment he had no doubts.

"You will not marry Mr. Plummer," he repeated, with energy, "and it is not you that will break the promise. It is he that shall give it back to you."

For the time she felt his faith, and her face glowed, but her courage left her when the "King," who had been ahead with the candidate, dropped back towards the rear and joined them.

"King" Plummer, too, had begun that return journey with feelings of exhilaration. Everything in the trip from Crow's Wing appealed to him, because it was so thoroughly in consonance with his early life in the mountains. The adventure in Queen City had stirred his blood, and around him were familiar things. He, too, wished that an organized band of bandits would come, because in his younger days he had helped to hunt down some of the worst men in the mountains, and the old fighting blood mounted as high as ever in his veins.

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He had seen that Sylvia was entirely recovered from the alarms of the night at Queen City, and then, because he felt that it was his duty, and because there was a keen zest in it, too, he rode on ahead with the candidate, to whom he pointed out dim blue peaks that he knew, and to whom he laid down the proposition that those mountains were full of minerals, and would one day prove a source of illimitable wealth to the nation.

The crispness of the morning, the vast expanse of mountain, and the feeling of deep, full life made the "King's" blood tingle. His years of hardship, danger, and joy—and he had enjoyed his life greatly—swept before him, and he laughed under his breath; life was still very good. After a while the thought of Sylvia came to him, and he smiled again, because Sylvia was truly good to look upon. He rode back towards her, and then he received a blow—a blow square in the face, and dealt heavily.

"King" Plummer's was not a mind trained to look upon the more delicate shades of life—he dealt rather with the obvious; but when he saw Harley and Sylvia he knew. Mrs. Grayson's warning, which at first he had only half accepted, had come true, and it had come quickly. His instant impulse was that of the primitive man to raise his fist and strike down this foolish, this presumptuous youth who had dared to cross the path of him, the King of the Mountains; but he did not raise it, because "King" Plummer was a gentleman; instead, he strove to conceal the fact that he was breathing hard and deep, and he spoke to them in a tone that he sought to render careless, but which really had an unnatural sound. Sylvia gave him a glance that was half fear, and had the "King" taken notice it would have filled him with deep pain, but Harley, who alone of the three retained his self-possession, spoke lightly of passing things. The feeling of exulting strength was not yet gone from him; in the presence of this man of great achievement he was not afraid, and, moreover, the desire to protect Sylvia, to turn attention from her, was strong within

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him.

For these reasons Harley carried the whole burden of the talk, and carried it well. Neither of the others wished to interrupt him; Sylvia being full of these new emotions, half joy and half fear, that agitated her, and Mr. Plummer trying to evolve from chaos a way to act.

Although the "King" had suppressed the muscular manifestation, he was none the less burned by internal fire. Sylvia was his: it was he who had found her in the mountains; it was he who had given her the years of care and tenderness, and by every right, including that of promise, she belonged to him. Nor was he one to give her up for a fancy. He had seen the look of love on her face when she spoke to Harley, but she was only a girl—from the crest of his years the "King" thought that he saw the truth, and knew it—and as soon as this campaign was over, and the Eastern youth had disappeared, she would forget him.

Mr. Plummer regarded this youth out of the corner of his eye, and while he pitied him for his ignorance of life, he was bound to admit that Harley was a handsome fellow, tall, well knit, and with an air of self-reliance. Evidently there was good stuff in him, and he would amount to something when he was trained and mature, although the "King" concluded that he needed a great deal of training. But he could not fail to feel respect for Harley's presence of mind, his calm, and his ease. The youth showed no fear of him, no sign of apprehension, and the mountaineer gave him credit for it.

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Sylvia was glad when they stopped in one of the lower glades to rest and eat of the food which had been so amply provided for them. But she was proud of Harley and the manner in which he had taken upon himself all the burden. His conduct went far to justify in her eyes his confident prediction, and, secretly approving, she watched the ease with which he bore himself among the blunt mountaineers and the handsome manner in which he affiliated. She noticed that they seemed to think of Harley as one like Jimmy Grayson—that is, one of themselves—and they never considered him raw or green in any respect.

Her confidence in Harley and the momentary elation returned as they stood there in this cup in the mountain-side and looked out upon the expanse of peak and plain. She ate, too, with an appetite that the mountain air sharpened, and she thrilled with strength and hope.

Mr. Plummer, from some motive that she did not understand, kept himself in the background during the stop; nor did she know how his big heart was filled with wrath and gloom. But as he stood silently at the farthest rim of the circle, he resolved to push his fortunes, which was in accordance with his nature.

"Will you walk to the edge of the cove with me?" he said to the candidate, when he saw that the latter had finished his luncheon, and Mr. Grayson, without a word, complied with his request.

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Jimmy Grayson must have had some premonition of what was to come, because he obeyed his first impulse, and glanced at Harley and Sylvia, who were standing together. He was confirmed in his thought when he saw the look of gloom and resolve upon the face of his friend.

"I want to speak to you of Sylvia," said "King" Plummer, in tones of hurry, as if it cost him an effort. "It's about our marriage. I think I ought to hurry it up a little. You see—well, you can't help seeing, that, compared with Sylvia, I'm old. I'm not really old, but I'm old enough to be her father, an' youth has a way that's pretty hard to break of turnin' to youth."

"Yes," said Jimmy Grayson.

"Sylvia's just a girl; she don't seem much more 'n a child to me, an' lately she's been travellin' about a heap, an' she's met new people. Now, I don't blame her, don't think that, because it's natural, but here is this young writin' chap."

"Harley, you mean?"

"Yes. An' I'm not sayin' anythin' against him, either, though writin' has never been much in my line, but he an' Sylvia seem to have taken a sort of shine to each other—I don't know whether it amounts to any more than that, though I suppose it could if it was give a chance; but down there in Queen City he did more for her than I did, or anybody else, and I suppose that tells with a girl. Well, you saw 'em together as we walked out here, an' I'm bound to admit that they make a powerful likely couple."

He hesitated, as if he were waiting for the candidate to speak, but Mr. Grayson was silent. He glanced once at the strong face of Plummer, drawn as if in pain, and then he looked into the valley a thousand feet below. Jimmy Grayson did not care to speak.

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"I ain't a blind man," continued the "King." "I may not be too smart, but still things don't have to be driven into me with a wedge. If Sylvia and Harley were left to themselves, they would fall deep in love, I can see that; but I tell you, Mr. Grayson, she's mine, she belongs to me, because I've earned her, and because she's promised herself to me, too, an' I can't give her up. Still, if it's wrong, if I ought to let her have her promise back, I'll do it anyhow. An' that's why I've asked you to walk out here. I don't like much to speak to another man of a thing right next to my heart, but I want to ask you, Mr. Grayson—you are her uncle an' my best friend—what do you think I ought to do?"

It was hard to embarrass Jimmy Grayson, but he was embarrassed now. He would rather any

other man in the world had asked him any other question. Sylvia was his niece, and her happiness was dear to him. Harley, too, had found a place in his heart. And when he glanced at them again and saw them still together, it seemed fit and right that they should continue so through life. But there was "King" Plummer, an honest man, and his claim could not be denied. And his mind could not help asking this insidious little question, "If Sylvia is allowed to throw over 'King' Plummer, will he not sulk and allow the Mountain States, passing from her uncle, to go into the other column?" Jimmy Grayson would not have been human if he had not heard this little question demanding an answer, but he resolutely resisted it.

"What do you say?" asked Mr. Plummer. "I'd risk much on your advice."

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"I was studying your question, because in a case like this a man has to think of so many things, and then may miss the right one. But, Mr. Plummer, I don't know what to say; I think, however, I'd wait. Sylvia is a good girl, and I know you can trust her. But they are beckoning to us; they are ready to start."

He was glad of that start, because it saved him from further discussion of the problem, and Mr. Plummer went back with him moodily.

Yet the resolve in the "King's" mind had only been strengthened by his talk with the candidate. The danger of Sylvia slipping through his fingers because of his own want of precaution made her all the more dear to him, and he was determined to take that precaution now. So he was watchful throughout the remainder of the journey, seeking his opportunity, and it came towards the twilight, as they saw the first houses of the railroad station rise upon the horizon.

Mrs. Grayson, Hobart, Blaisdell, the state politicians, and, all the others came out to meet them, and for a while there was a turmoil of voices asking questions and answering them. Presently Sylvia slipped from the group, and Mr. Plummer followed her towards the hotel.

"Sylvia," he said, "wait for me. I have some thing to say."

She recognized an unusual tone in his voice and she was frightened. She felt an almost irresistible impulse to run and to hide herself in some dim room of the hotel. But she did not do it; instead, she waited and walked by his side.

"Sylvia," he said, "the perils and hardships of the trip we are just finishin' have set me to thinkin' hard."

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She trembled again. She felt as if he were going to say something that she would not like to hear.

"That trip was full of dangers for you, and, as we go through all this Western country, there may be more to come. I want the right, Sylvia, to look after you, to look after you more closely than I've ever done before, and to do that, Sylvia, I've got to be your husband."

"I have promised."

"I know you have, an' I know you'll keep your promise. But I want you to keep it now. Why couldn't we get married, say next week, and make this campaign one big weddin' tour. I think it would be grand, Sylvia, an' it's right easy to arrange."

He paused, awaiting her answer, but she had suddenly lost all her color, and, despite herself, she trembled violently.

"Oh no!" she cried, "not now! It would be better to wait. Why break up this pleasant—Oh, I don't mean that! I mean, why not go on as we are through the campaign, and afterwards we could talk of—of—what you propose? Anything else now would be so unusual. I think we'd better wait!"

She spoke almost breathlessly under impulse, and then she stopped suddenly as if afraid. The color poured back into her face, and she waited timidly.

The King of the Mountains, who had never known fear, was gripped by a cold chill. He had delivered his master-stroke and it had failed.

"We'll wait, Sylvia," he said, gloomily. "Of course a woman's wish in such a matter as this is law, and more than law."

"Oh, daddy, don't you see how it is?" she cried, moved by his tone. "I'm but twenty-two. I don't want to marry just yet. I haven't seen enough of this big world. Why can't we wait a little?"

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"Don't be afraid, child; no one shall make you marry when you don't want to," he said, soothingly and protectingly, and this rôle became him superbly. "The subject sha'n't be mentioned to you again while the campaign lasts."

"You are the best man in the world, daddy!" she exclaimed. Suddenly she rose on tiptoe, kissed him lightly on the cheek, and then ran away. "King" Plummer walked gravely back to the lobby of the hotel, where a crowd was gathered.

Harley was one of this crowd, and on entering the room he had been met at once by Churchill, upon whose face was a look of consternation.

"Harley," he asked, "is the report true that Grayson was in danger of being kidnapped by bandits on this trip to Crow's Wing?"

"It is true, every word of it."

"My God! what will Europe say?" exclaimed Churchill, aghast.

Harley laughed, but he did not attempt to reason with Churchill. He knew that the correspondent of the *Monitor* was too far gone to be reached by argument.

Churchill sent a lurid despatch to the *Monitor*, describing in detail the folly and recklessness of the candidate, and the manner in which he neglected the great issues of the campaign for the sake of impulses, which always terminated in frivolous or dangerous adventures. And the *Monitor* fully backed up its correspondent, because, when the issue of the paper that published the despatch reached them, it also contained an editorial, in which the editor wrote in anguish of heart:

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"We have supported Mr. Grayson in this campaign with as much zeal and energy as our moral sense would permit. We have given him full credit for all the virtues that he may possess, and we have been willing at all times for him to profit by our experience and advice. But our readers will bear witness that we have never failed in courage to denounce the wrong, even if it should be in our own house. Our easy, and on the whole superficial, American temperament condones too many things. Never was it more noticeable than in the vital issues of this Presidential campaign. The yellow journals are making a great noise over Mr. Grayson; they shout about his oratory, his generosity, and his noble impulses until the really serious minority of us can scarcely hear; but the grave, thoughtful people, those who are recognized in Europe as the real leaders of American opinion, will not be put down. Despite the turmoil of the childish, we have never lost our heads. The *Monitor*, from the very first, has perceived the truth, and it has the courage to tell it. We contribute this advice willingly and without charge to those who are conducting the campaign.

"The youthful and flamboyant qualities must be eradicated from Mr. Grayson. Our young republic cannot afford to be discredited in the eyes of Europe by the sensational or frivolous actions of one who is nominated by a great party for the high office of President. This last adventure with brigands in the mountains is really more than our patience will bear, and our readers know that our patience is great. We have suggested, we have advised, and we have even threatened by indirection, but thus far it has all been futile.

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"Now we mean to speak with the bluntness and decision demanded by the circumstances. A committee of men, mature in years and solid in judgment, some of whom we can name, must be put in control of the campaign. Mr. Grayson must be kept within strict limits; he must take advice before delivering his speeches, and he must not be permitted to turn aside for irrelevant issues. And since the *Monitor* speaks reluctantly, and in the utmost kindness, we suggest that he become a faithful reader of our columns. A word to the wise is sufficient."

The day this issue of the *Monitor* arrived Sylvia said to Churchill:

"Mr. Churchill, I want to thank you in behalf of my uncle for that beautiful editorial in the *Monitor*. It was put in the very way that would appeal to him most."

"Do you really think so, Miss Morgan?" said Churchill, blushing with borrowed pride.

"Oh yes, but it was so typical, it had so much of a certain personal quality in it, that I am sure you must have telegraphed it to the *Monitor* yourself."

"King" Plummer, who stood by and who had very little to say these days, smiled sourly.

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## XVI

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### BY THE FIRELIGHT

The special train now entered one of the most mountainous portions of Utah, and, as the strenuous nature of the campaign continued, its exigencies permitted little time for other things. Personal feelings, fears, and hopes had to be buried, or at least hidden for the time, and Harley, like all the rest, was absorbed in work. Nevertheless, his feeling of confidence, even exhilaration, remained. He believed that he would yet discover a way.

He found this part of the campaign pleasant, physically as well as mentally. The alternation of huge mountain and fertile valley was grateful to the eye, and, however severe the day's journey might be, they knew there would be good rest at the end.

It had been nearly a week since the episode of the dead city, when Hobart bustled back to Harley and said:

"Harley, we shall have the noble red man to hear us to-night. We stop just at the edge of the Indian reservation, and a lot of the braves, with their squaws, too, I suppose, will attend. Of

course they will be duly impressed by Jimmy Grayson's oratory."

Sylvia Morgan was present when this news was announced, and Hobart suddenly stopped short and glanced at her. She had turned pale, and then, remembering that old tragedy in her life when she was a little child, he ascribed her pallor to her horror at the mention of Indians. But Hobart did not know that they were approaching the scene of the memorable massacre.

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The train now curved southward and entered a fertile valley lying like a bowl among the high mountains. They saw here fields that had been golden with wheat, ripe fruit yet hung from the trees, and the touch of green was still visible, although autumn had come. By the railway track a clear mountain stream flowed, sparkling in the thin, pure air, and there was more than one full-grown man in the candidate's party who, with memories of his youth before him, longed to pull off shoes and socks and wade in it with bare feet.

The sight was most refreshing after so much mountain and arid expanse, and the tired travellers brightened up visibly.

"One of the states has the motto, 'Here we rest'—I've forgotten which it is—but it ought to be Utah," said Hobart, "and now's the time."

He was not disappointed. They came before noon to Belleville, the metropolis of the valley, the place where the candidate was going to speak, one of the prettiest little towns that ever built its nest in the Rocky Mountains. They were all enthusiastic over it, with its trim houses, its well-paved streets, the clear water flowing beside the curbs, and its air of completion. The people, too, had all the Western courage and energy, without its roughness and undue expression, and so the candidate and his party luxuriated.

"You wouldn't think that this gem of a town was harried more by Indians in its infancy than perhaps any other place in the West, would you?" said Hobart to Harley.

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"Hobart, what a nuisance you are!" replied Harley; "you are always prowling around in search of useless facts. Now, I don't want to hear anything about bloodshed and massacre, when Belleville is the picture of neatness and comfort that it is to-day. Look at that little opera-house over there! You couldn't find anything handsomer in a city of fifty thousand in the East."

"Harley," said Hobart, with emphasis, "I wouldn't have your lack of curiosity for anything in the world," and he wandered away in disgust to pour his ancient history into the ears of a more willing listener.

At twilight they ate an admirable dinner, and then Harley, Hobart, who had returned from his explorations, Blaisdell, and two or three others, after their custom, filled in the interval between supper and the speeches with a stroll through the village, Mr. Plummer going along as a sort of mentor. The keeper of the hotel informed them that many of the Indians already were in town and were "tanking up." Harley found this to be true, and the red men failed to arouse in him either respect or admiration. If they had ever had any nobility of the wilderness, it was gone now, and they seemed to him a sodden, depressed, and repellent race. A half-dozen or so, in various stages of drunkenness, through whiskey surreptitiously obtained, increased the feeling of aversion.

In the dusk they stumbled over a figure lying squarely across the path, and Harley drew back with a word of disgust. An old Indian, dilapidated and in the last stages of intoxication, was stretched out on his face. A local resident named Walker, who had joined them, laughed.

"That," said he, "is a chief, a great man, or at least he was once. It's old Flying Cloud—poetical name, though he don't look poetical now by a long shot. Here, get out of this; you're blocking up the road!"

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With true Western directness he administered a kick to the prostrate form, but the old chief, buried in a sodden dream, only stirred and muttered; then the resident opened up a battery of kicks, and presently the Indian rose to his feet and slunk off, muttering, in the darkness.

"They're no good at all," said Walker. "Only a lot of sots, whenever they get the chance."

But Harley was thinking of the contrast between what he had just seen and what he had imagined might be the freedom and nobility of the wilderness.

It was a beautiful autumn night, and the candidate spoke in the open, in the village square, with the mountains that circled about him as his background. Sylvia Morgan was not among the listeners. Usually she enjoyed these speeches in the evening, with the crowds, the enthusiasm, and the encircling darkness. But to-night she would not come, nor would she tell the reason to Harley or any of his friends. She merely said that she wished to stay in her room at the hotel.

The audience was quiet and attentive, and Harley noticed here and there on the outskirts the dark faces of the Indians. They interested him so much that he left the platform presently to watch them. He was wondering if they had any conception at all of Jimmy Grayson's words or of a Presidential campaign. Nor did he gain any knowledge by his examination. They listened gravely, and their faces were without expression.

The nearest of them all to the stand Harley recognized as the old chief, Flying Cloud, whom Walker had kicked off the sidewalk. He seemed to have recovered physical command of himself, and stood erect. There was a red feather in his felt hat, and a shawl in brilliant stripes was drawn

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across his shoulders.

The candidate spoke in a specially happy vein that night, and the background of the mountains added impressiveness to his words. To Harley, again the analyst, and seeking to put himself in the Indian's place, there was a rhythm and power in what Jimmy Grayson said, although he, as an Indian, might not understand a word. He could interpret it as a chant of battle or victory, and such, he had no doubt, was the view of Flying Cloud.

The chief, so Harley judged, was still half under the influence of drink, but he was paying close attention to the speaker, and the correspondent at last saw in his eyes what he took to be the stir of some emotion. It was a light, as of memories of his own triumphs, and the chief's figure began to sway gently to the music of Jimmy Grayson's voice. They had built a bonfire near the speaker's stand, and by its flare Harley clearly saw old Flying Cloud smile.

Hobart came up at that moment, and, Harley pointed out to him the transformation in the old chief's appearance. Hobart's opinion agreed with Harley's.

"It's a battle-song that Flying Cloud is hearing," he said. "It's Jimmy Grayson that's stirring him up, though maybe the old fellow doesn't understand it that way."

The speeches ended after a while, and the people began to leave. Presently only a few were left in the square, and among them was Harley, who felt no touch of sleepiness. He looked at the quiet town, then up at the ridges and peaks, crested with snow and silhouetted against the moonlit sky, and thought again of that little girl, alone with her dead and in the night among the vast mountains.

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The next moment he believed that it was a telepathic feeling, because at his elbow was Sylvia Morgan herself, a red-striped shawl over her head to protect her from the cold, and "King" Plummer, who had evidently brought her from the hotel, not far away.

"Are they all gone?" she asked.

"No," replied Harley; "the Indians and a few more are left."

Harley, in the moonlight, clearly saw her shiver.

"I was restless, and I could not sleep," she said. "I came out for the sake of the air. But I'll go back."

"No," said Harley, "don't go. Stay with us, please. Now what can that mean?"

A wild, barbaric chant arose near the bonfire behind them.

"Come!" exclaimed Harley, keen to see and hear. "I think it's old Flying Cloud, and he's ready to turn himself loose. We can't miss this!"

Sylvia was about to turn away, but as "King" Plummer came up on the other side of her, and seemed to have a curiosity like Harley's, she yielded at last, though with reluctance, and the three walked towards the fire.

Harley's surmise was correct, as old Flying Cloud, jumping back and forth, was singing some kind of war-song. There was a group about him, and in it was Hobart, who Harley guessed had been a moving spirit in this scene. Jimmy Grayson's fire and eloquence had done the rest.

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The flames burned down a little, but they cast a weird light on the old chief's face, bringing out like brown carving the high cheek-bones, the great, hooked nose, and the seamed cheeks. The thin lips fell away from long, yellow teeth, and heightened the effect of cruelty which his whole expression gave.

Hobart came over to them, and said: "See how the old fellow is changing! We've got him to sing one of his ancient war-songs, and I guess he thinks he's beating Jimmy Grayson now!"

Sylvia Morgan shuddered, but she said nothing. She seemed to be held by the fascination of the serpent.

The chief continued to make his queer little jumps back and forth, and went on with his chant. As he had begun in English for his auditors, so he continued, although he was now oblivious of their presence. Harley, watching him, knew it, and he knew, too, that the chief's mind was far back in the past. His was not the song of the broken derelict, but of the barbarous and triumphant warrior, and as he sang he gathered fire and strength.

The circle of white faces grew around the old chief. Every loiterer was there, and others came back. Not one spoke. All were fascinated by the singular and weird scene. The moon, low down on the mountain's crest, still shed a pallid, grayish light that mingled with the fitful red glare from the glowing coals, the two together casting an unearthly tinge. But Harley's eyes never left the chief, as he saw his figure continue to expand and grow with ancient memories of prowess, and the eyes of Sylvia beside him, as she too listened, expressed many and strong emotions.

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Flying Cloud told of hunting triumphs, of the slaughter of the buffalo, of fierce encounters with the mountain-lion, of hand-to-hand combat with the grizzly bear, and then he glided into war. Now his voice rose, full and prolonged, without any of the tremor or shrillness of age, and his eccentric dancing grew more violent. His emotions, too, were shown on his face in all their



savagery as he told of the foray and the fight.

At first it was Indian against Indian, and never was any mercy shown—always woe to the conquered; then it was the whites. An emigrant train was coming over the mountains—men, women, and children. There was danger in their path; a Ute war-band was abroad, but the fools knew it not. They travelled on, and at night the children played and laughed by the camp-fire, but the shadow of the Utes was always there. Flying Cloud led the war-band, but held them back until the time should come. He was waiting for a place that he knew. At last they reached it, a deep cañon with bushes on either side, and the train entered the defile.

Harley suddenly felt a hand upon his arm. It was the fingers of Sylvia grasping him, but unconscious of the act. He looked up and saw her face as white as death, and a yard away the eyes of "King" Plummer were burning like two coals.

Flying Cloud's figure swayed, and his voice trembled with a curious joy at the old memories. He was approaching the great moment of triumph. He told how the warriors lay among the bushes, watching the foolish train come on, how they looked at each other and rejoiced in advance over an easy victory. Some would have fired too soon, but Flying Cloud would not let them. His was the cunning mind, as well as the bold heart, and he omitted nothing. The trap was perfect. The fools never suspected. They stopped to make a camp, and still they did not know that a ring of death was about them. They built their fires, and again the children laughed and played by the coals. It was the last time.

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The old chief was now wholly the wilderness slayer, the Indian of an earlier time. His glittering eyes at times swept the circle of white faces about him, but he did not see them, only that old massacre.

The narrative went on. Flying Cloud told each of his warriors to select a victim, and fire true when he gave the word. He chose for himself a large man who stood by one of the wagons, a man who had with him a woman and a little boy and a little girl, and the little girl had long curls.

A groan burst from Plummer, and Harley saw his great figure gather as if for a spring. But Harley, quick as lightning, seized the man in a powerful grasp, and cried in his ear: "Not now, Mr. Plummer, not now, for God's sake! Wait until the end!"

Harley felt the "King" quiver in his hands, and then cease to struggle. Sylvia stood by, still as white as death and absolutely motionless. The others, held by the old chief's song, did not see nor hear.

Flying Cloud's eyes were glittering with cruel triumph as he continued his chant. The rifles were raised, the white fools yet suspected nothing, but laughed and jested with each other as if there would be a to-morrow.

Then he gave the word, and all the rifles were fired at once. The cañon was filled with smoke and the whistling of bullets. Most of the men in the train were killed at once, and then the warriors sprang among those who were left. Flying Cloud had shot the tall man by the wagon, and then he sought the woman and the two children. He slew the woman and the little boy, and he scalped them both. Then he sprang at the girl, but the child of the Evil Spirit slipped among the bushes, and he could not find her.

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The old chief stopped a moment, and once more his glittering eyes swept the circle of white faces, but saw them not. Then that fierce cry burst again from Plummer. Suddenly he threw off Harley as if he had been a child, and sprang through the ring of white faces into the circle of the firelight. The tall, pale girl, still not saying a word, stood by, like an avenging goddess.

"Murderer!" cried the "King." "It is not too late to punish you!"

He seized the old chief by the throat, but the white men threw themselves upon him and tore him off.

Flying Cloud reeled back, gazed a moment at Plummer, and then drew a knife.

"It was when there was war between us, and I will not swing at the end of the white man's rope," he said.

So speaking, he plunged the blade into his own heart and fell dead, almost at the feet of the woman whose kin he had slain.

"Whatever the red scoundrel was," said Hobart, later, "I shall always use the old text for him, and say that nothing in this life became him like the leaving of it."

But there were no such feelings in the heart of Sylvia Morgan. When "King" Plummer sprang upon Flying Cloud, Harley turned involuntarily to Sylvia, and he saw the pallor replaced by a sudden flush; then, when the chief slew himself with his own knife, the flush passed, and whiter than ever she sank down gently. But Harley caught her in his arms before she fell, and in a moment or two she revived. It seemed to be her first thought that she was held by him, and she struggled a little.

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"Let me go," she said; "I can stand. I assure you I can. It was just a passing weakness."

But Harley wished to make certain that it was not more than that before he released her, and the friendly darkness and the interest of the crowd centred on Flying Cloud aided him. A minute later

Mrs. Grayson and the wife of a local political leader, Mrs. Meadows, took her from him and carried her to the hotel. Mrs. Grayson, who had heard the chief's chant, understood the story, but Mrs. Meadows, who knew nothing of Sylvia's relation to it, but who guessed something from the talk of the others, was devoured by curiosity. However, she prevailed over it, for the time, and was silent as she went with Sylvia back to the hotel, although she made a vow which she kept—that she would find out the full truth in the morning.

Harley lingered a little by the firelight and joined Hobart and the crowd. The tragedy had cut deep into his thoughts—and he did not care to talk, but the others had plenty to say.

"What a singular coincidence," said Tremaine, stroking his fine, white, pointed mustache, of which he was very proud. "I call it very remarkable that this savage should have told the story of that old tragedy the very night when the only survivor of it was present."

"I do not call it remarkable at all," said Hobart. "It is not even a coincidence in the usual meaning of the word. It came about naturally, each chapter in the story being the logical sequence of the chapter that preceded it." [Pg 258]

"It may all be very clear to a man like you, one who makes a study of crime and mysteries," said Tremaine, ironically, as he gave his mustache an impatient tug, "but it is far from being so to me. I still call it a coincidence."

"That is because you haven't taken time to think about it, Tremaine. Your mind is entirely too good to accept such a theory as coincidence. In the first place, Mr. Grayson is making a thorough tour of the West, all the more thorough because these are supposed to be doubtful states. Now what more natural than his coming to Belleville, which is one of the most important towns in northern Utah, and, having come, what more probable than the presence of the Indians at his speech, because such attractions are rare in Belleville, and the Indian would come to see what it is that stirs up so much his white friend and brother. Of course, the Indian in his degenerate days, would take the chance to get drunk, and, being in a whiskey stupor, he naturally supposed that Mr. Grayson was chanting a chant of victory, and quite as naturally he chanted in return his own chant, and also quite as naturally this chant was about the deed that he considered the greatest of his life. So, there you are; the chain is complete, the result is natural; any other result would have been unnatural."

Tremaine laughed.

"You have worked it out pretty well, Hobart," he said, "but I have my own opinion."

"You are entitled to it," rejoined Hobart, briskly, "but be sure you keep it to yourself, and then you won't suffer from the criticisms of the intelligent." [Pg 259]

Tremaine laughed good-naturedly, and then avowed his concern about that beautiful girl, Miss Morgan, who suddenly and under such peculiar circumstances had been brought face to face with the slayer of her people; he had perceived from the first her noble qualities, and he felt for her the deepest sympathy. Tremaine, while a great lover of the ladies, had in reality less perception than any of the others in affairs of the heart. He was, perhaps, the only one in the group who did not know what was going on, and for that reason he talked at length of Sylvia, no one being able to stop him. He thought it a pity that Sylvia should be wasted on "King" Plummer, who was a good man, a fine old Roman soul, but then he had his doubts about Sylvia's love for him—that is, as a husband. Mr. Plummer was too old for her. Tremaine, by a curious inconsistency, never looked upon himself as old, and thought it perfectly natural that he should carry on a mild flirtation with any girl, provided she be handsome, although young enough to be his daughter.

Harley was uneasy, and would have left them had not the act called attention to himself too pointedly, and he was forced to listen to Tremaine's rambling comment, knowing that all the others had him in their thoughts as they heard. Fortunately, Tremaine did not require any comment from others, preferring an unbroken stream of his own talk, and Harley was able to regain his hotel in silence.

They were confronted the next morning by an announcement that sent sorrow through the whole group. Mrs. Grayson felt that the events of the night before were too much for a young girl, and unless she were removed for a time to quieter scenes and a less arduous life they would leave lasting effects. Moreover, the campaign was about to enter upon a phase in which women would prove burdensome, hence she and Sylvia were going to Salt Lake City for a stay of two weeks, and then they would rejoin the party at some point in the Northwest. [Pg 260]

It was with no counterfeit grief that they heard this news. The ladies had added brightness and variety to a most toilsome campaign, and their daily travel would seem very black indeed without them. Even Churchill was loud in his regrets, because Churchill had some of the instincts of a gentleman, and he never failed in what was due to Mrs. Grayson and Sylvia. But he could not keep from making one nasty little stab at Harley.

"Harley," he said, "do you know that they are going to have a very stalwart escort to Salt Lake?"

"I do not," replied Harley, in some surprise. "I think they are quite able to take care of themselves."

"Perhaps they are, but 'King' Plummer is going with them, nevertheless. At his age it is well for a

man to keep watch over a young girl whom he expects to marry, or some husky youth may carry her off."

Harley was surprised at the strength of his desire to strike Churchill in the face, and he was also surprised at the fact that he resisted it. He accounted for it by his theory that Churchill could not help being mean at times, and, therefore, was not wholly responsible. So he contented himself with saying:

"Churchill, you are a fool now and then, but you never know it."

Then he walked carelessly away before Churchill had made up his mind whether to get angry or to return a sarcastic reply. Churchill liked to use sarcasm, as it made him feel superior. [Pg 261]

But Harley was much disturbed by Churchill's statement. Sylvia was going away, and her stay of two weeks might lengthen into months or become permanent. And Mr. Plummer was going with her. Harley's own absence would put him at a great disadvantage, and for a moment he suspected that this stop at Salt Lake City was an artful movement on the part of the "King," but reflection made him acquit Mr. Plummer, first, because the "King" was too honest to do such a thing, and, second, because he was not subtle enough to think of it.

While he was planning what he would do to face this unforeseen development, a boy from the hotel handed him a note. Harley's heart jumped when he saw that it was in the handwriting of Sylvia Morgan, and it fluttered still further when she asked to see him in the hotel parlor for a few minutes. He was apprehensive, too, because if she had anything good to tell him she certainly would not send for him.

Sylvia was sitting in the parlor beside a window that looked out upon a vast range of snow-covered mountains, rising like the serrated teeth of a saw, and, although she heard his footsteps, she did not turn her face until Harley stood beside her. Then she said, irrelevantly:

"Isn't that a grand view!"

"You did not send for me to tell me that," said Harley, with a certain protecting tenderness in his tone, because what he took to be the sadness in her face appealed to his manly qualities.

"No, I did not. I have been thinking over what we said to each other when we were coming back from Crow's Wing, and I have concluded that it was wrong." [Pg 262]

"Why was it wrong? I love you, and I had the right to tell you so."

"No, you did not. You would have had were I free, but I am promised to another. I was wrong to let you speak; I was wrong to listen to you."

"I will not admit it," said Harley, doggedly, "because Mr. Plummer is going to give you up. He will see that he ought not to hold you to this promise."

She smiled sadly.

"I must be loyal to him," she said, "and before starting for Salt Lake City I want to tell you that you must not again speak to me of this."

"But I shall write to you in Salt Lake."

"You must not write of this. If you do, I will not open another one of your letters."

"I promise not to write to you of love, but I make no promise after that. You are not going from Salt Lake to Idaho? This is not an excuse to leave us for good?"

Her eyes wavered before his. It may be that she had intended to abandon the campaign permanently, but, with his straight and masterful glance demanding an honest answer, she could not say it.

"Yes, I will come back," she said, and then, with a sudden burst of feeling: "Oh, I like your group; I like all of you. This great journey has been something fresh and wonderful to me, and I do not want to leave it!"

"I thought not," said Harley, with returning confidence, "and I am glad that you sent for me here, because it has given me a chance to tell you that, while you mean to keep your promise, I also mean to keep mine. Mr. Plummer will yet yield you up. You are mine, not his, you know you are!" [Pg 263]

He bent suddenly and kissed her lightly on the forehead, and every nerve in her tingled at the first touch of the lips of the man whom she loved. Yet with the sense of right, of loyalty to another, strong within her, she was about to protest, but he was gone, and the first kiss still tingled on her forehead. She felt as if he had put there an invisible seal, and that now in very truth she belonged to him.

The two ladies under the escort of Mr. Plummer left an hour later for Salt Lake City, and everybody was at the station to see them go. Mrs. Grayson was quiet as usual, and Sylvia was noticeably subdued, a fact which most of them ascribed to the tragedy of Flying Cloud and her coming absence of two weeks from a most interesting campaign.

"You ought to cheer up, Miss Sylvia," said Hobart, "because you are not half as unlucky as we are. You can spare us much more easily than we can spare you."

"I am really sorry that I must go," she said, sincerely.

"But you will come back to us?"

"I have promised to do so."

"That is enough; we know that you will keep a promise, Miss Sylvia."

Sylvia at first would not look at Harley. His kiss still burned upon her brow, and she yet felt that it was his seal, his claim upon her. And her conscience hurt her for it, because there was "King" Plummer, strong, protecting, and overflowing with love for her and faith in her. But as she was telling them all good-bye she was forced to say it to Harley, too, in his turn, and when he took her hand he pressed it ever so little, and said, for her ear only:

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"I am still hoping. I refuse to give you up."

She retreated quickly into the Salt Lake car to hide her blush.

When they saw the last smoke of the train melting into the blue sky, Harley and Mr. Heathcote walked back to the hotel together. A strong friendship had grown up between these two, and each valued the other's opinion.

"A fine woman," said Mr. Heathcote, looking towards the silky blue of the sky where the smoke had been.

"Yes, Mrs. Grayson has always impressed me as a woman of great dignity and strength," said Harley, purposely misunderstanding him.

"That is apparent, but I was not speaking of her. I meant Miss Morgan; she seems to me to be of a rare and noble type. The man who gets her, whoever he may be, ought to think himself lucky."

Harley noticed that Mr. Heathcote did not take it for granted that "King" Plummer would get her, but he said nothing in reply.

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## XVII

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### THE SPELLBINDER

An hour after the smoke of the Salt Lake train was lost in the blue sky, the special car bearing the candidate whirled off in another direction, deep into the wonderland of the mountains. Now white peaks were on one side and mighty chasms on the other; then both chasm and peak were lost behind them, and they shot through an irrigated valley, brown with the harvest, neat villages snuggling in the centre. But always, whether near or far, the mountains were around them, blue on the middle slopes, white at the crests, unless those crests were lost in the clouds and mists.

The people in the car were more quiet than usual, the candidate absorbed in somewhat sad thoughts, the state politicians respecting his silence, and the correspondents planning their despatches. But all missed Mrs. Grayson and Miss Morgan, who, whether they talked or not, always contributed brightness and a gentler note to their long campaign. "King" Plummer, too, with his loud laugh and his large, sincere manner, left a vacancy. Every one felt that there was now nothing ahead but business—cold, hard business—and so it proved.

Every campaign enters upon successive phases, in which the contestants advance, through politeness and consideration, first to wary feint and parry, and then to the stern death-grip of the battle which can mean nothing but the victory of one and the defeat of the other. They were now approaching this last stage, and great piles of Eastern newspapers, which reached them in Utah, reflected all the progress of the combat.

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It was obvious to all of those skilled readers and interpreters that the breach within the party was widening, and that this breach could become a chasm before the election. The *Monitor* and other papers, the chosen or self-appointed champions of vested interests, were almost openly in revolt; in Harley's mind their course amounted to the same thing; they printed in their news columns many things derogatory to Grayson, and likely to shatter public faith in his judgment, and in nearly all of them appeared signed contributions from members of the wealthy faction led by the Honorable Mr. Goodnight, attacking every speech made by the candidate, and intimating that he was a greater danger to the country than the nominee of the other side.

"The split will have to come," was Harley's muttered comment, "and the sooner the better for us."

The journals of the rival party were a singular contrast to those of Grayson's side, as they expressed unbounded and sincere confidence. In all that had occurred they could not read anything but victory for them, and Harley was bound to admit that their exultation was justified.

But amid all these troubles the candidate preserved his remarkable amiability of disposition, and Harley witnessed another proof that he was a man first and a statesman afterwards.

The train was continually thronged with local politicians and others anxious to see Mr. Grayson, and at a little station in a plain that seemed to have no end they picked up three men, one of

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whom attracted Harley's notice at once. He was young, only twenty four or five, with a bright, quick, eager face, and he was not dressed in the usual careless Western fashion. His trousers were carefully creased, his white shirt was well-laundered, and his tie was neat. But he wore that strange combination—not so strange west of the Mississippi—a sack-coat and a silk-hat at the same time.

The youth was not at all shy, and he early obtained an introduction to Mr. Grayson. Harley thus learned that his name was Moore—Charles Moore, or Charlie Moore, as those with him called him. Most men in the West, unless of special prominence, when presented to Jimmy Grayson, shook hands warmly, exchanged a word or two on any convenient topic, and then gave way to others, but this fledgling sought to hold him in long converse on the most vital questions of the campaign.

"That was a fine speech of yours that you made at Butte, Mr. Grayson," he said, in the most impulsive manner, "and I endorse every word of it, but are you sure that what you said about Canadian reciprocity will help our party in the great wheat states, such as Minnesota and the Dakotas?"

The candidate stared at him at first in surprise and some displeasure, but in a moment or two his gaze was changed into a kindly smile. He read well the youth before him, his amusing confidence, his eagerness, and his self-importance, that had not yet received a rude check.

"There is something in what you say, Mr. Moore," replied Jimmy Grayson, in that tone absolutely without condescension that made every man his friend; "but I have considered it, and I think it is better for me to stick to my text. Besides, I am right, you know."

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"Ah, yes, but that is not the point," exclaimed young Mr. Moore; "one may be right, but one might keep silent on a doubtful point that is likely to influence many votes. And there are several things in your speeches, Mr. Grayson, with which some of us do not agree. I shall have occasion to address the public concerning them—as you know, a number of us are to speak with you while you are passing through Utah."

There was a flash in Jimmy Grayson's eye, but Harley could not tell whether it expressed anger or amused contempt. It was gone in a moment, however, and the candidate again was looking at the fledgling with a kindly, smiling, and tolerant gaze. But Churchill thrust his elbow against Harley.

"Oh, the child of the free and bounding West!" he murmured. "What innocence, and what a sense of majesty and power!"

Harley did not deign a reply, but he made the acquaintance, by-and-by, of the men who had joined the train with Moore. One of these was a county judge named Basset, sensible and middle-aged, and he talked freely about the fledgling, whom he seemed to have in a measure on his mind. He laughed at first when he spoke of the subject, but he soon became serious.

"Charlie is a good boy, but what do you think he is? Or, rather, what do you think he thinks he is?"

"I don't know," replied Harley.

"Charlie thinks he's a spellbinder, the greatest ever. He's dreaming by night, and by day, too, that he's to be the West's most wonderful orator, and that he's to hold the thousands in his spell. He's a coming Henry Clay and Daniel Webster rolled into one. He's read that story about Demosthenes holding the pebble in his mouth to make himself talk good, and they do say that he slips away out on the prairie, where there's nobody about, and with a stone in his mouth tries to beat the old Greek at his own game. I don't vouch for the truth of the story, but I believe it."

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Harley could not keep from smiling.

"Well, it's at least an honest ambition," he said.

"I don't know about that," replied the judge, doubtfully. "Not in Charlie's case, because as a spellbinder he isn't worth shucks. He can't speak, and he'll never learn to do it. Besides, he's leaving a thing he was just made for to chase a rainbow, and it's breaking his old daddy's heart."

"What is it that he was made for?"

"He's a born telegraph-operator. He's one of the best ever known in the West. They say that at eighteen he was the swiftest in Colorado. Then he went down to Denver, and a month ago he gave up a job there that was paying him a hundred and fifty a month to start this foolishness. They say he might be a great inventor, too, and here he is trying to speak on politics when he doesn't know anything about public questions, and he doesn't know how to talk, either; I don't know whether to be mad about it or just to feel sorry, because Charlie's father is an old friend of mine."

Harley shared his feelings. He had seen the round peg in the square hole so many times with bad results to both the peg and the hole that every fresh instance grieved him. He was also confirmed in the soundness of Judge Basset's opinion by his observation of young Moore as the journey proceeded. The new spellbinder was anxious to speak whenever there was an occasion, and often when there was none at all. The discouragement and even the open rebukes of his elders could not suppress him. The correspondents, comparing notes, decided that they had never before seen so strong a rage for speaking. He took the whole field of public affairs for his range. He was

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willing at any time to discuss the tariff, internal revenue, finance, and foreign relations, and avowed himself master of all. Yet Harley saw that he was in these affairs a perfect child, shallow and superficial, and depending wholly upon a few catchwords that he had learned from others. Even the former Populists turned from him. But their sour faces when he spoke taught him nothing. He was still, to himself, the great spellbinder, and he looked forward to the day when he, too, a nominee for the Presidency, should charm multitudes with his eloquence and logic. He had no hesitation in confiding his hopes to Harley, and the correspondent longed to tell him how he misjudged himself. Yet he refrained, knowing that it was not his duty; and that even if it were, his words would make no impression.

But in other matters than those of public life and oratory Jimmy Grayson's people found young Moore likable enough. He was helpful on the train; now and then when the telegraph-operators had more material than they could handle, he gave them valuable aid; he was a fine comrade, taking good luck and bad luck with equal philosophy, and never complaining. "If only he wouldn't try to speak!" groaned Hobart, for whom he had sent a telegraphic message with skill and despatch.

But that very afternoon Moore talked to them on the subject of national finance, until they fell into a rage and left the car. That evening Harley was sitting with the candidate, when an old man, bent of figure and gloomy of face, came to them. [Pg 271]

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Grayson," he said, "for intruding on you, but I've come to ask a favor. I'm Henry Moore, of Council Grove, the father of Charlie Moore, who was the best telegraph-operator in Denver, and who is now the poorest public speaker in Colorado."

The old man smiled, but it was a sad smile, cut off early. Jimmy Grayson was full of sympathy at once, and he shook Mr. Moore's hand warmly.

"I know your son," he said; "he is a bright boy."

"Yes, he's nothing but a boy," said his father, as if seeking an excuse. "I suppose all boys must have their foolish spells, but he appears to have his mighty hard and long."

The old man sighed, and the look of sympathy on Jimmy Grayson's face deepened.

"Charlie is a good boy," continued Mr. Moore, "and if he could have this foolish notion knocked out of his head—there's no other way to get it out—he would be all right; and that's why I've come to you. You know you are to speak at Pueblo to-morrow night in a big hall, and one of the biggest crowds in the West will be there to hear you. Two or three speakers are to follow you, and what do you think that son of mine has done? Somehow or other he has got the committee to put him on the programme right after you, and he says he is going to demolish what he calls your fallacies."

Harley saw the candidate's lips curve a little, as if he were about to smile, but the movement was quickly checked. Jimmy Grayson would not willingly hurt the feelings of any man. [Pg 272]

"Your boy has that right," he said to Mr. Moore.

"No, he hasn't!" burst out the old man. "A boy hasn't any right to be so light-headed, and I want you, Mr. Grayson, when he has finished his speech, to come right back at him and wipe him off the face of the earth. It will be an easy thing for so big a man as you to do. Charlie doesn't know a thing about public affairs. He'll make lots of statements, and every one of 'em will be wrong. Just show him up. Make all the people laugh at him. Just sting him with your words till he turns red in the face. Roll him in the dust, and tread on him till he can't breathe. Then hold him up before all that audience as the biggest and wildest fool that ever came on a stage. Nothing else will cure him; it will be a favor to him and to me; and I, his father, who loves him more than anybody else in the world, ask you to do it."

Harley was tempted to smile, and at the same moment water came into his eyes. No one could fail to be moved by the old man's intense earnestness, his florid and mixed imagery, and his appealing look. Certainly Jimmy Grayson was no exception. He glanced at Harley, and saw his expression of sympathy, but the correspondent made no suggestion.

"I appreciate your feelings and your position, Mr. Moore," he said, "but this is a hard thing that you ask me to do. I cannot trample upon a boy, even metaphorically, in the presence of five thousand people. What will they think of me?"

"They'll understand. They'll know why it's done, and they'll like you for it. It's the only way, Mr. Grayson. Either you do it or my boy's life is ruined."

Jimmy Grayson walked up and down the room, and his face was troubled. He looked again and again at Harley, but the correspondent made no suggestion; he had none to make. At last he stopped. [Pg 273]

"I think I can save your son, and promise to make the trial, but I will not say a word just yet. Now don't ask me any more about it, and never mind the thanks. I understand; maybe I shall have a grown son myself, some day, to be turned from the wrong path. Good-night. I'll see you again at Pueblo. Harley, I wish you would stay awhile longer. I want to have further talk with you."

The candidate and Harley were in deep converse for some time, and, when they finished, much of the trouble had disappeared from Jimmy Grayson's eyes. "I think it can be done," he said.

"So do I," repeated Harley, with confidence.

The next day, which was occupied with the run down to Pueblo and occasional stops for speeches at way-stations, was uneventful save for the growing obsession of Charlie Moore. He was overflowing with pride and importance. That night, in the presence of five thousand people, he was going to reply to the great Jimmy Grayson, and show to them and to him his errors. Mr. Grayson was sound in most things, but there were several in which he should be set right, and he, Charlie Moore, was the man to do it for him.

The fledgling proudly produced several printed programmes with his name next to that of the candidate, and talked to the correspondents of the main points that he would make, until they fled into the next car. But he followed them there and asked them if they would not like to take in advance a synopsis of his speech, in order that they might be sure to telegraph it to their offices in time. All evaded the issue except Harley, who gravely jotted down the synopsis, and, with equal gravity, returned his thanks for Mr. Moore's consideration.

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"I knew you wouldn't want to miss it," said the youth, "I come on late, you know, and, besides, I remembered that the difference in time between here and New York is against us."

Mr. Moore, the father, was on the train throughout the day, but he did not speak to his son. He spent his time in the car in which Jimmy Grayson sat, always silent, but always looking, with appeal and pathos, at the great leader. His eyes said plainly: "Mr. Grayson, you will not fail me, will you? You will save my son? You will beat him, and tread on him until he hasn't left a single thought of being a famous orator and public leader? Then he will return to the work for which God made him."

Harley would look at the old man awhile, and then return to the next car, where the youth was chattering away to those who could not escape him.

The speech in Pueblo was to be of the utmost importance, not alone to those whose own ears would hear it, but to the whole Union, because the candidate would make a plain declaration upon a number of vexed questions that had been raised within the last week or two. This had been announced in all the press on the authority of Jimmy Grayson himself, and the speech in full, not a word missing, would have to be telegraphed to all the great newspapers both East and West.

In such important campaigns as that of a Presidential nominee, the two great telegraph companies always send operators with the correspondents, in order that they may despatch long messages from small way-stations, where the local men are not used to such heavy work. Now Harley and his associates had with them two veterans, Barr and Wymond, from Chicago, who never failed them. They were relieved, too, on reaching Pueblo, to find that the committee in charge had been most considerate. Some forethoughtful man, whom the correspondents blessed, had remembered the three hours' difference in time between Pueblo and New York, and against New York, and he had run two wires directly into the hall and into a private box on the left, where Barr and Wymond could work the instruments, so far from the stage that the clicking would not disturb Jimmy Grayson or anybody else, but would save much time for the correspondents.

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The audience gathered early, and it was a splendid Western crowd, big-boned and tanned by the Western winds.

"They have cranks out here, but it's a land of strong men, don't you forget that," said Harley to Churchill, and Churchill did not attempt a sarcastic reply.

They were both sitting at the edge of the stage, and in front of them, nearer the footlights, was young Moore, proud and eager, his fingers moving nervously. His father, too, had found a seat on the stage, but he was in the background, next to the scenery and behind the others; he was not visible from the floor of the house. There he sat, staring gloomily at his son, and now and then, with a sort of despairing hope, glancing at Jimmy Grayson.

There were some short preliminary speeches and introductions, and then came the turn of the candidate. The usual flutter of expectation ran over the audience, followed by the usual deep hush, but just at that moment there was an interruption. A boy in the uniform of a telegraph company hurried upon the stage.

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"You must come at once, sir," he said to Harley. "Mr. Wymond hasn't turned up. We don't know what's become of him. And Mr. Barr has took sick, sudden and bad. The Pueblo manager says he'll get somebody here as quick as he can, but he can't do it under half an hour, anyway!"

The other correspondents stared at each other in dismay, and then at the hired stenographer who was to take down the speech in full. But Harley, always thoughtful and resourceful, responded to the emergency. He had noticed Moore raise his head with an expression of lively interest at the news of the disaster, and he stepped forward at once and put his hand on the fledgling's shoulder.

"Mr. Moore," he exclaimed, in stirring appeal, "this is a crisis for us, and you must save us. You have eaten with us, and you have lived with us, and you cannot desert us now. We have all heard that you are a great operator, the greatest in the West. You must send Mr. Grayson's speech. What a triumph it will be for you—to send his speech and then get upon this stage and demolish it afterwards!"

The feeling in Harley's voice was real, and the boy was thrilled by it and the situation. Every natural impulse in him responded. It was the chivalrous thing for him to do, and an easy one. He could send a speech as fast as the fastest man living could deliver it. He rose without a word, his heart beating with thoughts of the coming battle, in which he felt proudly that he should be a victor, and made his way to the telegraphers' box.

Moore had lived in Pueblo, and nearly everybody in the audience knew him. When they saw him take his seat at one of the instruments, their quick Western minds divined what he was going to do, and the roar of applause that they had just given to the candidate, who was now on his feet, was succeeded by another; but the second was for Charlie Moore, the telegraph-operator.

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The fledgling had no time to think. He had scarcely settled himself in his chair when the deep, full voice of Jimmy Grayson filled the great hall, and he was launched upon a speech for which the whole Union was waiting. The short-hand man was already deep in his work, and the copy began to come. But the boy felt no alarm; he was not even flustered; the feel of the key was good, and the atmosphere of that box which enclosed the telegraph apparatus was sweet in his nostrils. He called up Denver, from which the speech would be repeated to the greater cities, and with a sigh of deep satisfaction settled to his task.

They tell yet in Western telegraph circles of Charlie Moore's great exploit. The candidate was in grand form that night, and his speech came rushing forth in a torrent. The missing Wymond was still missing, and the luckless Barr was still ill, but the fledgling sat alone in the box, his face bent over the key, oblivious of the world around him, and sent it all. Through him ran the fire of battle and great endeavor. He heard the call and replied. He never missed a word. He sent them hot across the prairie, over the slopes and ridges, and across the brown plains into Denver. And there in the general office the manager muttered more than once: "That fellow is doing great work! How he saves time!"

The audience liked Jimmy Grayson's speech, and again and again the applause swelled and echoed. Then they noticed how the boy in the telegraphers' box—a boy of their own—was working. Mysterious voices, too, began to spread among them the news how Charlie Moore had saved the day—or, rather, the night—and now and then in Jimmy Grayson's pauses cries of "Good boy, Charlie!" arose.

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Harley, while doing his writing, nevertheless kept a keen eye upon all the actors in the drama. He saw the light of hope appear more strongly upon old man Moore's face, and then turn into a glow as he beheld his son doing so well.

The candidate spoke on and on. He had begun at nine o'clock, but that was a great and important speech, and no one left the hall. Eleven o'clock, and then midnight, and Jimmy Grayson was still speaking. But it was not his night alone; it belonged to two men, and the other partner was Charlie Moore, who fulfilled his task equally well, and whom the audience still observed.

But the boy was thinking only of his duty that he was doing so well. The victory was his, as he knew that it would be. He kept even with the speech. Hardly had the last word of the sentence left Jimmy Grayson's lips before the first of it was on the way to Denver, and in newspaper offices two thousand miles away they were putting every paragraph in type before it was a half-hour old.

The boy, by-and-by, as the words passed before him on the written page, began to notice what a great speech it was. How the sentences cut to the heart of things! How luminous and striking was the phraseology! And around him he heard, as if in a dream, the liquid notes of that wonderful, golden voice. Suddenly, like a stroke of lightning, he realized how empty were his own thoughts, how bare and hard his speech, and how thin and flat his voice! His heart sank with a plunge, and then rose again as his finger touched the familiar key and the answering touch thrilled back through his body. He glanced at the audience, and saw many faces looking up at him, and on them was a peculiar look. Again the thrill ran through him, and, bending his head lower, he sent the words faster than ever on their eastern journey.

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At last Jimmy Grayson stopped, and then the audience cheered its applause for the speech. When the echoes died, some one—it was Judge Basset—sprang up on a chair and exclaimed:

"Gentlemen, we have cheered Mr. Grayson, and he deserves it; but there is some one else whom we ought to cheer, too. You have seen Charlie Moore, a Pueblo boy, one of our own, there in the box sending the speech to the world that was waiting for it. Perhaps you do not know that if he had not helped us to-night the world would have had to wait too long."

They dragged young Moore, amid the cheers, upon the stage, and then, when the hush came, the candidate said:

"You seem to know him already; but as all the speaking of the evening is now over, I wish to introduce to you again Mr. Charlie Moore, the greatest telegraph-operator in the West, the genius of the key, a man destined to rise to the highest place in his profession."

When the last echo of the last cheer died, there died with it the last ambition of Charlie Moore to be a spellbinder, and straight before him, broad, smooth, and alluring, lay the road for which his feet were fitted.

But the words most grateful to Jimmy Grayson were the thanks of the fledgling's father. The little drama of the side-box and the telegraph-key was known to but five people—the candidate, Harley, the two operators, and happy Mr. Moore. The old gentleman, indeed, said something

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about Mr. Grayson having helped him, but it was taken by the others to mean that a mere chance, a lucky combination of circumstances, had come to his aid, and they failed to see in it anything of prearrangement or even intention. Hence there appeared on the surface nothing to be criticised even by Churchill, ever on the lookout for an incident that seemed to him incongruous or irrelevant.

Harley made it an excuse for something that he wished very much to do. About this time Mrs. Grayson, returning from Salt Lake City, rejoined them, but she did not bring Sylvia with her, leaving her in the Mormon capital for a further stay with relatives. But Harley wrote a long letter to Sylvia, beginning with the story of the spellbinder, and he told her that his admiration for the candidate steadily increased, because Mr. Grayson was able, at all times, even in the heat of the hottest campaign that the Union had ever known, to put the highest attributes of the human heart—mercy, gentleness, help—before his own political good or even that of his party. Mr. Grayson might be beaten, but he would make a record that must become a source of pride, not to his party alone, but to the whole country. In fact, Mr. Grayson belonged to humanity, and the race might lay claim to him as one of its finest types.

Then from Mr. Grayson he glided to the other, and, to Harley, greater topic—herself. He told her that nothing had occurred to make him change his wishes or his hopes; since her absence began his resolve had grown. He felt more than ever that the claim of Mr. Plummer upon her, though of a high and noble nature, even if he did hold her promise, must yield to the love of the husband for the wife. Mr. Plummer would come to see this, and he would come to see it in time. He had no desire to interfere with the natural affection of the man who had done so much for Sylvia, nor did he feel that he was making such interference.

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Harley was not sure that he would receive a reply to this letter, but it came in due time, nevertheless, and it was Jimmy Grayson himself who handed it to him. The handwriting of the address was known, of course, to Mr. Grayson, and he could scarcely have failed to notice it, but he said nothing, and apparently the fact passed unheeded by him.

Sylvia, in the course of her letter, confined herself to impartial narrative, and began with the event of the spellbinder, which Harley had told to her in detail. Indeed, it seemed to Harley that she devoted a very remarkable amount of space to its consideration, especially as she agreed with him that Mr. Grayson's action was right; nevertheless, she discussed it from all points of the compass, and then she wrote with almost equal amplitude of her sight-seeing in Salt Lake City.

Harley knew that Mormons were no novelty to Sylvia, as she had seen many of them in Idaho, but she seemed to feel it necessary to describe with particularity all the great Mormon buildings, and also to speak fully of the manners and customs of the people. All this might have been very interesting to him at another time and from another pen, but now he saw only the handwriting and wished her to devote attention to that little codicil in his own letter in which he so earnestly avowed again his love and his belief in its ultimate triumph. She made no allusion whatever to it, and he felt his heart sink. Nor did she speak of "King" Plummer, and he could not gather from the letter whether he was yet in Salt Lake City or had gone back to Idaho. She had carefully avoided all the subjects on which he hoped she would write, and as he closed the letter and put it in his pocket he was still rather blue.

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But reflection put him in a different and much more pleasant frame of mind. The fact that she had replied was a good omen, and her very avoidance of the most delicate of all subjects was proof that she did not forbid it to him. Harley was a bold man, and, being ready to push his fortune to the utmost in a cause that he believed righteous, he resolved to write her another letter in a few days, and to repeat in it much that he had said in his first, or to say words to the same effect.

Meanwhile his countenance assumed a joyous cast, which was noticeable because he was habitually of grave demeanor, and his associates, observing the change, taxed him with the fact and demanded an explanation, Hobart in particular wishing to know. Harley lightly ascribed it to the rarefied air, as they were ascending a plateau, and the others, though calling it the baldest and poorest of replies, were forced to be content.

But one man who noticed Harley, and who said nothing, guessed much closer to the cause. It was Mr. Grayson himself, who had seen the address on the envelope, and it aroused grave thoughts in him. Nor were these thoughts unkind to Sylvia or Harley. It was the custom of the candidate to subject himself at intervals to a searching mental examination, and now he made James Grayson walk out before him again and undergo this minute process.

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He was extremely fond of Sylvia, whose grace, intelligence, and loyalty appealed to the best in him, and he was anxious to secure her happiness and her position in life, on which, in a measure, the former depended. For these reasons he had received with pleasure the news that Sylvia was going to marry Mr. Plummer. Despite the disparity of ages, the match seemed fitting to him; he knew the worth and honor of the "King" to be so great that the happiness of any young girl, especially that of one who owed so much to him, ought to be safe in his keeping. But now the doubts which had begun to form were growing stronger. He saw that nature was playing havoc with mere material fitness, and there came to him the question of his own duty.

The candidate now knew well enough that Sylvia did not love Mr. Plummer as a girl should love the man whom she is going to marry, but that she did love Harley. He conceived it, too, to be a true and lasting love with both the young man and the young woman, and again came to him that question of his own duty, a question not only troublesome, but dangerous to him in his present

situation. He knew that Sylvia, despite all, would marry "King" Plummer unless the unforeseen occurred, and make herself unhappy all her life. Should he, then, tell "King" Plummer, or have his wife tell him in the more indirect and delicate way women have, that the burden of the situation rested upon him, and that he ought to release Sylvia? The candidate shrank from such a task; he could not meddle, even when it was his own niece whom he wished to save, and there was another thought, too, in the background which he strove honestly to keep out of his mind; it was the old apprehension lest the "King" in his rage, particularly when it was the candidate himself who took from him his heart's desire, should rebel, or at least sulk and put the Mountain States in the opposing column. It was no less true now than in the Middle Ages that men disappointed in love some times did desperate things, and "King" Plummer was a full-blooded, impulsive man.

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Brooding much upon the question, a rare frown came to the face of Jimmy Grayson, and stayed there so long that his followers noticed it, and wondered much. They decided that it was the revolt within the party, and did not disturb him, but his wife, more acute, knew that it was not politics, and, sitting down beside him, waited silently until he should speak, as she knew he would in time. A full hour passed thus, and scarcely any one in the train uttered a word. The candidate gazed gloomily out of the window, but he did not see the mountains and the cañons as they shot by. Most of the state politicians slept in their seats, and the correspondents either wrote or communed with themselves.

Mr. Grayson rose at last, and, saying to his wife, "I should like a word with you in private," led the way to the drawing-room. She followed, knowing that he wished to speak of the trouble on his mind, and she made a shrewd guess as to its nature.

"Anna, it is something that I have been trying to put away from me," he said, when they were in the privacy of the drawing-room, "but it won't stay away. I suppose I ought to have spoken to you of it some time ago, but I could not make up my mind to do it."

She smiled a little.

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"I, too, have been dreading the subject," she said, "if it is what I think it is. You are going to speak of Sylvia, Mr. Plummer, and Mr. Harley."

"Yes, Harley has a letter from Sylvia, and he will have more. She doesn't want to write to him, but she will. The girl is breaking her heart, and I am not sure that you and I are doing what we ought to do."

"And you do not think that Mr. Plummer would make a suitable husband for her?"

She regarded him keenly from under lowered eyelids—the question was merely intended to lead to something else.

"That is not the point. Harley is the man she loves, and Harley is the man she should marry."

"Should she not decide this question for herself?"

The candidate studied the face of his wife. Her words, if taken simply as words, would seem metallic and cold, but there was an expression that gave them a wholly different meaning to him.

"Under ordinary circumstances, yes," he said, "but the circumstances in which Sylvia finds herself are not ordinary, and I am not sure how far we are responsible for them."

"I undertook to act once, and I was sorry that I did so."

The candidate did not speak again for several moments, but Mrs. Grayson read his expressive face.

"You have thought of something else," she said, "that is or seems to be connected with this affair of Sylvia's."

"I have, and I am afraid it is that which has been holding me back."

The eyes of the two met, and, although they said no more upon that point, they understood each other perfectly.

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"Anna," said the candidate, with decision, "you must write to Mr. Plummer. I do not shift this burden from myself to you because of any desire to escape it, but because I know you will write the letter so much better than I can."

Her eyes met his again, and hers shone with admiration—he was not less brave than she had thought him.

"I do not know what will come of it," he said; "perhaps nothing, but in any event we ought to write it."

"I will write," she said, firmly.

The candidate said nothing more but he bent down and kissed his wife on the forehead.

When Jimmy Grayson returned from the drawing-room, they noticed that the frown was gone from his face, and at once there was a new atmosphere in the car. The sleepy politicians awoke and made new or old jokes; the correspondents ceased writing, and asked Mr. Grayson what he intended to put in his next speech. Obviously the current of life began to run full and free again,

and the incomparable scenery gliding by their car-windows no longer passed without comment. But Mrs. Grayson, in the drawing-room, taking much thought and care, was writing this letter, which she addressed to Mr. Plummer, in Boisé, where she heard that he was going from Salt Lake City:

"DEAR MR. PLUMMER,—I want to tell you how we are getting on, because I know how deeply you are interested in the campaign, and all of us have enjoyed the way in which you affiliated with our little group. We have been so long together now that we have become a sort of family—speakers, writers, and well-wishers, with Mr. Grayson as the head in virtue of his position as nominee. You have had a large place in this family—what shall I call it?—a kind of elder brother, one who out of the fund of his experience could wisely lead the younger and more impulsive."

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Mrs. Grayson stopped here and tapped her finger thoughtfully with the staff of her pen. "That paragraph," she mused, "should bring home to him the fact that he is old as compared with Sylvia and Mr. Harley, and that is the first thing I wish to establish in his mind." Then, dipping her pen in the ink again, she wrote:

"This, I think, is one of the reasons that our young people have missed you so much. You were always prepared to take your part in the entertainment of the day, but your gravity and your years, which, without being too many, become you so much, exercised a restraining influence upon them, and showed them the line at which they should stop. I think that you acquired over them an influence, in its way paternal, and it is in such a capacity that they miss you most."

The lady's smile deepened, and in her mind was the thought that if he did not wince at this bolt he was, indeed, impervious. Then she continued:

"My interest in this campaign is not alone political nor personal to Mr. Grayson, which also means myself, but I have become much interested in those who travel with us—that is, those who have become the members of our new family. There is Mr. Heathcote, who was sent West as our enemy, and quickly turned to a friend. There is Mr. Tremaine, who is such a gay old beau, and who never realizes that he is too old for the young women with whom he wishes to flirt."

The lady stopped again, and her smile was deeper than ever. "Now that was unintended," she mused, "but it comes in very happily." She resumed:

"And there is Mr. Hobart, who loves mysteries, especially murder mysteries, and who saved the life of that innocent boy. I find him a most interesting character, but, after all, he is read with less difficulty than Mr. Harley, who, though silent and reserved, seems to me to be deeper and more complex. His, I am sure, is a very strong nature—Mr. Grayson, you know, is quite fond of him, and in certain things has got into the habit of leaning upon him. Mr. Harley seems to me to be fitted by temperament and strength to be the shield and support of some one. He could make the girl who should become his wife very happy, and I am wondering if he will go out of our West without forming such an attachment."

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"That surely," thought the lady, "will bring him to the question which I present to his mind, and he will answer it whether he will or not, by saying this attachment has been formed, and it is for Sylvia." She continued:

"Like Mr. Grayson, I am very fond of Mr. Harley, who has proved himself a true friend to us, and I should like to see him happy—that is, married to a true woman, who would not alone receive strength, but give it, too. In the course of his vocation, he has already roamed about the world enough, and it is time now for him to settle down. If I had my way I should select for him one of our fine Western girls; about twenty-one or two, I think, would be the right age for him—there is a fitness in these things."

"I wonder if that is blunt?" she mused. "No, he will think it just popped out, and that I was unconscious of it. I shall let it stay." Then she resumed:

"It ought to be a girl with a temperament that is at once a match and foil for his own. She should have a sense of humor, a gift for light and ironic speech that can stir him without irritating him, because he is perhaps of a cautious disposition, and hence would be well matched with one a little bit impulsive, each exercising the proper influence upon the other. She should be strong, too, habituated to physical hardship, as our Western girls are. Such a marriage, I think, would be ideal, and I expect you, Mr. Plummer, when you rejoin us, to help me make it, should the opportunity arise."

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Yours sincerely,

"ANNA GRAYSON."

She folded the sheets, put them in the envelope, and addressed them. It was the second time that she had written to Mr. Plummer, but with a very different motive, and she had more confidence in the second letter than she had ever felt in the first.

"That will cause him pain," she reflected, "but the task cannot be done without it."

In her heart she was genuinely sorry for Mr. Plummer, thinking at that moment more of his grief than of her husband's risk, but she was resolute to mail the letter, nevertheless. She read it a little later to Mr. Grayson, and he approved.

"It is likely to bring 'King' Plummer raging down from Idaho, but it ought to go," he said.

A half-hour later, this letter, written in a delicate, feminine hand, but heavy with fate, was speeding northwestward.

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## XVIII

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### THE SACRIFICE

A few days after writing this letter, Mrs. Grayson announced that Sylvia would rejoin them on the following afternoon, having shortened her stay in Salt Lake City, as her relations were about to depart on a visit to California.

"She wants very much to go on with us," said Mrs. Grayson, "and rather than send her either to Boisé or to our home, where she would be alone, we are willing for her to continue."

"I should think you would be!" exclaimed Hobart. "Why, Mrs. Grayson, much as we esteem you, we would start a violent rebellion if you should send Miss Morgan away, a rebellion attended by bloodshed and desperate deeds."

Mrs. Grayson smiled and glanced at Harley, who was silent. But she did not fail to see the flash of pleasure under his veiled eyelids.

"Keep your pistol in your pocket and your sword in its sheath, Mr. Hobart," she said; "I shall not give you occasion to use either."

"Then I declare for peace."

Sylvia joined them at the time mentioned by Mrs. Grayson, quiet, slightly pale, and disposed, in the opinion of the Graysons, to much thought. "The girl has something on her mind which she cannot put off," said Tremaine, and in this case he was right.

Sylvia, while in Salt Lake City, far from the influences which recently had brought to her acute pain and joy alike, considered her position with as much personal detachment as she could assume. Away from Harley and the magic of his presence and his confident voice, she strengthened her resolve to keep her word—if "King" Plummer claimed her, he should yet have her. But this same examination showed her another fact that was unalterable. She loved Harley, and, though she might marry another man, she would continue to love him. In a way she gloried in the truth and her recognition of it. It was a love she intended to hide, but it brought her a sad happiness nevertheless.

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It was this feeling, spiritual in its nature, that gave to Sylvia a new charm when she came back, a touch of sorrow and womanly dignity that all noticed at once, and to which they gave tribute. It melted the heart of Jimmy Grayson, who knew so well the reason why, and he was glad now that his wife had written to "King" Plummer.

Sylvia said nothing about Mr. Plummer; if she knew whether he would return and when, she kept it to herself, and Mrs. Grayson, who was waiting in anxiety for an answer to her letter—an answer that did not come—was in a state of apprehension, which she hid, however, from all except Mr. Grayson. This agitation was increased by an event in her husband's career, so unexpected in its nature and so extraordinary that it was the sensation of the country, and exercised an unfavorable influence upon the campaign. If any one in the United States, whether friend or enemy, had been asked if such a thing could occur, he would have said that it was impossible.

In their travels they came presently to Egmont, a snug town, lying in a hollow of the land, from which they were going to conduct what Hobart called a circular campaign—that is, it was the centre from which they were to make journeys to a ring of smaller places lying in a circle about it, returning late at night for sleep and rest.

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They were all pleased with Egmont; though less than ten years old, it had houses of brick and stone, a trim look, and the smoothness of life and comfort that usually come only with age. It was a pleasure to return to it every night from the newer and cruder villages in the outer ring, and enjoy good beds and fresh sheets.

But the candidate spoke first in Egmont, and the chairman of the committee that managed the meeting was the solid man of the town. Harley and his comrades required no information on this point; it was visible at once in the important manner of the Honorable John Anderson, the cool way in which he assumed authority, and his slight air of patronage when he came in contact with the correspondents. Harley and his comrades only laughed; they had often noticed the same bearing in men much better known in the world than the Honorable John Anderson, of Egmont,

Montana, and they generally set it down as one of the faults of success; therefore they could smile.

But Mr. Anderson was hospitable, insisting that the candidate and his family, instead of spending the first night at the hotel, should go with him to his house. "I have room and to spare," he said, with a slight touch of importance. "My house will be honored if it can shelter to-night the next President of the United States."

"Thank you for the invitation," said Jimmy Grayson, gravely. "I shall be glad to join you with my family and Mr. Harley. Mr. Harley has become in a sense one of my advisers, almost a lieutenant, I might say." [Pg 293]

Mr. Anderson was not intending to ask Harley, as the correspondent knew, but the candidate had included him so deftly that the important citizen must do so, too, and he widened the invitation with courtesy. Harley, always in search of new types, always anxious to explore the secrets of new lands, accepted as promptly as if the request had been spontaneous.

Although his house was only a few hundred yards away, Mr. Anderson took them there in his two-seated, highly polished carriage, drawn by a pair of seal-brown trotters. "Good horses," he said, as he cracked his whip contentedly over them. "I brought them all the way from Kentucky. Cost me a lot, too."

The Anderson house was really fine, built of light stone, standing far back on a wide lawn, and Harley could see that the good taste of some one had presided at its birth. It had an Eastern air of quiet and completion. When Mr. Anderson, glancing at his guests, beheld the look of approval on their faces, he was pleased, and said, in an easy, off-hand manner:

"Been up only four years; planned it myself, with a little help from wife and daughter."

Harley at once surmised that the good effect was due to the taste of the wife or daughter, or both, and he was confirmed in the opinion when he met Mrs. Anderson, a slight, modest woman, superior to her husband in some respects that Harley thought important. The daughter did not appear until just before dinner, but when she came into the parlor to meet the guest the correspondent held his breath for a moment. [Pg 294]

Rare and beautiful flowers bloom now and then on the cold plains of the great Northwest, and Harley said in his heart that Helen Anderson was one of the rarest and most beautiful of them all. It was not alone the beauty of face and figure, but it was, even more, the nobility of expression and a singular touch of pathos, as if neither youth nor beauty had kept from her a great sadness. This almost hidden note of sorrow seemed to Harley to make perfect her grace and charm, and he felt, stranger though he was, that he was willing to sacrifice himself to protect her from some blow unknown to him. Speaking of it afterwards, he found that she had the same effect upon the candidate. "I felt that I must be her champion," said Mr. Grayson. "Why, I did not know, but I wanted to fight for her."

Miss Anderson herself was unconscious of the impression that she created, and she strove only to entertain her father's guests, a task in which she achieved the full measure of success. Mr. Anderson mentioned, casually, how he had sent her to Wellesley, and Harley saw that her horizon was wider than that of her parents. But the pathetic, appealing look came now and then into her beautiful eyes, and Harley was convinced of her unhappiness. Once he saw a sudden glance, as of sympathy and understanding, pass between her and Sylvia.

It was not long before the secret of Helen Anderson was told to him, because it was no secret at all. The whole town was proud of her, and everybody in it knew that she was in love with Arthur Lee, the young lawyer whose sign hung on the main street of Egmont before an office which was yet unvisited by clients. It was true love on both sides, they said, with sympathy; they had been boy and girl together, and during her long stay in the East at school she had never forgotten him. But Mr. Anderson would have none of the briefless youth; his prosperity had fed his pride—a lawyer without a case was not a fit match for his daughter. "If you were famous, if it were common talk that some day you might be governor or United States senator, I might consent, but, sir, you have done nothing," he had said, with cruel sarcasm to Lee. [Pg 295]

It was a bitter truth, and Lee himself, high and honorable in all his nature, saw it. The girl, too, had old-fashioned ideas of duty to parents, and when her father bade her think no more of Lee she humbly bowed her head. But the town said, and the town knew, that the more she sought to put him out of her heart, the more strongly entrenched was he there; that while she now tried to think of him not at all, she thought of him all the time.

The whole story was brought to Harley; it was not in his nature to pry into the sacred mysteries of a young girl's heart, but the tale moved him all the more deeply when he saw young Lee, a man with a high, noble brow and clear, open eyes, through which his honest soul shone, that all might see. But upon his face was the same faint veil of sadness that hovered over Helen Anderson's, as if hope were lacking.

Harley met young Lee two or three times, and on each occasion purposely prolonged the talk, because the young lawyer without a case aroused his interest and sympathy. He soon discovered that Lee had an uncommon mind, acute, penetrating, and on fire with noble ideals. But it was a fire that smouldered unseen. He had never had a chance; it would come to him some day, Harley knew, but it might be, it surely would be, too late. Harley had seen much of the world, its glory [Pg 296]

and its shame alike, and he was convinced that nothing else in it was worth so much to man as the spontaneous love of a pure woman and a happy marriage. He knew from dear experience how much Lee was losing—nay, had lost already—and his pity was deeply stirred. He wished to speak of it to Sylvia, but the thought of such words only made his own wound the deeper. The whole town was on the side of the lovers, but it was bound and helpless; the father's command and Lee's own honor were barriers that could not be passed.

The people about Egmont were so much delighted with Mr. Grayson's speech that they demanded a second from him, and, with his usual good-nature, he yielded, although Harley knew that he was feeling the strain of such a long and severe campaign. The evening of the fifth day after his arrival was set for the time, and he was expected to deliver the address at a late hour, when he returned from one of the circle of villages.

On the night before the second speech, the candidate and Harley, who were now staying at the hotel, after making their excuses to the others, slipped out for a walk in the cool and silence of the dark. The rarest thing in Jimmy Grayson's life now was privacy, and he longed for it as a parched throat longs for water; it was only at such times as this, with a late hour and a favoring night, that he could secure it.

Nearly all Egmont was in bed, and they turned from the chief street into the residence quarter, where a few lights twinkled amid the lawns and gardens. No one had noticed them, and Jimmy Grayson, with a sigh of relief, drew breaths of the crisp, cool air that came across a thousand miles of clean prairie.

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"What a splendid night!" he said. "What a grand horizon!"

They stood upon a slight elevation, and they looked down the street and out upon the prairie, which rippled away, silver in the moonlight, like the waves of the sea. A wind, faint, like a happy sigh, was blowing.

"An evening for lovers," said the candidate, and he smiled as his mind ran back to some happy evenings in his own life. "Now, why should such a moonlight as this ever be spoiled by a political speech?" he continued.

"I was thinking of lovers myself," said Harley, "because here is the Anderson house before us. Don't you see its white walls shining through the trees?"

"Poor girl!" said the candidate. "It is a terrible thing for a woman to be separated from the man she loves. A woman, I think, can really love but once. And yet her father's pride is natural; young Lee has not even made a start in life."

"All he needs is a chance, which he will get—when it is too late," said Harley.

The house and its grounds, surrounded by a stone wall not more than three feet high, occupied an entire square in the outskirts of the little city, and the candidate and Harley followed the least frequented of the streets—one running beside the stone wall, which was shaded presently by thick and arching boughs of trees that grew within. As they entered the shadow they saw a man leap over the low barrier and disappear in the Anderson grounds.

"A burglar!" exclaimed Harley. His first thought was of Helen Anderson and her beautiful, appealing face, and without a moment's hesitation he sprang over the wall to pursue. Jimmy Grayson looked at him in astonishment, and then followed.

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Harley stopped for an instant inside the grounds, and saw the dark figure just ahead of him, but now walking with such slowness that pursuit was easy. Evidently the burglar was making sure of the way before he sought to enter the Anderson mansion; but Harley was surprised, in a few moments, to notice something familiar in the shoulders and bearing of the man whom he followed. His burglar never looked back, but entered an open space; and then Harley, his surprise increasing, stopped when he saw him approach a little summer-house of lattice-work. The hand of the candidate fell at that moment upon his arm, and a deep voice said in his ear:

"I think we have gone far enough, don't you, Harley?"

"I do," replied Harley, with conviction.

A woman was coming, a woman with a beautiful, pale face, more lovely and sad than ever in the moonlight, and the two men knew at once that Helen was about to meet her lover. They would have turned and fled from the grounds, because a woman's pure love was sacred, to be hidden from all eyes and ears save those of one, but her face was towards them, and had they stepped from the shadow of the oak she would have seen the two.

"Ah, Helen!" said Lee, as he met her and took her hands in his.

"Arthur, for the last time!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, I know it is for the last time," said Arthur, and there was a moving sadness in his voice.

Their faces were turned towards the two there in the shadow of the great oak, although unwitting that others were so near, and neither man dared to move. The moonlight, in softened silver, fell upon the faces of the lovers, disclosing all the beauty of the woman's and all the loftiness of the man's. Harley thought he had never seen a nobler pair.

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The man took both the girl's hands in his and held them for a few moments. Then he walked back and forth, taking quick little steps. Every motion of his figure expressed agony and despair. The girl stood still, and her face, clearly shown in the moonlight, was turned towards Harley; it, too, expressed agony and despair; but her stillness showed resignation, Lee's fierce movements were full of rebellion.

"I am going away, Helen," said Arthur. "I have decided upon it. I shall not be here more than a week or two longer. I cannot be in the same town, seeing you every day and knowing that you cannot be mine. I could not stand it."

"I suppose it is best," said Helen; "but, Arthur, I love you. I have told you that, and I am proud of it. I shall never love any one else. It is not possible."

Her beautiful, pale face was still turned towards Harley, and he saw again upon it that touch of ineffable sadness and resignation that had moved him so deeply. Lee stopped his despairing walk back and forth and looked at Helen. Then he uttered a little cry and seized her hands again.

"Helen," he said, "I cannot do it! I came here to give you up forever, to tell you that I was going away, and I meant to go, but I cannot do it. We love each other—then who has the right to separate us? I thought that I could stand this, that I had hardened myself to endure it, but when the time comes I find that it is too much. My right to you is greater than that of father or mother. Come with me; we can go to Longford to-night, and in three hours we shall be man and wife."

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He still held her hands in his, and his face was flushed and his eyes shining with an eager but noble passion.

Harley and the candidate, in the shrubbery, never stirred. They listened, but they forgot that they were listening.

The girl lifted her eyes to those of her lover, and there was in them no reproach, only a high, sad courage.

"You do not mean what you say now, Arthur," she said. "I have given my promise to my father, and you must help me to be strong, for alone I am weak, very weak. None can help me but you. You must go, as you said you would go, but your face shall always be with me here. Though I may not be your wife, I shall be true to you all my life."

"In such moments as these the woman is always stronger than the man," breathed Jimmy Grayson.

Lee dropped her hands again and walked a step or two away.

"Helen," he said, "forgive me, and forget what I said. I was base when I spoke. But I have found it too hard!—too hard!"

Her eyes still expressed no reproach; there was in them something almost divine. She loved him the more because of his weakness, although she would not yield to it.

"It is hard, very hard for us both," she whispered, "but it must be done. But, Arthur, I love you. I have told you that, and I am not ashamed of it. I shall never love any one else. It is not possible."

"I know it. I know, too, that your heart will always be mine, but, as the world sees it, your father is right. I am nothing. I have no right to a wife—above all, to one such as you. I feel that I have a power within me, the power to do things which the world would call good, but there is no chance. I suppose that the chance will come some day—when it is too late."

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Harley started. The words were the echo of his own. "We must go," he whispered to the candidate. "No one has a right to listen, even without intention, at this, their last meeting." Jimmy Grayson had already turned away, and by the faint moonlight sifting through the branches Harley saw a mist in his eyes. But their movement made a sound, and the lovers looked up.

"Did you hear a noise? What was it?" asked Helen.

"Only a lizard in the grass or a squirrel rattling the bark of a tree," replied Arthur.

They listened a moment, but they heard nothing more, save the faint stirring of the wind among the leaves and the grass.

"Are you really going, Arthur?" asked Helen, as if, approving it once, she would like now to hear him deny it.

He looked at her, his face flushing and his eyes alight, as if at last he heard her ask him to stay; but he saw in her gaze only brave resolve. She could love him, and yet she had the strength to sacrifice that love for what she considered her duty. He drew courage from her, and he lifted his head proudly, although his eyes expressed grief alone.

"Yes, I have only to start," he replied; "you know I have little to take. I make just one more public appearance in Egmont. Mr. Grayson speaks here again to-morrow night, and the committee, by some chance—a chance it must have been—has put me on the list of speakers."

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"Oh, Arthur, it may be an opportunity for you!"

She was eager, flushed, her eyes flaming and uplifted to his.

"It might be, Helen, at any other time, but this is evil fortune. I am of the other party; I must speak against him—we are fair to both sides here; he will have the right of rejoinder, and you know what he is, Helen—the greatest orator in America, perhaps in all the world. No one yet has ever been able to defeat him, and what chance have I, with no experience, against the most formidable debater in existence? I should shirk it, Helen, if the people would not think me a coward."

"Oh, Arthur, what an ordeal!" She looked up at him with wet, tender eyes.

Harley, at the mention of Jimmy Grayson's name, glanced away from the lovers and towards the candidate. He saw him start, and a singular, soft expression pass over his face, to be followed by one of doubt.

"Now I shall go, Helen," said Arthur. "It was wrong of me to ask you to meet me here, but I could not go away without seeing you alone and speaking to you alone, as I do now."

"I was glad to come."

He took her hands again, and for a few moments they stood, gazing into each other's eyes, where they saw all the grief of a last parting. Harley wished to turn his gaze away, but, somehow, he could not. There was silence in the grounds, save that gentle, sighing sound of the wind through the leaves and grass, and only the moon looked down.

Suddenly the youth bent his head, kissed the girl on the lips, and then ran swiftly through the shrubbery, as if he could not bear to hesitate or look back. [Pg 303]

"It was their first kiss," murmured Harley.

"I did not see it," said Jimmy Grayson, turning his eyes away.

"And their last," murmured Harley.

The girl stood like a statue, still deadly pale, but Harley saw that her eyes were luminous. It was the man whom she loved who had taken her first kiss; nothing could alter that beautiful fact. She listened, as if she could hear his last retreating footstep on the grass dying away like an echo. Harley and the candidate watched her until her slender figure in the white draperies was hid by the house, and then they, too, went back to the street.

Neither spoke until they passed the low stone wall, and then the candidate said, brusquely:

"Harley, unless this moonlight deceives me, there is moisture on your eyelids. What do you mean by such unmanly weakness?"

Harley smiled, but, refraining from the *tu quoque*, left Jimmy Grayson to lead the way, and he noticed that he chose a course that did not take them back to the hotel. Moreover, he did not speak again for a long time, and Harley walked on by his side, silent, too, but thoughtful and keenly observant. He saw that his friend was troubled, and he divined the great struggle that was going on in his mind. Whether he could do it if he were in the place of the candidate he was unable to say, and he was glad that the decision did not lie with himself.

They walked on and on until they left the town and were out upon the broad prairie, where the wind moaned in a louder key, and the candidate's face was still troubled. [Pg 304]

"Harley," said the candidate, at last, "I cannot get rid of the look in that girl's eyes."

"I do not wish to do so," said Harley.

It was nearly midnight when he turned and began to walk back towards the town. The moonlight, breaking through a cloud, again flooded Jimmy Grayson's face, and Harley, who knew him so well, saw that the look of trouble had passed. The lips were compressed and firm, and in his eyes shone the clear light of decision. Harley's feelings, as he saw, were mingled, a strange compound of elation and apprehension. But at the hotel he said, gravely, "Good-night," and the candidate replied with equal seriousness, "Good-night." Neither referred to what they had seen nor to what they expected.

The second speech at Egmont drew an even greater audience than the first, as the fame of Jimmy Grayson's powers spread fast, and there would be, too, the added spice of combat; members of the other party would accept his challenge, replying to his logic if they could, and the hall was crowded early with eager people. Harley, sitting at the back of the stage, saw the Honorable John Anderson come in, importantly, his wife under one arm and his daughter under the other. Helen looked paler than ever, but here under the electric lights her sad loveliness made the same appeal to Harley. Lee arrived late, and although, as one of the speakers, he was forced to sit on the stage, he hid himself behind the others. But a single glance passed between the two, and then the girl sat silent and pale, hoping against hope for her lover.

The candidate spoke well. His voice was as deep and as musical as ever, and his sentences rolled as smoothly as before. All his charm and magnetism of manner were present; the old spell which he threw over everybody—a spell which was from the heart and the manner as well as from the meaning of his words—was not lacking, but to Harley, keenly attentive, there seemed to be a flaw in his logic. The reasoning was not as clear and compact as usual. Only a man with a penetrating, analytical mind would observe it, but there were openings here and there where his armor could be pierced. Blaisdell, one of the correspondents, noticed the fact, and he whispered to Harley: [Pg 305]



"It's a good thing that Jimmy Grayson has no great speaker against him to-night; I never knew him to wander from the point before."

"Where's your great speaker?" asked Harley, with irony.

But the crowded audience was oblivious. It heard only the music of the candidate's voice and felt only the spell of his manner; therefore, it was with a sort of contempt that it looked upon Lee, the young lawyer without a case, who rose to reply. Lee was pale, but there was a fire in his eyes, as if he, too, had noticed something, and Harley, observing, caught his breath sharply.

The correspondent again looked down at the girl, and he saw a deep flush sweep over her face, and then, passing, leave it deadly pale. The next moment she averted her eyes as if she would not see the failure of her lover, not the less dear to her because he was about to go away forever. But though he did not see her face now, Harley, as he looked at the bent head, could read her mind. He knew that she was quivering; he knew that she, too, had been completely under the spell of the candidate's great voice and manner, and she feared the painful contrast.

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Harley glanced once at Jimmy Grayson, sitting quietly, all expression dismissed from his face, and then he looked back at the girl; she should receive all his attention now. Presently he saw her raise her head, the color returned to her face, and a sudden look of wonder and hope appeared in her eyes. Arthur was speaking, not timidly, not like one beaten, but in a strong, clear voice, and with a logic that was keen and merciless he drove straight at the weak points in the candidate's address. Even Harley was surprised at his skill and penetration.

The correspondent watched Helen, and he read every step of her lover's progress in her eyes. The wonder and hope there grew, and the hope turned to delight. She looked up at her father, as if to tell him how much he had misjudged Arthur, and that here, in truth, was the beginning of greatness; and the important man, as he felt her eyes upon him, moved uneasily in his seat.

The feelings of the audience were mingled, but among them amazement led all the rest. The great Jimmy Grayson, the Presidential nominee, the unconquerable, the man of world-wide fame, the victor of every campaign, was being beaten by a young townsman of their own, not known twenty miles from home. Incredible as it seemed, it was true; the fact was patent to the dullest in the hall. Harley saw a look of astonishment and then dismay overspread the faces of Mrs. Grayson and Sylvia, and he knew that of all in the hall they were suffering most acutely.

The keen, cutting voice went on, tearing Jimmy Grayson's argument to pieces, clipping off a section here and a section there, and tossing the fragments aside. By-and-by the amazement of the people gave way to delight. Their home pride was touched. This boy of their own was doing what no other had ever been able to do. They began to thunder forth applause, and the women waved their handkerchiefs. Hobart leaned over and whispered to Harley:

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"Old man, what does this mean? Is Jimmy Grayson sick?"

"He was never better than he is to-night."

Hobart gave him an inquiring look.

"I'll ask more about this later," he said.

But Harley already had turned his attention back to Helen, and as he watched the growing joy on her face his own heart responded. It was relief, elation, that he felt now, and, for the moment, no apprehension. He saw the color yet flushing her cheeks, and the eyes alight with life and joy. He saw her suddenly clasp her father's arm in both hands, and, though he was too far away to hear, he knew well that she was telling him what a great man Arthur was going to be. For her all obstacles were driven away by this sudden flood of fortune, and Harley again saw the important man move uneasily while a look, half fear, half shame, came into his eyes.

The speech was finished, and young Lee, a man now on a pedestal, sat down amid thunders of applause. Jimmy Grayson undertook to respond, but for the first time in his life he was weak and halting. He wandered on lamely, and at last retired amid faint cheers, to be followed quickly by an astonished silence. Then, when the people recovered themselves, they poured in a tumult from the hall; but the hero to whom they turned admiringly was Arthur Lee, their own youthful townsman, and not the candidate.

The next day Hobart told Harley that Lee had won everything. Mr. Anderson, sharing the pride of Egmont, could resist no longer, and had withdrawn his refusal. Arthur and Helen would be married in the winter.

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"You see," said Hobart, "young Lee is now a hero."

"But not the greatest hero," said Harley.

"That is true," said Hobart, and then he added, after a moment's pause, "I could never have done it."

But that night, when Jimmy Grayson left the hall, he went at once to the hotel with Mrs. Grayson. Luckily there was a side-door, out of which they slipped so quietly and quickly that not many people had a chance either to pity him or to exult over him, at least in his presence. Yet he did not fail to notice more than one sneer on the faces of those who belonged to the other party, and his cheeks burned for a moment, as James Grayson, the candidate, had his full store of human

pride.

In the hall the amazed crowd lingered, and the correspondents, not less surprised than the people, gathered in a group to talk it over. Sylvia was there, too, and she was almost in tears. To none had the blow been harder than to her, and she was so stunned that she could yet scarcely credit it. All of the group were sad except Churchill, who felt all the glory of an I-told-you-so come to judgment.

"It was bound to happen, sooner or later," he said, when he noticed that Sylvia was not listening; "the man is all froth and foam, but who could have thought that the bubble would be pricked by an obscure little Western attorney? Was ever anything more ignominious?"

Then the ancient beau, Tremaine, spoke from a soul that was stirred to the depths.

"Churchill," he exclaimed, "I've been travelling about the world forty years, but there are times when I think you are the meanest man I ever met." [Pg 309]

Churchill flushed and clinched his fist, but thought better of it, and turned off the matter with an uneasy laugh.

"Tremaine," he said, "the older you grow the fonder you become of superlatives."

"I admired Jimmy Grayson in his triumphs, and I admire him more than ever in his defeat," said Tremaine, still bristling, and fiercely twisting his short, gray mustache.

"Mr. Tremaine, I want to thank you," said Sylvia, who, turning to them, had heard Tremaine's warm speech; and she put her hand in his for a moment, which was to him ample repayment.

Harley stood by, and was silent because he did not know what to say. To state that Mr. Grayson had allowed himself to be beaten for a purpose would have an incredible look in print—it would seem the poorest of excuses; nor did he wish to make use of it in the presence of Churchill, who would certainly jeer at it and present it in his despatches as a ridiculous plea. He had begun to have a certain sensitiveness in regard to the candidate, and he did not wish to be forced into a quarrel with Churchill.

But Sylvia caught a slight smile, a smile of irony, in the eyes of Harley, and the tears in her own dried up at once. She felt instinctively, with all the quickness of a woman's intuition, that Harley knew something about the speech which she did not know, but she meant to know it, and she watched for an opportunity.

They were turning out the lights in the hall and the people began to go away, the correspondents closing up the rear. Sylvia fell back with Harley, and touched his arm lightly. [Pg 310]

"There is something that you are not telling me," she said.

"I am willing to tell it to you, because you will believe it."

Tremaine, with ever-ready gallantry, was about to join them, but Sylvia said:

"I thank you, Mr. Tremaine, but Mr. Harley has promised to see me to the hotel."

Her tone was light, but so decisive that Tremaine turned back at once, and Hobart, who was ahead, hid a smile.

"Now, I want to know what it is," she said, eagerly, to Harley. "That was a good speaker, an able man, but I don't believe that he or anybody else could beat Uncle James. How did it happen?"

Harley did not answer her at once, because it seemed to him just then that the action of Jimmy Grayson was an illustration, and the idea was hot in his mind.

"Perhaps there is nothing to tell, after all," she said, and her face fell.

"There is something to tell; I hesitated because I was looking for the best way to tell it. Mr. Grayson to-night made a sacrifice of himself, purposely and willingly."

"A sacrifice of himself! How could he have done such a thing?"

"For the best reason that makes a man do such a thing. For love."

She stared at him a moment, and then broke into a puzzled but ironic laugh.

"You are certainly dreaming a romance. Uncle James and Aunt Anna have been happily married for years, and there is nothing now that could force him to make such a sacrifice." [Pg 311]

Harley smiled, and his smile was rarely tender, because he was thinking at that moment of Sylvia.

"The sacrifice was not to help his own cause, but the cause of another, the cause of the man who beat him—that is, seemed to beat him. Mr. Lee, through his victory to-night, wins the girl whom he loves, and he could have won her in no other way. There are people who can do great deeds and make great sacrifices for love, even to help the love of two others. It will be printed in every paper of the United States in the morning that Mr. Grayson was defeated in debate to-night by a young local lawyer. His prestige will be greatly impaired."

Her eyes glowed, and her face, too, became rarely tender.

"Uncle James was truly great to-night!" she exclaimed.

"At his greatest. I know of no other man who could have done it. After all, Sylvia, don't you think love is the greatest and purest of motives, and that we should consider it first?"

"John," she said, and it was the first time that she had ever called him by his first name, "you must not tempt me to break my sacred word to the man to whom I owe all things. Oh, John, don't you see how hard it is for me, and won't you help me to bear it, instead of making the burden heavier?"

She turned upon him a face of such pathetic appeal that Harley was abashed.

"Sylvia," he replied, almost in a whisper, "God knows that I do not wish to make you unhappy, nor do I wish to make you do what is wrong. I spoke so because I could not help it. Do you think that I can love you, and know you to be what you are, and then stand idly by and see you passing to another? I believe in silence and endurance, but not in such silence and endurance as that. It is too much! God never asks it of a man!"

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She looked at him. Her eyes were dewy and tender, filled with love, a love tinged with sorrow, but he saw the brave resolution shining there, and he knew that, despite all, she would keep her word unless "King" Plummer himself willingly released her from it. And he loved her all the more because she was so true.

"Sylvia," he said, "I was wrong. I should not have spoken to you in such a manner. I am a weak coward to make your duty all the harder for you."

They were at the "ladies' entrance" of the hotel, and the others either had gone in or had turned aside. They were alone, and she bent a little towards him.

"The things that you say may be wrong," she whispered, "but—oh, John—I love to hear you say them!"

Then she went into the hotel, and Harley wisely did not seek to follow.

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## XIX

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### AN IDAHO STORM

Among the mountains of Idaho, a dark storm-cloud, ribbed with flashes of steel-edged lightning, was growing. For thirty years "King" Plummer had lived a life after his own mind, and it had been a very free life. In four or five states he was a real monarch, and there was nothing at all derisive about his nickname. At fifty he was at his mental and physical zenith, never before had he felt so strong, both in body and mind, so capable of doing great deeds, and with so keen a zest in life. The blood flowed in a rich, red tide through his veins, and he breathed the breath of morning like a youth.

To this big, strong man, rioting in the very fulness of life, came Mrs. Grayson's letter. He was not in Bois  when it arrived there, but it was forwarded to him at a mining-camp in the very highest mountains. He read it early one morning sitting on a big rock at the edge of a valley that dropped off three thousand feet below, and first there was a shade of annoyance on his face, to be followed by a frown, which gave way in its turn to an angry red flush.

But while the shade of annoyance was still on his face the "King" asked, "What is she driving at?" and then, when it was replaced by the frown, he muttered, "Why does she waste so much time on Harley and a marriage for him?" and then, when the red flush came, he exclaimed, "Damn the Eastern kid!" In the mind of "King" Plummer everybody who did not live west of the Missouri River was Eastern.

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He read the letter over four or five times, and it sank deeper and deeper into his soul, and as it sank it burned like fire. All that he had feared, but which he had refused to believe when he came away, was true. Sylvia did not love him, but she loved that raw youngster Harley. And here was Mrs. Grayson, the wife of a man who was under obligations to him, whom he could ruin, hinting that he give her up, and she a woman whom he had supposed to be endowed with at least ordinary intelligence.

In his wrath, which was mighty, "King" Plummer swore at the whole tribe of women as fickle, heartless creatures. Then he rose to his feet, clinched his fist, shook it at the opposite mountain across the valley, and swore aloud at all creation. And "King" Plummer knew how to swear; he was no mealy-mouthed man; his had been a wild and tumultuous youth, and though he would never use oaths in the presence of Sylvia, he could still, in the seclusion of mountain or desert, let fly an imprecating volley that would burn the rocks themselves. It was apparent to some miners coming up the slope that their chief was no extinct volcano, and they wisely passed in silence on the other side.

For the present there was little grief in the "King's" outpouring; the tide of wrath was too full and sparkling to be tinged yet awhile by other currents, and just now it flowed most against Mrs.

Grayson, who had been bold enough to tell him what he was least willing to hear. His heart, too, was full of unspoken threats, as "King" Plummer was a passionate man who had lived a rough life, close to the ground, and full of primitive emotions. And the threats he expressed in words were such as these: "They shall pay for it!" "I helped put that husband of hers where he is, I helped make him, and I can help unmake him; and, by thunder, I will do it, too!" In the hour of his wrath he hated Jimmy Grayson, and his head was filled with sudden schemes. He would "teach the man what it was to play the King of the Mountains for a sucker," and, still raging, he cast from him all the ties of party and association.

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Within an hour he was on his swiftest horse, riding furiously towards Bois , his heart full of anger and his head full of plans for revenge.

Nor was he sparing in speech when he reached Bois . His words cracked so loud that the echo of them travelled several hundred miles and reached Mrs. Grayson, who was waiting vainly for a reply to a letter that she had written nearly two weeks before. Now, no reply was necessary, because this news was what she had feared, but which she had hoped would not come.

The report was winged and full of alarms. "King" Plummer, shooting out of the mountains like a cannon-ball, had made his appearance in the streets of Bois , openly denouncing Jimmy Grayson, calling him a traitor, and saying that he would beat him if he had to ruin himself to do it. What had caused this sudden change nobody knew, but it must be something astonishing, and it behooved the candidate to explain himself quickly.

The loyal soul of the candidate's wife flashed back an angry reply across the five hundred miles of mountain and desert. If "King" Plummer was not the man she had hoped he was, then they preferred that they should fight him rather than have him as a false friend. Yet there was in her heart a throb of admiration for him, because he was willing to throw everything overboard for the love of a woman.

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The defection clothed the whole train in the deepest gloom. Tremaine spoke for the group when he said it was all up with Jimmy Grayson, and the others did not have the heart even to pretend to a different belief. With a Plummer defection on one side and a Goodnight falling away on the other, there was no hope left for a party which even with these wings faithful had only a desperate fighting chance.

Harley was thoroughly miserable. He could guess—no, he did not guess, he knew the cause of "King" Plummer's bolt, and he knew, too, that if it were not for himself it would never have occurred; he had wrecked all the future of others, nor in making such a wreck had he secured his own happiness, provided even that he was selfish enough to be happy when others were ruined.

Sylvia, too, was sunk in the depths. She did not have to be told that her aunt had written to Mr. Plummer; she guessed that Mr. Plummer had received some warning, some message, it did not matter from whom, nothing else could cause him to burst forth with such violence, and the very nature of the case forbade her from speaking; she could only keep silent, knowing that significant talk was going on all around her, and pass sleepless nights and troubled days.

The situation brought a thrill of satisfaction and interest to one man on the train, and he was Churchill. The cumulative effect of "King" Plummer's bolt might force Jimmy Grayson off the track, and it was not yet too late to put up another candidate. Such a thing had never been done, but that was no reason why it could not succeed, and he telegraphed Mr. Goodnight that Mr. Grayson was very despondent, and that those about him knew he did not have a ghost of a chance.

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Churchill guessed close to the cause of the Plummer bolt, but he was not sure, and for that and other reasons he at once sought an interview with the nominee.

Mr. Grayson was courteous, and seemingly not as despondent as Churchill had described him. He said that he could not speak of Mr. Plummer's defection, because he had no official knowledge of the fact; it was merely report, and hence he could not comment on what was not proved. Mr. Churchill, he knew, would readily recognize the unfitness of such a thing, nor could he tell what he should do in supposititious cases, because, even if the latter came true, circumstances might give them another appearance.

Churchill skirmished as delicately as he could about the subject of Sylvia and the surmise that she was the key to the situation, which, if true, would make one of the greatest stories told in a newspaper; but here the candidate was impervious. Not only was he impervious, but he seemed to be densely ignorant; all the hints of Churchill glided off him like arrows from a steel breast-plate, all the most delicate and skilful art of the interviewer failed. So far as concerned the subject of politics, Sylvia was unknown to Mr. Grayson. Baffled upon this interesting point, Churchill retired to write his interview; but as he rested his pad upon the car-seat and sharpened his pencil he flung out a feeler or two.

"I say, Hobart," he said to the mystery man, who sat just in front of him, "I think there's something at the bottom of this Plummer revolt that we haven't probed. Now, isn't it the truth that Miss Morgan has thrown him over, and that he is taking his revenge on her uncle?"

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Hobart glanced up the car, and noticed that Harley was not within hearing. Then he replied, gravely:

"Churchill, I don't believe that Miss Morgan has broken her engagement with the 'King'—she'll

marry him yet if he says so—but I do believe that she has some connection with this affair. What it is, I don't know, and I'm mighty glad that I don't have to speak of it in my despatches; it's too intangible."

But Churchill was not so scrupulous. Without giving any names, he wove into his four-thousand-word despatch a very beautiful and touching romance, in which Jimmy Grayson figured rather badly—in fact, somewhat as an evil genius—and the *Monitor*, dealing in the fine vein of irony which it considered its strongest card, wrote scornfully of a campaign into which personal issues were obtruding to such an extent that they were shattering it. The *Monitor* still affected to see some good in Mr. Grayson, but put the bad in such high relief that the good merely set it off, like those little patches that ladies wear on their faces. And the mystery of the Plummer bolt, involving a young and beautiful woman, just hinted at in the despatches, heightened the effect of the story. "King" Plummer himself appeared to the reading public as a martyr, and even to many old partisans party rebellion seemed in this case honorable and heroic.

For a day or so Harley scarcely spoke to any one, and, as far as was possible within the limited confines of a train, he avoided Sylvia. He did not wish to see her, because he was strengthening himself to carry out a great resolution which he meant to take. In this crisis he turned to only one person, and that was Mr. Heathcote, who he felt would give him advice that was right and true.

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When Harley told Mr. Heathcote of his purpose, the committeeman's face became grave, but he said, "It is the hard thing for you to do, although it is the best thing." An hour later, Harley sent to his editor in New York a despatch, asking to be recalled; he said there had arisen personal reasons which would make him valueless for the rest of the campaign, and he felt that the *Gazette* would be the gainer if he were transferred to another field of activity.

Harley felt a deep pang, and he did not attempt to disguise it from himself, when he sent this telegram, but after it was gone his conscience came to his relief, although he still avoided the presence of Sylvia with great care. But the pang was repeated many times, as he sat silent among his companions and calculated how he could leave them that night and get a train for New York in the morning.

He was still sitting among them about the twilight hour when the conductor handed him a telegraphic despatch, and Harley knew that it was from his editor, who had a high appreciation of his merits, both personal and professional. The message was brief and pointed. It said: "Can't understand your request for a transfer. Your despatches from the campaign best work you have ever done; not only have all news, but write from the inside; you present the candidate as he is. Have telegraphed Mr. Grayson asking if there is any quarrel, and in reply he makes special request that you represent *Gazette* with him to the end. Stay till you are sent for, and don't bother me again."

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Harley read it over a second time. Despite himself he smiled, and he smiled because he felt a throb of pleasure. "Good old chief," he said, and he understood now that a refusal of his request was a hope that he had dared not utter to himself. But he knew that he should have taken the great risk.

He showed the despatch to Mr. Heathcote, and the committeeman was sincerely glad.

"Your editor has done his duty," he said.

Mr. Grayson did not allude to the subject, and Harley respected his silence, although devoutly grateful for the reply that he had made.

Other telegrams caused by the threatened revolt in the mountains were also passing; some of them stopped at the house of Mr. Plummer, in Bois , and upon the trail of one of these telegrams, a forcible one, came a thin-faced and quiet but alert man, Mr. Henry Crayon, who in his way was a power in both the financial and political worlds. Mr. Crayon was perhaps the most trusted of the lieutenants of the Honorable Clinton Goodnight, and the two had held a long conference before his departure for the West, agreeing at the end of it that "it was time to make a move, and after that move to spring a live issue."

Mr. Crayon was fairly well informed of the causes that agitated the soul of "King" Plummer, and as he shot westward on a Limited Continental Express he considered the best way of approach, inclining as always to delicate but incisive methods. Long before he reached Bois  his mind was well made up, and he felt content because he anticipated no difficulty in handling the crude mountaineer, who was unused to the ways of diplomacy.

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He found the "King" in Bois , still hot and sulky. Mr. Plummer had not heard anything in person from the Graysons, nor had he sent any message to them, and the mountains were full of talk about his bolt, which was now spoken of as an accepted fact.

Mr. Crayon's first meeting with Mr. Plummer came about in quite an accidental and easy way—Mr. Crayon saw to that—and the Easterner was deferential, as became one who had so little experience of the West, who, in case he was presumptuous, was likely to be reminded that Idaho was nearly twenty times as large as Connecticut and twice as large as the state of New York itself. After making himself pleasant by humility and requests for advice, Mr. Crayon glided warily into the subject of politics. He disclosed to Mr. Plummer how much a powerful faction in the party was displeased with Mr. Grayson, and the equally important fact that this faction felt the necessity of speedy action of some kind.

They were at that moment in a secluded corner of the reading-room of the chief hotel in Boisé, and Mr. Crayon had ordered a pleasant and powerful Western concoction which he and Mr. Plummer sipped as they talked. The "King's" face was red, partly with the sun and partly with the anger that still burned him. Mr. Crayon's words fell soothingly upon his ear—Mr. Crayon had a quiet, mellow voice—and his sense of injury at the hands of Jimmy Grayson deepened. What right had Jimmy Grayson or Jimmy Grayson's wife, which was the same thing, to interfere in his private affairs? And it was only a step from one's private life to one's public life. Wrong in one, wrong in the other. Mr. Crayon, watching him keenly though covertly, was pleased with the varying expressions that passed over the unbearded portions of the "King's" face. He read there anger, jealousy, and revenge, and he said to himself that he would bend this man, big and strong as he was, to his will.

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Mr. Crayon now grew bolder. He said that the minority within the party, which, for the present, he represented, was resolved to come to an issue with Mr. Grayson; the destinies of a great party, and possibly the country, could not be put in the hands of a man who had neither the proper dignity nor the proper sense of responsibility. Thus far he went, and then the wily Mr. Crayon stopped to notice the effect.

It seemed to him to be favorable, and Mr. Crayon was an acute man. The "King" drank a little of his liquor and nodded his head. Yes, he had been fooled in Jimmy Grayson, he had thought that he was as true as steel, but there was a flaw in the steel; Jimmy Grayson had done him a great injury, and he was not a man who turned one cheek when the other was smitten; he smote back with all his might, and his own hand was pretty heavy.

Mr. Crayon smiled—all things were certainly going well; he had caught Mr. Plummer at the right moment, and there was no doubt of the impression that he was making. Then he went a little further; he suggested that a certain important issue not hitherto discussed in the campaign was going to be brought up, even now they were proposing to present it in the West, and Mr. Grayson would have to declare himself either for or against it—there was no middle ground. Mr. Crayon again stopped and observed the "King" with the same covert but careful glance. The face of Mr. Plummer obviously bore the stamp of approval; moreover, he nodded, and, thus encouraged, Mr. Crayon went further and further, telling why the issue was so great, and why it must be presented to the public without delay.

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Mr. Plummer asked him to name the issue, and when Mr. Crayon did so, without reserve, the "King's" face once more bore the stamp of approval, and he nodded his head again.

"If Mr. Grayson accepts the law as we lay it down," said Mr. Crayon, with satisfaction, "he places himself in our hands and we control him. Our policies prevail, and, if he becomes President of the United States, we remain the power that rules him, and that, therefore, rules the country. If he resists us, well, that is the end of him!"

Mr. Crayon had lighted a cigar, and as he said "that is the end of him" he flicked off the ash with a quick gesture that had in it the touch of finality.

Mr. Plummer said nothing, and Mr. Crayon was content; he could do enough talking for two.

"Mr. Goodnight and other of my associates are coming West very soon," he continued. "The velvet glove will be taken off, and it is high time."

Then they went forth into the streets of Boisé and they were seen walking together by many people, to which Mr. Crayon was not averse, and in an hour three or four local correspondents were sending eastward vivid despatches stating that Mr. Crayon, the representative of the conservative and dissatisfied minority in the party, was in Boisé in close conference with "King" Plummer, the political ruler of the mountains. And the burden of all these despatches was fast-coming evil for Jimmy Grayson.

Nor was the candidate long in hearing of it. The very next day a Boisé newspaper containing a full first-page account of it reached them, and was read aloud to the party by Mr. Heathcote. Mr. Grayson made no comment as it was being read, but Harley once saw his face darken and his lips close tightly together; this was the only sign that he gave, and it quickly passed.

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But the others were not so chary of words. The train was full of indignant comment, and the ears of "King" Plummer in the distance must have burned.

"I could not have believed it of him," said Mr. Heathcote. "It is untrue to the man's whole nature, even if he is swayed suddenly by some powerful emotion."

Hobart glanced at Sylvia, who had withdrawn to the far end of the car, where she was apparently gazing at the mountains that fled by, although she said not one word and her face was red. Nor did Harley join in the talk, but, taking advantage of the slight bustle caused by Mr. Grayson's retirement to the drawing-room, he took refuge in a day car to which their own coach was attached for the time. That evening, while the others were at dinner, he saw Sylvia alone.

"I ought to tell you," she said, "that I have asked to leave the train, but my aunt has refused to consent to it. She says she needs me, and as I cannot go now to my old home in Boisé, it is better for me to stay with her. I have heard that you asked to be recalled to the East, and I honor you for it."

"Are you sorry that my request was refused?" asked Harley.

She did not falter, although the red in her cheeks flushed deeper.

"No, I am not sorry; I am glad," she replied. "Why should I tell an untruth about what is so great a matter to both of us? But it cannot change anything." [Pg 325]

Harley felt that this was, indeed, a maid well worth winning, and his hope yet to find a way, which had been weakened somewhat lately, grew high again. That night wild resolves ran through his mind. He would sacrifice his pride, hitherto an unthinkable thing—he would see "King" Plummer and tell him that Sylvia and he loved each other, that neither of them could possibly be happy unless they were wedded, then he would appeal to the older man's generosity; he would tell him how Sylvia loyally meant to keep her word and pay her debt of gratitude with herself, then he would ask him to release her from the promise. But he gave up the idea as one that required too much; he could never humiliate himself so far, and even then it would be a humiliation without result.

If Harley had undertaken to carry out such a wild idea, he would have found it difficult, because no one in the party then knew where "King" Plummer was; they were hearing of him all over the West, and the Denver, Salt Lake, and smaller newspapers were filled with accounts of his doings, all colored highly. His bolt, they said, was now an accomplished fact; he showed the deepest hostility to the candidate, and he was also in constant correspondence with a powerful and dissatisfied wing in the East.

Mr. Grayson never said a word, he never spoke of Mr. Plummer in any of his speeches, and Harley believed there was only sadness in his mind, not anger, whenever he thought of the "King."

But there could be no doubt of the effect of all these events upon the campaign; to the public Jimmy Grayson seemed as one lost in the wilderness, and only in the mountains, where the people were far from the great centres of information, did they yet cherish a hope of his election. Churchill wrote to the *Monitor* that Jimmy Grayson himself had abandoned hope. [Pg 326]

Ominous rumblings were coming from the East, too. Goodnight, Crayon, and their friends had found a pretext upon which to take drastic action, and they were about to take it.

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## XX

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### THE GREAT PHILIPSBURG CONFERENCE

If ever you go to Philipsburg, which is in Wyoming, not far from the Montana line, you will hear the people proclaim the greatness of the town in which they live. You expect this sort of thing in the Far West, and you are prepared for it, but you will be surprised at the nature of the Philipsburg boast. Its proud inhabitants will not tell you that it is bound to be the largest city between the Missouri and the coast, they will not assert that since the horizon touches the earth at an equal distance on all sides of the town, it is, therefore, the natural centre of the world; but they will tell you stories of the Great Philipsburg Conference, and some of them will not be far from the truth.

Philipsburg is but a hamlet, fed by an irrigation ditch that leads the life-giving waters down from a distant mountain, and it has neither the beauty of nature nor that given by the hand of man, but the people will point importantly to the square wooden hotel of only two stories, and tell you that there occurred the great crisis in the most famous and picturesque Presidential campaign ever waged in the United States; they will even lead you to the very room in which the big talk occurred, and say, in lowered voices, that the furniture is exactly the same, and arranged just as it was on that momentous night when the history of the world might have been changed. In this room the people of Philipsburg have a reverential air, and there is cause for it. [Pg 328]

The affair did not begin at Philipsburg—it merely had its climax there—but far away on the dusty plains of eastern Washington, where the wheat grows so tall, and it bubbled and seethed as the candidate and his party travelled eastward, stopping and speaking many times by the way. It was all about the tariff, a dry subject in itself, but, as tall oaks from little acorns grow, so a dry subject often can make interesting people do interesting things.

At the convention that nominated Mr. Grayson for the Presidency the subject of the tariff had been left somewhat vague in the platform, not from deliberate purpose, but merely through the drift of events; the question had not interested the people greatly in some time; other things connected with both the foreign and internal policy of the government, particularly the continued occupation of the Philippines and a projected new banking system, were more to the fore; but as the campaign proceeded certain events caused the tariff also to be brought into issue and to receive a large share of public attention.

Now, a clever man—above all, one as clever as Jimmy Grayson—could avoid giving a decided opinion upon this subject. It is party creed for a candidate to stand upon his platform, and, as the platform contained no tariff plank, he was not obliged to take any stand upon the tariff. Such a course would seem good politics, too, but Harley knew that Mr. Grayson favored a reduction of the tariff and a liberal measure of reciprocity with neighboring states, and he dreaded the time [Pg 329]

when the candidate should declare himself upon the subject; he did not see how he could do it without losing many votes, because there was a serious difference of view inside his own party. And Harley's dread grew out of his intense desire to see Mr. Grayson elected. His hero was not perfect—no man was; there were some important truths which he did not yet know, but he was honest, able, and true, and he came nearer to being the ideal candidate than any other man whom he had ever seen. Above all, he represented the principles which Harley, from the bottom of his soul, wished to triumph.

The fight had been begun against great odds, against powerful interests consolidated in a battle-line that at first seemed impervious, but by tremendous efforts they had made progress; the vast energy and the winning personality of Mr. Grayson were a strong weapon, and Harley was gradually sensible that the people were rallying around him in increasing numbers, and by people he did not merely mean the masses of the lowest, those who never raise themselves; Harley was never such a demagogue as to think that a man was bad because he had achieved something in the world and had prospered; he had too honest and clear a mind to put a premium upon incapacity and idleness.

Lately he had begun to have hope—a feeling that Mr. Grayson might be elected despite the "King" Plummer defection was growing upon him, if they could only abide by the issues already formed. But at the best it would be a fight to the finish, with the chances in favor of the other man. Yet his heart was infused with hope until this hateful tariff question began to raise its head. Harley knew that a declaration upon it would split the party, or at least would cut from it a fragment big enough to cause defeat. He devoutly hoped that they would steer clear of this dangerous rock, but he was not so sure of Jimmy Grayson, who, after all, was his own pilot. And his amiability did not alter the fact that he had a strong hand. [Pg 330]

Harley at first heard the mutterings of the thunder only from afar; it was being debated in the East among the great manufacturing cities, but as yet the West was untouched by the storm. Mr. Heathcote, the Eastern committeeman, called his attention to it after they had passed the mountain-range that divides western Washington from eastern Washington.

Harley was looking out of the window at the rippling brown plain, which he was told was one of the best wheat countries in the world. "At first," said his informant, a pioneer, "we thought it was a desert, and we thought so, too, for a long time afterwards; it looked like loose sand, and the wind actually blew the soil about as if it were dust. Now, and without irrigation, it produces its thirty bushels of wheat per acre season after season."

Harley was thinking of this brilliant transformation, when the committeeman, who was sitting just behind him, suddenly changed the channel of his thoughts.

"I have here a Walla Walla paper that will interest you, Mr. Harley," he said. "In fact, it is likely to interest us all. The despatch is somewhat meagre, but it will suffice."

He put his finger on the top head-line of the first page, and Harley read: "The Tariff an Issue." He took the paper and read the article carefully. The debate had occurred before an immense audience in Madison Square Garden, in New York City, and according to the despatch it had excited the greatest interest, a statement that Harley could easily believe. [Pg 331]

"I was hoping that we would be spared this," he said, as he laid the paper down and his face became grave. "Why do they bring it up? It's not in the platform and it should not be made an issue, at least not now."

"But it is an issue, after all," replied Mr. Heathcote, "and I am surprised that the enemy did not raise the question sooner. They must have had some very bad management. They are united on this question, and we are not. If we are forced to come into line of battle on it, then we are divided and they are not; don't you see their advantage?"

"Yes, it is manifest," replied Harley, gloomily. Then, after a little thought, he began to brighten.

"It is not necessary for Jimmy Grayson to declare himself."

"He will, if he is asked to do so."

"But we are away out here in the Western mountains, out of immediate touch with the great centres of population. These thinly settled states are doubtful, those more populous are not. Here they are not interested in the tariff either one way or the other; the subject has scarcely been mentioned on our Western tour; why can we not still keep it in the dark?"

"But, I tell you, if the issue is presented to Jimmy Grayson, he is sure to speak his mind about it."

"It is for us to see that it is not presented. I don't think it will be done by any of the local population, and we must exercise a censorship over the press. We must try to keep from him all newspapers containing accounts of the tariff debates; we must not let him know that the issue is before the public off there in the East. There is only a month more of the campaign, and, while it is not likely that we can suppress the matter entirely, we may keep it down until it is too late to do much harm." [Pg 332]

"The plan isn't a bad one," said Mr. Heathcote; "but we've got to take everybody into the plot. Mr. Grayson alone is to be left in ignorance."

"They are all his devoted personal friends except Churchill, of the *Monitor*, and I can bully him



into silence."

Harley's face flushed slightly as he made this assertion with emphasis. Mr. Heathcote, who was learning much these days, smiled as he observed him.

"Mr. Harley," he said, "no one could doubt the reality of your wishes for Mr. Grayson's success."

All went willingly into the little conspiracy against the extension of Mr. Grayson's knowledge, even Churchill, under the whip and spur of Harley's will, promising a sullen silence. The case itself presented aspects that stirred these men, calling as it did for an alertness of mind and delicacy of handling that appealed to their sense of responsibility; hence it aroused their interest, which in turn begat a desire to succeed.

But Harley, as well as Mr. Heathcote and the others, knew very well that it was not the enemy alone who had raised this new and, as they all feared, fatal issue; even if they had not read it in the despatches, the hand of the minority within their own party was too clearly visible. In the newspapers that reached them constant allusions were made to Mr. Goodnight, Mr. Crayon, and their associates, who were deeply interested in the maintenance of the tariff, and who, it was said, would force Mr. Grayson to pledge himself to its support; this, it was predicted, they could easily do, as it was obvious that he could not win without the help of this minority.

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Harley knew that the Goodnight faction now intended to force the issue—that is, either to subject Mr. Grayson or to ruin him, and he saw that the affair would require the most delicate handling; only that and the best of fortune could postpone the issue long enough.

They took Sylvia into their confidence, both by necessity and choice, but they were rather surprised to find that in this case she did not believe in diplomacy.

"If I were Uncle James," she said, with indignant anger, "I would tell them to go to—well, well, where a man would tell them to go to, and I would not be polite about it, either."

Harley laughed at her heat, although he liked it, too.

"And then you'd lose the election," he said.

"I'd lose it, if I must, but at least I'd save my independence and self-respect in doing so. Is Uncle James the nominee, or is he not? If he is the nominee, shouldn't he say what he ought to do?"

"Perhaps, but it isn't politics; even if he were elected he wouldn't be absolutely free; no ruler ever was, whether president or king."

But she clung to her opinion.

It was no easy matter to hide the tariff issue from Jimmy Grayson, who was exceedingly watchful of all things about him, despite his great labors in the campaign; yet his associates were aided to some extent by the rather meagre character of the newspapers which now reached them, newspapers published in small towns, and therefore unable to pay for long despatches from the East. But even these were censored with the most jealous care; if they contained anything about the hot tariff discussion off there in the Atlantic States, they disappeared before they could reach the candidate. All the news was inspected with the most rigid care, just as if the real feeling of his subjects was being hidden from a kaiser or a czar.

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But Harley and his friends soon found that they had laid upon themselves a great and onerous task, and to Harley, at least, it was all the heavier because he found, at last, that his heart was not wholly in it. Despite all their caution, references to the tariff debate would dribble in; Jimmy Grayson began to grow suspicious; he would ask about the work of the campaign orators in the East, and he seemed surprised that his friends, above all the correspondents, should have so little news on the subject.

"I should like to see some of the New York or Chicago newspapers, even if they are ten days old," he said. "It seems odd that we have not had any for a week now."

"The metropolitan press scarcely reaches these isolated regions," said Harley.

"We have been in isolated regions before, and we had the New York and Chicago newspapers every day."

Harley did not answer, and presently contrived some excuse for leaving Jimmy Grayson, being much troubled in mind, not alone because the candidate was growing suspicious, but because of a rising belief that he ought to know, that the truth should not be hidden from him. If the tariff was to be an issue, then the candidate should declare himself, cost what it might. Yet Harley, for the present, followed the course that he had set. But he shivered a little when he looked at the New York and Chicago newspapers that were smuggled about the train; the tariff question was swelling in importance, and the head-lines over the debates were growing bigger.

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A stray copy of the *Monitor* reached them, and it was big with prophecy: "At last the gauntlet has been thrown down by the wise, the conservative, and the high moral element of the party." It said, editorially: "Our impulsive young man will learn that there are older and soberer heads, and he must bow his own to them. The *Monitor* has long foreseen this necessary crisis, although the blind multitude would not believe us, and we are both glad and proud to say that we have had our modest little share in forcing it."

The candidate sent for Harley the next noon, and when the correspondent entered the state-room set aside for his use, he saw that Mr. Grayson's face was grave. He held a yellow sheet of paper, evidently a telegraph form, in his right hand, and was tapping it lightly with the forefinger of his left hand.

"Harley," he said, smiling the frank smile that made him so many friends; "I've got in the habit of looking upon you as a friend and sort of confidential adviser."

"It makes me happy to hear you say so," said Harley, who was gratified.

Jimmy Grayson looked at the telegram, and his face became grave. Then he handed it to Harley, saying, "I have here something that I do not altogether understand. Read it."

It was from New York, and it said:

"Your silence on tariff issue admirable. Keep it up. Don't let enemy force you into action."

It was signed with the name of a New York politician well-known as a trimmer.

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Mr. Grayson looked Harley squarely in the eye, and the correspondent's face fell.

"Now what does it mean?"

Harley was silent.

"What does it mean?" continued Mr. Grayson, in a perplexed tone. "The tariff has not been a real issue in this campaign. Now why does he congratulate me on my silence?"

Harley did not speak and Jimmy Grayson's face grew grave.

"I am sorry that we have not been able to keep fully informed about the campaign in the East," he said. "I am bound to assume from this that the tariff issue has been raised there, and if a fight is to be made upon it I, as the head of the ticket, must do my share."

Then Harley confessed, and in doing so relieved his conscience, in which he was wise, both from the moral and prudential points of view, because the truth about the situation could not be hidden any longer from the acute mind of Jimmy Grayson. He concealed nothing, he showed that he was the leader of the conspiracy, and he described their devious attempts, with their relative success and failure.

"Harley," said the candidate, when the tale was told, "I am more than ever convinced that you are my sincere friend. You would not have done this if you were not. It was a mistake, but you certainly meant well."

"I did it because I thought I could help."

"I know it, but I repeat that it was a mistake. Such an important matter could not be kept permanently in the background. It was bound to come forward, and with all the greater force because it had been restrained so long. I don't think any harm has been done, but I'll have to take the management of it into my own hands now."

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He smiled again with such frankness and sincerity that Harley's feelings were not hurt by his words, but he quickly realized the truth of his assertion about the increased force of the disclosure because it had been kept back so long. Now the avalanche struck them. When Harley left the state-room, Churchill came to him.

"Harley," he said, "the *Monitor* has telegraphed me to get a thousand words from Mr. Grayson, if I can, on the tariff issue. My first duty is to my paper, and I am bound to obey these instructions."

"It's all right, he knows now; go right in to see him; but I am sure he won't talk to you about it; he isn't ready yet."

Three or four more correspondents received instructions of the same character, and in addition there was a rain of telegrams for Jimmy Grayson himself and for his party associates. It seemed that the issue had suddenly culminated in the East, and the candidate would be bound to speak. But the telegrams to Mr. Grayson were of a varying nature; many of them were opposed to revision, and they were usually signed by men of wealth and power, those who furnished the sinews of war, as necessary in a political campaign—and entirely within the confines of honesty, too—as the cannon and the rifles are on the field of battle. Others took another view, and it was apparent to everybody that great trouble in the party was at hand.

Gloom settled over the train. They were ready at all times to fight the enemy, but how to handle defection among their own men was a puzzling thing, and there was cause for despair. Sylvia, however, was glad that Mr. Grayson knew. She said that he would do right, whatever it might be.

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"I've been in to see Mr. Grayson," said Mr. Heathcote to Harley, "and I suggested that he might continue his silence on the great question. You see, he is not bound to speak. If he doesn't want to, nobody can make him."

"No, nobody can make him speak, nor can anybody keep him from it if he wishes to do so."

While they talked the train was slowing down for a stop at a tiny village of a dozen houses, and when there a long telegram was brought to Mr. Heathcote. He read it with absorbed attention,

and when he looked up at Harley his face showed relief.

"This is good! This is good!" he said. "The telegram is dated Chicago, and it tells me that a big committee of New York, Philadelphia, and Boston men is coming on to see Mr. Grayson. They are good members of our own party, all in favor of letting the tariff alone, and I think they can bring such pressure to bear that they will save us."

Harley himself felt relief. The committee might achieve something, and, at any rate, the responsibility would rest upon more heads.

"When can we expect these men?" he asked.

"In two days; they are already well on their way."

"Being an Eastern man yourself, it will fall to your lot to be the intermediary."

"I suppose so," said Mr. Heathcote, and he sighed a little.

True to Mr. Heathcote's prediction, the committee overtook them two days later at a way-station, and Harley saw at once that strenuous days were ahead, because the committee had a full sense of its own largeness and importance, a fact evident even to those less acute than Harley; and it was led by Mr. Goodnight and Mr. Crayon themselves. It was composed of eight men, all middle-aged or more, and every one was set in a way of thinking peculiar to the business in which he had spent many years and in which he had made much money.

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All glittered with the gloss of prosperity. When they left the train they put on polished silk-hats, brought forth by ready servants, and when they walked through the streets of the little villages they were resplendent in long, black frock-coats and light trousers. They were not, as Mr. Heathcote had been in his primordial condition, young and merely mistaken, but they had passed the time of life when there was anything to be learned; in fact, they were quite well aware that they knew everything, particularly those subjects pertaining to the growth and prosperity of the country.

The leader of the committee was Mr. Clinton Goodnight, who, as has been told, was a manufacturer of immense wealth and also a member of the Lower House of Congress, thus combining in himself the loftiest attributes of law-making and money-making. He was helped, too, by a manner of great solemnity and a slow, deep voice that placed emphasis upon every alternate word, thus adding impressiveness to everything he said. He was assiduously seconded by Mr. Henry Crayon, thin-faced and alert as ever, speaking in short, snappy sentences, from which all useless adjectives were elided. Mr. Crayon was self-made, and was willing that it should be known. He, too, had fathomed the depths of knowledge.

They were introduced to Mr. Grayson by Mr. Heathcote, who, with useful experience of his own not far behind him, was able to show much tact.

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"I am glad to meet you again, Mr. Grayson," said Mr. Goodnight, in a large, rotund manner. "I am sorry I did not see more of you when we were together in the House. But you were very young then, you know. Who'd have thought that you would be so conspicuous now? I dare say you did not expect to see us here. We business-men are usually so much engrossed with affairs that we do not have time for politics, but there come occasions when our help, especially our advice, is needed, and this is one of them."

Harley saw a faint smile pass over the face of the candidate, but Jimmy Grayson was a man of infinite tact, which, instead of being allied to greatness, is a part of greatness itself, and he took no notice of anything in Mr. Goodnight's words or manner. On the contrary, he welcomed him and his associate with real warmth; he was glad to see the great business interests of the country represented in person in the campaign; it ought always to be so; if the solid men took more part in the elections it would be better for all.

Every member of the committee smiled a satisfied smile and admitted that Mr. Grayson's remarks were true. This was progress, as Harley could see. The committee may have come with advice and reprobation in its soul, but clearly it was placated, for the present.

"We give proof of devotion to cause," said Mr. Crayon, in his sharp, snappy way. "Have come all the way from great financial centres to these lonely plains. Heavy sacrifice of time. Hope it will be duly appreciated."

"You can rest easy on that point," said Jimmy Grayson, as the faint smile again passed over his face. "Your intentions will be taken at their full value."

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"We wish to have a long and thorough talk with you a little later on," said Mr. Goodnight. "The subject is one of the greatest importance, and the age and experience of the members of this committee fit us to deal with it."

"Undoubtedly," said Jimmy Grayson, and Harley thought that his voice was a little dryer than usual.

Fortunately the members of the committee had their own special car, equipped with many luxuries, and it was attached to Jimmy Grayson's train. Hence there was no crowding and no displacing of the old travellers, but it was clear that there were now two parties following the candidate, since the old and the new did not coalesce. The members of the committee showed at

once that they knew themselves to be the mainstay of the country, while the others were merely frivolous and unstable politicians.

Sylvia, of course, was eager to know what they had said and how they bore themselves, and Harley was anxious to gratify her.

"They said they were very great men, and they bore themselves accordingly."

"Uncle James is a greater man than all of them put together."

"I foresee trouble," said Hobart, joyfully, to Harley a little later. "I can feel it in the air around me, I breathe it, I can even see it."

"Hobart," said Harley, pityingly, "you only obey your instincts."

"Wherein I am a wise man," replied Hobart, with satisfaction. "I am out here to get news, and the livelier the news the better. Now I think that these gentlemen will soon furnish us something worth writing about."

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"I am afraid so," said Harley, despondently.

The committee was in no haste to speak. Its members dined luxuriously in their private car, and invited to join them those whom they thought worthy of the honor—only a very few besides the ladies. Among these was Harley; but it was Jimmy Grayson who took him.

The conversation was exclusively commercial and financial. Mr. Goodnight, Mr. Crayon, and their associates were well aware that the whole science of government pertained to the development of trade, and it was the business of a people, as well as of a man, to stick to the main point. It was for this reason, too, that Mr. Crayon incidentally let it be understood that he did not value a college education. He had several university graduates working for him on small salaries, while he had never been inside the walls of a university, and that was the beginning and end of the matter; there could be no further discussion.

"I understand you are connected with the press," he said to Harley, who sat in the next chair. "I should think there was not much in that; but still, with careful, diligent man, it might serve as opening into financial circles. You must come in contact with men of importance. I know a man, originally a writer for press, who has risen to be a bank cashier. Worthy fellow."

"I am sure that he must be," said Harley, and Mr. Crayon's opinion of him rose.

The atmosphere of which Hobart spoke with such emphasis did not permeate the special car. There was no sign of trouble around the bountiful dining-table. The committee had its own way and did all the talking, leaving Mr. Grayson, Mr. Heathcote, and the others in silence. Hence there was no chance of a disagreement, and, as Harley judged, Mr. Goodnight and Mr. Crayon were assured that this pleasant state of affairs would continue.

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Mr. Crayon, who was pleased with his neighbor, again gave Mr. Harley enlightenment. He asked him about the country through which they were passing, and was kind enough to consider his information of some weight. But he permitted Harley to furnish only the premises; it was reserved for himself to draw the conclusions; he predicted with absolute certainty the future of this region and the amount of revenue it would yield through its threefold interests—agricultural, pastoral, and mineral. He added that only the trained mind could make these accurate estimates.

"Well, what happened?" asked Hobart, when Harley returned to his own car.

"Nothing."

"Nothing? Maybe so, but it won't remain nothing long. You just wait and see."

Sylvia, to whom these men were, of course, polite, summed them up very accurately in a remark that she made to Harley.

"It is impossible to teach them anything," she said, "because they know everything already."

An hour later the candidate spoke at a small station to a large audience composed of people typical of the region—miners, farmers, and cowboys, variously attired, but all quiet and peaceful. There was not a sign of disorder, there was nothing even remotely resembling the toughs of the great Eastern cities. This seemed to be a surprise to the members of the committee, who sat in a formidable semicircle on the stage behind the candidate. But as the surprise wore away a touch of disdain appeared in their manner; they seemed to doubt whether the region and its people were of any importance.

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To Harley the speech of the morning was of particular interest, and he watched Jimmy Grayson with the closest attention. He wanted to see whether he would venture upon the treacherous ocean of the tariff, and he had been unable to draw from his manner any idea of his intention. But Jimmy Grayson did not launch his bark upon those stormy waters. He handled many issues, and never did he allow any one in the audience to doubt his meaning; it was a plain yea or nay, and he drew applause from the audience or a disapproving silence, according to its feelings.

But the committee was satisfied, the faces of the members shone with pleasure, and Harley, reading their minds, saw how they told themselves of the quick effect their presence had upon Jimmy Grayson. It was well for men of weight to surround a Presidential candidate; despite

himself, with strong, grave faces beside him he would put a prudent restraint upon his words. The long trip from the East and the temporary sacrifice of important interests was proving to be worth the price. When the speech was over, they congratulated him upon his caution and wisdom.

But that afternoon they were caught under a deluge of Eastern newspapers, and in them all the tariff discussion loomed formidably. There was every indication, too, that this big storm-cloud was moving westward; already it was hovering over the Missouri River Valley, because the newspapers of Kansas City and Omaha, like those of Chicago and New York, fairly darkened with it.

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And the telegrams, too, continued to fall on Jimmy Grayson thick and fast. They came in yellow showers; all the correspondents received orders to get long interviews with him upon the subject, if possible, and the leaders in every part of the country were telegraphing to do this and to do that, or not to do either. It was evident that a great population wanted to know just how Jimmy Grayson stood on the tariff.

The members of the committee took alarm; Harley saw them bustling in uneasily to Jimmy Grayson, and whispering to him much and often.

"It's begun! It's begun! The war is on!" said Hobart, gleefully. "I hear the dropping bullets of the skirmishers!"

"Hobart, you'd exult over an earthquake!" exclaimed Harley, wrathfully.

But he knew Hobart's words to be true, and presently he drifted back to Jimmy Grayson.

"Mr. Harley is my intimate personal friend," said the candidate to some of the members of the committee who looked askance at the correspondent; "and what you say before me you can say before him. He knows what to print and what not to print."

"It is this," said Mr. Goodnight, and Mr. Crayon nodded violently in affirmation; "all the news shows that this tariff agitation is growing fast. But it is only a trick of the enemy to force an expression from us. They are united in favor of the tariff and we are not. There is a division within our ranks. Many of us, and I may say it is the more solid and conservative wing of the party, the men who really understand the world, know that it is not wise to meddle with the question. Leave well enough alone. We are interested in this ourselves, and, as you know, we furnish the sinews of war."

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He stopped and coughed significantly, and Mr. Crayon also coughed significantly. The remaining members of the committee did likewise. Jimmy Grayson looked thoughtful.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I confess to you that my mind has been upon this subject for several days past."

"But you will listen to advice," said Mr. Goodnight, hastily.

"Certainly! Certainly!" said Jimmy Grayson. "But you see the time is coming when I must decide upon some course in regard to it. I appreciate the self-sacrifice of you gentlemen in leaving your business interests to come so far, and I shall be glad if we can co-operate. We reach Philipsburg to-night; I make a speech there, but it will be over early. Suppose we have our talk immediately afterwards."

The committee at once accepted the offer and expressed satisfaction. Mr. Grayson showed every sign of tractability, and they began to feel again that their valuable time had not been expended in vain.

Harley told Sylvia that the affair was now bound to come to a head very soon, but she repeated her confidence in her uncle.

Hobart, however, was gloomy; his joy of the morning seemed to have passed quickly.

"I don't like it," he remarked to Harley. "Jimmy Grayson seems to have followed the lead of these men without once saying: 'I am the nominee and it is for me to say.'"

"And why not? Every dictate of prudence requires that he should. What is the use of taking up such a troublesome question at this late day of the campaign?"

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"But there will be no fight!" This was said very plaintively.

Harley smiled.

"I sincerely hope we will escape one," he said.

Mr. Grayson, after the brief talk, retired to his state-room, and for a long time did not see anybody. Harley knew that he was thinking deeply, and when the time came for the next speech at another way-station, he followed close behind and was keenly watchful.

Again the members of the committee arranged themselves on the stage in a formidable semicircle behind the speaker, and surveyed the audience with an air that bore a tinge of weary disdain. They were in one of the most barren parts of the country, a section that could never be developed into anything great, and Mr. Crayon looked upon a speech there as a sheer waste of time.

The candidate spoke upon many important issues, and then he began to skirmish gingerly around the edge of one that hitherto had been permitted to slumber quietly. He did not show any wish to make a direct attack, just a desire to worry and tease, as it were, a disposition to fire a few shots, more for the sake of creating an alarm than to do damage.

The committee at once felt apprehension. This was forbidden ground. The candidate was growing entirely too frivolous; he should be reminded of his duty to the country and to great business interests. Yet they could do nothing at the moment; Mr. Grayson was speaking, and it was impossible to interrupt him.

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But Harley, attentive and knowing everything that passed in their minds, enjoyed their uneasiness. He saw them quiver and shrink, and then grow angry, as Mr. Grayson skirmished closer and closer to the forbidden ground, that area sown with traps and pitfalls, in which many a man has broken his political limbs, yea, has even lost his political life. He watched the massive Mr. Goodnight as he swelled with importance and indignation. He knew that the great manufacturer was on pins to get at the candidate, to tell him the terrible mistake that he was so near to making, and perhaps to lecture him a little on the indiscretions of youth and inexperience. But, perforce, he remained silent until Mr. Grayson concluded, and then as the crowd was leaving, he approached him. The candidate seemed to be in a light and joyous humor, and he lifted his hand in a gesture that was a dismissal of care.

"Remember our coming conference to-night, Mr. Goodnight," he said. "We will discuss everything then."

He smiled as he spoke, and walked on, but Mr. Goodnight felt himself waved aside in a manner that was not pleasing to his sense of dignity; he was sixty years old, and he had done great things in the world.

Harley and Hobart saw it all, and light began to appear on Hobart's gloomy countenance.

"Harley," he said, "I believe that after all my first intuition was correct. We may yet have trouble."

Harley was not so sure. It seemed to him that the affair, which was really not an affair, merely the bud and promise of one, could be adjusted, especially in these shortening days of the campaign. Tact would do it, and he was full of hope.

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The members of the committee went into their private car and were inhospitable the remainder of the day; apparently they wished to be alone, and no one was inclined to violate their wish. Harley supposed that they were in conference, and he was correct.

They arrived at Philipsburg in a gorgeous twilight that wrapped the Western mountains in red and gold, but Harley scarcely noticed either the town or the colors over it. He was full of anxiety, as he began to share Hobart's view that something was going to happen, although he did not take the same cheerful view of trouble.

The speech at Philipsburg was not long. Again Jimmy Grayson skirmished around the dangerous question, but, as before, he did not make any direct attack upon it. Just when the committee became most alarmed, he withdrew his forces, and the speech once more closed with the decisive things unsaid.

But as soon as the crowd dispersed, the Great Philipsburg Conference began. The large parlor of the hotel had been obtained, and when Jimmy Grayson started, he put his hand on Harley's shoulder, saying:

"Harley, the press is excluded from this conference, which is secret, but I take you with me in your capacity as a private citizen. I have made it a requisite with the committee, because you are a friend and I may need your help."

Harley gave him a glance of gratitude and appreciation, and the two together entered the designated room. It was a large, cheerful apartment, with a wood-fire burning on the broad hearth. The members of the committee were already there, and Mr. Goodnight stood importantly, back to the fire, with a hand in either pocket, and a coat-tail under either arm. Mr. Crayon leaned against the wall and gently stroked his arm.

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They exchanged the usual commonplaces about the weather and the campaign, and, as they spoke, most of the committee looked darkly at Harley, but they said nothing. It was quite evident that his presence was a matter arranged definitely by Mr. Grayson, and it was politic for them to endorse it.

Mr. Grayson settled himself easily into an armchair, and looked around as if to say he was ready to listen. Harley stood by a window, careless in manner, seemingly, but never more watchful in his life, and on fire with curiosity.

Mr. Goodnight glanced at Mr. Crayon, and Mr. Crayon glanced at Mr. Goodnight. There came at once to Harley an amusing thought about putting the bell on the tiger. But perhaps these men regarded themselves as tigers.

Mr. Goodnight gave a premonitory cough, and taking his hands out of his pockets let his coat-tails drop. This also was a signal.

"Mr. Grayson," he said, "we have admired your campaign—have admired it greatly; we have

appreciated the skill with which you have kept away from dangerous subjects, and we have been sure that it would continue to the end, but I must confess that this confidence of ours was shaken a little to-day—I trust that I am not hurting your feelings."

"Oh no, not at all. I also have a statement to make," said Jimmy Grayson, ingenuously. "But I shall be glad to hear yours first."

The big men were somewhat disconcerted, and Mr. Crayon spoke up briskly:

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"Great issues at stake. In such emergencies Presidential nominees must hear advice."

"You are right," said Jimmy Grayson, gravely. "A Presidential nominee ought always to listen to advice."

Mr. Goodnight's face cleared.

"We feel that we are in a position to speak plainly, Mr. Grayson," he said. "We are elderly men, used to the handling of large affairs, and—and this cannot be said of all others in our party. We noticed to-day how you skirted dangerously upon the tariff question, which we think—in fact, which we know—should be avoided. It is a dangerous thing, and we trust it is only an indiscretion that will not be repeated; or, perhaps, it might be a little sop to these people out here, who really do not count."

Harley glanced at Jimmy Grayson, who was distinctly in the position of one receiving a lecture from his elders, and, therefore, from those who knew more than he. But the face of the candidate expressed nothing save gravity and attention.

"That is quite true," he said.

"I am glad that you recognize our need," said Mr. Goodnight. "I do not know how you feel personally upon this great question, but, as I take it, politics and one's private opinion are different things."

Jimmy Grayson raised his head as if he were going to speak, but he let it drop without saying anything, and the great manufacturer continued:

"It is often necessary to submerge the lesser in the greater, and never was there a more obvious instance of it than this. We, and by 'we' I mean the great financial interests of the party, are interested in the tariff, and believe that it is best as it is. We do not know how you stand personally, but there is no question how you should stand politically. We men of finance may be in a minority within the party in the matter of votes, but perhaps we may constitute a majority in other and more important respects."

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"All wings of the party are entitled to an opinion," said Jimmy Grayson.

"True, but the opinion of one wing may be worth more than the opinion of another wing," continued Mr. Goodnight; "and for that reason we who stand at the centres from which the affairs of America are conducted are here. We see the unwisdom of approaching such a subject, and, above all, the destruction that would be caused if you were to speak fully upon it. It is a topic that must be eliminated."

Harley saw a quick glitter appear in the eyes of Jimmy Grayson, and then it was shut out by the lowered lids.

"But if this is an issue, and if I am to judge from the overwhelming testimony of the press it is an issue," said Mr. Grayson, gently, "ought I not in duty both to my party and myself declare how I stand upon it? I freely confess to you that the matter looks somewhat troublesome, and, therefore, I am glad that we can consult with one another."

"Why troublesome?" exclaimed Mr. Crayon, shortly. "Seems to me, Mr. Grayson, that your shrewd political eye would see point at once. Above all things must avoid split in the party. Campaign will soon close, you are here in Far West, nothing can force you to speak, you avoid issue to the last; clever politics, seems to me."

And Mr. Crayon rubbed his smooth chin, his eye lighting up with a satisfied smile. Harley glanced again at Jimmy Grayson, and saw a frown pass over his face, but it was fleeting, and when he spoke once more his voice was unemotional.

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"Clever politics is a phrase hard to define," he said. "One does not always know just where cleverness lies. I have not said anything definite upon this issue, but it doubtless occurs to you gentlemen that I may have opinions."

The committee stirred, and Mr. Crayon and Mr. Goodnight looked at each other; it was evident to them that they had not taken the candidate in hand too soon. Harley felt no abatement of interest.

"That is just the point," said Mr. Goodnight, "and so we have come West. We felt that we must act."

Harley expected to see a flame of wrath appear on Jimmy Grayson's face, but the candidate was unmoved.

"Of course you know what would happen if you were to declare for reduction," said Mr.

Goodnight. They seemed to take it for granted that if he declared at all it would be for reduction.

"Not at all," replied Mr. Grayson.

"But I do," said Mr. Goodnight, with emphasis. "The wealthy, the important wing of the party, would be bound to disown you."

"Ah!" said Jimmy Grayson.

Harley felt a thrill of anger, but he did not move.

The silent members of the committee, who were sitting, stirred in their chairs, and their clothes rustled importantly. They felt that equivocation and indirection were thrust aside, and the law was now being laid down.

"Then I am to understand that silence on this question is a requisite," said Mr. Grayson, mildly.

"Undoubtedly," replied Mr. Goodnight, with growing emphasis. "We are quite convinced of its necessity, and it is the demand that we make. A Presidential candidate must always listen to advice." [Pg 354]

"But sometimes it has seemed to me," said Mr. Grayson, musingly, "that in a Presidential campaign the public is entitled to certain privileges, or, rather, that it has certain rights, and chief among these is to know just how its candidate stands on any important issue."

"It would never do! It would never do!" exclaimed Mr. Goodnight, hastily, and with some temper. "We cannot allow it!"

Harley glanced again at Jimmy Grayson, but the candidate's lids were lowered, and no flash came from his eye.

"I put it forward in a tentative way," he said, in the same mild and musing tone. "Of course, I may be mistaken. I have received many telegrams from important people asking how I stand, and I notice that the press is discussing the same question very actively."

"They can be waved aside," said Mr. Crayon, loftily. "Telegrams can go unanswered, and why bother about a foolish press?"

"Still," said Jimmy Grayson, mildly, but tenaciously, "the public has certain rights."

"An ignorant mob that can be left in ignorance," said Mr. Crayon, briskly.

"Nothing must be said! Nothing must be said! Quite resolved upon that!" exclaimed Mr. Goodnight, brusquely.

"This resolution is unchangeable, I take it?" asked Jimmy Grayson, in tones milder than ever.

"There is not the least possibility of a change," replied Mr. Goodnight, in a tone of finality. "We have considered the question from every side, and nothing is to be said. Of course, if you were to declare for a revision, we should have to abandon you at once to overwhelming defeat." [Pg 355]

"But I should like to say a few words upon the subject," said Jimmy Grayson, and there was a slight touch of pleading in his tone, "just as a sort of salve to my conscience. You see I am troubled about all these requests that I should declare myself, and I have certain ideas about what a candidate should do, in which I differ from you, and in which probably I am wrong, but I cannot help it. I should like to ease my mind, and hence I ask you that I be permitted to say a few words. Just one little speech, and I will not handle the subject again, if you direct me not to do so."

"We are against it; we are against saying a single word," declared Mr. Goodnight.

"Just one little speech," pleaded Jimmy Grayson. "I think the people are entitled to it. We stop to-morrow at a small station, a place of not more than twenty houses; I should like to say something there, and that would serve as a claim later on that I had not avoided the issue. But, as I said, I promise you that I will not touch the subject again without your permission."

"Don't believe in it! Don't believe in it!" said Mr. Crayon, snappily.

"I am afraid I shall have to insist," said Jimmy Grayson, plaintively. "I do not like to say anything that would displease such powerful friends, but our people are peculiar, sometimes. I feel that I must touch the subject a little when we reach Waterville to-morrow morning."

He spoke in his most propitiatory tones, but the committee was still stirred. Mr. Goodnight, Mr. Crayon, and their associates demanded absolute silence, and they had not found it difficult to overawe the candidate. Yet there was a certain mild persistence in his tone which told them that they should humor him a little, as one would a spoiled or hurt child. They, as men of the world, knew that it was not well to bear too hard on the bit. [Pg 356]

They conferred a little, leaving Jimmy Grayson alone in his chair, where he remained silent and with inexpressive face. Harley still stood by the window. He had never spoken, but nothing escaped his attention. More than once he was hot with anger, but none of the committeemen ever looked at him.

"If you insist, and as you say you will, we yield this little point," said Mr. Goodnight, "but we only



do so because Waterville is such a small place. Even then we are not sure that it is not an indiscretion, to call it by a mild name, and if anything should come of it you would have to bear the full responsibility, Mr. Grayson."

"That is true," said Jimmy Grayson, cheerfully, "but as you have said, Waterville is a small, a very small place; one could hardly find a smaller on the map."

"In that event it will doubtless do no harm," said Mr. Goodnight, relaxing a little, and Mr. Crayon, stroking his smoothly shaven chin, said after him: "No harm; no harm, perhaps, in so small a place!"

Harley had never moved from the window, and again he studied Jimmy Grayson's face with the keenest attention. Harley was a fine judge of character, but he could read nothing there, save gravity. As for himself, he felt often those hot thrills of anger at the words of these men; would nothing stir them from their complacency? He had, too, a sense of pain at Jimmy Grayson's lack of resentment. It was true that their support was a necessity, but after all they were a minority within the party, and one might remind them of the fact. Yet Jimmy Grayson probably knew best; he understood politics, and perhaps his course was the wiser. But Harley sighed.

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After the victory, although it had not been a difficult one to win, the members of the committee were disposed to condescend a little. They sent to their private car for champagne and other luxuries which the candidate and Harley touched but lightly, and they treated even Harley, the newspaper-man, with graciousness.

Mr. Crayon felt the flame of humor sparkling in his veins, and he jested lightly on the little speech at Waterville. "Just think of our candidate wasting sweetness on desert air," he said, "for Waterville is in desert, and, as I am reliably informed, has less than forty inhabitants."

Jimmy Grayson showed no resentment, but smiled gravely.

"Of course Mr. Harley understands that all this is *sub rosa*," said Mr. Goodnight, looking severely at the correspondent.

"Mr. Harley knows it, and he is to be trusted entirely," said Jimmy Grayson. "Otherwise I should not have brought him with me. I vouch for the fact that he will say nothing of this meeting until we give him permission."

Mr. Grayson presently excused himself, on the plea that he needed sleep, a plea which was admitted by everybody, and Harley also withdrew, while the members of the committee went to their private car pleased with the evening's work. Thus the Great Philipsburg Conference came to an end.

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The candidate and Harley walked together to their rooms through a rather dim hall, but it was not too dim to hide from Harley a singular expression that passed over the face of the candidate. It was gone like a flash, but it seemed to Harley to be a compound of anger and anticipation. Wisely he kept silent, and Jimmy Grayson, stopping a moment at his own door, said, in the grave but otherwise expressionless tone that he had used throughout the discussion:

"Good-night, Harley; I don't think we shall forget this evening, shall we?"

"No," replied Harley, and he tried to decipher a meaning in Jimmy Grayson's tone, but he could not.

When Harley turned away, he found Hobart, Blaisdell, Churchill, and all the other correspondents waiting for him at the end of the hall to get the news of the conference.

"There is nothing, not a line," said Harley.

They looked at him incredulously.

"It is the truth, I assure you," continued Harley. "I am not sending a word to my own paper. I am going straight to my bed."

"If you say so, Harley, I believe you," said Churchill. "Besides, it's past one o'clock now, and that's past four o'clock in New York and past three in Chicago; all the papers have gone to press, and we couldn't send anything if we wanted to do so."

"There is nothing to tell you," said Harley, "except that Mr. Grayson will allude to the tariff in his speech to-morrow, or, rather, this morning, at Waterville. He has promised the committee not to do so again—they were not very willing to grant him even so little—but it is a sort of sop to Cerberus; later on, if any one twits him with avoiding the revision, he can say, and say truthfully, that he has spoken on it."

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"I see," said Churchill.

And before they could ask him anything more Harley had entered his own room and was going to bed.

The morning dawned badly. The sun shone dimly through a mass of dirty brown clouds, and the mountains were hidden in mist. A slow and provoking cold rain was falling. It was also a start at the first daylight, and, forced to rise too early from their beds, all were in a bad humor. Even Sylvia was hid in a heavy cloak, and she did not smile. Harley had told her that he could make

nothing of the conference the night before.

They reached Waterville an hour later, and they found it even smaller and bleaker than they expected. Although the usual body of citizens was on hand to meet them at the train, the attendance was less than at any point hitherto. The shed under which Jimmy Grayson was to speak would easily hold them.

But the members of the committee, when they came from their private car, showed satisfaction. They had enjoyed a good breakfast, their *chef*, as Harley could testify, was one of the best, and they were not averse to hearing the candidate make his record good. Hence they were all comfortably arranged on the platform in their usual solid semicircle when Mr. Grayson appeared. The candidate himself was a bit later than usual, but he gave them a cheerful good-morning when he appeared, and then proceeded at once to the matter of the speech.

The audience, though small, greeted Mr. Grayson with the heartiest applause, and he soon had them under his spell. He talked a while on the customary issues, and then he said:

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"Gentlemen, there is one question which seemed in previous campaigns to be of paramount importance, but in this it has been suffered a long time to rest. Lately, however, it has been rising into prominence again. In the great centres of population to the eastward it has become a question first in the minds of the people, and before the campaign closes it is bound to become as momentous here."

Harley, in a seat at the corner of the stage, glanced at the committee, and he noticed a slight shade of disapproval on all their faces. The candidate was a little too strong in his preamble, but they smiled again when they noticed his face which wore an expression so gentle and innocent.

"It has been but recently that the matter came to my attention," continued the candidate, in an easy, conversational tone, "but in the time since then I have been thinking about it a great deal. This question I need scarcely tell you is the revision of the tariff, and I am going to speak to you about it this morning."

There was a sudden cheer from the audience, and the people seemed to draw closer around the speaker's stand. Their faces glowed with interest. Sylvia sat up straight and her eyes sparkled. The committee looked a warning at Jimmy Grayson, but he did not see it.

"This question has come up late," he said, "and perhaps it could have been put aside. I have been told that it would be for the good of our party, particularly in this campaign, to do so, and many have advised me to keep silence, saying that I could consistently and honorably follow such a course, as our platform does not declare itself on the question; but there are some things that trouble me. This is an issue, I feel sure, which must be threshed out sooner or later, and as it is now so importantly before the country I think that I, as the standard-bearer of our party, should have an opinion upon it."

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The audience cheered again, and longer and louder than ever. Sylvia's eyes not only sparkled, they flashed. Mr. Goodnight half rose in his seat and said something in a loud whisper to the candidate, but Mr. Grayson did not hear it and went on with his speech.

"It did not take me long to make up my mind," he continued. "I have decided opinions upon the subject, and what they are I shall tell you before I leave this stage; but first I want to tell you a story."

Mr. Grayson did not tell stories often; he did so only when they were thoroughly relevant, and Hobart, Blaisdell, and the other correspondents leaned forward with sudden interest. Sylvia's face glowed.

"I think I'll sharpen my lead-pencils," said Hobart.

"I would if I were you," said Harley.

"This story," continued the candidate, in an easy, confidential manner, "is about a man who was in a position much like mine. He was the nominee of his party for a most important office, and towards the close of his campaign a great issue came up again, just as in my case. He did not think that he ought to keep silent about it, but when he was thinking over what he ought to say a committee of men, representing a minority in his party, arrived from the great centres of population, industry, and finance—he was then far away in a thinly settled and somewhat isolated region."

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Again the committee stirred, and they whispered loudly both to one another and to Mr. Grayson, but he paid no heed to them and spoke on. All the correspondents were writing rapidly, eagerly, and with rapt attention, while Sylvia's eyes still sparkled and flashed.

"Well, the members of this committee and the man met," continued the candidate, "and from the first they treated him as one who might have an opinion of his own but who must not be allowed to express it. They were not bad men, perhaps, but a long course of exclusive attention to their own personal interests had, we will say, narrowed them. That personal advantage was always dangling before them; they could see nothing else. The sun rose and set in its interest, and such an affair as the government of a mighty nation like the United States must be regulated with sole regard to it. They thought they knew everything in the world when they knew only one thing in it. Their ignorance was equalled only by their presumption."

The rolling cheer came once more from the audience, but Harley saw that the faces of the committee had turned red. They whispered no more, but stared angrily and uneasily at Jimmy Grayson, who did not notice them.

"How glad I am that I sharpened all my lead-pencils!" said Hobart, in a low tone to Harley.

But Harley never stopped writing.

"They did not even have the tact to treat this candidate with courtesy and consideration," continued Mr. Grayson. "They lectured him on his comparative youth and his ignorance of the world, when it was they who were ignorant. They told him, without hesitation, regardless of his own opinion and the fact that he was a free man among free men, that he must not speak on this issue. They threatened him."

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"Did he take the bluff?" shouted a big man in the audience.

"Wait and we shall see," said Jimmy Grayson, sweetly. "They were entitled to their opinion, and he would have heard their advice, but their manner was intolerable; they undertook to treat him as a child. They called him to a conference, and there they laid down the law to him as a school-master would order a sulking child to be good."

"Did he take the bluff?" again shouted the big man in the crowd.

"Wait and we shall see," repeated Jimmy Grayson, as sweetly as ever. "Well, this conference came to pass, and it lasted a long time, but only the committee talked; they gave the candidate scarcely a chance to say a word. They treated him with increasing arrogance. They said that if he declared himself upon this great issue they would bolt the party and let him go headlong to destruction."

"The traitors!" shouted the big man in the audience. But the members of the committee, from some strange cause, seemed to be struck speechless. Their jaws fell, but the faces of them all were as red as fire. Sylvia leaned forward and clapped her gloved hands.

"Blaisdell," whispered Hobart, "slip away and arrange at the telegraph-office; any of us will give you his report. I shall have at least five thousand words myself."

Blaisdell slid noiselessly away.

"The candidate endured it all, but only for the time," thundered Jimmy Grayson, and now his voice was swelling with passion, while his eyes fairly sparkled with heat and anger—"but only for the time. He had decided opinions upon this subject, as I have upon the question of tariff revision, and he intended to utter them as I intend to utter mine. They said—and they said it with intolerable condescension and patronage—that for the sake of his record he might make one little speech upon the subject before a few people out in what they called the desert, and he accepted the concession. But there was rage in his heart. He was willing to be beaten by the biggest majority ever given against a Presidential candidate before he would yield to such insolent dictation. Moreover, there was the question of his true opinion, which the people had a right to know, and he took his resolve. There was that little speech, and he remembered the telegraph wire, the thin line that binds the farthest little village to the great world, and I say he took his resolve."

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"He called the bluff!" shouted the big man in the audience, in a perfect roar of triumph, and Jimmy Grayson smiled sweetly.

Suddenly Mr. Goodnight, in all the might of his majesty and importance, rose up and stalked from the stage, and the eleven other members of the committee, headed by Mr. Crayon, followed him in an angry file, accompanied by the derisive shouts of the audience. They quickened their pace somewhat when they reached solid ground, but before they were within the sheltering confines of their private car, Jimmy Grayson was launched upon his great and thrilling tariff speech, in which he invested the driest subject in the world with an interest that absorbed the attention of ninety million people.

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All day the wires eastward and westward sang with the burden of the great speech made in the tiny hamlet of Waterville, in the Wyoming mountains, and the next morning it occupied the front pages of ten thousand newspapers. It was absolutely clear and decisive. No one could doubt how the candidate stood. He was heart and soul for revision. Sylvia threw her arms around his neck, and said, "Uncle James, I was never prouder of you than I am at this moment."

When they left Waterville the private car of the committee was still attached to their train, but there was no communication between it and the other cars. About the middle of the afternoon they reached a junction with another railroad line. There the private car was cut off and attached to a new engine. Then it sped eastward at the rate of fifty miles an hour.

Meanwhile the correspondents were holding a little conference of their own.

"They will bolt him sure," said Hobart. "Will it ruin Jimmy Grayson?"

"I believe not," said Harley, who had been thinking much. "Of course there will be a split, but such courage, and his way of meeting their attack, will appeal to the people; it will bring him thousands of new votes."

"Whether it does or does not," said Hobart, "if I had been in his place I'd have done as he did."

## ALONE WITH NATURE

When the party returned to the train after Jimmy Grayson's thrilling defiance there was an air of relief, even joyousness, about them all. No more diplomacy, no more watching for blows in the dark, no more waiting, now they knew who their friends were, and they knew equally well their enemies. They could strike straight at Goodnight, Crayon, and all the others. Only in the heart of nearly every one of them there was still mourning for the lost leader, for "King" Plummer, whom a gust of passion had led astray.

"Well," said Hobart, "I thank God that the split has come at last. Even if we are beaten out of our boots, I've got that defiance to remember, and the picture of Jimmy Grayson refusing either to be browbeaten or cajoled, even though the price was the Presidency."

"We know where we stand," said Mr. Heathcote, "and that at least is a gain."

As for Sylvia, she was thrilling with pride. Her uncle's high heroism, his superb truthfulness appealed to every quality in her woman's soul, and with another impulse full as womanly she hated Goodnight, Crayon, and their associates with all her heart; she believed them capable of any crime, personal as well as political. She felt so intensely upon the subject that she wanted to speak of it to somebody else, but Mr. and Mrs. Grayson had withdrawn to the drawing-room, and all the correspondents were deep in their work, as it would be necessary to send very long despatches to the great cities that day.

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Harley wrote five or six thousand words full of fire and zeal. As usual, he wrote from the "inside," and his was not a bare record of facts; one reading it, though three thousand miles away, was upon the scene himself; everything passed before him alive; he saw the heroic figure of the candidate thundering forth his denunciation; he knew all that it cost, the full penalty, and he shared the stern impulse which such a speaker in such a situation must feel; he, too, saw the astonishment on the faces of the committee, astonishment followed by fear and rage, and he shared also the noble thrill that must come to a man who had lost all save honor, but was proud in the losing. Harley was always a good writer, but now as he wrote he saw every word burning before him, so intense were his feelings, and even across the United States he communicated the same thrill to those who read.

His despatch brought from his abrupt editor the one word "Splendid!" and it attracted marked attention not only wherever the *Gazette* went, but where also went the numerous journals into which it was copied. Everybody who read it said, "What a magnificent figure Jimmy Grayson is!" and the impression was deepened and widened by other writers on the train who were inferior in powers only to Harley. In this his day of great disaster the candidate was to find that there were friends who were truly bound to him with "hooks of steel." Nor was he ungrateful. The moisture rose in his eyes when he first heard of their accounts, and in privacy he confided to his wife that he did not know how to thank them.

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"If I were you I should not say anything," she advised. "They will like it better if you don't."

And he did not.

Now the campaign took on a new phase. Even in the beginning it had differed from any other ever waged in America, and since the Philipsburg conference that difference, already great, increased. It was permeated throughout by the personal element, party platforms sank into the background, and in the foreground stood the titanic figure of Jimmy Grayson fighting single-handed against a host of foes.

His hero appealed more powerfully than ever to Harley; every sympathy within him was aroused by this lone figure who stood like Horatius at the bridge—the old simile was always coming to him—and under its influence his despatches took on a vivid coloring and a keen, searching quality that thrilled all who read. And many other newspapers gave the same lifelike impression.

The figure of the candidate, although he was admittedly a beaten man, loomed larger than ever to the whole country, and his enemies, although counting already the fruits of victory, began to feel a certain awe of him. They showed an anxiety to keep away from him, even in what they considered his dying moments, and no speaker dared to meet him on the platform, despite the recollections of his defeat at Egmont. The opposition often alluded to this "defeat," and sought to make great capital of it, but the sensation that it had created at first faded. It was surrounded by too many brilliant triumphs; people would say that on the day of his defeat he was ill, like Napoleon at Leipsic; that he was giving daily proofs that he was without a match in the world, and one such little incident did not count.

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The split in the party was made complete. Mr. Goodnight, Mr. Crayon, and eighteen of their associates, all men of wealth and influence, came out in a formal signed statement published first in the *Monitor*, stating their position in calmness and moderation and in measured language. They said that they had tried to support Mr. Grayson; they had given him every chance; they had always been ready with advice; they had sought to instil in him a full sense of his responsibility, and to impart to his mind the breadth and solidity so necessary in a Presidential nominee; they

were strong in party loyalty, and they hesitated long before taking such a momentous step; but they knew that in every great crisis brave men who would not hesitate at great risk to lead must be found; therefore they stepped into the breach. Reluctantly and with much grief they announced that they could not support Mr. Grayson. He was a menace to the country, and they felt that they must remove this danger; hence they would support the other side, and they advised all the solid worth of the country, those who cared for the national honor, to do likewise.

The *Monitor* commented editorially in its finest vein upon this tribute to conscience. It was glad to know that there were yet brave and honest men; it was never worth while to despair of the republic so long as such lofty and heroic citizens as Mr. Goodnight and Mr. Crayon were vouchsafed to it. The American people were frivolous and superficial, but there was a saving remnant, men who might almost compare with the great statesmen of Europe, and in every emergency, every crisis, it was they who would make enormous sacrifice of private interest and save the state.

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Churchill followed the lead, and in a long despatch made a ferocious attack upon Jimmy Grayson, the man. Then, with a concealed sense of importance, he waited until the paper arrived, and when the two hours that he thought necessary to make the impression deep had passed he went in to Mr. Grayson and announced with an air of great dignity that he was prepared to leave the train; he felt that as a keen and remorseless critic his presence would put a severe constraint upon the candidate; there was nothing personal in his course, and he did not wish to prevent anybody from doing his best; he was aware that he must be regarded with the greatest hostility and apprehension, and therefore he would retire, seeking his news either by going before or by following.

"Why, Mr. Churchill!" exclaimed the candidate, in surprise, "we do not dream of letting you go. You have been so long with us that your place could not be filled. I cannot consent to such a thing! You must stay with us to the end!"

Churchill felt that his shot had missed again, but he said:

"I spoke out of consideration. I thought that my continued presence here might have a somewhat disconcerting effect upon you."

"Not at all! Not at all!" replied the candidate, courageously. "It's a blow, but we prefer to bear it rather than lose you. Ah, here is my niece, Sylvia; perhaps she can persuade you. Sylvia, Mr. Churchill speaks of leaving us; he thinks that he ought to do so because he is a critic of us. Sylvia, I leave him in your hands, and I want you to persuade him that it is only his exaggerated sense of honor."

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Sylvia was not averse to the task. She was wholly feminine, and hence there was in her a trace of cajolery which she now used. She told Churchill that her uncle and all his friends felt the truth and edge of his criticisms, but they felt, too, that although he was in the opposition now, they might, nevertheless, profit by them. And there was the influence of his personal presence on the train—his gravity of manner and his weighed and measured speech were a useful antidote to the flippancy and levity of his associates.

Sylvia said these things rather by indirection than by plain words, and under the influence of such soothing speech Churchill gradually melted and became forgiving; he would stay, but it was partly for the sake of Miss Morgan that he stayed, and later in the day he confided to Mr. Heathcote that he was surprised at the way Sylvia was coming out; she really had strong and attractive qualities; if she were to marry a man of refinement and knowledge of the world who would exercise a stimulating and also a corrective influence upon her, she might become a very fine woman. Mr. Heathcote bowed assent, but looked away from Churchill and out of the window. Churchill's opinion of Mr. Heathcote also improved.

There was yet one element in the situation that was not clarified. Mr. Plummer not only failed to appear upon the scene, but did not communicate in any manner with either the Graysons or Sylvia. They heard of him as floating about the Northwest and full of hot talk, but no one could put his hand upon him, and they were puzzled, because they had expected decisive, straight-from-the-shoulder action from the "King."

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In this week Harley saw Sylvia almost every hour in the day, but never once did he speak of the subject that was nearest both their hearts. Sometimes he thought that it would have been better had the Graysons granted her request to go, because he could see that she was suffering from a constant nervous strain, and that her gayety with the group was often forced.

They came at last to Grafton, a village in the corner of North Dakota, where a sweep of low mountains opens out for a space and forms a wide valley. In that hollow lies Grafton, and to Harley it looked warm and inviting. The candidate was to speak here, and as Harley ascertained in advance that Mr. Grayson did not intend to say anything new, merely repeating a speech of the day before, he did not consider it necessary to be present; instead, he chose to take a walk through the town and its outskirts for the sake of fresh air, exercise, and some solitary musing.

The autumn was far advanced in that Northern latitude, but the chill of winter had not yet come. The wide sky of glittering blue hung high, and in the thin air the mountain-peaks that stood far away came near; the wooden houses of the new town were gilded and softened by the yellow sunshine.

Harley saw the usual audience—the ranchmen, the sheep-herders, the miners, and the railroadmen—all flocking towards the stand where the candidate would speak, and exchanging jocose or admiring comment, because this was to them both a holiday and a ceremony.

Only a minute or two sufficed to carry him to the outskirts of the little town, and he would have paid no further attention to the crowd, but he thought he saw on its fringe a broad, powerful back that he knew. When he undertook to take the second look and make sure the back was gone, and Harley went on, telling himself, as one is apt to do, that it was only his fancy. The echo of cheering came to his ears, and he knew that the candidate, as usual, held the audience in his grasp. Presently the echo died, and those that followed it did not come to him, as he had left the town behind; although from the low crest of a swell he could see the heads of the people surrounding Jimmy Grayson, and by the way they bobbed back and forth he knew that the enthusiasm was boiling.

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He went down the far side of the swell, passed a clump of bushes, and came face to face with Sylvia Morgan. She, too, leaving the speech, had been walking, and the color of her face was deepened by the exercise and the crisp, bracing air. It had given her, also, an obvious exhilaration, probably physical, that Harley had not seen before in a long time, and her smile was of pure welcoming joy.

Harley's was an answering smile, but his heart was full of a longing and an anger equally fierce. Never had she seemed to him more to be desired than on that morning; tall, straight, and young, instinct with the life and strength of the great upland reaches upon which she lived, her pure soul looking out of her pure eyes, she was a woman to be won by the man to whom her love was given, and he rebelled because he did not have the right. Temptation was strong within him, and he had excuse.

"Speeches, however good, do not appeal to you to-day?" he said.

"No, I prefer the mountains."

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She pointed to the line of peaks that formed a border of darker blue on the horizon.

"So do I," said Harley, with emphasis, but he meant, at that moment, that he was glad to be alone with her.

"Since chance has brought us together," he said, "why should we not continue in this way?"

They walked on, and he was very close to her, so close that when a wanton wind caught a stray ringlet of her hair it brushed lightly against his cheek. Faint and fleeting as was the touch, every nerve thrilled. He said fiercely to himself that she was his and should remain his.

They came to a little brook, a stream of ice-cold water flowing down from the distant mountains, and he helped her across, although a single step would have carried her from bank to bank. Then, too, he held her hand in his longer than the case warranted, and again he tingled. He said nothing, nor did she, but she glanced at him and she was a little afraid; his lips were closed in the firm fashion that she knew, and his eyes were on the distant mountains. Behind them came a broad shadow, but neither looked back.

Jimmy Grayson was a great man, but Cæsar and his fortunes were now completely forgotten by both Harley and Sylvia; each was thinking only of the other, and though they were still silent, they wandered on and on, Sylvia content that Harley was by her side, and Harley happy to feel her so near that her hair blown in the wind had touched his face. Had they looked back they would have seen the shadow come a little nearer and raise its arm in an angry gesture. The town sank behind the swells, and before lay only a brown expanse of country that rolled away with unbroken monotony. A slight grayish tint, as of a mist, crept into the glittering blue of the sky, but Harley and Sylvia did not notice it.

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Sylvia felt, in a way, as if she were in a state of suspended animation. The world had paused for a moment, and for that reason she knew that fate was impending; she, too, felt a thrill running through every nerve, and she felt the presence, so near her, of the man whom she loved, and would always love. He was master to-day, and she knew that she would do whatever he should ask her; all her resolves, all the long course of strengthening through which she might put herself would melt away in the heat of an emotion that was too strong for her; if he said that they should slip back to the town, take a train to the next station and get married there, forgetful of her promise, "King" Plummer, the campaign, her uncle, and everything else, she would go with him. But she remembered to pray that he would not say it.

Harley still did not speak. He, too, was struggling with himself, and saying, over and over under his breath, that he should remember his duty. Sylvia glanced at him covertly from time to time, and, while she yet felt a little fear, she admired the firm curve of his chin and the clear cut of his face. They came at last to a clump of dwarfed trees, sheltered between the swells, and they stopped.

"Sylvia," said Harley, "I felt only joy when I met you, but I am sorry now that the chance brought us together this time, because it is a greater grief to see you go. I thought once that we might be together always, because I know that you are mine, mine in spirit at least, no matter to whom the law may give you, but now—"

He broke off and looked at her with longing.

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"It is better that I should leave you and go alone," she said.

She held out her hand.

"This is a good-bye," she said.

"But it shall not be so cold a one!" he exclaimed.

He put his arms around her, and kissed her full upon the lips.

"Oh, John!" she cried, and when he released her she ran back upon their path, her face very red, although she was in no wise angry with him. Harley walked on, and he did not raise his head until the shadow that followed them stood across his way. Then, when he looked up, he found himself gazing into the muzzle of a very large revolver, held by a large, brown hand. Behind the hand, and lowering at him, was the inflamed and determined face of "King" Plummer.

In this crisis neither of the two wasted words. Each was a man of action, and each knew that long speech was vanity of vanities.

Harley was pale; life was sweet, never sweeter than when it seemed to be leaving, but he did not flinch.

"You have stolen her from me," said the "King." "I saw what you did there; you ought to be willing to pay the price."

"I object to the word 'stolen,'" said Harley, calmly. "The love of Sylvia Morgan is not a thing that could be stolen by anybody."

"Words differ, but acts don't. I've been a border man, and I've got to do things in the border way."

"One of which is to come armed upon an unarmed man?"

Harley saw the "King" flinch, but the finger did not leave the trigger.

"You took from me when I wasn't looking all that I love best, and I'll take from you all I can."

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The red face of "King" Plummer suddenly turned gray, and Harley saw it, but he did not see what caused it. There was the light, swift tread of footsteps behind him, a warm breath upon his face, and then Sylvia's arms were around his neck and she was upon his breast.

"Shoot if you want to," she said to the "King," "but your bullet will strike me first."

Her eyes, for the first time in her life, sparkled defiance at him, and their gaze stabbed the "King" to the heart.

Harley strove to put her aside, but she clung to him with strong, young arms.

The "King's" face, pale before, now became white. It was, perhaps, the first time in his life that all the blood had left it, and it showed the power of this new and sudden emotion. "King" Plummer, in a flash, saw many things. The finger that lay upon the trigger trembled, and then, with a cry of fear, this man who feared no other man threw his pistol to the earth.

"My God, Sylvia!" he exclaimed. "What do you think I am?"

"Not a murderer!"

"No, I am not; but I came very near to being one."

He looked at the two, in each other's arms as it were, and turned away, leaving the pistol upon the ground. "King" Plummer had seen enough for one day.

They watched him until the broad back passed over a swell and was lost. Then Sylvia, blushing, remembered, and took her arms from Harley's neck.

"You have saved my life," said Harley.

"I do not think that he would have fired."

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"You have saved it, anyhow. Now it is yours, and you must take it. He cannot claim you after this."

The blush became brilliant.

"He has not given me up. He has not said so."

"But he will give you up. He shall. You are mine now. Come!"

He took her unresisting hand in his, and again they walked side by side, so close that the strong wind once more brushed the little ringlet against his cheek.

It is a peculiarity of Grafton that the low swells around it, rolling away towards the mountains, look just alike everywhere. One has to be a resident, and an old-timer at that, to be able to tell one from another. Harley and Sylvia, hand-in-hand, had little thought of such things as these, nor were they anxious to reach Grafton quickly; yet the time when they must be there would come, and Harley at last interrupted a pleasanter occupation by exclaiming:

"Why, where is Grafton? We should have reached it long ago!"

Sylvia saw only the low swells, rolling away, one after the other; there was no glimpse of a house, no smoke on the horizon to tell where the village had hid itself so suddenly. Around them were the low ridges, and afar the circle of blue mountains. Save for themselves, it seemed a lone and desolate world. Sylvia became white; she knew their situation better than Harley.

"We have lost the town! We mistook the direction!" she said.

"We can easily find it again; it must be there."

He pointed in the direction in which he thought Grafton lay, and continued:

"It will merely make our walk back to town the longer, and that is what I like."

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But she, who had lived her life on the plains and in the mountains, was not so sure. She knew that they had walked far, because not even the smoke of Grafton could be seen now. Yet he was with her.

"Suppose we try that direction," she assented.

"And if it isn't right, we will try another; our train stays at Grafton all day."

They walked on, saying to each other the little things that mean nothing to others, but which lovers love, and Grafton yet lay hidden in its place between the swells. The skies, changing now from a bright to a steely gray, were unmarred by a single wisp of smoke.

Harley felt at last an uneasiness which increased gradually as they went on; the country was provokingly monotonous, one swell was like another, and the dips between were just the same; there were patches of brown grass eaten down by cattle, but mostly the soil was bare; it seemed to Harley, at that moment, a weary and ugly land, but it set off the star in the midst of it—Sylvia—like a diamond in the dust. He looked up; the mountains, before blue and distinct in the clear sky, were now gray and vague.

"We must have walked fast and far," he said. "Look how that range of mountains has moved away."

Sylvia looked, and her face whitened again.

"It is not distance, John," she said. "It is a mist. See, the clouds are coming!"

The mountains moved farther away and became shadowy; the steel-gray of the skies darkened; up from the southwest rolled ugly brown clouds; there was a rush of chill air.

Harley understood all, and a shiver passed over him. But his fear was for her, not for himself.

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"It is going to snow," said Sylvia.

"And we are lost in this desert; it was I, too, who brought you here," said Harley.

She looked up into his eyes, and her face was not pale.

"We are together," she said.

He bent his head and kissed her, for the second time that day.

"You are the bravest woman in the world, Sylvia," he said. "Now we live or die together, and we are not afraid."

"We are not afraid."

He put his arm around her waist, and she did not resist. Both expected to die, and they felt that they belonged to each other for eternity. A strange, spiritual exaltation possessed them; the world about them was unreal now—they two were all that was real.

"The snow comes, dearest," she said.

Up from the southwest the ugly brown clouds were still rolling, and the sky above them still darkened; the mountains were gone in the mist, the chill wind strengthened and shrieked over the plain. Harley kept his arm around Sylvia's waist, and drew her more closely to him that he might shelter her.

"Let the snow come," he said.

Great white flakes, borne upon the edge of the wind, fell damp upon their faces, and suddenly the air was filled with them as they came in blinding clouds; the wind ceased to shriek and died, and the brown clouds, now fused into one mass that covered all the heavens, opened and let down the snow in unbroken volume.

"We must go on, sweetheart," said Harley, rousing himself. "To stand here is death. We may find some kind of shelter if we go; there is none in this place."

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They walked on, their heads bent a little, as the snow was coming straight down. They could not see twenty yards before them through the white cloud, and Harley was scarcely conscious whether they climbed the swells or descended into the dips between.



Sylvia covered her head with a small shawl that she wore. Harley wanted to take off his coat and wrap it around her, but she would not let him.

"I am not cold," she said; "I think it is the walking that keeps me warm."

It was partly that, but it was more the presence of Harley and the state of spiritual exaltation in which they remained. Both took it as a matter of course that they were to die in a few hours, but they had no fear of this death, and it was not even worth while to talk or think of it. Harley had spoken merely through habit and instinct of moving on lest they die, and it was these same unconscious motives that made them struggle, although they took no interest in their own efforts.

"We may come to a clump of trees," said Sylvia, "or to a hollow in a rocky hill-side; that happens sometimes in this part of the Dakotas."

"Maybe we shall," said Harley, but he thought no more about it.

The wind rose again and swept over the plain with a shriek and a howl. Columns and cones of snow were whirled past them and over them; wind and snow together made it harder for them to keep their feet.

"If we don't find that hollow soon, we won't need it," said Harley.

"No," she said.

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She was very close to him, and when she looked up he could see a smile on her face.

"Death is not terrible," she said.

"Not with you."

The shriek of the wind had now become a moan like the moan of a desolate world. They came to two or three dwarfed trees growing close to one another, but they gave no shelter, and, Harley being in dread lest branches should be blown off and against Sylvia, they went on.

"What will they think has become of us?" said Sylvia.

But the only thought it brought into Harley's mind at that moment was the interruption it would cause to the campaign. He was sorry for Jimmy Grayson. He felt that the girl's step was growing less steady. Obviously she was becoming weaker.

"Lean against me," he said; "I am strong enough for both."

She said nothing, but he felt her shoulder press more heavily against him. He drew his hat-brim down that he might keep the whirling flakes from his eyes, and staggered blindly forward. His knee struck against something hard, and, putting out his hand, he touched stone and earth.

"Here is a hill," he said, without joy, and he uncovered his eyes again to seek shelter. He did not find it there, but farther on, in another hill, was a rocky alcove that in earlier days had been the den of some wild animal. It was carpeted with old dead leaves, and it faced the east, while the wind and the snow came from the southwest. It was only a hollow, running back three or four feet, and one must crouch to enter; but except near the door there was no snow in it, and the storm drove by in vain.

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"Here is our house, Sylvia," exclaimed Harley, with a strong ring in his voice, and he drew her in. He raked up the old, musty, dead leaves in a heap, and made her sit upon them. He was the man now, the masculine animal who ruled, and she obeyed without protest.

"Hark to the storm! How the wind whistles!" he said.

Pyramids and columns of snow whirled by the mouth of their little hollow, and they crouched close together. Out upon the plain the shriek of the wind was weird and unearthly. Now and then some blast, fiercer and more tortuous than the rest, drove a fringe of snow so far into the hollow that it fell a wet skim across their faces.

Sylvia did not move or speak for a long time, and when Harley looked out again the snow was thinner but the wind was still high, and it was growing much colder. The blast lashed his face with a whip of ice.

He turned back in alarm, and took Sylvia's hand in his. It was cold, and it seemed to him that the blood in it had ceased to run.

"Sylvia! Sylvia!" he cried in fear, and not knowing what else to say. "What is the matter?"

"This, I think, is death," she replied, in sleepy content.

It was dark in the hollow, whether the darkness of coming night or the darkness of the storm Harley did not know nor care. He could not see her face, but he touched it; it, too, was cold.

He felt a pang of agony. When both expected to die he had neither fear nor sorrow; now she was about to die alone and leave him!

"Sylvia! Sylvia!" he cried. "It is not death! You cannot go!"

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He rubbed her hands violently, and even her cheeks. He called to her over and over again, and she awoke from her numbing torpor.

"It was beginning to be like an easy sleep," she said.

"That is what we must fight," said Harley.

He brushed up all the leaves at the mouth of the hollow as a sort of barrier, and he believed that it gave help. Then he sat down on a small ledge of stone and leaned against the wall.

"Sylvia," he said, "I want you to live, and you cannot live if this cold creeps into your body again. Sit here."

She hesitated, and in the darkness he did not see her blush.

"Why should you not? It may be our last day."

He drew her down upon his knees, then closer to him, and put his arms around her. Presently he could feel her face against his, and it was cold no longer. Neither spoke nor moved, but Harley could feel that she was warm, and he could hear her soft, regular breathing. After a while he stirred a little, and he found that she was asleep. Her hands and face were still warm. He did not move again. She spoke once in her sleep, and all that she said was his name.

Outside the plain was a vast sheet of snow, over which the cold wind moaned, and out of the east the night was coming.

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## XXII

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### THE "KING'S" AWAKENING

When "King" Plummet left Harley and Sylvia on the plain, he strode blindly forward, his heart filled with rage, grief, and self-accusation. He said aloud: "William Plummer, you are fifty years old, and you have made of yourself the damnedest fool in the whole Northwest!"

Hitherto he had always held the belief that if Harley were away she would soon forget him and would be happy as his wife. Now he knew that this could never come to pass, and the truth filled him with dismay.

He had ridden across country with no knowledge of Mr. Grayson's presence in Grafton until he was very near the place; then, when he heard of it, he was overwhelmed with a great desire to see these people and bid them defiance. He was a man who fought his enemies, and he would show them what he could do. So he rode into Grafton, and slipped quietly into a saloon to get a tonic. He was a border man bred in border ways, and usually liquor would have had no effect on him, but to-day it was fire to a brain already on fire. All his grievances now became great wrongs—he was an injured man whom the world persecuted; Grayson, for whom he had done so much in political life, had betrayed him; the girl whom he was going to marry had betrayed him, too, and this young Eastern slip, Harley, was surely laughing at him.

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These thoughts were intolerable to the "King," who had hitherto been victorious always, and now his rage centred on Harley; he saw Harley everywhere, at every point of the compass wherever he looked, and when he came out of the saloon and went down the deserted street he saw Harley in reality, strolling along absently, his eyes upon the ground. He thought first that the correspondent was on his way to join the crowd around the speaker's stand, but he soon perceived that he was going in another direction. It was "King" Plummer's first impulse—there was still liquid fire in his veins—to overtake Harley and demand the only kind of satisfaction that such a man as he should have. Then he wished to see where Harley was going, because he had a premonition—false in this case, the meeting was by accident—that he was on his way to Sylvia; so he decided to follow as an animal stalks its game. Only the most powerful emotion conjoined with other circumstances could have made the "King" do such a thing, as his nature was essentially open, and he loved open methods. Yet he trailed his enemy with the skill and cunning of an Indian.

He saw Harley and Sylvia meet, and all his suspicions were confirmed. Again he felt a fierce impulse, and it was to rush upon the guilty pair, but he restrained it and still followed. His perceptions were trained to other things, but he was in no danger of being seen by them; they were too much absorbed in each other, and all the world passed by them unnoticed. The "King," though a rough, blunt man, saw this, and it made the fire in him burn the hotter.

He saw them stop at last, he saw Harley kiss Sylvia, and then he saw the girl turn away. He waited until he saw Sylvia pass over the swell, and then he took his opportunity. Whether he would have fired if Sylvia had not come he could not say to himself afterwards in his cooler moments. Remorse upon this point tortured him for some time.

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When he turned away he saw nothing. He was agitated by the powerful truth that Sylvia preferred death with Harley to life with him, and all his views were inward. He still did not know what he would do, but there was much of a moving nature to him in the scene that he left. He had never before seen such a look on a woman's face as that on Sylvia's when she threw herself upon Harley's breast and defied his bullet; it was beautiful and wonderfully pathetic, and something

like a sob came from the burly "King." Harley, too, had borne himself like a man; there was no fear in the face of the Eastern youth when he looked into the muzzle of the pistol that threatened instant death; "King" Plummer remembered more than once in the early days when he had been covered by the levelled weapon of an enemy, and he knew how hard it was in such a case to control one's nerves and keep steady. He could not help respecting a courage fully the equal of his own.

He wandered on in a series of circles that did not take him far, and in a half-hour he stopped at the crest of a swell higher than the rest. He saw Sylvia and Harley far away—but he knew them well—walking side by side. "Well, I suppose they have the right!" he said, moodily. The fire within him was dying down, but he added; "I'll be damned if I look at them making love."

The "King" had the habits bred by long years of necessity and precaution, and unless the distracting circumstances were very powerful he was always a keen observer of weather and locality. Now the fire was low, but he was almost at the edge of the town before his blood became normal and cool. Then he looked about. A half-mile away he saw a mass of heads, sometimes rising and falling, and a faint echo of cheers came to him. He knew that the candidate was still speaking, and he smiled rather sourly. Then he was conscious that the sunshine was not so brilliant, and there was a feeling of chill damp in the wind that came up from the southwest.

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The "King" glanced up at the sky; it had turned a steely gray, and ugly brown clouds were coming up over the rim of the southwestern horizon. "There's going to be an early snow," he said, and for the moment the matter gave him no further concern. Then Sylvia and Harley suddenly shot up and filled his whole horizon. He had seen them far from where he stood, and they were going directly away from the town, not towards it! And one was a girl and the other a tenderfoot!

Now Harley disappeared from the "King's" horizon as suddenly as he had come into it, and the solitary figure of Sylvia filled all its space. She was not a woman now, but the desolate little girl whom he had found alone in the mountains, vainly trying to bury her massacred dead, and whom he had carried away on his saddle-bow. All the long years of protection and tenderness that he had given her came back to him; there was only the image of the slim little girl with flying curls who ran to meet him and who called him "Daddy!"

That little girl was lost out there on the plain, and as sure as the sun had gone from the heavens a snow-storm was coming fast on the wings of the southwestern wind. He knew, and his heart was filled with grief and despair; no rage was left there; that fire had burned out completely, and it seemed to the "King" that it never could be lighted again. It was wonderful now to him that the flame could ever have been so fierce. And the boy Harley was lost, too. Mr. Plummer again remembered, and with a certain admiration, how brave Harley had been, and he remembered, too, that when he first saw him his impulse was to like him greatly.

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He ran back towards the swell where he had last beheld them, hoping to find them or at least to follow upon their traces before the snow fell and hid the trail. He was an old frontiersman, and with a favorable soil he might do it. But long before he reached the swell the snow flew, and the brown clouds and the whirling flakes together blotted out all the plain, save the little circle in which he stood.

He raised his powerful voice and called in tones that carried far, "Sylvia! Sylvia!" But no sound came back save the lonely cry of the wind and the soft, whirring rush of the snow, like the soft beat of wings. The "King" was a brave and sanguine man, physically and mentally disposed to hope, but his heart dropped like lead in water. He saw the slim little girl, with flying brown hair, dead and cold in the snow. Then his courage came back, and with it all his mental coolness. He did not seek to rush after them, floundering here and there in the semi-darkness and calling vainly, but hurried back to the town.

The people had just returned from the candidate's speech, and were crowding into the lobby of the hotel to shake Mr. Grayson's hand and to tell him that he would win by a "million majority." The candidate was enduring this ordeal with his usual good-nature and grace, although the crowded room was hot and close, and the odor of steaming boots arose.

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Into this packed mass of human beings "King" Plummer burst like a bomb. "Help! All of you!" he cried, and his voice cracked like a rifle. "They are lost out on the plain in the storm, and they were wandering away from the town! Miss Morgan! Sylvia! My child! And the young man, Harley!"

There was no mistaking the "King's" meaning. Here was a mountain man, one who knew of what he was talking, one who would raise no false alarm. Both grief and command were in his voice, and the Dakotans responded upon the instant; they knew Sylvia, too—her fresh, young beauty, coming into so small a town, was noticed at once. To the last man they went out into the storm to the rescue; and there were many women who were willing, too.

The candidate seized Mr. Plummer's arm in a fierce grasp.

"Do you mean to say that Sylvia and Harley are lost in that?" he cried, and he pointed into the mass of driving snow.

"Ay, they are there," said the "King," "but we will find them."

"We will find them," echoed Jimmy Grayson, and, though they strove to make him stay at the hotel, he drew his overcoat about his ears and was by his side as "King" Plummer led the way.

Hobart, Blaisdell, even old Tremaine, and Churchill as well, were there, too.

They knew that Sylvia and Harley were somewhere north of the town, and, dividing into groups, five or six to a group, they spread out to a great distance. They carried whiskey for warmth, and lanterns with which to signal to each other, and for guidance in the night that might come before they returned. In the twilight of the storm these lanterns twinkled dimly.

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The "King" himself carried a lantern, and Jimmy Grayson, by his side, could read his face. Mr. Plummer had not told him a word, but he could guess the story. He had come upon them, there was a violent scene of some kind, and now the "King," with death threatening "his little girl," was stricken with remorse. All the candidate's anger against Mr. Plummer was gone, melted away suddenly—and he saw that the "King's" wrath against himself was gone the same way. Now he felt only pity for the stricken man.

The great line of men moved across the plain towards the north, calling to each other now and then and waving the dim lanterns. Jimmy Grayson listened for the welcome cry that the lost had been found, but it did not come. The "King" did not speak save to give orders—he had naturally assumed command of the relief party, and his position was not disputed.

They advanced far northward, and they noticed with increased alarm the thickening of the storm. Whirlwinds of snow beat in their faces. Jimmy Grayson once heard the big, burly man by his side say, in a kind of sobbing whisper, "Oh, my little girl!" and he felt a catch in his own throat.

Then he repeated the "King's" own words, "We will find them."

"And alive!" said the "King," in fierce defiance.

He did not speak again for a long time. He seemed to become unconscious of the presence by his side of Jimmy Grayson, the man whom in his hot wrath he had threatened to betray. At last he turned his head and said, as if it were an impulse:

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"Mr. Grayson, they said I was going to knife you, and I meant to do it! They tempted me, and I was willing to be tempted by them; but, by God! I gave them no promise and I won't. I was your friend, and I'm your friend again!"

"A better I never hope to have," said Jimmy Grayson, and in the storm the hands of the two men met in a grasp as true as it was strong.

"We will not speak of this again," said Mr. Grayson and they never did. A resident of Grafton, Mr. Harrison, came up to them, fighting his way through the snow.

"Mr. Plummer," he said, "there are some rocky hills three or four miles north of here, with hollows and sort of half-way caves here and there in their sides. It's barely possible that Mr. Harley and Miss Morgan have got to one of those places. I think we ought to go there at once, because, because—"

The man's voice failed.

"Speak out," said the "King," "I can stand it."

"Well, it's just this, though I hate to say it. It's a sure thing that they've gone a long distance, and if they've hit on one of the hollows we're likely to find 'em alive if we get there pretty soon, but if they ain't in a hollow they'll be—they'll be—"

"They'll be dead when we do find them. Take us to the hills, Mr. Harrison."

The man, lantern in hand, strode on, and with him were Mr. Grayson and Mr. Plummer. Hobart was at the candidate's elbow. Twilight was at hand and the darkness was increasing, although the snow was thinning. Hobart, peering out on the plain, saw only the swells of snow rising and falling like a white sea, and overhead the sky of sullen clouds. He marked the agony on the faces of the candidate and the "King," and his own heart was heavy. There was no thrill over a mystery now; the lost were too dear to him.

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"It's night," said Mr. Plummer. In his heart was the fear that the two, overpowered, had fallen down and slowly frozen to death under the snow, but he did not dare to whisper it to others.

It was heavy work going through the drifts and keeping the right way over a plain that had the similarity of the sea, but the men did not falter. Jimmy Grayson was always looking into the darkness, striving to see the darker line or blur that would mark the hills, but he asked no questions. The snow ceased, and after a while low, black slopes appeared against the dusky horizon.

"The hills!" said the candidate, and the Grafton man nodded. They increased their pace until they were almost running. Neither Mr. Grayson nor Mr. Plummer knew it, but the Grafton man had little hope; he had merely suggested the place as a last chance.

It took them much longer than they thought or hoped to reach the hills, but when they came to them they began a rapid search. The "King" and the candidate were still together, and the former had taken a lantern from one of the men. They had been looking among the hills for about a quarter of an hour, and they drew somewhat away from the others. The "King" raised his lantern at intervals and threw ribbons of light along the white slopes. They came to a hill a little higher than the rest, and he raised the lantern again. It was not a white reflection that came, but

something misty and brown.

"Dead leaves!" cried the "King." "It's a cave or a hollow."

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He raised the lantern higher, and the light shone directly in at the opening; it shone, too, upon Sylvia's face as she lay asleep in Harley's arms.

"Babes in the wood!" muttered Hobart, who had come up behind them.

The "King" paused a moment. The picture appealed to him, too, and he saw then in Harley only the rescuer of "his little girl." His heart yearned over Harley also. Then he uttered a joyous shout, dropped his lantern, and seized Sylvia. "Daddy," she said, awakening and putting her arms around his neck, "I've come back."

"God bless you, my child, my daughter!" he said.

To Harley it was all a dream; there was something the matter with him—there was a sort of dull, unreal feeling, and these men that he knew seemed to be very far away. Nor did he understand why they pulled him out so roughly, rubbed snow on his face and ears, and chafed his hands violently. Afterwards he remembered hearing dimly some one say, "We're just in time; he was freezing to death," and then he wished they would be gentler. Fiery stuff was poured down his throat, and he coughed and struggled, but they had no mercy. Then they committed the crowning outrage—they took him by the arms, held him up and made him run back and forth in the snow. After that the pain came; there were strong needle-pricks all through him, and he heard some one say in a foolish tone of satisfaction, "He's coming around all right." Then they poured more fiery stuff down his throat.

After a while the needle pains ceased, and Harley understood that they had saved him from freezing to death. He thought at once of Sylvia; there she stood wrapped from chin to heel in a great fur coat, and she smiled at him.

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It was a slow but happy walk back to Grafton. The "King's" joyful shout had been repeated and passed on to all the searchers, and all the lanterns had been whirled aloft in rejoicing signal. Messengers were already hurrying on to Grafton with the news.

Harley walked by the side of Mr. Grayson, who had given his hand one strong clasp and who had said, "Harley, it was like finding a brother." Sylvia leaned on Mr. Plummer's arm because the whole of her strength had not yet come back. "Daddy," she whispered, "where did you come from? We've been waiting for you a long time."

"Something up there must have called me," he replied, reverently, pointing to the heavens, in which the new stars twinkled. "Sylvia," he continued, "I'm not a fool any more. Forgive your old daddy and you can love the boy."

"Not unless you are really, truly, and wholly willing, daddy."

"Really, truly, and wholly, my little girl."

"Now you must tell him so, daddy."

"I'll tell him so."

They were startled by Sylvia suddenly stopping, throwing her arms around Mr. Plummer's neck, and kissing him. But they ascribed it to the hysteria natural in a woman under such circumstances.

The world was still unreal to Harley. Now and then the people with whom he was walking seemed very far away, merely vague black shadows on the white plain of snow; all but Sylvia, who smiled again at him, and who he thought had drawn him back to earth.

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As they approached the town the "King" gave Sylvia to her uncle and fell back a little, until he was by the side of Harley.

"Lad," he said, and he used the word because he felt that Harley was very much younger than he, "you've won her and she's yours; I'll give her to you. I've played the part of father to her, and it's what I ought to keep on playing. I see it now. I guess I keep a daughter and gain a son."

Harley looked squarely into his eyes—the world was real now—and he saw the utmost sincerity there.

"Mr. Plummer," he said, "you are one of God's noblemen."

The "King's" hand and Harley's met in a strong and true grip, and those who noticed thought it was another incident due wholly to the stress of the night and the storm.

When they reached the town Mrs. Grayson took Sylvia in her arms and the others left her. Jimmy Grayson was to speak the next day at Freeport, a village a little farther on, but that speech was never delivered, and when the Freeport people heard the reason they made no complaint.

It was announced the next morning that Mrs. Grayson and Sylvia would leave at once for the candidate's home, as their part of the campaign was finished, but Harley found Sylvia alone in the little parlor of the hotel. She was sitting by the window looking out at the vast snowy plains and the dim blue mountains afar, and apparently she did not hear him as he entered, although he

closed the door behind him with a slight noise. He leaned over her and took one of her hands in both of his.

"Sylvia," he said, "won't you come away from the window a moment?"

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He did not wait for her answer, but drew her away.

"I do not want any one in the street to see me kiss you," he said, and he kissed her.

Her cheeks, already red, grew redder.

"You mustn't do that," she said.

"I can't help myself," he said, humbly, and did it again.

"I have the right," he added, "because you are mine now. Last night Mr. Plummer, of his own free will and volition, gave you to me."

"Good old daddy!" she murmured.

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## XXIII

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### ELECTION NIGHT

At last came the great day which was to tell whether their efforts were a brilliant success or a dire failure—there was no middle ground—and the special train took them to the small city in which the candidate lived. All the correspondents were yet with him, as on the eventful night following the eventful day they must tell the world how Jimmy Grayson looked and what he said when the wires brought the news, good or bad. A few faithful political friends had been invited also to stay with him to the end, and they completed the group which would share the hospitality of the candidate, who must smile and be the good host while the nation was returning his sentence. Harley thought it a bitter ordeal, but it could not be helped.

After his recognition of the great fact that Sylvia and Harley loved each other and belonged to each other, "King" Plummer had gone to Idaho for a while, but he rejoined them on the homeward journey, and his spirits seemed fully recovered. He drifted easily in conversation about her into the old paternal relationship with Sylvia which became him so well, and he never again alluded to that vain dream of his that he might be something else. Moreover, after his temporary alienation he had become a more ardent Graysonite than ever, and would not hear of anything except his triumphant election, despite the immense power of the forces allied against him.

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While they changed cars often in the West, the one that bore them to the candidate's town had been their home for several weeks, and even the engine was the same; thus the train attendants fell under the spell of Jimmy Grayson, and when he walked down their car-steps for the last time they came around him in their soiled working clothes and wished him success. It was scarcely dawn then, the east was not yet white, but Harley could see sincerity written all over their honest faces, and Jimmy Grayson, who had listened to ten thousand words of the same kind, some true and some false, was much moved.

"Sir," said the engineer, "at midnight, when the tale is told, I shall be three hundred miles from here, but if you are not the man, then it is a tale that I shall not care to hear."

"Friends," said Jimmy Grayson, gravely, "I am glad to have your good wishes; the good wish is the father of the good act, and whatever tale the coming night has to tell let us endure it without vaunting or complaint."

As Mr. Grayson and his friends walked away in the growing dawn, the railroad men raised a cheer. A little later Harley heard the puff, puff of a locomotive followed by the grinding of wheels, and the train which had been their home whirled away into that West where they had seen and done so many strange things. Harley tried to follow it awhile with his eyes, because this was like a parting with a human being, an old and faithful friend; he felt, too, that the most vivid chapter yet in his life was closing. Unconsciously he raised his hand and waved good-bye; the others, noticing the act, understood and were silent.

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All were under the influence of the morning, which was dawning slowly and ill. There are fine days in November, yet we cannot depend upon it, and now the month was in one of its bad humors. An overcast sun was struggling through brown, ominous clouds, and its light was pale and cold. A sharp wind whistled against the houses, yet shuttered and silent in these early morning hours. The city was still asleep, and did not know that the candidate had come home to hear his fate.

"Is this ugly sky an omen of ill?" asked Churchill, who, despite his supercilious nature and the fact that he represented an opposition newspaper, had come at last under the spell of Jimmy Grayson and was in a way one of the band.

"If it is a gray sky for Mr. Grayson, it is a gray sky for the other man, too, and I draw no inference from the circumstance," replied Harley.

Nevertheless there was an oppression over the whole group—perhaps it was because they were so near the end; and scarcely another word was said as they walked along the silent street, each thinking of the day at hand and the night to follow.

The candidate had offered all the hospitality of his house, but none would accept, not wishing to intrude upon the first freshness of his family reunion; they intended to register at the hotels and come to his home later on for the news of the day. So they stopped at a street corner, bade him a short farewell, and allowed him to go on alone.

But Harley could not resist the temptation of looking back. They had arrived in the town two hours ahead of time, and he knew that the candidate's family were not yet expecting him, but he could see the house behind its shield of trees, now swept of foliage, and already there were signs of life about it. He saw the candidate's wife run down the steps and meet her husband, and then he looked away.

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"This is one part of a Presidential campaign that we must not watch," he said to the group about him, and without a word they walked to their hotel, not glancing back again, although more than one in the group was secretly envious of Harley, because of the welcome that they knew awaited him a little later.

It was a good hotel that received them, and it was an abounding breakfast that awaited them there. Harley sat near a window of the dining-room, where he could look out upon the street and see the city coming to life, a process that began but slowly, because it is always a holiday when the people cast their votes for a President. Yet the city awoke at last, men began to appear in the streets, a polling-booth opposite the hotel was opened, and the Presidential election had begun.

The dining-room was now filling up, and all around Harley and his friends rose the hum of interested talk. People were beginning to speculate on the result, and to point out the strangers whom Jimmy Grayson had brought among them.

Harley presently went into the lobby and found it crowded. All there were touched by a keen, eager interest, and were balancing the chances. The correspondent, alert, watchful, saw that the bulk of opinion was against Jimmy Grayson. He saw, too, that while there was much local pride in the candidate, it was tinctured by envy, and here and there by malice. He realized to the full the truth of the old adage that a prophet is never without honor save in his own country.

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In that crowded lobby were men who had been conspicuous in local public life when Jimmy Grayson was a mere boy, and they could not understand how he had passed them; it was a chance, they said and believed—mere luck, not merit. Others, in a tone of patronage, told stories of the days when he was a threadbare and penniless young attorney, and they named at least five other men of his age who had been more promising. Then they depreciated his gifts, and in the same breath disclaimed all intention of doing so, believing, too, that the disclaimer was genuine. Yet Harley had no great blame for these men; he understood how bitter it was for them to see the hero march by while they stood still, and it was not the first instance of the kind that he had noticed.

But the crowd, on the whole, was loyal, and sincerely wished Jimmy Grayson success. Yet they could not keep down gloomy forebodings. There had been a defection of a minority within the party, led by Mr. Goodnight, Mr. Crayon, and their associates, who had gone bodily into the enemy's camp, a procedure which had made much noise in the American world, and none could tell how much it would cost. The story of the Philipsburg conference and Jimmy Grayson's great speech at Waterville was known to everybody, and now, while the old politicians applauded his courage and honesty, they began to fear its effects. Harley felt the same thrill of apprehension, the momentary timidity, that even the bravest experience when about to go into battle.

Those in the lobby soon knew Harley and his friends, and the nature of their business, and many questions which they could not answer were asked them. "You have been with Jimmy Grayson all along; will he win?" and whether it was Harley or another he was forced to reply that he did not know.

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Harley now looked at his watch, something he had been eager to do for a time that seemed interminable to him; it was yet early, so the watch told him, but he looked out next at the heavens and the day was unfolding. "I will go now; I refuse to wait any longer," he said to himself, and he slipped away from the crowd.

He went rapidly down the street, and the Presidential campaign was not in his mind at all; the only thought there was Sylvia! Sylvia! He stood presently before the Grayson door and rang the bell. He remembered how he had rung that same bell five months ago, never dreaming that his fate would answer his ring. And now that same happy fate was answering it again, because, when the door swung back, there was Sylvia, her hand upon the bolt and the smile of young love that has found its own upon her face.

"I knew it was you—I knew your ring," she said, unconscious of the fact that one ring is like another.

"And you came to meet me," said Harley. "It is fitting; you opened it first to me and you let my happiness in."

"And you brought mine with you when you came."

They were young and much in love.

Harley stepped inside, and she closed the door.

"I think I shall kiss you," he said.

"Uncle James and Aunt Anna are in the next room."

"I don't want to kiss either Uncle James or Aunt Anna."

"They might come."

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"I defy them—yes, I bid defiance even to a Presidential nominee."

He put his arm around her waist and kissed her.

"You know that he hasn't had time to come."

"Then I give him another chance. I defy that terrible man again. Yes, I defy him twice, thrice, and more times."

She struggled a little, and her cheeks flamed, but she thought how fine, tall, and masterful he was, and how long it was since she had seen him—it had not really been long.

"Sylvia," he said, "this is the next best day."

"The next best day?" wonderingly.

"The next best day to the one on which we shall be married. I think I shall defy your terrible uncle again."

And she blushed redder than ever. As a matter of fact the "terrible uncle," hearing a step in the hall, came to the door of his room and saw this defiance issued to him not only once, but twice. Whereupon he promptly went back into his own room, shut the door, and said to his wife, "Anna, you must not go into the hall for at least ten minutes." He remembered some meetings of his own, and Mrs. Grayson, although she had not looked into the hall, understood perfectly.

Presently Sylvia, keeping herself well into the background, showed Harley into the parlor, and he paid his respects to Mrs. Grayson, who was sincerely glad to see him again. She looked upon him now as one of the family. "King" Plummer came before long, and by-and-by he and Harley went into the town to seek political news. "But I'll be back soon," he said to Sylvia.

"And I'll be at the door when you come," she said to him.

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They did not spend more than an hour in the town, and when they returned the other correspondents were with them. The day had not improved, the lowering clouds still stalked across the horizon, and the wind came cold and sharp out of the northwest.

"I've had a telegram from New York saying that a great vote is being polled," said Hobart, "and I've no doubt it's the case throughout the East. Yet Jimmy Grayson is bound to sit at home helpless while all this great battle is going on."

"He has done his work already," said Harley; "and now it is the rank and file who count."

There was no sign of gloom at the Grayson home. The candidate, refreshed, and with his half-dozen young children around him, was unfeignedly happy, while Mrs. Grayson, hovering near her husband, who had been practically lost to her for, lo! these many months, showed the same joy and relief. She received the group with genuine warmth—her husband's friends were hers—and bade them make the house their home until the fight was over. Sylvia greeted them as old comrades, which, in fact, they were. A room with tables for writing was already set apart for their use.

The children were in holiday attire and thrilled by excitement; they could not be suppressed. They were well aware what it was to be President of the United States, and they failed to understand how any one could vote against their father. "If he is beaten," thought Harley, "it is not Mr. Grayson nor Mrs. Grayson who will feel the most disappointment, but these little children."

Neither the candidate nor his wife alluded to the Presidential race, seeming to enjoy this short respite after the long strain and before the crucial trial yet to come. They talked of the small affairs of the home, and she gave the news of their neighbors, as if they would make the most of this brief hour; yet it was not wholly natural, there was in it a note of suspense, and Harley knew that, despite the joy of reunion, the shadow of the coming night was already over them. Jimmy Grayson must feel that while he idled about his own home the ballots were falling in the boxes off to the East and to the West by the hundred thousand, and his own fate was being decided.

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Harley and Sylvia, after the greetings and the casual talk, slipped away from the others. There was a little glass-covered piazza at the back of the house, and there they sat.

"Now you must tell me all that you have been doing since I left you."

"Nothing worth the telling. How could anything interesting happen after you had gone? But I've been doing some fine thinking."



"Of what?"

"Of you!—always you! I've had to tear up the first page of many of my despatches."

"Why?"

"Because I would address them to Sylvia instead of to the *Gazette*."

"John, I didn't know that you had imagination."

"It isn't imagination; I don't need imagination when I'm near you or thinking of you, which is all the time."

"And you are going to marry a Western girl, after all?" irrelevantly.

"I wouldn't marry any other kind, and there is only one of them that I would marry."

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They did not speak again for a half-minute, but what they said was relevant.

But the best of times must come to an end, even if it is merely to give way to another good time, and Harley could not remain long at the candidate's house, but strolled with Blaisdell and two or three others through the city. He, too, had a sense of helplessness in regard to the campaign. Like Jimmy Grayson, he was now condemned to a period of inaction, and, strive as he might, he could not aid his friend a particle. They went to the local headquarters of the party—two parlors of the largest hotel in the city.

The rooms, which had been thrown together, were packed with men and thick with tobacco-smoke, making the air heavy and hot. News there was none, but clouds of rumor and gossip. The telegraph said bad weather, cold and raw, with gusts of rain, prevailed all over the United States, but that an enormous vote was being polled, nevertheless. In all the booths in all the great cities long lines of people were waiting, and reports of the same character were coming from the country districts. But with the secret ballot there was nothing whatever to indicate which way this vote was being cast, nor would there be until the polls were closed and the official count was begun. It was said that in many of the precincts of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia more than half the vote was cast already, so eager were both sides for victory. These bulletins, more or less vague as they came from time to time, were posted on a blackboard, and their vagueness did not keep them from arousing the keenest interest.

Dexter, the chairman of the state committee, a thin-faced man who talked little, shook his head ominously.

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"I don't like the enormous vote they are polling so early in the big cities," he said. "It shows that the band of traitors led by Goodnight, Crayon, and their kind are getting in their work."

"But we don't know it to be a fact," said Harley, resolved that the cloud should have its silver lining. "For every man in that crowd eager to cast a vote against Jimmy Grayson, there may be one eager to cast a vote for him."

Dexter shook his head again, and with increased gloom. Harley's argument might appeal to his hopes, but not to his judgment.

"I'm sorry that Jimmy Grayson made his attack upon that committee," he said. "It spoke well for his courage and honesty, but it was bad politics."

"I think that courage and honesty are good politics," said Harley, and he left Dexter to his pessimistic thoughts.

The rooms were growing too close, and there was an absence of definite news, so he went again into the open air. The character of the day was unchanged; it was still dark with ominous clouds trooping across the sky, and the wind had grown more bitter.

Harley now found himself under the strain of an extreme anxiety. He did not realize until this day how deeply his own feelings were interwoven with the fate of the campaign, and how bleak the night would look to him and Sylvia if Mr. Grayson were beaten—and he knew that the odds were against him; despite himself, he, a man of calm mind and strong will, was a prey to nerves. He began to shrink at the thought of the count of the votes, and to fear the first real bulletins.

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He walked about the streets awhile to steady himself, and then looked at his watch. It was past noon there, but later in the East and earlier in the West; yet the bulk of the ballots were cast already. In three or four hours more the tabulated vote in the states farthest east would begin to arrive, and they would listen to the opening chapter of the story, a story which he feared to hear.

Absorbed in his thoughts, he had strolled unconsciously towards the country. There, at a turn of the road, he met two people in a light wagon, and they were the candidate and his wife Mrs. Grayson driving. Harley looked up in surprise at their calm, cheerful faces. How could they assume such an air with the combat at its height?

"I'm sorry you and Sylvia were not with us," said Mr. Grayson; "Mrs. Grayson has been taking me to see the changes in the country since I went campaigning. There are a half-dozen new residences in the suburb out yonder, and they've built a new foot-bridge, too, over the river. Oh, our city is looking up!"

They drove on cheerfully, and Harley went back to town. All the arrangements for the night were

made; the two great telegraph companies would handle their despatches in equal proportion, and would send bulletins of the count, as fast as they came, to the candidate. Headquarters would do the same, and there would be no lack of news.

Harley rejoined his comrades at the hotel, but stayed with them only a little while, because he, of course, was to dine with Sylvia and the Graysons. All the others had been invited, but they did not wish to overwhelm the candidate on this day of all days, and none except "King" Plummer would go. [Pg 410]

"Lucky fellow," said Hobart, as Harley walked away.

"But not luckier than he deserves," said Blaisdell.

After dinner Hobart looked at his watch, then shut it, and with a quick motion thrust it into his pocket.

"The polls have closed in three-fourths of the states," he said, "and probably somebody is elected. I wonder who it is?"

Nobody replied, but on their way to Jimmy Grayson's house they passed through the party headquarters. The rooms were so crowded that they could scarcely move, but they managed to approach the blackboard, and they saw written upon it:

"Goodnight, Crayon, and others claim decisive defeat of Grayson. Assert that he will not get one-third the vote of the electoral college."

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Hobart, who felt a thrill of anger. "Why, they have not begun the count of the vote anywhere!"

They left the rooms and went into the street. The November twilight was coming earlier than ever under the shadow of the thickening clouds, and already lights were beginning to shine from many windows. Uniformed messenger-boys were passing.

"The wires will soon be talking," said Churchill.

The candidate's house was not inferior to any in the number of its lights. In the cold, dark twilight it reared a cheerful front, and the candidate himself, when he received them, was steady and calm.

"Some of our friends are here already," he said, and he had them shown into the large room, where the tables for their use had been placed.

It was brilliantly illuminated, and a dozen men were sitting about speculating on the events of the day and hoping for a happy result. Among them was old Senator Curtis, who had come all the way from Wyoming, and he was loudly declaring that if Mr. Grayson were not elected he would never take any interest in another Presidential election. The others made no comment on his declaration. [Pg 411]

Harley came in late. At dinner with the Graysons he had been thinking, when he looked at Sylvia's lovely face across the table, that it would always be just across the table from him now, and the thought was such a happy one that it clung to him.

The correspondents disposed themselves about the room, and placed pencil and paper on the tables; yet there would be nothing for them to write for a long time. They were only to tell the story of how the candidate took it, after the story itself was told. Their business was with either a pæan or a dirge.

Harley looked around at the group, all of whom he knew.

"Have you fellows thought that this is our last meeting?" he asked.

There was a sudden silence in the room. All seemed to feel the solemnity of the moment. Out in the street some happy men, who had helped to empty the bowl, were singing a campaign song, and its sound came faintly to the group.

"A wager to you boys that none of you can name the state from which the first completed return will come. What odds will you give?" said "King" Plummer, who was resolutely seeking to be cheerful.

"We won't take your wager because we'd win, sure," said Hobart. "It will be a precinct in New York City, up-town. They get through quick there; they never fail to be first." [Pg 412]

"Whatever the vote there is, I am going to look upon it as an omen," said Mr. Heathcote. "If our majority is reduced it will mean a bad start, good ending; if our majority is increased, it will mean that a good beginning is half the battle."

Dexter, the chairman of the state campaign committee, entered, his thin face still shadowed by gloomy thoughts.

"We've had a few bulletins at headquarters, but nothing definite," he said. "All the reports so far are from the East, of course, owing to the difference in time, but I'd like mighty well to know what they are doing out there on the Slope and in the Rockies."

"We'll know in good time, Charlie; just you wait," said Jimmy Grayson, who was the calmest man in the room.

"I've done enough waiting already to last me the rest of my life," said Dexter, moodily.

The door was opened softly, and four or five pairs of young eyes peeped shyly into the room. The candidate, with assurances that there was nothing to be told, gently pushed the youthful figures away and closed the door again.

"I would put them to bed," he said, apologetically, "but they can't sleep, and it is not any use for them to try; so they are supposed to be shepherded in another part of the house by a nurse, but they seem to break the bounds now and then."

"I claim the privilege of carrying them the good news when we get it, if they are still awake," said Harley.

A messenger-boy entered with a despatch, but it contained no information, merely an assurance from a devoted New England adherent that he believed Jimmy Grayson was elected, as he felt it in his bones.

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"Why does a man waste time and money in telegraphing us a thing like that?" said Dexter. "It isn't worth anything."

But Harley was not so sure. He believed with Jimmy Grayson that good wishes had more than a sentimental value. He went to the window and gazed into the street. The number of people singing campaign songs as they waited for the news was increasing, and the echoes of much laughter and talk floated towards the house. Farther down the street they were throwing flashlights on white canvas in front of a great crowd, but so far the bulletins were only humorous quotations or patent-medicine advertisements, each to be saluted at the beginning with a cheer and at the end with a groan. He turned back to the table just as another boy bearing a despatch entered the room.

Mr. Dexter had constituted himself the clerk of the evening—that is, he was to sit at the centre-table and read the despatches as they came. He took the yellow envelope from the boy, tore it open, and paused a moment. Then all knew by the change upon his face that the first news had come. Dexter turned to Hobart.

"You were right," he said, "it is from New York City, up-town. The Thirty-first Assembly District in the City of New York gives a majority of 824 for Grayson. This is official."

At another table sat a man with a book containing the complete vote of all the election districts in every state of the Union at the preceding Presidential election. All looked inquiringly at him, and he instantly made the comparison.

"We carried the Thirty-first Assembly District of the City of New York by 1077 four years ago," he said. "Our majority suffers a net loss of 253."

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"Did I not tell you?" exclaimed Heathcote. "A bad start makes a good ending."

"It's a happy sign," said Sylvia, with her usual resolute hopefulness.

But, despite themselves, a gloom settled upon all; the first report from the battle was ominous—such a loss continued would throw the election heavily in favor of the other man—and after her remark they were silent.

Mrs. Grayson looked into the room, but they told her there was nothing, and, whether she believed them or not, she closed the door again without further question.

"Here comes another boy," said Hobart, who was at the window, watching the crowd before the transparency.

"Now this is good news, sure," said "King" Plummer.

It was from another assembly district in New York City, and the party majority was cut down again, but this time the reduction was only 62 votes.

"That's better," said Mr. Heathcote.

"It will have to be a great deal better to elect our man," whispered Hobart to Harley.

Harley went to the window again, and looked down the street towards the transparency, where the opposition voters were cheering wildly at the first news so favorable to their side. Despite himself, Harley felt an unreasoning anger towards them. "You cheer about nothing," he said to himself. "This is only a few thousand votes among millions." Then he was ashamed of his feeling, and left the window.

"The Hub speaks!" exclaimed Mr. Dexter, as he tore open another envelope. Then he announced a vote from one of the wards of Boston.

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"And it speaks right," said the man with the book. "Mr. Grayson cuts down the majority polled against us there four years ago by 433 votes."

A little cheer was raised in the room, and down the street at the transparency there was a cheer,

too, but the voices were not the same as those that cheered a few moments ago.

"Good old Boston," said Hobart, "and we made that gain right where the enemy thought he was strongest!"

The first gain of the evening had a hopeful effect upon all, and they spoke cheerfully.

But a vote from Providence, a minute later went the other way, and it was followed by one of a similar nature from New Haven. The gloom returned. Their minds fluctuated with the bulletins.

"It was too good to last," whispered Hobart, downcast.

The children again appeared at the door and wanted to know if their father was elected. Sylvia took upon herself the task of assuring them that he was not yet elected, but he certainly would be before many hours. Then they went away sanguine and satisfied, and trying to keep sleepy eyelids from closing. In the street the noise was increasing as the crowd received facts, and the cheers were loud and various. But those of the enemy predominated, and Harley thrilled more than once with silent anger. A half-dozen men passed the house singing a song in derision of Jimmy Grayson; some of the words came to them through the window, and Sylvia flushed, but Mr. Grayson himself showed no sign that he understood.

The telegrams now were arriving fast; there were two streams of boys, one coming in at the door and the other going out, and Mr. Dexter, at the table, settled to his work. For a while the chief sounds in the room were the tearing of paper, the rustling of unfolded despatches, and the dry voice of the chairman announcing results. These votes were all from Eastern cities, where the polls closed early and the ballots could be counted quickly. Over the West and the Far West darkness still brooded, and the country districts everywhere were silent. [Pg 416]

Yet Harley knew that throughout the United States the utmost activity prevailed. To him the night was wonderful; in a day of perfect peace nearly twenty million votes had been cast, and the most powerful ruler in the world had been made by the free choice of the nation, just as four years or eight years hence another ruler would be made in his place by the same free choice, the old giving way to the new. Now to-night they were trying to find out who this ruler was, and no one yet could tell.

But the tale would be told in a few hours. Harley knew that over an area of three million square miles, as large as the ancient civilized world, men were at work counting, down to the last remote mountain hamlet, and putting the result on the wires as they counted it. And ninety million people waited, ready to abide by the result, whether it was their man or the other. To him there was something extraordinary in this organized, this peaceful but tremendous activity. To-night all the efforts of the world's most energetic nation were bent upon a single point. In each state the wires talked from every town and village to a common centre, and each state in turn, through its metropolis, talked to the common centre of them all, and the general result of all they said would be known to everybody before morning. It seemed marvellous to him, although he understood it perfectly, that a few hours after the boxes were opened the votes should be counted and accredited to the proper man. [Pg 417]

He resumed his seat at a table, although there was yet but little for him to write, and listened to the dry, monotonous voice of Dexter as he called the vote. The results were still of a variable nature, gains here and losses there, but on the whole the losses were the larger, and the atmosphere of the room grew more discouraging. The great state of New York, upon which they had relied, was showing every sign that it would not justify their faith. The returns from the city of New York, from Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, were all bad, and the most resolute hopes could not make them otherwise.

"As goes New York, so goes the Union," whispered Hobart, quoting an old proverb.

"Maybe that rule will be broken at last," replied Harley, hopefully.

But even Sylvia looked gloomy. There was one thought, as these returns came, in the minds of them all. It was that the members of the Philipsburg Committee had made good their threat; their defection had drawn from Grayson thousands of votes in a pivotal state, and if he had ever had a chance of election this took it from him. Yet no one uttered a word of reproach for Jimmy Grayson, although Harley knew that those who called themselves practical politicians were silently upbraiding him. He feared that they might consider their early warnings justified, and he resented it.

A discordant note, too, was sounded by the South; Alabama, a state that they considered sure, although by a small majority, would go for the other man if the returns continued of the same tone. The only ray of light came from New England, whence it had not been expected. The large cities there were showing slight increases for Jimmy Grayson. [Pg 418]

"Who would have thought it?" said Mr. Heathcote.

But it seemed too small to have any effect, and they turned their minds to other parts of the country that seemed to be more promising ground. The voice of Mr. Dexter, growing hoarse from incessant use and wholly without expression, read a bulletin from New York:

"Great crowd in front of the residence of the Honorable Mr. Goodnight, on upper Fifth Avenue, and he is speaking to them from the steps. Says the election of their man is assured. Derides Mr.

Grayson; says no man can betray predominant interests and succeed. Crowd hooting the name of Grayson."

"The traitor!" exclaimed Hobart.

But Jimmy Grayson said nothing. Harley watched him closely, and he knew now that the candidate's expressionless face was but a mask—it was only human that he should feel deep emotion. Harley saw his lips quiver faintly now and then, and once or twice his eyes flashed. Down the street, in front of the transparency, there was a tremendous noise, the people had divided according to their predilections and were singing rival campaign songs, but there was no disorder.

Waiters came in bearing refreshments, and during a lull in the bulletins they ate and drank. Mrs. Grayson also joined them for a little while. She said nothing about the news, and Harley inferred from her silence on the point that she knew it to be discouraging. But he saw her give her husband a glance of pride and devotion that said as plain as print, "Even if you are beaten, you are the man who should have been elected." She reported that the younger of the children had dropped off to sleep, but the others were still eager.

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Again some men passing the house raised a cry in derision of Jimmy Grayson, and Mrs. Grayson's face flushed. The others did not know what to do; they could not go out and rebuke the deriders, as that would only make a bad matter worse, but the men soon passed on. Mrs. Grayson stayed only a little while in the room, retiring on the plea of domestic duties. Jimmy Grayson, too, went out to see his children, he said, but Harley thought that man and wife wished to talk over the prospect.

The news, after the lull, began to come faster than ever. The West spoke at last, and its first words came through Denver and Salt Lake, but its voice was non-committal. There was nothing in it to indicate how Colorado and Utah, both doubtful states, would go. But presently, when Mr. Dexter broke an envelope and opened a bulletin, he laughed.

"Boys," he said, "here's faith for you: the precinct of Waterville, in Wyoming casts every one of her votes for Grayson."

They cheered. Certainly the people who had heard Mr. Grayson's decisive speech were loyal to him, and they should have honor despite their fewness. But immediately behind it came a bulletin that gave them the heaviest blow they had yet received.

"Complete returns from more than three-fourths of the precincts in the state," read Mr. Dexter, "show beyond doubt that New Jersey has gone at least 20,000 against Grayson."

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"I never did think much of New Jersey, anyhow," said Hobart, sourly.

They laughed, but there was no mirth in the laugh. Tears rose in Sylvia's eyes. Ten minutes later, Alabama had wheeled into line with New Jersey it was certainly against Grayson and the news from New York was growing worse. Harley, in his heart, knew that there was no hope of the state, although he tried to draw encouragement from scattered votes here and there. From the Middle West the news was mixed, but its general tenor was not favorable. But New England was still behaving well.

"Our vote in Massachusetts surprises me," said Mr. Heathcote; "we shall more than cut their majority in half. We shall carry Boston and Worcester, and we are even making gains in the country districts."

"Almost complete returns from Michigan and Wisconsin show that the former has gone for Grayson by a substantial majority, and the latter against him by a majority about the same," read Mr. Dexter.

"Which shows that Michigan is much the finer state of the two," said Hobart.

"One state at least is secure," said Harley.

They heard a tremendous cheer down the street in front of the transparency, and Harley went to the window. His heart fell when he saw that the cheer, was continued, came from the opposition crowd. It was announced definitely on the cloth that New York had gone against Grayson; the returns permitted no doubt of it, and there was reason why the enemy should rejoice. Presently their own bulletins confirmed the bad news, and announced that off in another city the bands were serenading the other man.

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Blow followed blow. Connecticut, despite gains made there, went against Grayson by a majority, small it is true, but decisive, and Illinois and Indiana speedily followed her bad lead. To Harley all seemed over, and he could not take it with resignation. Jimmy Grayson was the better man on the better platform, and he should have been elected. It was a crime to reject him. An angry mist came over his eyes, and he walked into the hall that no one should see it. But Mr. and Mrs. Grayson stood at the end of the hall, evidently having just come from the children's room, and before he could turn away he heard her say:

"We have lost, but you are still the man of the nation to me."

As he was returning he met Sylvia, and now the tears in her eyes were plainly visible.

"John, it can't be true! He isn't beaten, is he?"

"No, it is not true, Sylvia," he said, telling what he did not believe. "We still have a chance."

They returned at once to the room, and Mr. Grayson came in a minute later, his face wearing the same marble mask. When two or three forced themselves to speak encouraging words, he smiled and said there was yet hope. But Harley had none, and he felt sure that Jimmy Grayson, too, was without it.

"Good news from Iowa!" suddenly cried Mr. Dexter. "A despatch from Des Moines reports heavy gains for Grayson throughout the south and west of the state."

Here was a fresh breath of life, and for a moment they felt glad, but North Dakota, a state for which they had hoped but scarcely expected, soon reported against them. The good news could not last.

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"Anything more from Massachusetts?" asked Mr. Heathcote.

Mr. Dexter was opening a despatch and he gave a gasp when he looked at it.

"Massachusetts in doubt!" he exclaimed. "Grayson makes heavy gains in the country districts as well as in the cities. Our National Committee is claiming Massachusetts!"

There was a burst of cheering in the room. They had never even hoped for Massachusetts. From first to last it was conceded to the enemy.

"Oh, if Massachusetts only had as many votes as New York!" groaned Hobart. "This is so good it can't be true!"

But Sylvia smiled through her tears.

Soon there was another cheer. Fresh despatches from Massachusetts confirmed the earlier news and made it yet better; then the state was in doubt, now it inclined to Jimmy Grayson; the gains came in, steady and large.

"We've got it by at least 20,000," exclaimed Mr. Dexter, exultantly. "It's a regular upset. Who'd have thought it?"

It was true. It was known in a quarter of an hour that Massachusetts had given a majority of 25,000 for Grayson, and behind their big sister came New Hampshire and Rhode Island, with small but sure majorities. Jimmy Grayson had carried three New England states, when all of them had been conceded to the enemy, one of the most surprising changes ever known in a Presidential election.

There were repeated cheers in the room. Even Jimmy Grayson was compelled to smile in satisfaction. But Harley did not have hope. This, in his opinion, was merely a pleasant incident—it could not have much effect on the result; Massachusetts had a large vote, but those of New Hampshire and Rhode Island were small, and there against them stood the gigantic state of New York, towering like a mountain. New York had the biggest vote of all, and he did not see how it could be overcome.

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Harley now and then wrote a paragraph of his despatch to his newspaper, telling of the scene at the candidate's house and how he and his friends looked and talked, but it did not take all his time. By-and-by he went out on the steps to see the crowd in the streets and to get the fresh air. The night was cold and raw, but its touch was soothing. His thoughts were with Jimmy Grayson. He yet had little hope, and he was thinking of all those gigantic labors wasted; it was a case where a man must win or lose every thing. At the transparency the rival crowds were cheering or groaning according to the news that came.

Harley turned back and met Mrs. Grayson.

"Tell me, Mr. Harley," she said, and her eyes were eager, "just how the election stands so far. I know that you will tell me the truth; is there really as much hope as the others seem to feel?"

Harley looked into her clear, brave eyes, and he replied honestly:

"I think there is some hope, Mrs. Grayson, but not much. Too many big states have gone against us, and we cannot offset big states with little ones. New York, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Alabama are all in the hostile line."

"Thank you for the truth," she said. "I can stand it, and so can Mr. Grayson."

But Harley was not sure. He felt at times that this ordeal was too great for any man or woman. When he returned to the room they were announcing news from the Pacific coast.

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"We have Washington," said Mr. Dexter; "and Oregon is against us, but California is in doubt."

"But we mean to have California," said Sylvia, and the others smiled.

Good reports came from the Rocky Mountain region, all the states there except Utah going for Grayson. It had been thought once by both sides that these doubtful states would decide the election, but with the great upset in the East and Middle West affairs took on another complexion, and they must make new calculations.

"Has anything been heard from Pennsylvania?" asked Mr. Heathcote.

Several laughed, and the laugh was significant.

"Nothing at all," replied Mr. Dexter, and there was a suggestion of contempt in his tone; "but why should we want to hear anything? It's sure for the enemy by at least 100,000, and he may get 200,000. Pennsylvania is one state from which I don't want to hear anything at all."

They laughed again, but, as nothing yet came from Pennsylvania, Harley's curiosity about it began to rise. "Strange that we do not hear anything," he said; but Mr. Dexter laughed, and promised to read in an extra loud tone the first Pennsylvania bulletin they should get.

It was nearly midnight now and the election was still undecided; midnight came and the situation was yet unchanged, but a full half-hour later Mr. Dexter cleared his throat and said, in a high voice:

"Listen, Mr. Harley! Here's your first Pennsylvania bulletin!"

He was sarcastic both in voice and look.

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"Complete reports from Pittsburg, Alleghany, and their surrounding districts show remarkable change. This district gives 20,000 majority for Grayson."

Then Mr. Dexter, holding the telegram in his hand, sat open-mouthed, barely realizing what he had read. But Harley sprang up with exultant cry. For once he lost his self-control.

"We are not beaten yet!" he cried.

"We are not beaten yet!" echoed Sylvia.

They waited feverishly for more Pennsylvania news, and presently it came in a despatch from Philadelphia. Grayson had carried that great city by a small majority, and the enemy was frightened about the state. A third despatch from Harrisburg, the state capital, confirmed the news; the state of Pennsylvania, coming next to New York in the size of its vote, was in doubt. It was the most astonishing fact of the election, but every return showed that Grayson had developed marvellous strength there. The National Committee issued a bulletin claiming it, but the other side claimed it, too; it would be at least two hours yet before the claim could be decided, and they must suffer in suspense.

Harley and Hobart walked together into the street. Harley's forehead was damp.

"This is getting on my nerves," he said.

"If Pennsylvania goes for Grayson, what then?" asked Hobart.

"It means that Grayson is elected; an hour ago I could not have dreamed of such a thing."

Down the street the crowd was roaring and cheering, and the roars and cheers were about equally divided between the two parties.

When they returned to the room the volunteer secretary was just announcing that Iowa was safely in the Grayson column. It was conceded to him by 15,000. Further news from Pennsylvania was indecisive, but it continued good.

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Mrs. Grayson was in the room, and Harley looked at her and her husband. The faces of both had become grave, and Harley knew why. The Presidential chair was not wholly out of sight, after all, and the chance was sufficient to bring upon them both a sense of mighty responsibilities. There was a great shout down the street.

"They have posted a bulletin," said Hobart, who was at the window. "It says that California has gone for Grayson by 10,000, and that all indications point to his carrying Ohio."

"I was right, and we do have California," said Sylvia.

Again Jimmy Grayson and his wife exchanged that grave look. It seemed that each was frightened a little. But Mr. Dexter did not notice it. He was reading a telegram from New York saying that consternation over the news from Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Iowa prevailed in the hostile ranks; they no longer claimed the election, they merely asserted that it was in doubt; it was admitted that while Goodnight, Crayon, and their friends had taken many votes from Jimmy Grayson, he was making up the difference, and perhaps more, elsewhere.

"If Jimmy Grayson were to come so near and yet miss, it would be more than mortal flesh could bear," whispered Hobart.

"It would have to be borne," replied Harley.

It was far past one o'clock in the morning. The room was hot and close. The floor was littered with envelopes and telegrams. The two lines of telegraph-boys had trodden two trails in the carpet, and Harley began to feel the long strain. All the men had red eyes and black streaks under them. Yet they were as keen as ever to hear the last detail. It seemed to every one that the fate of Jimmy Grayson was now hanging in the balance; a feather would tip it this way or that, and the room sank into an unusual silence, the silence of painful suspense.

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There was a long wait and then came a telegram rather thicker than the others. Somehow all of them felt that this told the story, and the fingers of Mr. Dexter trembled as he tore open the

envelope. He paused, holding it a moment between his fingers, and then, in a quivering voice, he read:

"Complete returns from the state of Pennsylvania give it to Grayson by 18,000, and he is chosen President of the United States by a majority of 36 in the electoral college. Our enemies concede their defeat. We send our heartiest congratulations to Mr. Grayson on his victory, and on the great campaign he made. Everybody here recognizes that it was Grayson who won for Grayson."

It was signed with the name of the chairman of the National Committee, and with a deep "Ah!" the reader let it fall upon the table, where it lay. Then there was a half-minute of intense silence in the room. That for which they had long fought and for which they had scarcely hoped had come at the eleventh hour. Mr. Grayson was the President-elect. They could not speak; they were awed.

It was Mrs. Grayson who first broke the silence. She ran to her husband, threw her arms around him, and exclaimed:

"Oh, Jimmy! It is almost too much for us to undertake!"

But Jimmy Grayson was not afraid. He stood up and Harley saw a glow of deep emotion come over his face. [Pg 428]

"As God is my judge," he said, "I shall try with my utmost strength to fulfil the duties of this high place."

Sylvia, not knowing what else to do, put her hand in Harley's; and he held it.

There was a tremendous burst of cheering in front of the house, and a band began to play. Above the music swelled a continuous roar for the President-elect, "Grayson!" "Grayson!" "Grayson!" They were all for him now. There was no need for Harley to wake up the children; the thunders of applause already brought them, triumphing in a result of which they had never felt any doubt.

"You will have to speak to the people, Mr. Grayson," said Mr. Dexter. "It is their right. You are no longer a free man; you belong to the nation now."

The President-elect went out on the veranda and spoke to them with a certain solemnity and majesty while they listened in respectful silence. Meanwhile telegrams of congratulation were pouring into the house from all parts of the world, and out in the distant mountains men came down to the camps and spoke to each other about the President-to-be.

Harley's last despatch was sent, the crowd was gone, the other correspondents were on their way to the hotel, and the people were turning out the lights, but he yet lingered at the Grayson home. It was Jimmy Grayson who asked him to wait a moment, and they stood alone on the dark veranda.

"Harley," said Jimmy Grayson, and there was much feeling in his voice, "you have been the best friend I ever had, and I am so selfish that I do not want to lose you. Stay with me; be my secretary. In these later days the office of the President's secretary has grown to be a big one. I think that you are the best man in the world for it, and if I am re-elected you shall go into the Cabinet. You will be old enough then. Remember, Harley, that it is I who ask a favor now, and it is for you to grant it." [Pg 429]

The hands of the two strong men met in a strong grasp.

"I accept the offer," said Harley.

The President-elect turned away, faded into the darkness of his own house, and another figure took his place. A small, warm hand slipped into Harley's, and he held it fast.

"What was he saying to you?" asked Sylvia.

"He was asking me to be his secretary."

"And your reply?"

"I hesitated and asked for a bribe."

"Oh, John!"

"I said that if, one month from to-day and with the assistance of a minister, he would give you to me forever, I would take the place."

"What did he say then?"

"He said the price was high, but I could have it. And we shall all be together again for four years more, and perhaps eight."

Her eyes, very close to his, were shining through a mist of happy tears, and, standing there at the doorstep, he kissed her in the darkness.



## THE END

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