

# **Mr. Crewe's Career — Volume 1 eBook**

## **Mr. Crewe's Career — Volume 1 by Winston Churchill**

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# Contents

<a href="#">Mr. Crewe's Career — Volume 1 eBook.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Table of Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Page 1.....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Page 2.....</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Page 3.....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Page 4.....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Page 5.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Page 6.....</a>	<a href="#">15</a>
<a href="#">Page 7.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">Page 8.....</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Page 9.....</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">Page 10.....</a>	<a href="#">21</a>
<a href="#">Page 11.....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">Page 12.....</a>	<a href="#">24</a>
<a href="#">Page 13.....</a>	<a href="#">26</a>
<a href="#">Page 14.....</a>	<a href="#">28</a>
<a href="#">Page 15.....</a>	<a href="#">30</a>
<a href="#">Page 16.....</a>	<a href="#">32</a>
<a href="#">Page 17.....</a>	<a href="#">33</a>
<a href="#">Page 18.....</a>	<a href="#">35</a>
<a href="#">Page 19.....</a>	<a href="#">37</a>
<a href="#">Page 20.....</a>	<a href="#">39</a>
<a href="#">Page 21.....</a>	<a href="#">41</a>
<a href="#">Page 22.....</a>	<a href="#">43</a>

Page 23.....	45
Page 24.....	46
Page 25.....	48
Page 26.....	50
Page 27.....	52
Page 28.....	54
Page 29.....	56
Page 30.....	58
Page 31.....	60
Page 32.....	62
Page 33.....	64
Page 34.....	66
Page 35.....	68
Page 36.....	70
Page 37.....	72
Page 38.....	73
Page 39.....	74
Page 40.....	76
Page 41.....	78
Page 42.....	80
Page 43.....	82
Page 44.....	84
Page 45.....	86
Page 46.....	88
Page 47.....	90
Page 48.....	92

<a href="#">Page 49.....</a>	<a href="#">94</a>
<a href="#">Page 50.....</a>	<a href="#">96</a>
<a href="#">Page 51.....</a>	<a href="#">98</a>
<a href="#">Page 52.....</a>	<a href="#">100</a>
<a href="#">Page 53.....</a>	<a href="#">102</a>
<a href="#">Page 54.....</a>	<a href="#">103</a>
<a href="#">Page 55.....</a>	<a href="#">105</a>
<a href="#">Page 56.....</a>	<a href="#">107</a>
<a href="#">Page 57.....</a>	<a href="#">109</a>
<a href="#">Page 58.....</a>	<a href="#">111</a>
<a href="#">Page 59.....</a>	<a href="#">113</a>
<a href="#">Page 60.....</a>	<a href="#">115</a>
<a href="#">Page 61.....</a>	<a href="#">117</a>
<a href="#">Page 62.....</a>	<a href="#">119</a>
<a href="#">Page 63.....</a>	<a href="#">121</a>
<a href="#">Page 64.....</a>	<a href="#">123</a>
<a href="#">Page 65.....</a>	<a href="#">125</a>
<a href="#">Page 66.....</a>	<a href="#">126</a>
<a href="#">Page 67.....</a>	<a href="#">128</a>
<a href="#">Page 68.....</a>	<a href="#">130</a>
<a href="#">Page 69.....</a>	<a href="#">132</a>
<a href="#">Page 70.....</a>	<a href="#">133</a>
<a href="#">Page 71.....</a>	<a href="#">134</a>
<a href="#">Page 72.....</a>	<a href="#">136</a>
<a href="#">Page 73.....</a>	<a href="#">138</a>
<a href="#">Page 74.....</a>	<a href="#">140</a>

<a href="#">Page 75.....</a>	<a href="#">142</a>
<a href="#">Page 76.....</a>	<a href="#">144</a>
<a href="#">Page 77.....</a>	<a href="#">146</a>
<a href="#">Page 78.....</a>	<a href="#">148</a>
<a href="#">Page 79.....</a>	<a href="#">150</a>
<a href="#">Page 80.....</a>	<a href="#">152</a>
<a href="#">Page 81.....</a>	<a href="#">154</a>
<a href="#">Page 82.....</a>	<a href="#">156</a>
<a href="#">Page 83.....</a>	<a href="#">157</a>
<a href="#">Page 84.....</a>	<a href="#">158</a>
<a href="#">Page 85.....</a>	<a href="#">159</a>
<a href="#">Page 86.....</a>	<a href="#">161</a>
<a href="#">Page 87.....</a>	<a href="#">163</a>
<a href="#">Page 88.....</a>	<a href="#">165</a>
<a href="#">Page 89.....</a>	<a href="#">167</a>
<a href="#">Page 90.....</a>	<a href="#">169</a>
<a href="#">Page 91.....</a>	<a href="#">170</a>
<a href="#">Page 92.....</a>	<a href="#">171</a>
<a href="#">Page 93.....</a>	<a href="#">172</a>
<a href="#">Page 94.....</a>	<a href="#">173</a>
<a href="#">Page 95.....</a>	<a href="#">175</a>
<a href="#">Page 96.....</a>	<a href="#">176</a>
<a href="#">Page 97.....</a>	<a href="#">177</a>
<a href="#">Page 98.....</a>	<a href="#">179</a>
<a href="#">Page 99.....</a>	<a href="#">181</a>
<a href="#">Page 100.....</a>	<a href="#">183</a>



# Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
THE HONOURABLE HILARY VANE		1
SITS FOR HIS PORTRAIT		
CHAPTER II		7
CHAPTER III		12
CHAPTER IV		22
CHAPTER V		31
CHAPTER VI		41
CHAPTER VII		52
CHAPTER VIII		64
CHAPTER IX		82
CHAPTER X		94

## Page 1

### THE HONOURABLE HILARY VANE SITS FOR HIS PORTRAIT

I may as well begin this story with Mr. Hilary Vane, more frequently addressed as the Honourable Hilary Vane, although it was the gentleman's proud boast that he had never held an office in his life. He belonged to the Vanes of Camden Street,—a beautiful village in the hills near Ripton,—and was, in common with some other great men who had made a noise in New York and the nation, a graduate of Camden Wentworth Academy. But Mr. Vane, when he was at home, lived on a wide, maple-shaded street in the city of Ripton, cared for by an elderly housekeeper who had more edges than a new-fangled mowing machine. The house was a porticoed one which had belonged to the Austens for a hundred years or more, for Hilary Vane had married, towards middle age, Miss Sarah Austen. In two years he was a widower, and he never tried it again; he had the Austens' house, and that many-edged woman, Euphrasia Cotton, the Austens' housekeeper.

The house was of wood, and was painted white as regularly as leap year. From the street front to the vegetable garden in the extreme rear it was exceedingly long, and perhaps for propriety's sake—Hilary Vane lived at one end of it and Euphrasia at the other. Hilary was sixty-five, Euphrasia seventy, which is not old for frugal people, though it is just as well to add that there had never been a breath of scandal about either of them, in Ripton or elsewhere. For the Honourable Hilary's modest needs one room sufficed, and the front parlour had not been used since poor Sarah Austen's demise, thirty years before this story opens.

In those thirty years, by a sane and steady growth, Hilary Vane had achieved his present eminent position in the State. He was trustee for I know not how many people and institutions, a deacon in the first church, a lawyer of such ability that he sometimes was accorded the courtesy-title of "Judge." His only vice—if it could be called such—was in occasionally placing a piece, the size of a pea, of a particular kind of plug tobacco under his tongue,—and this was not known to many people. Euphrasia could not be called a wasteful person, and Hilary had accumulated no small portion of this world's goods, and placed them as propriety demanded, where they were not visible to the naked eye: and be it added in his favour that he gave as secretly, to institutions and hospitals the finances and methods of which were known to him.

As concrete evidence of the Honourable Hilary Vane's importance, when he travelled he had only to withdraw from his hip-pocket a book in which many coloured cards were neatly inserted, an open-sesame which permitted him to sit without payment even in those wheeled palaces of luxury known as Pullman cars. Within the limits of the State he did not even have to open the book, but merely say, with a twinkle of his eyes to the conductor, "Good morning, John," and John would reply with a bow and a genial and



usually witty remark, and point him out to a nobody who sat in the back of the car. So far had Mr. Hilary Vane's talents carried him.

## Page 2

The beginning of this eminence dated back to the days before the Empire, when there were many little principalities of railroads fighting among themselves. For we are come to a changed America. There was a time, in the days of the sixth Edward of England, when the great landowners found it more profitable to consolidate the farms, seize the common lands, and acquire riches hitherto undreamed of. Hence the rising of tailor Ket and others, and the leveling of fences and barriers, and the eating of many sheep. It may have been that Mr. Vane had come across this passage in English history, but he drew no parallels. His first position of trust had been as counsel for that principality known in the old days as the Central Railroad, of which a certain Mr. Duncan had been president, and Hilary Vane had fought the Central's battles with such telling effect that when it was merged into the one Imperial Railroad, its stockholders—to the admiration of financiers—were guaranteed ten per cent. It was, indeed, rumoured that Hilary drew the Act of Consolidation itself. At any rate, he was too valuable an opponent to neglect, and after a certain interval of time Mr. Vane became chief counsel in the State for the Imperial Railroad, on which dizzy height we now behold him. And he found, by degrees, that he had no longer time for private practice.

It is perhaps gratuitous to add that the Honourable Hilary Vane was a man of convictions. In politics he would have told you—with some vehemence, if you seemed to doubt—that he was a Republican. Treason to party he regarded with a deep-seated abhorrence, as an act for which a man should be justly outlawed. If he were in a mellow mood, with the right quantity of Honey Dew tobacco under his tongue, he would perhaps tell you why he was a Republican, if he thought you worthy of his confidence. He believed in the gold standard, for one thing; in the tariff (left unimpaired in its glory) for another, and with a wave of his hand would indicate the prosperity of the nation which surrounded him,—a prosperity too sacred to tamper with.

One article of his belief, and in reality the chief article, Mr. Vane would not mention to you. It was perhaps because he had never formulated the article for himself. It might be called a faith in the divine right of Imperial Railroads to rule, but it was left out of the verbal creed. This is far from implying hypocrisy to Mr. Vane. It was his foundation-rock and too sacred for light conversation. When he allowed himself to be bitter against various “young men with missions” who had sprung up in various States of the Union, so-called purifiers of politics, he would call them the unsuccessful with a grievance, and recommend to them the practice of charity, forbearance, and other Christian virtues. Thank God, his State was not troubled with such.

In person Mr. Hilary Vane was tall, with a slight stoop to his shoulders, and he wore the conventional double-breasted black coat, which reached to his knees, and square-toed congress boots. He had a Puritan beard, the hawk-like Vane nose, and a twinkling eye that spoke of a sense of humour and a knowledge of the world. In short, he was no man's fool, and on occasions had been more than a match for certain New York lawyers with national reputations.

## Page 3

It is rare, in this world of trouble, that such an apparently ideal and happy state of existence is without a canker. And I have left the revelation of the canker to the last. Ripton knew it was there, Camden Street knew it, and Mr. Vane's acquaintances throughout the State; but nobody ever spoke of it. Euphrasia shed over it the only tears she had known since Sarah Austen died, and some of these blotted the only letters she wrote. Hilary Vane did not shed tears, but his friends suspected that his heart-strings were torn, and pitied him. Hilary Vane fiercely resented pity, and that was why they did not speak of it. This trouble of his was the common point on which he and Euphrasia touched, and they touched only to quarrel. Let us out with it—Hilary Vane had a wild son, whose name was Austen.

Euphrasia knew that in his secret soul Mr. Vane attributed this wildness, and what he was pleased to designate as profligacy, to the Austen blood. And Euphrasia resented it bitterly. Sarah Austen had been a young, elfish thing when he married her,—a dryad, the elderly and learned Mrs. Tredway had called her. Mr Vane had understood her about as well as he would have understood Mary, Queen of Scots, if he had been married to that lady. Sarah Austen had a wild, shy beauty, startled, alert eyes like an animal, and rebellious black hair that curled about her ears and gave her a faun-like appearance. With a pipe and the costume of Rosalind she would have been perfect. She had had a habit of running off for the day into the hills with her son, and the conventions of Ripton had been to her as so many defunct blue laws. During her brief married life there had been periods of defiance from her lasting a week, when she would not speak to Hilary or look at him, and these periods would be followed by violent spells of weeping in Euphrasia's arms, when the house was no place for Hilary. He possessed by matrimony and intricate mechanism of which his really admirable brain could not grasp the first principles; he felt for her a real if uncomfortable affection, but when she died he heaved a sigh of relief, at which he was immediately horrified.

Austen he understood little better, but his affection for the child may be likened to the force of a great river rushing through a narrow gorge, and he vied with Euphrasia in spoiling him. Neither knew what they were doing, and the spoiling process was interspersed with occasional and (to Austen) unmeaning intervals of severe discipline. The boy loved the streets and the woods and his fellow-beings; his punishments were a series of afternoons in the house, during one of which he wrecked the bedroom where he was confined, and was soundly whaled with an old slipper that broke under the process. Euphrasia kept the slipper, and once showed it to Hilary during a quarrel they had when the boy was grown up and gone and the house was silent, and Hilary had turned away, choking, and left the room. Such was his cross.

## Page 4

To make it worse, the boy had love his father. Nay, still loved him. As a little fellow, after a scolding for some wayward prank, he would throw himself into Hilary's arms and cling to him, and would never know how near he came to unmanning him. As Austen grew up, they saw the world in different colours: blue to Hilary was red to Austen, and white, black; essentials to one were non-essentials to the other; boys and girls, men and women, abhorred by one were boon companions to the other.

Austen made fun of the minister, and was compelled to go church twice on Sundays and to prayer-meeting on Wednesdays. Then he went to Camden Street, to live with his grandparents in the old Vane house and attend Camden Wentworth Academy. His letters, such as they were, were inimitable if crude, but contained not the kind of humour Hilary Vane knew. Camden Wentworth, principal and teachers, was painted to the life; and the lad could hardly wait for vacation time to see his father, only to begin quarreling with him again.

I pass over escapades in Ripton that shocked one half of the population and convulsed the other half. Austen went to the college which his father had attended,—a college of splendid American traditions,—and his career there might well have puzzled a father of far greater tolerance and catholicity. Hilary Vane was a trustee, and journeyed more than once to talk the matter over with the president, who had been his classmate there.

"I love that boy, Hilary," the president had said at length, when pressed for a frank opinion,—“there isn't a soul in the place, I believe, that doesn't,—undergraduates and faculty,—but he has given me more anxious thought than any scholar I have ever had.”

“Trouble,” corrected Mr. Vane, sententiously.

“Well, yes, trouble,” answered the president, smiling, “but upon my soul, I think it is all animal spirits.”

“A euphemism for the devil,” said Hilary, grimly; “he is the animal part of us, I have been brought up to believe.”

The president was a wise man, and took another tack.

“He has a really remarkable mind, when he chooses to use it. Every once in a while he takes your breath away—but he has to become interested. A few weeks ago Hays came to me direct from his lecture room to tell me about a discussion of Austen's in constitutional law. Hays, you know, is not easily enthused, but he declares your son has as fine a legal brain as he has come across in his experience. But since then, I am bound to admit,” added the president, sadly, “Austen seems not to have looked at a lesson.”

““Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel,”” replied Hilary.



“He’ll sober down,” said the president, stretching his conviction a little, “he has two great handicaps: he learns too easily, and he is too popular.” The president looked out of his study window across the common, surrounded by the great elms which had been planted when Indian lads played among the stumps and the red flag of England had flown from the tall pine staff. The green was covered now with students of a conquering race, skylarking to and fro as they looked on at a desultory baseball game. “I verily believe,” said the president, “at a word from your son, most of them would put on their coats and follow him on any mad expedition that came into his mind.”

## Page 5

Hilary Vane groaned more than once in the train back to Ripton. It meant nothing to him to be the father of the most popular man in college.

“The mad expedition” came at length in the shape of a fight with the townspeople, in which Austen, of course, was the ringleader. If he had inherited his mother’s eccentricities, he had height and physique from the Vanes, and one result was a week in bed for the son of the local plumber and a damage suit against the Honourable Hilary. Another result was that Austen and a Tom Gaylord came back to Ripton on a long suspension, which, rumour said, would have been expulsion if Hilary were not a trustee. Tom Gaylord was proud of suspension in such company. More of him later. He was the son of old Tom Gaylord, who owned more lumber than any man in the State, and whom Hilary Vane believed to be the receptacle of all the vices.

Eventually Austen went back and graduated—not summa cum laude, honesty compels me to add. Then came the inevitable discussion, and to please his father he went to the Harvard Law School for two years. At the end of that time, instead of returning to Ripton, a letter had come from him with the postmark of a Western State, where he had fled with a classmate who owned ranch. Evidently the worldly consideration to be derived from conformity counted little with Austen Vane. Money was a medium only—not an end. He was in the saddle all day, with nothing but the horizon to limit him; he loved his father, and did not doubt his father’s love for him, and he loved Euphrasia. He could support himself, but he must see life. The succeeding years brought letters and quaint, useless presents to both the occupants of the lonely house,—Navajo blankets and Indian jeweler and basket-work,—and Austen little knew how carefully these were packed away and surreptitiously gazed at from time to time. But to Hilary the Western career was a disgrace, and such meagre reports of it as came from other sources than Austen tended only to confirm him in this opinion.

It was commonly said of Mr. Paul Pardriff that not a newspaper fell from the press that he did not have a knowledge of its contents. Certain it was that Mr. Pardriff made a specialty of many kinds of knowledge, political and otherwise, and, the information he could give—if he chose —about State and national affairs was of a recondite and cynical nature that made one wish to forget about the American flag. Mr. Pardriff was under forty, and with these gifts many innocent citizens of Ripton naturally wondered why the columns of his newspaper, the Ripton Record, did not more closely resemble the spiciness of his talk in the office of Gales’ Hotel. The columns contained, instead, such efforts as essays on a national flower and the abnormal size of the hats of certain great men, notably Andrew Jackson; yes, and the gold standard; and in times of political stress they were devoted to a somewhat fulsome praise

## Page 6

of regular and orthodox Republican candidates,—and praise of any one was not in character with the editor. Ill-natured people said that the matter in his paper might possibly be accounted for by the gratitude of the candidates, and the fact that Mr. Pardriff and his wife and his maid-servant and his hired man travelled on pink mileage books, which could only be had for love—not money. On the other hand, reputable witnesses had had it often from Mr. Pardriff that he was a reformer, and not at all in sympathy with certain practices which undoubtedly existed.

Some years before—to be exact, the year Austen Vane left the law school —Mr. Pardriff had proposed to exchange the Ripton Record with the editor of the Pepper County Plainsman in afar Western State. The exchange was effected, and Mr. Pardriff glanced over the Plainsman regularly once a week, though I doubt whether the Western editor ever read the Record after the first copy. One day in June Mr. Pardriff was seated in his sanctum above Merrill's drug store when his keen green eyes fell upon the following:—"The Plainsman considers it safe to say that the sympathy of the people of Pepper County at large is with Mr. Austen Vane, whose personal difficulty with Jim Blodgett resulted so disastrously for Mr. Blodgett. The latter gentleman has long made himself obnoxious to local ranch owners by his persistent disregard of property lines and property, and it will be recalled that he is at present in hot water with the energetic Secretary of the Interior for fencing government lands. Vane, who was recently made manager of Ready Money Ranch, is one of the most popular young men in the county. He was unwillingly assisted over the State line by his friends. Although he has never been a citizen of the State, the Plainsman trusts that he may soon be back and become one of us. At last report Mr. Blodgett was resting easily."

This article obtained circulation in Ripton, although it was not copied into the Record out of deference to the feelings of the Honourable Hilary Vane. In addition to the personal regard Mr. Pardriff professed to have for the Honourable Hilary, it maybe well to remember that Austen's father was, among other, things, chairman of the State Committee. Mr. Tredway (largest railroad stockholder in Ripton) pursed his lips that were already pursed. Tom Gaylord roared with laughter. Two or three days later the Honourable Hilary, still in blissful ignorance, received a letter that agitated him sorely.

*"Dear father:* I hope you don't object to receiving a little visit from a prodigal, wayward son. To tell the truth, I have found it convenient to leave the Ready Money Ranch for a while, although Bob Tyner is good enough to say I may have the place when I come back. You know I often think of you and Phrasie back in Ripton, and I long to see the dear old town again. Expect me when you see me.

"Your aff. son,  
"Austen."

# Page 7

## CHAPTER II

### ON THE TREATMENT OF PRODIGALS

While Euphrasia, in a frenzy of anticipation, garnished and swept the room which held for her so many memories of Austen's boyhood, even beating the carpet with her own hands, Hilary Vane went about his business with no apparent lack of diligence. But he was meditating. He had many times listened to the Reverend Mr. Weightman read the parable from the pulpit, but he had never reflected how it would be to be the father of a real prodigal. What was to be done about the calf? Was there to be a calf, or was there not? To tell the truth, Hilary wanted a calf, and yet to have one (in spite of Holy Writ) would seem to set a premium on disobedience and riotous living.

Again, Austen had reached thirty, an age when it was not likely he would settle down and live an orderly and godly life among civilized beings, and therefore a fatted calf was likely to be the first of many follies which he (Hilary) would live to regret. No, he would deal with justice. How he dealt will be seen presently, but when he finally reached this conclusion, the clipping from the Pepper County Plainsman had not yet come before his eyes.

It is worth relating how the clipping did come before his eyes, for no one in Ripton had the temerity to speak of it. Primarily, it was because Miss Victoria Flint had lost a terrier, and secondarily, because she was a person of strong likes and dislikes. In pursuit of the terrier she drove madly through Leith, which, as everybody knows, is a famous colony of rich summer residents. Victoria probably stopped at every house in Leith, and searched them with characteristic vigour and lack of ceremony, sometimes entering by the side door, and sometimes by the front, and caring very little whether the owners were at home or not. Mr. Humphrey Crewe discovered her in a boa-stall at Wedderburn,—as his place was called,—for it made little difference to Victoria that Mr. Crewe was a bachelor of marriageable age and millions. Full, as ever, of practical suggestions, Mr. Crewe proposed to telephone to Ripton and put an advertisement in the Record, which—as he happened to know—went to press the next day. Victoria would not trust to the telephone, whereupon Mr. Crewe offered to drive down with her.

"You'd bore me, Humphrey," said she, as she climbed into her runabout with the father and grandfather of the absentee. Mr. Crewe laughed as she drove away. He had a chemical quality of turning invidious remarks into compliments, and he took this one as Victoria's manner of saying that she did not wish to disturb so important a man.

Arriving in the hot main street of Ripton, her sharp eyes descried the Record sign over the drug store, and in an astonishingly short time she was in the empty office. Mr. Pardriff was at dinner. She sat down in the editorial chair and read a great deal of uninteresting matter, but at last found something on the floor (where the wind had blown



it) which made her laugh. It was the account of Austen Vane's difficulty with Mr. Blodgett. Victoria did not know Austen, but she knew that the Honourable Hilary had a son of that name who had gone West, and this was what tickled her. She thrust the clipping in the pocket of her linen coat just as Mr. Pardriff came in.

## Page 8

Her conversation with the editor of the Record proved so entertaining that she forgot all about the clipping until she had reached Fairview, and had satisfied a somewhat imperious appetite by a combination of lunch and afternoon tea. Fairview was the “summer place” of Mr. Augustus P. Flint, her father, on a shelf of the hills in the town of Tunbridge, equidistant from Leith and Ripton: and Mr. Flint was the president of the Imperial Railroad, no less.

Yes, he had once been plain Gus Flint, many years ago, when he used to fetch the pocket-handkerchiefs of Mr. Isaac D. Worthington of Brampton, and he was still “Gus” to his friends. Mr. Flint’s had been the brain which had largely conceived and executed the consolidation of principalities of which the Imperial Railroad was the result and, as surely as tough metal prevails, Mr. Flint, after many other trials and errors of weaker stuff, had been elected to the place for which he was so supremely fitted. We are so used in America to these tremendous rises that a paragraph will suffice to place Mr. Flint in his Aladdin’s palace. To do him justice, he cared not a fig for the palace, and he would have been content with the farmhouse under the hill where his gardener lived. You could not fool Mr. Flint on a horse or a farm, and he knew to a dot what a railroad was worth by travelling over it. Like his governor-general and dependent, Mr. Hilary Vane, he had married a wife who had upset all his calculations. The lady discovered Mr. Flint’s balance in the bank, and had proceeded to use it for her own glorification, and the irony of it all was that he could defend it from everybody else. Mrs. Flint spent, and Mr. Flint paid the bills; for the first ten years protestingly, and after that he gave it up and let her go her own gait.

She had come from the town of Sharon, in another State, through which Mr. Flint’s railroad also ran, and she had been known as the Rose of that place. She had begun to rise immediately, with the kite-like adaptability of the American woman for high altitudes, and the leaden weight of the husband at the end of the tail was as nothing to her. She had begun it all by the study of people in hotels while Mr. Flint was closeted with officials and directors. By dint of minute observation and reasoning powers and unflagging determination she passed rapidly through several strata, and had made a country place out of her husband’s farm in Tunbridge, so happily and conveniently situated near Leith. In winter they lived on Fifth Avenue.

One daughter alone had halted, for a minute period, this progress, and this daughter was Victoria—named by her mother. Victoria was now twenty-one, and was not only of another generation, but might almost have been judged of another race than her parents. The things for which her mother had striven she took for granted, and thought of them not at all, and she had by nature that simplicity and astonishing frankness of manner and speech which was once believed to be an exclusive privilege of duchesses.

## Page 9

To return to Fairview. Victoria, after sharing her five o'clock luncheon with her dogs, went to seek her father, for the purpose (if it must be told) of asking him for a cheque. Mr. Flint was at Fairview on the average of two days out of the week during the summer, and then he was nearly always closeted with a secretary and two stenographers and a long-distance telephone in two plain little rooms at the back of the house. And Mr. Hilary Vane was often in consultation with him, as he was on the present occasion when Victoria flung open the door. At sight of Mr. Vane she halted suddenly on the threshold, and a gleam of mischief came into her eye as she thrust her hand into her coat pocket. The two regarded her with the detached air of men whose thread of thought has been broken.

"Well, Victoria," said her father, kindly if resignedly, "what is it now?"

"Money," replied Victoria, promptly; "I went to Avalon this morning and bought that horse you said I might have."

"What horse?" asked Mr. Flint, vaguely. "But never mind. Tell Mr. Freeman to make out the cheque."

Mr. Vane glanced at Mr. Flint, and his eyes twinkled. Victoria, who had long ago discovered the secret of the Honey Dew, knew that he was rolling it under his tongue and thinking her father a fool for his indulgence.

"How do you do, Mr. Vane?" she said; "Austen's coming home, isn't he?" She had got this by feminine arts out of Mr. Paul Pardriff, to whom she had not confided the fact of her possession of the clipping.

The Honourable Hilary gave a grunt, as he always did when he was surprised and displeased, as though some one had prodded him with a stick in a sensitive spot.

"Your son? Why, Vane, you never told me that," said Mr. Flint. "I didn't know that you knew him, Victoria."

"I don't," answered Victoria, "but I'd like to. What did he do to Mr. Blodgett?" she demanded of Hilary.

"Mr. Blodgett!" exclaimed that gentleman. "I never heard of him. What's happened to him?"

"He will probably recover," she assured him.

The Honourable Hilary, trying in vain to suppress his agitation, rose to his feet.

"I don't know what you're talking about, Victoria," he said, but his glance was fixed on the clipping in her hand.

“Haven’t you seen it?” she asked, giving it to him.

He read it in silence, groaned, and handed it to Mr. Flint, who had been drumming on the table and glancing at Victoria with vague disapproval. Mr. Flint read it and gave it back to the Honourable Hilary, who groaned again and looked out of the window.

“Why do you feel badly about it?” asked Victoria. “I’d be proud of him, if I were you.”

“Proud of him” echoed Mr. Vane, grimly. “Proud of him!”

“Victoria, what do you mean?” said Mr. Flint.

“Why not?” said Victoria. “He’s done nothing to make you ashamed. According to that clipping, he’s punished a man who richly deserved to be punished, and he has the sympathy of an entire county.”

## Page 10

Hilary Vane was not a man to discuss his domestic affliction with anybody, so he merely grunted and gazed persistently out of the window, and was not aware of the fact that Victoria made a little face at him as she left the room. The young are not always impartial judges of the old, and Victoria had never forgiven him for carrying to her father the news of an escapade of hers in Ripton.

As he drove through the silent forest roads on his way homeward that afternoon, the Honourable Hilary revolved the new and intensely disagreeable fact in his mind as to how he should treat a prodigal who had attempted manslaughter and was a fugitive from justice. In the meantime a tall and spare young man of a red-bronze colour alighted from the five o'clock express at Ripton and grinned delightedly at the gentlemen who made the station their headquarters about train time. They were privately disappointed that the gray felt hat, although broad-brimmed, was not a sombrero, and the respectable, loose-fitting suit of clothes was not of buckskin with tassels on the trousers; and likewise that he came without the cartridge belt and holster which they had pictured in anticipatory sessions on the baggage-trucks. There could be no doubt of the warmth of their greeting as they sidled up and seized a hand somewhat larger than theirs, but the welcome had in it an ingredient of awe that puzzled the newcomer, who did not hesitate to inquire:—"What's the matter, Ed? Why so ceremonious, Perley?"

But his eagerness did not permit him to wait for explanations. Grasping his bag, the only baggage he possessed, he started off at a swinging stride for Hanover Street, pausing only to shake the hands of the few who recognized him, unconscious of the wild-fire at his back. Hanover Street was empty that drowsy summer afternoon, and he stopped under the well-remembered maples before the house and gazed at it long and tenderly; even at the windows of that room—open now for the first time in years—where he had served so many sentences of imprisonment. Then he went cautiously around by the side and looked in at the kitchen door. To other eyes than his Euphrasia might not have seemed a safe person to embrace, but in a moment he had her locked in his arms and weeping. She knew nothing as yet of Mr. Blodgett's misfortunes, but if Austen Vane had depopulated a county it would have made no difference in her affection.

"My, but you're a man," exclaimed Euphrasia, backing away at last and staring at him with the only complete approval she had ever accorded to any human being save one.

"What did you expect, Phrasie?"

"Come, and I'll show you your room," she said, in a gutter she could not hide; "it's got all the same pictures in, your mother's pictures, and the chair you broke that time when Hilary locked you in. It's mended."

"Hold on, Phrasie," said Austen, seizing her by the apron-strings, "how about the Judge?" It was by this title he usually designated his father.

## Page 11

"What about him?" demanded Euphrasia, sharply.

"Well, it's his house, for one thing," answered Austen, "and he may prefer to have that room—empty."

"Empty! Turn you out? I'd like to see him," cried Euphrasia. "It wouldn't take me long to leave him high and dry."

She paused at the sound of wheels, and there was the Honourable Hilary, across the garden patch, in the act of slipping out of his buggy at the stable door. In the absence of Luke, the hired man, the chief counsel for the railroad was wont to put up the horse himself, and he already had the reins festooned from the bit rings when he felt a heavy, hand on his shoulder and heard a voice say:—"How are you, Judge?"

If the truth be told, that voice and that touch threw the Honourable Hilary's heart out of beat. Many days he had been schooling himself for this occasion: this very afternoon he had determined his course of action, which emphatically did not include a fatted calf. And now surged up a dryad-like memory which had troubled him many a wakeful night, of startled, appealing eyes that sought his in vain, and of the son she had left him flinging himself into his arms in the face of chastisement. For the moment Hilary Vane, under this traitorous influence, was unable to speak. But he let the hand rest on his shoulder, and at length was able to pronounce, in a shamefully shaky voice, the name of his son. Whereupon Austen seized him by the other shoulder and turned him round and looked into his face.

"The same old Judge," he said.

But Hilary was startled, even as Euphrasia had been. Was this strange, bronzed, quietly humorous young man his son? Hilary even had to raise his eyes a little; he had forgotten how tall Austen was. Strange emotions, unbidden and unwelcome, ran riot in his breast; and Hilary Vane, who made no slips before legislative committees or supreme courts, actually found himself saying:—"Euphrasia's got your room ready."

"It's good of you to take me in, Judge," said Austen, patting his shoulder. And then he began, quite naturally to unbuckle the breechings and loose the traces, which he did with such deftness and celerity that he had the horse unharnessed and in the stall in a twinkling, and had hauled the buggy through the stable door, the Honourable Hilary watching him the while. He was troubled, but for the life of him could find no adequate words, who usually had the dictionary at his disposal.

"Didn't write me why you came home," said the Honourable Hilary, as his son washed his hands at the spigot.

"Didn't I? Well, the truth was I wanted to see you again, Judge."

His father grunted, not with absolute displeasure, but suspiciously.

“How about Blodgett?” he asked.

“Blodgett? Have you heard about that? Who told you?”

“Never mind. You didn’t. Nothing in your letter about it.”

“It wasn’t worth mentioning,” replied Austen. “Tyner and the boys liked it pretty well, but I didn’t think you’d be interested. It was a local affair.”

## Page 12

“Not interested! Not worth mentioning!” exclaimed the Honourable Hilary, outraged to discover that his son was modestly deprecating an achievement instead of defending a crime. “Godfrey! murder ain’t worth mentioning, I presume.”

“Not when it isn’t successful,” said Austen. “If Blodgett had succeeded, I guess you’d have heard of it before you did.”

“Do you mean to say this Blodgett tried to kill you?” demanded the Honourable Hilary.

“Yes,” said his son, “and I’ve never understood why he didn’t. He’s a good deal better shot than I am.”

The Honourable Hilary grunted, and sat down on a bucket and carefully prepared a piece of Honey Dew. He was surprised and agitated.

“Then why are you a fugitive from justice if you were acting in self-defence?” he inquired.

“Well, you see there were no witnesses, except a Mexican of Blodgett’s, and Blodgett runs the Pepper County machine for the railroad out there. I’d been wanting to come East and have a look at you for some time, and I thought I might as well come now.”

“How did this—this affair start?” asked Mr. Vane.

“Blodgett was driving in some of Tyner’s calves, and I caught him. I told him what I thought of him, and he shot at me through his pocket. That was all.”

“All! You shot him, didn’t you?”

“I was lucky enough to hit him first,” said Austen.

Extraordinary as it may seem, the Honourable Hilary experienced a sense of pride.

“Where did you hit him?” he asked.

It was Euphrasia who took matters in her own hands and killed the fatted calf, and the meal to which they presently sat down was very different from the frugal suppers Mr. Vane usually had. But he made no comment. It is perhaps not too much to say that he would have been distinctly disappointed had it been otherwise. There was Austen’s favourite pie, and Austen’s favourite cake, all inherited from the Austens, who had thought more of the fleshpots than people should. And the prodigal did full justice to the occasion.



## CHAPTER III

### CONCERNING THE PRACTICE OF LAW

So instinctively do we hark back to the primeval man that there was a tendency to lionize the prodigal in Ripton, which proves the finished civilization of the East not to be so far removed from that land of outlaws, Pepper County. Mr. Paul Pardriff, who had a guilty conscience about the clipping, and vividly bearing in mind Mr. Blodgett's mishap, alone avoided young Mr. Vane; and escaped through the type-setting room and down an outside stairway in the rear when that gentleman called. It gave an ironical turn to the incident that Mr. Pardriff was at the moment engaged in a "Welcome Home" paragraph meant to be propitiatory.

Austen cared very little for lionizing. He spent most of his time with young Tom Gaylord, now his father's right-hand man in a tremendous lumber business. And Tom, albeit he had become so important, habitually fell once more under the domination of the hero of his youthful days. Together these two visited haunts of their boyhood, camping and fishing and scaling mountains, Tom with an eye to lumbering prospects the while.

## Page 13

After a matter of two or three months had passed away in this pleasant though unprofitable manner, the Honourable Hilary requested the presence of his son one morning at his office. This office was in what had once been a large residence, and from its ample windows you could look out through the elms on to the square. Old-fashioned bookcases lined with musty books filled the walls, except where a steel engraving of a legal light or a railroad map of the State was hung, and the Honourable Hilary sat in a Windsor chair at a mahogany table in the middle.

The anteroom next door, where the clerks sat, was also a waiting-room for various individuals from the different parts of the State who continually sought the counsel's presence.

"Haven't seen much of you since you've be'n home, Austen," his father remarked as an opening.

"Your—legal business compels you to travel a great deal," answered Austen, turning from the window and smiling.

"Somewhat," said the Honourable Hilary, on whom this pleasantry was not lost. "You've be'n travelling on the lumber business, I take it."

"I know more about it than I did," his son admitted.

The Honourable Hilary grunted.

"Caught a good many fish, haven't you?"

Austen crossed the room and sat on the edge of the desk beside his father's chair.

"See here, Judge," he said, "what are you driving at? Out with it."

"When are you—going back West?" asked Mr. Vane.

Austen did not answer at once, but looked down into his father's inscrutable face.

"Do you want to get rid of me?" he said.

"Sowed enough wild oats, haven't you?" inquired the father.

"I've sowed a good many," Austen admitted.

"Why not settle down?"

"I haven't yet met the lady, Judge," replied his son.

"Couldn't support her if you had," said Mr. Vane.

“Then it’s fortunate,” said Austen, resolved not to be the necessary second in a quarrel. He knew his father, and perceived that these preliminary and caustic openings of his were really olive branches.

“Sometimes I think you might as well be in that outlandish country, for all I see of you,” said the Honourable Hilary.

“You ought to retire from business and try fishing,” his son suggested.

The Honourable Hilary sometimes smiled.

“You’ve got a good brain, Austen, and what’s the use of wasting it chasing cattle and practising with a pistol on your fellow-beings? You won’t have much trouble in getting admitted to the bar. Come into the office.”

Austen did not answer at once. He suspected that it had cost his father not a little to make these advances.

“Do you believe you and I could get along, Judge? How long do you think it would last?”

“I’ve considered that some,” answered the Honourable Hilary, “but I won’t last a great while longer myself.”

## Page 14

"You're as sound as a bronco," declared Austen, patting him.

"I never was what you might call dissipated," agreed Mr. Vane, "but men don't go on forever. I've worked hard all my life, and got where I am, and I've always thought I'd like to hand it on to you. It's a position of honour and trust, Austen, and one of which any lawyer might be proud."

"My ambition hasn't run in exactly that channel," said his son.

"Didn't know as you had any precise ambition," responded the Honourable Hilary, "but I never heard of a man refusing to be chief counsel for a great railroad. I don't say you can be, mind, but I say with work and brains it's as easy for the son of Hilary Vane as for anybody else."

"I don't know much about the duties of such a position," said Austen, laughing, "but at all events I shall have time to make up my mind how to answer Mr. Flint when he comes to me with the proposal. To speak frankly, Judge, I hadn't thought of spending the whole of what might otherwise prove a brilliant life in Ripton."

The Honourable Hilary smiled again, and then he grunted.

"I tell you what I'll do," he said; "you come in with me and agree to stay five years. If you've done well for yourself, and want to go to New York or some large place at the end of that time, I won't hinder you. But I feel it my duty to say, if you don't accept my offer, no son of mine shall inherit what I've laid up by hard labour. It's against American doctrine, and it's against my principles. You can go back to Pepper County and get put in jail, but you can't say I haven't warned you fairly."

"You ought to leave your fortune to the railroad, Judge," said Austen. "Generations to come would bless your name if you put up a new station in Ripton and built bridges over Bunker Hill grade crossing and the other one on Heath Street where Nic Adams was killed last month. I shouldn't begrudge a cent of the money."

"I suppose I was a fool to talk to you," said the Honourable Hilary, getting up.

But his son pushed him down again into the Windsor chair.

"Hold on, Judge," he said, "that was just my way of saying if I accepted your offer, it wouldn't be because I yearned after the money. Thinking of it has never kept me awake nights. Now if you'll allow me to take a few days once in a while to let off steam, I'll make a counter proposal, in the nature of a compromise."

"What's that?" the Honourable Hilary demanded suspiciously.

“Provided I get admitted to the bar I will take a room in another part of this building and pick up what crumbs of practice I can by myself. Of course, sir, I realize that these, if they come at all, will be owing to the lustre of your name. But I should, before I become Mr. Flint’s right-hand man, like to learn to walk with my own legs.”

The speech pleased the Honourable Hilary, and he put out his hand.

## Page 15

"It's a bargain, Austen," he said.

"I don't mind telling you now, Judge, that when I left the West I left it for good, provided you and I could live within a decent proximity. And I ought to add that I always intended going into the law after I'd had a fling. It isn't fair to leave you with the impression that this is a sudden determination. Prodigals don't become good as quick as all that."

Ripton caught its breath a second time the day Austen hired a law office, nor did the surprise wholly cease when, in one season, he was admitted to the bar, for the proceeding was not in keeping with the habits and customs of prodigals. Needless to say, the practice did not immediately begin to pour in, but the little office rarely lacked a visitor, and sometimes had as many as five or six. There was an irresistible attraction about that room, and apparently very little law read there, though sometimes its occupant arose and pushed the visitors into the hall and locked the door, and opened the window at the top to let the smoke out. Many of the Honourable Hilary's callers preferred the little room in the far corridor to the great man's own office.

These visitors of the elder Mr. Vane's, as has been before hinted, were not all clients. Without burdening the reader too early with a treatise on the fabric of a system, suffice it to say that something was continually going on that was not law; and gentlemen came and went—fat and thin, sharp-eyed and red-faced—who were neither clients nor lawyers. These were really secretive gentlemen, though most of them had a hail-fellow-well-met manner and a hearty greeting, but when they talked to the Honourable Hilary it was with doors shut, and even then they sat very close to his ear. Many of them preferred now to wait in Austen's office instead of the anteroom, and some of them were not so cautious with the son of Hilary Vane that they did not let drop certain observations to set him thinking. He had a fanciful if somewhat facetious way of calling them by feudal titles which made them grin.

"How is the Duke of Putnam this morning?" he would ask of the gentleman of whom the Ripton Record would frequently make the following announcement: "Among the prominent residents of Putnam County in town this week was the Honourable Brush Bascom."

The Honourable Brush and many of his associates, barons and earls, albeit the shrewdest of men, did not know exactly how to take the son of Hilary Vane. This was true also of the Honourable Hilary himself, who did not wholly appreciate the humour in Austen's parallel of the feudal system. Although Austen had set up for himself, there were many ways—not legal—in which the son might have been helpful to the father, but the Honourable Hilary hesitated, for some unformulated reason, to make use of him; and the consequence was that Mr. Hamilton Tooting and other young men of a hustling nature in the Honourable Hilary's office found that Austen's advent did not tend greatly to lighten a certain class of their labours. In fact, father and son were not much nearer in spirit than when ode had been in Pepper County and the other in Ripton. Caution

and an instinct which senses obstacles are characteristics of gentlemen in Mr. Vane's business.

## Page 16

So two years passed,—years liberally interspersed with expeditions into the mountains and elsewhere, and nights spent in the company of Tom Gaylord and others. During this period Austen was more than once assailed by the temptation to return to the free life of Pepper County, Mr. Blodgett having completely recovered now, and only desiring vengeance of a corporal nature. But a bargain was a bargain, and Austen Vane stuck to his end of it, although he had now begun to realize many aspects of a situation which he had not before suspected. He had long foreseen, however, that the time was coming when a serious disagreement with his father was inevitable. In addition to the difference in temperament, Hilary Vane belonged to one generation and Austen to another.

It happened, as do so many incidents which tend to shape a life, by a seeming chance. It was a Tune evening, and there had been a church sociable and basket picnic during the day in a grove in the town of Mercer, some ten miles south of Ripton. The grove was bounded on one side by the railroad track, and merged into a thick clump of second growth and alders where there was a diagonal grade crossing. The picnic was over and the people preparing to go home when they were startled by a crash, followed by the screaming of brakes as a big engine flew past the grove and brought a heavy train to a halt some distance down the grade. The women shrieked and dropped the dishes they were washing, and the men left their horses standing and ran to the crossing and then stood for the moment helpless, in horror at the scene which met their eyes. The wagon of one—of their own congregation was in splinters, a man (a farmer of the neighbourhood) lying among the alders with what seemed a mortal injury. Amid the lamentations and cries for some one to go to Mercer Village for the doctor a young man drove up rapidly and sprang out of a buggy, trusting to some one to catch his horse, pushed, through the ring of people, and bent over the wounded farmer. In an instant he had whipped out a knife, cut a stick from one of the alders, knotted his handkerchief around the man's leg, ran the stick through the knot, and twisted the handkerchief until the blood ceased to flow. They watched him, paralyzed, as the helpless in this world watch the capable, and before he had finished his task the train crew and some passengers began to arrive.

"Have you a doctor aboard, Charley?" the young man asked.

"No," answered the conductor, who had been addressed; "my God, not one, Austen."

"Back up your train," said Austen, "and stop your baggage car here. And go to the grove," he added to one of the picnickers, "and bring four or five carriage cushions. And you hold this."

The man beside him took the tourniquet, as he was bid. Austen Vane drew a note-book from his pocket.

"I want this man's name and address," he said, "and the names and addresses of every person here, quickly."



## Page 17

He did not lift his voice, but the man who had taken charge of such a situation was not to be denied. They obeyed him, some eagerly, some reluctantly, and by that time the train had backed down and the cushions had arrived. They laid these on the floor of the baggage car and lifted the man on to them. His name was Zeb Meader, and he was still insensible. Austen Vane, with a peculiar set look upon his face, sat beside him all the way into Ripton. He spoke only once, and that was to tell the conductor to telegraph from Avalon to have the ambulance from St. Mary's Hospital meet the train at Ripton.

The next day Hilary Vane, returning from one of his periodical trips to the northern part of the State, invaded his son's office.

"What's this they tell me about your saving a man's life?" he asked, sinking into one of the vacant chairs and regarding Austen with his twinkling eyes.

"I don't know what they tell you," Austen answered. "I didn't do anything but get a tourniquet on his leg and have him put on the train."

The Honourable Hilary grunted, and continued to regard his son. Then he cut a piece of Honey Dew.

"Looks bad, does it?" he said.

"Well," replied Austen, "it might have been done better. It was bungled. In a death-trap as cleverly conceived as that crossing, with a down grade approaching it, they ought to have got the horse too."

The Honourable Hilary grunted again, and inserted the Honey Dew. He resolved to ignore the palpable challenge in this remark, which was in keeping with this new and serious mien in Austen.

"Get the names of witnesses?" was his next question.

"I took particular pains to do so."

"Hand 'em over to Tooting. What kind of man is this Meagre?"

"He is rather meagre now," said Austen, smiling a little. "His name's Meader."

"Is he likely to make a fuss?"

"I think he is," said Austen.

"Well," said the Honourable Hilary, "we must have Ham Tooting hurry 'round and fix it up with him as soon as he can talk, before one of these cormorant lawyers gets his claw in him."

Austen said nothing, and after some desultory conversation, in which he knew how to indulge when he wished to conceal the fact that he was baffled, the Honourable Hilary departed. That student of human nature, Mr. Hamilton Tooting, a young man of a sporting appearance and a free vocabulary, made the next attempt. It is a characteristic of Mr. Tooting's kind that, in their efforts to be genial, they often use an awkward diminutive of their friends' names.

"Hello, Aust," said Mr. Tooting, "I dropped in to get those witnesses in that Meagre accident, before I forget it."

"I think I'll keep 'em," said Austen, making a note out of the Revised Statutes.

"Oh, all right, all right," said Mr. Tooting, biting off a piece of his cigar. "Going to handle the case yourself, are you?"

## Page 18

"I may."

"I'm just as glad to have some of 'em off my hands, and this looks to me like a nasty one. I don't like those Mercer people. The last farmer they ran over there raised hell."

"I shouldn't blame this one if he did, if he ever gets well enough," said Austen. Young Mr. Tooting paused with a lighted match halfway to his cigar and looked at Austen shrewdly, and then sat down on the desk very close to him.

"Say, Aust, it sometimes sickens a man to have to buy these fellows off. What? Poor devils, they don't get anything like what they ought to get, do they? Wait till you see how the Railroad Commission'll whitewash that case. It makes a man want to be independent. What?"

"This sounds like virtue, Ham."

"I've often thought, too," said Mr. Tooting, "that a man could make more money if he didn't wear the collar."

"But not sleep as well, perhaps," said Austen.

"Say, Aust, you're not on the level with me."

"I hope to reach that exalted plane some day, Ham."

"What's got into you?" demanded the usually clear-headed Mr. Tooting, now a little bewildered.

"Nothing, yet," said Austen, "but I'm thinking seriously of having a sandwich and a piece of apple pie. Will you come along?"

They crossed the square together, Mr. Tooting racking a normally fertile brain for some excuse to reopen the subject. Despairing of that, he decided that any subject would do.

"That Humphrey Crewe up at Leith is smart—smart as paint," he remarked. "Do you know him?"

"I've seen him," said Austen. "He's a young man, isn't he?"

"And natty. He knows a thing or two for a millionaire that don't have to work, and he runs that place of his right up to the handle. You ought to hear him talk about the tariff, and national politics. I was passing there the other day, and he was walking around among the flowerbeds. 'Ain't your name Tooting?' he hollered. I almost fell out of the buggy."

“What did he want?” asked Austen, curiously. Mr. Tooting winked.

“Say, those millionaires are queer, and no mistake. You’d think a fellow that only had to cut coupons wouldn’t be lookin’ for another job, wouldn’t you? He made me hitch my horse, and had me into his study, as he called it, and gave me a big glass of whiskey and soda. A fellow with buttons and a striped vest brought it on tiptoe. Then this Crewe gave me a long yellow cigar with a band on it and told me what the State needed, — macadam roads, farmers’ institutes, forests, and God knows what. I told him all he had to do was to get permission from old man Flint, and he could have ‘em.”

“What did he say to that?”

“He said Flint was an intimate friend of his. Then he asked me a whole raft of questions about fellows in the neighbourhood I didn’t know he’d ever heard of. Say, he wants to go from Leith to the Legislature.”

## Page 19

"He can go for all I care," said Austen, as he pushed open the door of the restaurant.

For a few days Mr. Meader hung between life and death. But he came of a stock which had for generations thrust its roots into the crevices of granite, and was not easily killed by steam-engines. Austen Vane called twice, and then made an arrangement with young Dr. Tredway (one of the numerous Ripton Tredways whose money had founded the hospital) that he was to see Mr. Meader as soon as he was able to sustain a conversation. Dr. Tredway, by the way, was a bachelor, and had been Austen's companion on many a boisterous expedition.

When Austen, in response to the doctor's telephone message, stood over the iron bed in the spick-and-span men's ward of St. Mary's, a wave of that intense feeling he had experienced at the accident swept over him. The farmer's beard was overgrown, and the eyes looked up at him as from caverns of suffering below the bandage. They were shrewd eyes, however, and proved that Mr. Meader had possession of the five senses—nay, of the six. Austen sat down beside the bed.

"Dr. Tredway tells me you are getting along finely," he said.

"No thanks to the railrud," answered Mr. Meader; "they done their best."

"Did you hear any whistle or any bell?" Austen asked.

"Not a sound," said Mr. Meader; "they even shut off their steam on that grade."

Austen Vane, like most men who are really capable of a deep sympathy, was not an adept at expressing it verbally. Moreover, he knew enough of his fellow-men to realize that a Puritan farmer would be suspicious of sympathy. The man had been near to death himself, was compelled to spend part of the summer, his bread-earning season, in a hospital, and yet no appeal or word of complaint had crossed his lips.

"Mr. Meader," said Austen, "I came over here to tell you that in my opinion you are entitled to heavy damages from the railroad, and to advise you not to accept a compromise. They will send some one to you and offer you a sum far below that which you ought in justice to receive, You ought to fight this case."

"How am I going to pay a lawyer, with a mortgage on my farm?" demanded Mr. Meader.

"I'm a lawyer," said Austen, "and if you'll take me, I'll defend you without charge."

"Ain't you the son of Hilary Vane?"

"Yes."

"I've heard of him a good many times," said Mr. Meader, as if to ask what man had not. "You're railroad, ain't ye?"

Mr. Meader gazed long and thoughtfully into the young man's face, and the suspicion gradually faded from the farmer's blue eyes.

"I like your looks," he said at last. "I guess you saved my life. I'm —I'm much obliged to you."

When Mr. Tooting arrived later in the day, he found Mr. Meader willing to listen, but otherwise strangely non-committal. With native shrewdness, the farmer asked him what office he came from, but did not confide in Mr. Tooting the fact that Mr. Vane's son had volunteered to wring more money from Mr. Vane's client than Mr. Tooting offered him. Considerably bewildered, that gentleman left the hospital to report the affair to the Honourable Hilary, who, at intervals during the afternoon, found himself relapsing into speculation.

## Page 20

Inside of a somewhat unpromising shell, Mr. Zeb Meader was a human being, and no mean judge of men and motives. As his convalescence progressed, Austen Vane fell into the habit of dropping in from time to time to chat with him, and gradually was rewarded by many vivid character sketches of Mr. Meader's neighbours in Mercer and its vicinity. One afternoon, when Austen came into the ward, he found at Mr. Meader's bedside a basket of fruit which looked too expensive and tempting to have come from any dealer's in Ripton.

"A lady came with that," Mr. Meader explained. "I never was popular before I was run over by the cars. She's be'n here twice. When she fetched it to-day, I kind of thought she was up to some, game, and I didn't want to take it."

"Up to some game?" repeated Austen.

"Well, I don't know," continued Mr. Meader, thoughtfully, "the woman here tells me she comes regular in the summer time to see sick folks, but from the way she made up to me I had an idea that she wanted something. But I don't know. Thought I'd ask you. You see, she's railrud."

"Railroad!"

"She's Flint's daughter."

Austen laughed.

"I shouldn't worry about that," he said. "If Mr. Flint sent his daughter with fruit to everybody his railroad injures, she wouldn't have time to do anything else. I doubt if Mr. Flint ever heard of your case."

Mr. Meader considered this, and calculated there was something in it.

"She was a nice, common young lady, and cussed if she didn't make me laugh, she has such a funny way of talkin'. She wanted to know all about you."

"What did she want to know?" Austen exclaimed, not unnaturally.

"Well, she wanted to know about the accident, and I told her how you druv up and screwed that thing around my leg and backed the train down. She was a good deal took with that."

"I think you are inclined to make too much of it," said Austen.

Three days later, as he was about to enter the ward, Mr. Meader being now the only invalid there, he heard a sound which made him pause in the doorway. The sound was feminine laughter of a musical quality that struck pleasantly on Austen's ear. Miss

Victoria Flint was sated beside Mr. Meader's bed, and qualified friendship had evidently been replaced by intimacy since Austen's last visit, for Mr. Meader was laughing, too.

"And now I'm quite sure you have missed your vocation, Mr. Meader," said Victoria. "You would have made a fortune on the stage."

"Me a play-actor!" exclaimed the invalid. "How much wages do they git?"

"Untold sums," she declared, "if they can talk like you."

"He kind of thought that story funny—same as you," Mr. Meader ruminated, and glanced up. "Drat me," he remarked, "if he ain't a-comin' now! I callated he'd run acrost you sometime."

Victoria raised her eyes, sparkling with humour, and they met Austen's.



## Page 21

"We was just talkin' about you," cried Mr. Meader, cordially; "come right in." He turned to Victoria. "I want to make you acquainted," he said, "with Austen Vane."

"And won't you tell him who I am, Mr. Meader?" said Victoria.

"Well," said Mr. Meader, apologetically, "that was stupid of me—wahn't it? But I callated he'd know. She's the daughter of the railrud president—the 'one that was askin' about you."

There was an instant's pause, and the colour stole into Victoria's cheeks. Then she glanced at Austen and bit her lip-and laughed. Her laughter was contagious.

"I suppose I shall have to confess that you have inspired my curiosity, Mr. Vane," she said.

Austen's face was sunburned, but it flushed a more vivid red under the tan. It is needless to pretend that a man of his appearance and qualities had reached the age of thirty-two without having listened to feminine comments of which he was the exclusive subject. In this remark of Victoria's, or rather in the manner in which she made it, he recognized a difference.

"It is a tribute, then, to the histrionic talents of Mr. Meader, of which you were speaking," he replied laughingly.

Victoria glanced at him with interest as he looked down at Mr. Meader.

"And how is it to-day, Zeb?" he said.

"It ain't so bad as it might be—with sech folks as her and you araound," admitted Mr. Meader. "I'd almost agree to get run over again. She was askin' about you, and that's a fact, and I didn't slander you, neither. But I never callated to comprehend wimmen-folks."

"Now, Mr. Meader," said Victoria, reprovngly, but there were little creases about her eyes, "don't be a fraud."

"It's true as gospel," declared the invalid; "they always got the better of me. I had one of 'em after me once, when I was young and prosperin' some."

"And yet you have survived triumphant," she exclaimed.

"There wahn't none of 'em like you," said Mr. Meader, "or it might have be'n different."

Again her eyes irresistibly sought Austen's,—as though to share with him the humour of this remark,—and they laughed together. Her colour, so sensitive, rose again, but less perceptibly this time. Then she got up.

“That’s unfair, Mr. Meader!” she protested.

“I’ll leave it to Austen,” said Mr. Meader, “if it ain’t probable. He’d ought to know.”

In spite of a somewhat natural embarrassment, Austen could not but acknowledge to himself that Mr. Meader was right. With a womanly movement which he thought infinitely graceful, Victoria leaned over the bed.

“Mr. Meader,” she said, “I’m beginning to think it’s dangerous for me to come here twice a week to see you, if you talk this way. And I’m not a bit surprised that that woman didn’t get the better of you.”

“You hain’t a-goin’!” he exclaimed. “Why, I callated—”

## Page 22

“Good-by,” she said quickly; “I’m glad to see that you are doing so well.” She raised her head and looked at Austen in a curious, inscrutable way. “Good-by, Mr. Vane,” she said; “I—I hope Mr. Blodgett has recovered.”

Before he could reply she had vanished, and he was staring at the empty doorway. The reference to the unfortunate Mr. Blodgett, after taking his breath away, aroused in him an intense curiosity betraying, as it did, a certain knowledge of past events in his life in the hitherto unknown daughter of Augustus interest could she have in him? Such a Flint. What question, from similar sources, has heightened the pulse of young men from time immemorial.

## CHAPTER IV

### “TIMEO DANAOS”

The proverbial little birds that carry news and prophecies through the air were evidently responsible for an official-looking letter which Austen received a few mornings later. On the letter-head was printed “The United Northeastern Railroads,” and Mr. Austen Vane was informed that, by direction of the president, the enclosed was sent to him in an entirely complimentary sense. “The enclosed” was a ticket of red cardboard, and its face informed him that he might travel free for the rest of the year. Thoughtfully turning it over, he read on the back the following inscription:—“It is understood that this pass is accepted by its recipient as a retainer.”

Austen stared at it and whistled. Then he pushed back his chair, with the pass in his hand, and hesitated. He seized a pen and wrote a few lines: “Dear sir, I beg to return the annual pass over the Northeastern Railroads with which you have so kindly honoured me”—when he suddenly changed his mind again, rose, and made his way through the corridors to his father’s office. The Honourable Hilary was absorbed in his daily perusal of the Guardian.

“Judge,” he asked, “is Mr. Flint up at his place this week?”

The Honourable Hilary coughed.

“He arrived yesterday on the three. Er—why?”

“I wanted to go up and thank him for this,” his son answered, holding up the red piece of cardboard. “Mr. Flint is a very thoughtful man.”

The Honourable Hilary tried to look unconcerned, and succeeded.

“Sent you an annual, has he? Er—I don’t know as I’d bother him personally, Austen. Just a pleasant note of acknowledgment.”

"I don't flatter myself that my achievements in the law can be responsible for it," said Austen. "The favour must be due to my relationship with his eminent chief counsel."

Hilary Vane's keen eyes rested on his son for an instant. Austen was more than ever an enigma to him.

"I guess relationship hasn't got much to do with business," he replied. "You have be'n doing—er—better than I expected."

"Thank you, Judge," said Austen, quietly. "I don't mind saying that I would rather have your approbation than—this more substantial recognition of merit."

## Page 23

The Honourable Hilary's business was to deal with men, and by reason of his ability in so doing he had made a success in life. He could judge motives more than passably well, and play upon weaknesses. But he left Austen's presence that morning vaguely uneasy, with a sense of having received from his own son an initial defeat at a game of which he was a master. Under the excuse of looking up some precedents, he locked his doors to all comers for two hours, and paced his room. At one moment he reproached himself for not having been frank; for not having told Austen roundly that this squeamishness about a pass was unworthy of a strong man of affairs; yes, for not having revealed to him the mysteries of railroad practice from the beginning. But frankness was not an ingredient of the Honourable Hilary's nature, and Austen was not the kind of man who would accept a hint and a wink. Hilary Vane had formless forebodings, and found himself for once in his life powerless to act.

The cost of living in Ripton was not so high that Austen Vane could not afford to keep a horse and buggy. The horse, which he tended himself, was appropriately called Pepper; Austen had found him in the hills, and he was easily the finest animal in Ripton: so good, in fact, that Mr. Humphrey Crewe (who believed he had an eye for horses) had peremptorily hailed Austen from a motorcar and demanded the price, as was Mr. Crewe's wont when he saw a thing he desired. He had been somewhat surprised and not inconsiderably offended by the brevity and force of the answer which he had received.

On the afternoon of the summer's day in which Austen had the conversation with his father just related, Pepper was trotting at a round clip through the soft and shady wood roads toward the town of Tunbridge; the word "town" being used in the New England sense, as a piece of territory about six miles by six. The fact that automobiles full of laughing people from Leith hummed by occasionally made no apparent difference to Pepper, who knew only the master hand on the reins; the reality that the wood roads were climbing great hills the horse did not seem to feel. Pepper knew every lane and by-path within twenty miles of Ripton, and exhibited such surprise as a well-bred horse may when he was slowed down at length and turned into a hard, blue-stone driveway under a strange granite arch with the word "Fairview" cut in Gothic letters above it, and two great lamps in wrought-iron brackets at the sides. It was Austen who made a note of the gratings over the drains, and of the acres of orderly forest in a mysterious and seemingly enchanted realm. Intimacy with domains was new to him, and he began to experience an involuntary feeling of restraint which was new to him likewise, and made him chafe in spite of himself. The estate seemed to be the visible semblance of a power which troubled him.

## Page 24

Shortly after passing an avenue neatly labelled “Trade’s Drive” the road wound upwards through a ravine the sides of which were covered with a dense shrubbery which had the air of having always been there, and yet somehow looked expensive. At the top of the ravine was a sharp curve; and Austen, drawing breath, found himself swung, as it were, into space, looking off across miles of forest-covered lowlands to an ultramarine mountain in the hazy south,—Sawanec. As if in obedience to a telepathic command of his master, Pepper stopped.

Drinking his fill of this scene, Austen forgot an errand which was not only disagreeable, but required some fortitude for its accomplishment. The son had this in common with the Honourable Hilary—he hated heroics; and the fact that the thing smacked of heroics was Austen’s only deterrent. And then there was a woman in this paradise! These gradual insinuations into his reverie at length made him turn. A straight avenue of pear-shaped, fifteen-year-old maples led to the house, a massive colonial structure of wood that stretched across the shelf; and he had tightened the reins and started courageously up the avenue when he perceived that it ended in a circle on which there was no sign of a hitching-post. And, worse than this, on the balconied, uncovered porch which he would have to traverse to reach the doorway he saw the sheen and glimmer of women’s gowns grouped about wicker tables, and became aware that his approach was the sole object of the scrutiny of an afternoon tea party.

As he reached the circle it was a slight relief to learn that Pepper was the attraction. No horse knew better than Pepper when he was being admired, and he arched his neck and lifted his feet and danced in the sheer exhilaration of it. A smooth-faced, red-cheeked gentleman in gray flannels leaned over the balustrade and made audible comments in a penetrating voice which betrayed the fact that he was Mr. Humphrey Crewe.

“Saw him on the street in Ripton last year. Good hock action, hasn’t he?—that’s rare in trotters around here. Tried to buy him. Feller wouldn’t sell. His name’s Vane—he’s drivin’ him now.”

A lady of a somewhat commanding presence was beside him. She was perhaps five and forty, her iron-gray hair was dressed to perfection, her figure all that Parisian art could make it, and she was regarding Austen with extreme deliberation through the glasses which she had raised to a high-bridged nose.

“Politics is certainly your career, Humphrey,” she remarked, “you have such a wonderful memory for faces. I don’t see how he does it, do you, Alice?” she demanded of a tall girl beside her, who was evidently her daughter, but lacked her personality.

“I don’t know,” said Alice.

“It’s because I’ve been here longer than anybody else, Mrs. Pomfret,” answered Mr. Crewe, not very graciously, “that’s all. Hello.” This last to Austen.

“Hello,” said Austen.

## Page 25

"Who do you want to see?" inquired Mr. Crewe, with the admirable tact for which he was noted.

Austen looked at him for the first time.

"Anybody who will hold my horse," he answered quietly.

By this time the conversation had drawn the attention of the others at the tables, and one or two smiled at Austen's answer. Mrs. Flint, with a "Who is it?" arose to repel a social intrusion. She was an overdressed lady, inclining to embonpoint, but traces of the Rose of Sharon were still visible.

"Why don't you drive 'round to the stables?" suggested Mr. Crewe, unaware of a smile.

Austen did not answer. He was, in fact, looking towards the doorway, and the group on the porch were surprised to see a gleam of mirthful understanding start in his eyes. An answering gleam was in Victoria's, who had at that moment, by a singular coincidence, come out of the house. She came directly down the steps and out on the gravel, and held her hand to him in the buggy, and he flushed with pleasure as he grasped it.

"How do you do, Mr. Vane?" she said. "I am so glad you have called. Humphrey, just push the stable button, will you?"

Mr. Crewe obeyed with no very good grace, while the tea-party went back to their seats. Mrs. Flint supposed he had come to sell Victoria the horse; while Mrs. Pomfret, who had taken him in from crown to boots, remarked that he looked very much like a gentleman.

"I came to see your father for a few moments—on business," Austen explained.

She lifted her face to his with a second searching look.

"I'll take you to him," she said.

By this time a nimble groom had appeared from out of a shrubby path and seized Pepper's head. Austen alighted and followed Victoria into a great, cool hallway, and through two darkened rooms, bewilderingly furnished and laden with the scent of flowers, into a narrow passage beyond. She led the way simply, not speaking, and her silence seemed to betoken the completeness of an understanding between them, as of a long acquaintance.

In a plain white-washed room, behind a plain oaken desk, sat Mr. Flint—a plain man. Austen thought he would have known him had he seen him on the street. The other things in the room were letter-files, a safe, a long-distance telephone, and a thin private secretary with a bend in his back. Mr. Flint looked up from his desk, and his face,



previously bereft of illumination, lighted when he saw his daughter. Austen liked that in him.

“Well, Vic, what is it now?” he asked.

“Mr. Austen Vane to see you,” said Victoria, and with a quick glance at Austen she left him standing on the threshold. Mr. Flint rose. His eyes were deep-set in a square, hard head, and he appeared to be taking Austen in without directly looking at him; likewise, one felt that Mr. Flint’s handshake was not an absolute gift of his soul.

“How do you do, Mr. Vane? I don’t remember ever to have had the pleasure of seeing you, although your father and I have been intimately connected for many years.”

## Page 26

So the president's manner was hearty, but not the substance. It came, Austen thought, from a rarity of meeting with men on a disinterested footing; and he could not but wonder how Mr. Flint would treat the angels in heaven if he ever got there, where there were no franchises to be had. Would he suspect them of designs upon his hard won harp and halo? Austen did not dislike Mr. Flint; the man's rise, his achievements, his affection for his daughter, he remembered. But he was also well aware that Mr. Flint had thrown upon him the onus of the first move in a game which the railroad president was used to playing every day. The dragon was on his home ground and had the choice of weapons.

"I do not wish to bother you long," said Austen.

"No bother," answered Mr. Flint, "no bother to make the acquaintance of the son of my old friend, Hilary Vane. Sit down—sit down. And while I don't believe any man should depend upon his father to launch him in the world, yet it must be a great satisfaction to you, Mr. Vane, to have such a father. Hilary Vane and I have been intimately associated for many years, and my admiration for him has increased with every year. It is to men of his type that the prosperity, the greatness, of this nation is largely due,—conservative, upright, able, content to confine himself to the difficult work for which he is so eminently fitted, without spectacular meddling in things in which he can have no concern. Therefore I welcome the opportunity to know you, sir, for I understand that you have settled down to follow in his footsteps and that you will make a name for yourself. I know the independence of young men—I was young once myself. But after all, Mr. Vane, experience is the great teacher, and perhaps there is some little advice which an old man can give you that may be of service. As your father's son, it is always at your disposal. Have a cigar."

The thin secretary continued to flit about the room, between the letter-files and the desk. Austen had found it infinitely easier to shoot Mr. Blodgett than to engage in a duel with the president of the United Railroad.

"I smoke a pipe," he said.

"Too many young men smoke cigars—and those disgusting cigarettes," said Mr. Flint, with conviction. "There are a lot of worthless young men in these days, anyhow. They come to my house and loaf and drink and smoke, and talk a lot of nonsense about games and automobiles and clubs, and cumber the earth generally. There's a young man named Crewe over at Leith, for instance—you may have seen him. Not that he's dissipated—but he don't do anything but talk about railroads and the stock market to make you sick, and don't know any more about 'em than my farmer."

During this diatribe Austen saw his opening growing smaller and smaller. If he did not make a dash for it, it would soon be closed entirely.

“I received a letter this morning, Mr. Flint, enclosing me an annual pass—”

## Page 27

"Did Upjohn send you one?" Mr. Flint cut in; "he ought to have done so long ago. It was probably an oversight that he did not, Mr. Vane. We try to extend the courtesies of the road to persons who are looked up to in their communities. The son of Hilary Vane is at all times welcome to one."

Mr. Flint paused to light his cigar, and Austen summoned his resolution. Second by second it was becoming more and more difficult and seemingly more ungracious to return a gift so graciously given, a gift of no inconsiderable intrinsic value. Moreover, Mr. Flint had ingeniously contrived almost to make the act, in Austen's eyes, that of a picayune upstart. Who was he to fling back an annual pass in the face of the president of the Northeastern Railroads?

"I had first thought of writing you a letter, Mr. Flint," he said, "but it seemed to me that, considering your relations with my father, the proper thing to do was to come to you and tell you why I cannot take the pass."

The thin secretary paused in his filing, and remained motionless with his body bent over the drawer.

"Why you cannot take it, Mr. Vane?" said the railroad president. "I'm afraid I don't understand."

"I appreciate the—the kindness," said Austen, "and I will try to explain." He drew the red cardboard from his pocket and turned it over. "On the back of this is printed, in small letters, 'It is understood that this pass is accepted by the recipient as a retainer.'"

"Well," Mr. Flint interrupted, smiling somewhat blandly, "how much money do you think that pass would save an active young lawyer in a year? Is three hundred dollars too much? Three hundred dollars is not an insignificant sum to a young man on the threshold of his practice, is it?"

Austen looked at Mr. Flint.

"Any sum is insignificant when it restricts a lawyer from the acceptance of just causes, Mr. Flint. As I understand the matter, it is the custom of your railroad to send these passes to the young lawyers of the State the moment they begin to give signs of ability. This pass would prevent me from serving clients who might have righteous claims against your railroads, and—permit me to speak frankly—in my opinion the practice tends to make it difficult for poor people who have been injured to get efficient lawyers."

"Your own father is retained by the railroad," said Mr. Flint.

"As their counsel," answered Austen. "I have a pride in my profession, Mr. Flint, as no doubt you have in yours. If I should ever acquire sufficient eminence to be sought as counsel for a railroad, I should make my own terms with it. I should not allow its



management alone to decide upon the value of my retainer, and my services in its behalf would be confined strictly to professional ones.”

Mr. Flint drummed on the table.

“What do you mean by that?” he demanded.

“I mean that I would not engage, for a fee or a pass, to fight the political battles of a railroad, or undertake any political manipulation in its behalf whatever.”

## Page 28

Mr. Flint leaned forward aggressively.

“How long do you think a railroad would pay dividends if it did not adopt some means of defending itself from the blackmail politician of the State legislatures, Mr. Vane? The railroads of which I have the honour to be president pay a heavy tag in this and other States. We would pay a much heavier one if we didn’t take precautions to protect ourselves. But I do not intend to quarrel with you, Mr. Vane,” he continued quickly, perceiving that Austen was about to answer him, “nor do I wish to leave you with the impression that the Northeastern Railroads meddle unduly in politics.”

Austen knew not how to answer. He had not gone there to discuss this last and really great question with Mr. Flint, but he wondered whether the president actually thought him the fledgling he proclaimed. Austen laid his pass on Mr. Flint’s desk, and rose.

“I assure you, Mr. Flint, that the spirit which prompted my visit was not a contentious one. I cannot accept the pass, simply because I do not wish to be retained.”

Mr. Flint eyed him. There was a mark of dignity, of silent power, on this tall scapegrace of a son of Hilary Vane that the railroad president had missed at first—probably because he had looked only for the scapegrace. Mr. Flint ardently desired to treat the matter in the trifling aspect in which he believed he saw it, to carry it off genially. But an instinct not yet formulated told the president that he was face to face with an enemy whose potential powers were not to be despised, and he bristled in spite of himself.

“There is no statute I know of by which a lawyer can be compelled to accept a retainer against his will, Mr. Vane,” he replied, and overcame himself with an effort. “But I hope that you will permit me,” he added in another tone, “as an old friend of your father’s and as a man of some little experience in the world, to remark that intolerance is a characteristic of youth. I had it in the days of Mr. Isaac D. Worthington, whom you do not remember. I am not addicted to flattery, but I hope and believe you have a career before you. Talk to your father. Study the question on both sides,—from the point of view of men who are honestly trying, in the face of tremendous difficulties, to protect innocent stockholders as well as to conduct a corporation in the interests of the people at large, and for their general prosperity. Be charitable, young man, and judge not hastily.”

Years before, when poor Sarah Austen had adorned the end of his table, Hilary Vane had raised his head after the pronouncement of grace to surprise a look in his wife’s eyes which strangely threw him into a white heat of anger. That look (and he at intervals had beheld it afterwards) was the true presentment of the soul of the woman whose body was his. It was not—as Hilary Vane thought it—a contempt for the practice of thanking one’s Maker for daily bread, but a contempt for cant of one who sees the humour in cant. A masculine version of that look Mr. Flint now beheld in the eyes of Austen Vane, and the enraging effect on the president of the United Railroads was

much the same as it had been on his chief counsel. Who was this young man of three and thirty to agitate him so? He trembled, though not visibly, yet took Austen's hand mechanically.

## Page 29

“Good day, Mr. Vane,” he said; “Mr. Freeman will help you to find your horse.”

The thin secretary bowed, and before he reached the door into the passage Mr. Flint had opened another at the back of the room and stepped out on a close-cropped lawn flooded with afternoon sunlight. In the passage Austen perceived a chair, and in the chair was seated patiently none other than Mr. Brush Bascom—political Duke of Putnam. Mr. Bascom’s little agate eyes glittered in the dim light.

“Hello, Austen,” he said, “since when have you took to comin’ here?”

“It’s a longer trip from Putnam than from Ripton, Brush,” said Austen, and passed on, leaving Mr. Bascom with a puzzled mind. Something very like a smile passed over Mr. Freeman’s face as he led the way silently out of a side entrance and around the house. The circle of the drive was empty, the tea-party had gone—and Victoria. Austen assured himself that her disappearance relieved him: having virtually quarrelled with her father, conversation would have been awkward; and yet he looked for her.

They found the buggy and Pepper in the paved courtyard of the stables. As Austen took the reins the secretary looked up at him, his mild blue eyes burning with an unsuspected fire. He held out his hand.

“I want to congratulate you,” he said.

“What for?” asked Austen, taking the hand in some embarrassment.

“For speaking like a man,” said the secretary, and he turned on his heel and left him.

This strange action, capping, as it did, a stranger experience, gave Austen food for thought as he let Pepper take his own pace down the trade’s road. Presently he got back into the main drive where it clung to a steep, forest-covered side hill, when his attention was distracted by the sight of a straight figure in white descending amidst the foliage ahead. His instinctive action was to pull Pepper down to a walk, scarcely analyzing his motives; then he had time, before reaching the spot where their paths would cross, to consider and characteristically to enjoy the unpropitious elements arrayed against a friendship with Victoria Flint.

She halted on a flagstone of the descending path some six feet above the roadway, and stood expectant. The Rose of Sharon, five and twenty years before, would have been coy—would have made believe to have done it by accident. But the Rose of Sharon, with all her beauty, would have had no attraction for Austen Vane. Victoria had much of her mother’s good looks, the figure of a Diana, and her clothes were of a severity and correctness in keeping with her style; they merely added to the sum total of the effect upon Austen. Of course he stopped the buggy immediately beneath her, and her first



question left him without any breath. No woman he had ever known seized the essentials as she did.

“What have you been doing to my father?” she asked.

“Why?” exclaimed Austen.

## Page 30

"Because he's in such a bad temper," said Victoria. "You must have put him in it. It can't be possible that you came all the way up here to quarrel with him. Nobody ever dares to quarrel with him."

"I didn't come up to quarrel with him," said Austen.

"What's the trouble?" asked Victoria.

The humour of this question was too much for him, and he laughed. Victoria's eyes laughed a little, but there was a pucker in her forehead.

"Won't you tell me?" she demanded, "or must I get it out of him?"

"I am afraid," said Austen, slowly, "that you must get it out of him—if he hasn't forgotten it."

"Forgotten it, dear old soul!" cried Victoria. "I met him just now and tried to make him look at the new Guernseys, and he must have been disturbed quite a good deal when he's cross as a bear to me. He really oughtn't to be upset like that, Mr. Vane, when he comes up here to rest. I am afraid that you are rather a terrible person, although you look so nice. Won't you tell me what you did to him?"

Austen was non-plussed.

"Nothing intentional," he answered earnestly, "but it wouldn't be fair to your father if I gave you my version of a business conversation that passed between us, would it?"

"Perhaps not," said Victoria. She sat down on the flagstone with her elbow on her knee and her chin in her hand, and looked at him thoughtfully. He knew well enough that a wise general would have retreated—horse, foot, and baggage; but Pepper did not stir.

"Do you know," said Victoria, "I have an idea you came up here about Zeb Meader."

"Zeb Meader!"

"Yes. I told my father about him,—how you rescued him, and how you went to see him in the hospital, and what a good man he is, and how poor."

"Oh, did you!" exclaimed Austen.

"Yes. And I told him the accident wasn't Zeb's fault, that the train didn't whistle or ring, and that the crossing was a blind one."

"And what did he say?" asked Austen, curiously.

“He said that on a railroad as big as his something of the kind must happen occasionally. And he told me if Zeb didn’t make a fuss and act foolishly, he would have no cause to regret it.”

“And did you tell Zeb?” asked Austen.

“Yes,” Victoria admitted, “but I’m sorry I did, now.”

“What did Zeb say?”

Victoria laughed in spite of herself, and gave a more or less exact though kindly imitation of Mr. Meader’s manner.

“He said that wimmen-folks had better stick to the needle and the duster, and not go pokin’ about law business that didn’t concern ’em. But the worst of it was,” added Victoria, with some distress, “he won’t accept any more fruit. Isn’t he silly? He won’t get it into his head that I give him the fruit, and not my father. I suspect that he actually believes my father sent me down there to tell him that.”

## Page 31

Austen was silent, for the true significance of this apparently obscure damage case to the Northeastern Railroads was beginning to dawn on him. The public was not in the best of humours towards railroads: there was trouble about grade crossings, and Mr. Meader's mishap and the manner of his rescue by the son of the corporation counsel had given the accident a deplorable publicity. Moreover, if it had dawned on Augustus Flint that the son of Hilary Vane might prosecute the suit, it was worth while taking a little pains with Mr. Meader and Mr. Austen Vane. Certain small fires have been known to light world-wide conflagrations.

"What are you thinking about?" asked Victoria. "It isn't at all polite to forget the person you are talking to."

"I haven't forgotten you," said Austen, with a smile. How could he —sitting under her in this manner?

"Besides," said Victoria, mollified, "you haven't answered my question."

"Which question?"

She scrutinized him thoughtfully, and with feminine art made the kind of an attack that rarely fails.

"Why are you such an enigma, Mr. Vane?" she demanded. "Is it because you're a lawyer, or because you've been out West and seen so much of life and shot so many people?"

Austen laughed, yet he had tingling symptoms because she showed enough interest in him to pronounce him a riddle. But he instantly became serious as the purport of the last charge came home to him.

"I suppose I am looked upon as a sort of Jesse James," he said. "As it happens, I have never shot but one man, and I didn't care very much for that."

Victoria got up and came down a step and gave him her hand. He took it, nor was he the first to relinquish the hold; and a colour rose delicately in her face as she drew her fingers away.

"I didn't mean to offend you," she said.

"You didn't offend me," he replied quickly. "I merely wished you to know that I wasn't a brigand."

Victoria smiled.



"I really didn't think so—you are much too solemn. I have to go now, and—you haven't told me anything."

She crossed the road and began to descend the path on the other side. Twice he glanced back, after he had started, and once surprised her poised lightly among the leaves, looking over her shoulder.

## CHAPTER V

### THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

The next time Austen visited the hospital Mr. Meader had a surprise in store for him. After passing the time of day, as was his custom, the patient freely discussed the motives which had led him to refuse any more of Victoria's fruit.

"I hain't got nothing against her," he declared; "I tried to make that plain. She's as nice and common a young lady as I ever see, and I don't believe she had a thing to do with it. But I suspicioned they was up to somethin' when she brought them baskets. And when she give me the message from old Flint, I was sure of it."

## Page 32

"Miss Flint was entirely innocent, I'm sure," said Austen, emphatically.

"If I could see old Flint, I'd tell him what I thought of him usin' wimmen-folks to save 'em money," said Mr. Meader. "I knowed she wahn't that kind. And then that other thing come right on top of it."

"What other thing?"

"Say," demanded Mr. Meader, "don't you know?"

"I know nothing," said Austen.

"Didn't know Hilary Vane's be'n here?"

"My father!" Austen ejaculated.

"Gittin' after me pretty warm, so they be. Want to know what my price is now. But say, I didn't suppose your fayther'd come here without lettin' you know."

Austen was silent. The truth was that for a few moments he could not command himself sufficiently to speak.

"He is the chief counsel for the road," he said at length; "I am not connected with it."

"I guess you're on the right track. He's a pretty smooth talker, your fayther. Just dropped in to see how I be, since his son was interested. Talked a sight of law gibberish I didn't understand. Told me I didn't have much of a case; said the policy of the railrud was to be liberal, and wanted to know what I thought I ought to have."

"Well?" said Austen, shortly.

"Well," said Mr. Mender, "he didn't git a mite of satisfaction out of me. I've seen enough of his kind of folks to know how to deal with 'em, and I told him so. I asked him what they meant by sending that slick Mr. Tooting 'raound to offer me five hundred dollars. I said I was willin' to trust my case on that crossin' to a jury."

Austen smiled, in spite of his mingled emotions.

"What else did Mr. Vane say?" he asked.

Not a great sight more. Said a good many folks were foolish enough to spend money and go to law when they'd done better to trust to the liberality of the railrud. Liberality! Adams' widow done well to trust their liberality, didn't she? He wanted to know one more thing, but I didn't give him any satisfaction."

“What was that?”

“I couldn’t tell you how he got ’raound to it. Guess he never did, quite. He wanted to know what lawyer was to have my case. Wahn’t none of his affair, and I callated if you’d wanted him to know just yet, you’d have toad him.”

Austen laid his hand on the farmer’s, as he rose to go.

“Zeb,” he said, “I never expect to have a more exemplary client.”

Mr. Mender shot a glance at him.

“Mebbe I spoke a mite too free about your fayther, Austen,” he said; “you and him seem kind of different.”

“The Judge and I understand each other,” answered Austen.

He had got as far as the door, when he stopped, swung on his heel, and came back to the bedside.

“It’s my duty to tell you, Zeb, that in order to hush this thing up they may offer you more than you can get from a jury. In that case I should have to advise you to accept.”

## Page 33

He was aware that, while he made this statement, Zeb Meader's eyes were riveted on him, and he knew that the farmer was weighing him in the balance.

"Sell out?" exclaimed Mr. Meader. "You advise me to sell out?"

Austen did not get angry. He understood this man and the people from which he sprang.

"The question is for you to decide—whether you can get more money by a settlement."

"Money!" cried Zeb Meader, "I have found it pretty hard to git, but there's some things I won't do for it. There's a reason why they want this case hushed up, the way they've be'n actin'. I ain't lived in Mercer and Putnam County all my life for nothin'. Hain't I seen 'em run their dirty politics there under Brush Bascom for the last twenty-five years? There's no man has an office or a pass in that county but what Bascom gives it to him, and Bascom's the railrud tool." Suddenly Zeb raised himself in bed. "Hev' they be'n tamperin' with you?" he demanded.

"Yes," answered Austen, dispassionately. He had hardly heard what Zeb had said; his mind had been going onward. "Yes. They sent me an annual pass, and I took it back."

Zeb Meader did not speak for a few moments.

"I guess I was a little hasty, Austen," he said at length.

"I might have known you wouldn't sell out. If you're' willin' to take the risk, you tell 'em ten thousand dollars wouldn't tempt me."

"All right, Zeb," said Austen.

He left the hospital and struck out across the country towards the slopes of Sawanec, climbed them, and stood bareheaded in the evening light, gazing over the still, wide valley northward to the wooded ridges where Leith and Fairview lay hidden. He had come to the parting of the ways of life, and while he did not hesitate to choose his path, a Vane inheritance, though not dominant, could not fail at such a juncture to point out the pleasantness of conformity. Austen's affection for Hilary Vane was real; the loneliness of the elder man appealed to the son, who knew that his father loved him in his own way. He dreaded the wrench there.

And nature, persuasive in that quarter, was not to be stilled in a field more completely her own. The memory and suppliance of a minute will scarce suffice one of Austen's temperament for a lifetime; and his eyes, flying with the eagle high across the valley, searched the velvet folds of the ridges, as they lay in infinite shades of green in the level light, for the place where the enchanted realm might be. Just what the state of his feelings were at this time towards Victoria Flint is too vague—accurately to be painted,



but he was certainly not ready to give way to the attraction he felt for her. His sense of humour intervened if he allowed himself to dream; there was a certain folly in pursuing the acquaintance, all the greater now that he was choosing the path of opposition to the dragon. A young woman, surrounded as she was, could be expected to know little of the subtleties of business and political morality: let him take Zeb Meader's case, and her loyalty would naturally be with her father,—if she thought of Austen Vane at all.

## Page 34

And yet the very contradiction of her name, Victoria joined with Flint, seemed to proclaim that she did not belong to her father or to the Rose of Sharon. Austen permitted himself to dwell, as he descended the mountain in the gathering darkness, upon the fancy of the springing of a generation of ideals from a generation of commerce which boded well for the Republic. And Austen Vane, in common with that younger and travelled generation, thought largely in terms of the Republic. Pepper County and Putnam County were all one to him—pieces of his native land. And as such, redeemable.

It was long past the supper hour when he reached the house in Hanover Street; but Euphrasia, who many a time in days gone by had fared forth into the woods to find Sarah Austen, had his supper hot for him. Afterwards he lighted his pipe and went out into the darkness, and presently perceived a black figure seated meditatively on the granite doorstep.

"Is that you, Judge?" said Austen.

The Honourable Hilary grunted in response.

"Be'n on another wild expedition, I suppose."

"I went up Sawanec to stretch my legs a little," Austen answered, sitting down beside his father.

"Funny," remarked the Honourable Hilary, "I never had this mania for stretchin' my legs after I was grown."

"Well," said Austen, "I like to go into the woods and climb the hills and get aired out once in a while."

"I heard of your gettin' aired out yesterday, up Tunbridge way," said the Honourable Hilary.

"I supposed you would hear of it," answered Austen.

"I was up there to-day. Gave Mr. Flint your pass did you?"

"Yes."

"Didn't see fit to mention it to me first—did you? Said you were going up to thank him for it."

Austen considered this.

“You have put me in the wrong, Judge,” he replied after a little. “I made that remark ironically. I am afraid we cannot agree on the motive which prompted me.”

“Your conscience a little finer than your father’s—is it?”

“No,” said Austen, “I don’t honestly think it is. I’ve thought a good deal in the last few years about the difference in our ways of looking at things. I believe that two men who try to be honest may conscientiously differ. But I also believe that certain customs have gradually grown up in railroad practice which are more or less to be deplored from the point of view of the honour of the profession. I think they are not perhaps —realized even by the eminent men in the law.”

“Humph!” said the Honourable Hilary. But he did not press his son for the enumeration of these customs. After all the years he had disapproved of Austen’s deeds it seemed strange indeed to be called to account by the prodigal for his own. Could it be that this boy whom he had so often chastised took a clearer view of practical morality than himself? It was preposterous. But why the uneasiness of the past few years? Why had he more than once during that period, for the first time in his life, questioned a hitherto absolute satisfaction in his position of chief counsel for the Northeastern Railroads? Why had he hesitated to initiate his son into many of the so-called duties of a railroad lawyer? Austen had never verbally arraigned those duties until to-night.

## Page 35

Contradictory as it may seem, irritating as it was to the Honourable Hilary Vane, he experienced again the certain faint tingling of pride as when Austen had given him the dispassionate account of the shooting of Mr. Blodgett; and this tingling only served to stiffen Hilary Vane more than ever. A lifelong habit of admitting nothing and a lifelong pride made the acknowledgment of possible professional lapses for the benefit of his employer not to be thought of. He therefore assumed the same attitude as had Mr. Flint, and forced the burden of explanation upon Austen, relying surely on the disinclination of his son to be specific. And Austen, considering his relationship, could not be expected to fathom these mental processes.

“See here, Judge,” he said, greatly embarrassed by the real affection he felt, “I don’t want to seem like a prig and appear to be sitting in judgment upon a man of your experience and position especially since I have the honour to be your son, and have made a good deal of trouble by a not irreproachable existence. Since we have begun on the subject, however, I think I ought to tell you that I have taken the case of Zeb Meader against the Northeastern Railroads.”

“Wahn’t much need of telling me, was there?” remarked the Honourable Hilary, dryly. “I’d have found it out as soon as anybody else.”

“There was this need of telling you,” answered Austen, steadily, “although I am not in partnership with you, I bear your name. And in-as-much as I am to have a suit against your client, it has occurred to me that you would like me to move—elsewhere.”

The Honourable Hilary was silent for a long time.

“Want to move—do *you*? Is that it?”

“Only because my presence may embarrass you.”

“That wahn’t in the contract,” said the Honourable Hilary; “you’ve got a right to take any fool cases you’ve a mind to. Folks know pretty well I’m not mixed up in ’em.”

Austen did not smile; he could well understand his father’s animus in this matter. As he looked up at the gable of his old home against the stars, he did not find the next sentence any easier.

“And then,” he continued, “in taking, a course so obviously against your wishes and judgment it occurred to me—well, that I was eating at your table and sleeping in your house.”

To his son’s astonishment, Hilary Vane turned on him almost truculently.

“I thought the time’d come when you’d want to go off again,—gypsying,” he cried.

“I’d stay right here in Ripton, Judge. I believe my work is in this State.”

The Honour could see through a millstone with a hole in it. The effect of Austen’s assertion on him was a declaration that the mission of the one was to tear down what the other had so laboriously built up. And yet a growing dread of Hilary Vane’s had been the loneliness of declining years in that house should Austen leave it again, never to return.

## Page 36

"I knew you had this Meader business in mind," he said. "I knew you had fanciful notions about—some things. Never told you I didn't want you here, did I?"

"No," said Austen, "but—"

Would have told you if I hadn't wanted you—wouldn't I?"

"I hope so, Judge," said Austen, who understood something of the feeling which underlay this brusqueness. That knowledge made matters all the harder for him.

"It was your mother's house—you're entitled to that, anyway," said the Honourable Hilary, "but what I want to know is, why you didn't advise that eternal fool of a Meader to accept what we offered him. You'll never get a county jury to give as much."

"I did advise him to accept it," answered Austen.

"What's the matter with him?" the Honourable Hilary demanded.

"Well, judge, if you really want my opinion, an honest farmer like Meader is suspicious of any corporation which has such zealous and loyal retainers as Ham Tooting and Brush Bascom." And Austen thought with a return of the pang which had haunted him at intervals throughout the afternoon, that he might almost have added to these names that of Hilary Vane. Certainly Zeb Meader had not spared his father.

"Life," observed the Honourable Hilary, unconsciously using a phrase from the 'Book of Arguments,' "is a survival of the fittest."

"How do you define 'the fittest?'" asked Austen. "Are they the men who have the not unusual and certainly not exalted gift of getting money from their fellow creatures by the use of any and all weapons that may be at hand? who believe the acquisition of wealth to be exempt from the practice of morality? Is Mr. Flint your example of the fittest type to exist and survive, or Gladstone or Wilberforce or Emerson or Lincoln?"

"Emerson!" cried the Honourable Hilary, the name standing out in red letters before his eyes. He had never read a line of the philosopher's writings, not even the charge to "hitch your wagon to a star" (not in the "Book of Arguments"). Sarah Austen had read Emerson in the woods, and her son's question sounded so like the unintelligible but unanswerable flashes with which the wife had on rare occasions opposed the husband's authority that Hilary Vane found his temper getting the best of him—The name of Emerson was immutably fixed in his mind as the synonym for incomprehensible, foolish habits and beliefs. "Don't talk Emerson to me," he exclaimed. "And as for Brush Bascom, I've known him for thirty years, and he's done as much for the Republican party as any man in this State."

This vindication of Mr. Bascom naturally brought to a close a conversation which had already continued too long. The Honourable Hilary retired to rest; but—if Austen had known it—not to sleep until the small hours of the morning.

## Page 37

It was not until the ensuing spring that the case of Mr. Zebulun Meader against the United Northeastern Railroads came up for trial in Bradford, the county-seat of Putnam County, and we do not wish to appear to give it too great a weight in the annals of the State. For one thing, the weekly newspapers did not mention it; and Mr. Paul Pardriff, when urged to give an account of the proceedings in the Ripton Record, said it was a matter of no importance, and spent the afternoon writing an editorial about the domestic habits of the Aztecs. Mr. Pardriff, however, had thought the matter of sufficient interest personally to attend the trial, and for the journey he made use of a piece of green cardboard which he habitually carried in his pocket. The editor of the Bradford Champion did not have to use his yellow cardboard, yet his columns may be searched in vain for the event.

Not that it was such a great event, one of hundreds of railroad accidents that come to court. The son of Hilary Vane was the plaintiff's counsel; and Mr. Meader, although he had not been able to work since his release from the hospital, had been able to talk, and the interest taken in the case by the average neglected citizen in Putnam proved that the weekly newspaper is not the only disseminator of news.

The railroad's side of the case was presented by that genial and able practitioner of Putnam County, Mr. Nathaniel Billings, who travelled from his home in Williamstown by the exhibition of a red ticket. Austen Vane had to pay his own way from Ripton, but as he handed back the mileage book, the conductor leaned over and whispered something in his ear that made him smile, and Austen thought he would rather have that little drop of encouragement than a pass. And as he left the car at Bradford, two grizzled and hard-handed individuals arose and wished him good luck.

He needed encouragement,—what young lawyer does not on his first important case? And he did not like to think of the future if he lost this. But in this matter he possessed a certain self-confidence which arose from a just and righteous anger against the forces opposing him and a knowledge of their tactics. To his mind his client was not Zeb Meader alone, but the host of victims who had been maimed and bought off because it was cheaper than to give the public a proper protection.

The court room was crowded. Mr. Zeb Meader, pale but determined, was surrounded by a knot of Mercer neighbours, many of whom were witnesses. The agate eyes of Mr. Brush Bascom flashed from the audience, and Mr. Nat Billings hustled forward to shake Austen's hand. Nat was one of those who called not infrequently upon the Honourable Hilary in Ripton, and had sat on Austen's little table.

"Glad to see you, Austen," he cried, so that the people might hear; and added, in a confidentially lower tone, "We lawyers understand that these little things make no difference, eh?"



## Page 38

"I'm willing to agree to that if you are, Nat," Austen answered. He looked at the lawyer's fleshy face, blue-black where it was shaven, and at Mr. Billings' shifty eyes and mouth, which its muscles could not quite keep in place. Mr. Billings also had nicked teeth. But he did his best to hide these obvious disadvantages by a Falstaffian bonhomie,—for Mr. Billings was growing stout.

"I tried it once or twice, my friend, when I was younger. It's noble, but it don't pay," said Mr. Billings, still confidential. "Brush is sour—look at him. But I understand how you feel. I'm the kind of feller that speaks out, and what I can't understand is, why the old man let you get into it."

"He knew you were going to be on the other side, Nat, and wanted to teach me a lesson. I suppose it is folly to contest a case where the Railroad Commission has completely exonerated your client," Austen added thoughtfully.

Mr. Billings' answer was to wink, very slowly, with one eye; and shortly after these pleasantries were over, the case was called. A fragrant wind blew in at the open windows, and Nature outside was beginning to array herself in myriad hues of green. Austen studied the jury, and wondered how many points of his argument he could remember, but when he had got to his feet the words came to him. If we should seek an emblem for King David's smooth, round stone which he flung at Goliath, we should call it the truth—for the truth never fails to reach the mark. Austen's opening was not long, his words simple and not dramatic, but he seemed to charge them with something of the same magnetic force that compelled people to read and believe "Uncle Ton's Cabin" and the "Song of the Shirt." Spectators and jury listened intently.

Some twenty witnesses appeared for the plaintiff, all of whom declared that they had heard neither bell nor whistle. Most of these witnesses had been in the grove, two or three in the train; two, residents of the vicinity, testified that they had complained to the Railroad Commission about that crossing, and had received evasive answers to the effect that it was the duty of citizens to look out for themselves. On cross-examination they declared they had no objection to grade crossings which were properly safeguarded; this crossing was a death-trap. (Stricken out.) Mr. Billings made the mistake of trying to prove that one of these farmers—a clear-eyed, full-chested man with a deep voice—had an animus against the railroad dating from a controversy concerning the shipping of milk.

"I have an animus, your Honour," said the witness, quietly. "When the railrud is represented by the kind of politicians we have in Putnam, it's natural I should hain't it?"

This answer, although stricken out, was gleefully received.

## Page 39

In marked contrast to the earnestness of young Mr. Vane, who then rested, Mr. Billings treated the affair from the standpoint of a man of large practice who usually has more weighty matters to attend to. This was so comparatively trivial as not to be dignified by a serious mien. He quoted freely from the "Book of Arguments," reminding the jury of the debt of gratitude the State owed to the Northeastern Railroads for doing so much for its people; and if they were to eliminate all grade crossings, there would be no dividends for the stockholders. Besides, the law was that the State should pay half when a crossing was eliminated, and the State could not afford it. Austen had suggested, in his opening, that it was cheaper for the railroad as well as the State to kill citizens. He asked permission to inquire of the learned counsel for the defence by what authority he declared that the State could not afford to enter into a policy by which grade crossings would gradually be eliminated.

"Why," said Mr. Billings, "the fact that all bills introduced to this end never get out of committee."

"May I ask," said Austen, innocently, "who has been chairman of that particular committee in the lower House for the last five sessions?"

Mr. Billings was saved the embarrassment of answering this question by a loud voice in the rear calling out:—"Brush Bascom!"

A roar of laughter shook the court room, and all eyes were turned on Brush, who continued to sit unconcernedly with his legs crossed and his arm over the back of the seat. The offender was put out, order was restored, and Mr. Billings declared, with an injured air, that he failed to see why the counsel for the plaintiff saw fit to impugn Mr. Bascom.

"I merely asked a question," said Austere; "far be it from me to impugn any man who has held offices in the gift of the people for the last twenty years."

Another gale of laughter followed this, during which Mr. Billings wriggled his mouth and gave a strong impression that such tactics and such levity were to be deplored.

For the defence, the engineer and fireman both swore that the bell had been rung before the crossing was reached. Austen merely inquired whether this was not when they had left the station at North Mercer, two miles away. No, it was nearer. Pressed to name the exact spot, they could only conjecture, but near enough to be heard on the crossing. Other witnesses—among them several picnickers in the grove—swore that they had heard the bell. One of these Austen asked if he was not the member from Mercer in the last Legislature, and Mr. Billings, no longer genial, sprang to his feet with an objection.

“I merely wish to show, your Honour,” said Austen, “that this witness accepted a pass from the Northeastern Railroads when he went to the Legislature, and that he has had several trip passes for himself and his family since.”

The objection was not sustained, and Mr. Billings noted an exception.

## Page 40

Another witness, upon whose appearance the audience tittered audibly, was Dave Skinner, boss of Mercer. He had lived, he said, in the town of Mercer all his life, and maintained that he was within a hundred yards of the track when the accident occurred, and heard the bell ring.

"Is it not a fact," said Austen to this witness, "that Mr. Brush Bascom has a mortgage on your farm?"

"I can show, your Honour," Austen continued, when Mr. Billings had finished his protest, "that this man was on his way to Riverside to pay his quarterly instalment."

Mr. Bascom was not present at the afternoon session. Mr. Billings' summing up was somewhat impassioned, and contained more quotations from the "Book of Arguments." He regretted, he said, the obvious appeals to prejudice against a railroad corporation that was honestly trying to do its duty—yes, and more than its duty.

Misjudged, misused, even though friendless, it would continue to serve the people. So noble, indeed, was the picture which Mr. Billings' eloquence raised up that his voice shook with emotion as he finished.

In the opinion of many of the spectators Austen Vane had yet to learn the art of oratory. He might with propriety have portrayed the suffering and loss of the poor farmer who was his client; he merely quoted from the doctor's testimony to the effect that Mr. Meader would never again be able to do physical labour of the sort by which he had supported himself, and ended up by calling the attention of the jury to the photographs and plans of the crossing he had obtained two days after the accident, requesting them to note the facts that the public highway, approaching through a dense forest and underbrush at an angle of thirty-three degrees, climbed the railroad embankment at that point, and a train could not be seen until the horse was actually on the track.

The jury was out five minutes after the judge's charge, and gave Mr. Zebulun Meader a verdict of six thousand dollars and costs,—a popular verdict, from the evident approval with which it was received in the court room. Quiet being restored, Mr. Billings requested, somewhat vehemently, that the case be transferred on the exceptions to the Supreme Court, that the stenographer write out the evidence, and that he might have three weeks in which to prepare a draft. This was granted.

Zeb Meader, true to his nature, was self-contained throughout the congratulations he received, but his joy was nevertheless intense.

"You shook 'em up good, Austen," he said, making his way to where his counsel stood. "I suspicioned you'd do it. But how about this here appeal?"

“Billings is merely trying to save the face of his railroad,” Austen answered, smiling. “He hasn’t the least notion of allowing this case to come up again—take my word for it.”

“I guess your word’s good,” said Zeb. “And I want to tell you one thing, as an old man. I’ve been talkin’ to Putnam County folks some, and you hain’t lost nothin’ by this.”

## Page 41

"How am I to get along without the friendship of Brush Bascom?" asked Austen, soberly.

Mr. Meader, who had become used to this mild sort of humour, relaxed sufficiently to laugh.

"Brush did seem a mite disgruntled," he remarked.

Somewhat to Austen's embarrassment, Mr. Mender's friends were pushing forward. One grizzled veteran took him by the hand and looked thoughtfully into his face.

"I've lived a good many years," he said, "but I never heerd 'em talked up to like that. You're my candidate for governor."

## CHAPTER VI

### ENTER THE LION

It is a fact, as Shakespeare has so tersely hinted, that fame sometimes comes in the line of duty. To be sure, if Austen Vane had been Timothy Smith, the Mender case might not have made quite so many ripples in the pond with which this story is concerned. Austen did what he thought was right. In the opinion of many of his father's friends whom he met from time to time he had made a good-sized stride towards ruin, and they did not hesitate to tell him so—Mr. Chipman, president of the Ripton National Bank; Mr. Greene, secretary and treasurer of the Hawkeye Paper Company, who suggested with all kindness that, however noble it may be, it doesn't pay to tilt at windmills.

"Not unless you wreck the windmill," answered Austen. A new and very revolutionary point of view to Mr. Greene, who repeated it to Professor Brewer, urging that gentleman to take Austen in hand. But the professor burst out laughing, and put the saying into circulation.

Mr. Silas Tredway, whose list of directorships is too long to print, also undertook to remonstrate with the son of his old friend, Hilary Vane. The young lawyer heard him respectfully. The cashiers of some of these gentlemen, who were younger men, ventured to say—when out of hearing—that they admired the championship of Mr. Mender, but it would never do. To these, likewise, Austen listened good-naturedly enough, and did not attempt to contradict them. Changing the angle of the sun-dial does not affect the time of day.

It was not surprising that young Tom Gaylord, when he came back from New York and heard of Austen's victory, should have rushed to his office and congratulated him in a rough but hearty fashion. Even though Austen had won a suit against the Gaylord Lumber Company, young Tom would have congratulated him. Old Tom was a different

matter. Old Tom, hobbling along under the maples, squinted at Austen and held up his stick.

“Damn you, you’re a lawyer, ain’t you?” cried the old man.

Austen, well used to this kind of greeting from Mr. Gaylord, replied that he didn’t think himself much of one.

“Damn it, I say you are. Some day I may have use for you,” said old Tom, and walked on.

“No,” said young Tom, afterwards, in explanation of this extraordinary attitude of his father, “it isn’t principle. He’s had a row with the Northeastern about lumber rates, and swears he’ll live till he gets even with ’em.”

## Page 42

If Professor Brewer (Ripton's most clear-sighted citizen) had made the statement that Hilary Vane—away down in the bottom of his heart—was secretly proud of his son, the professor would probably have lost his place on the school board, the water board, and the library committee. The way the worldly-wise professor discovered the secret was this: he had gone to Bradford to hear the case, for he had been a dear friend of Sarah Austen. Two days later Hilary Vane saw the professor on his little porch, and lingered. Mr. Brewer suspected why, led carefully up to the subject, and not being discouraged—except by numerous grunts—gave the father an account of the proceedings by no means unfavourable to the son. Some people like paregoric; the Honourable Hilary took his without undue squirming, with no visible effects to Austen.

Life in the office continued, with one or two exceptions, the even tenor of its way. Apparently, so far as the Honourable Hilary was concerned, his son had never been to Bradford. But the Honourable Brush Bascom, when he came on mysterious business to call on the chief counsel, no longer sat on Austen's table; this was true of other feudal lords and retainers: of Mr. Nat Billings, who, by the way, did not file his draft after all. Not that Mr. Billings wasn't polite, but he indulged no longer in slow winks at the expense of the honourable Railroad Commission.

Perhaps the most curious result of the Meader case to be remarked in passing, was upon Mr. Hamilton Tooting. Austen, except when he fled to the hills, was usually the last to leave the office, Mr. Tooting often the first. But one evening Mr. Tooting waited until the force had gone, and entered Austen's room with his hand outstretched.

"Put her there, Aust," he said.

Austen put her there.

"I've been exercisin' my thinker some the last few months," observed Mr. Tooting, seating himself on the desk.

"Aren't you afraid of nervous prostration, Ham?"

"Say," exclaimed Mr. Tooting, with a vexed laugh, "why are you always jollyng me? You ain't any older than I am."

"I'm not as old, Ham. I don't begin to have your knowledge of the world."

"Come off," said Mr. Tooting, who didn't know exactly how to take this compliment. "I came in here to have a serious talk. I've been thinking it over, and I don't know but what you did right."

"Well, Ham, if you don't know, I don't know how I am to convince you."





“Hold on. Don’t go twistin’ around that way—you make me dizzy.” He lowered his voice confidentially, although there was no one within five walls of them. “I know the difference between a gold brick and a government bond, anyhow. I believe bucking the railroad’s going to pay in a year or so. I got on to it as soon as you did, I guess, but when a feller’s worn the collar as long as I have and has to live, it ain’t easy to cut loose—you understand.”

## Page 43

"I understand," answered Austen, gravely.

"I thought I'd let you know I didn't take any too much trouble with Meader last summer to get the old bird to accept a compromise."

"That was good of you, Ham."

"I knew what you was up to," said Mr. Tooting, giving Austen a friendly poke with his cigar.

"You showed your usual acumen, Mr. Tooting," said Austen, as he rose to put on his coat. Mr. Tooting regarded him uneasily.

"You're a deep one, Aust," he declared; "some day you and, me must get together."

Mr. Billings' desire for ultimate justice not being any stronger than Austen suspected, in due time Mr. Meader got his money. His counsel would have none of it,—a decision not at all practical, and on the whole disappointing. There was, to be sure, an influx into Austen's office of people who had been run over in the past, and it was Austen's unhappy duty to point out to these that they had signed (at the request of various Mr. Tootings) little slips of paper which are technically known as releases. But the first hint of a really material advantage to be derived from his case against the railroad came from a wholly unexpected source, in the shape of a letter in the mail one August morning.

*"Dear sir: Having remarked with some interest the verdict for a client of yours against the United Northeastern Railroads, I wish you would call and see me at your earliest convenience.*

*"Yours truly,*

*"Humphrey Crewe."*

Although his curiosity was aroused, Austen was of two minds whether to answer this summons, the truth being that Mr. Crewe had not made, on the occasions on which they had had intercourse, the most favourable of impressions. However, it is not for the struggling lawyer to scorn any honourable brief, especially from a gentleman of stocks and bonds and varied interests like Mr. Crewe, with whom contentions of magnitude are inevitably associated. As he spun along behind Pepper on the Leith road that climbed Willow Brook on the afternoon he had made the appointment, Austen smiled to himself over his anticipations, and yet—being human—let his fancy play.

The broad acres of Wedderburn stretched across many highways, but the manor-house (as it had been called) stood on an eminence whence one could look for miles down the Yale of the Blue. It had once been a farmhouse, but gradually the tail had begun to wag

the dog, and the farmhouse became, like the original stone out of which the Irishman made the soup, difficult to find. Once the edifice had been on the road, but the road had long ago been removed to a respectful distance, and Austen entered between two massive pillars built of granite blocks on a musical gravel drive.

Humphrey Crewe was on the porch, his hands in his pockets, as Austen drove up.

“Hello,” he said, in a voice probably meant to be hospitable, but which had a peremptory ring, “don’t stand on ceremony. Hitch your beast and come along in.”

## Page 44

Having, as it were, superintended the securing of Pepper, Mr. Crewe led the way through the house to the study, pausing once or twice to point out to Austen a carved ivory elephant procured at great expense in China, and a piece of tapestry equally difficult of purchase. The study itself was no mere lounging place of a man of pleasure, but sober and formidable books were scattered through the cases: "Turner's Evolution of the Railroad," "Graham's Practical Forestry," "Eldridge's Finance"; while whole shelves of modern husbandry proclaimed that Mr. Humphrey Crewe was no amateur farmer. There was likewise a shelf devoted to road building, several to knotty-looking pamphlets, and half a wall of neatly labelled pigeonholes. For decoration, there was an oar garnished with a ribbon, and several groups of college undergraduates, mostly either in puffed ties or scanty attire, and always prominent in these groups, and always unmistakable, was Mr. Humphrey Crewe himself.

Mr. Crewe was silent awhile, that this formidable array of things might make the proper impression upon his visitor.

"It was lucky you came to-day, Vane," he said at length. "I am due in New York to-morrow for a directors' meeting, and I have a conference in Chicago with a board of trustees of which I am a member on the third. Looking at my array of pamphlets, eh? I've been years in collecting them,—ever since I left college. Those on railroads ought especially to interest you—I'm somewhat of a railroad man myself."

"I didn't know that," said Austen.

"Had two or three blocks of stock in subsidiary lines that had to be looked after. It was a nuisance at first," said Mr. Crewe, "but I didn't shirk it. I made up my mind I'd get to the bottom of the railroad problem, and I did. It's no use doing a thing at all unless you do it well." Mr. Crewe, his hands still in his pockets, faced Austen smilingly. "Now I'll bet you didn't know I was a railroad man until you came in here. To tell the truth, it was about a railroad matter that I sent for you."

Mr. Crewe lit a cigar, but he did not offer one to Austen, as he had to Mr. Tooting. "I wanted to see what you were like," he continued, with refreshing frankness. "Of course, I'd seen you on the road. But you can get more of an idea of a man by talkin' to him, you know."

"You can if he'll talk," said Austen, who was beginning to enjoy his visit.

Mr. Crewe glanced at him keenly. Few men are fools at all points of the compass, and Mr. Crewe was far from this.

"You did well in that little case you had against the Northeastern. I heard about it."

"I did my best," answered Austen, and he smiled again.

“As some great man has remarked,” observed Mr. Crewe, “it isn’t what we do, it’s how we do it. Take pains over the smaller cases, and the larger cases will come of themselves, eh?”

“I live in hope,” said Austen, wondering how soon this larger case was going to unfold itself.

## Page 45

"Let me see," said Mr. Crewe, "isn't your father the chief attorney in this State for the Northeastern? How do you happen to be on the other side?"

"By the happy accident of obtaining a client," said Austen.

Mr. Crewe glanced at him again. In spite of himself, respect was growing in him. He had expected to find a certain amount of eagerness and subserviency—though veiled; here was a man of different calibre than he looked for in Ripton.

"The fact is," he declared, "I have a grievance against the Northeastern Railroads, and I have made up my mind that you are the man for me."

"You may have reason to regret your choice," Austen suggested.

"I think not," replied Mr. Crewe, promptly; "I believe I know a man when I see one, and you inspire me with confidence. This matter will have a double interest for you, as I understand you are fond of horses."

"Horses?"

"Yes," Mr. Crewe continued, gaining a little heat at the word, "I bought the finest-lookin' pair you ever saw in New York this spring,—all-around action, manners, conformation, everything; I'll show 'em to you. One of 'em's all right now; this confounded railroad injured the other gettin' him up here. I've put in a claim. They say they didn't, my man says they did. He tells me the horse was thrown violently against the sides of the car several times. He's internally injured. I told 'em I'd sue 'em, and I've decided that you are the man to take the case—on conditions."

Austen's sense of humour saved him,—and Mr. Humphrey Crewe had begun to interest him. He rose and walked to the window and looked out for a few moments over the flower garden before he replied:—"On what conditions?"

"Well," said Mr. Crewe, "frankly, I don't want to pay more than the horse is worth, and it's business to settle on the fee in case you win. I thought—"

"You thought," said Austen, "that I might not charge as much as the next man."

"Well," said Mr. Crewe, "I knew that if you took the case, you'd fight it through, and I want to get even with 'em. Their claim agent had the impudence to suggest that the horse had been doctored by the dealer in New York. To tell me that I, who have been buying horses all my life, was fooled. The veterinary swears the animal is ruptured. I'm a citizen of Avalon County, though many people call me a summer resident; I've done business here and helped improve the neighbourhood for years. It will be my policy to employ home talent Avalon County lawyers, for instance. I may say, without

indiscretion, that I intend from now on to take even a greater interest in public affairs. The trouble is in this country that men in my position do not feel their responsibilities.”

“Public spirit is a rare virtue,” Austen remarked, seeing that he was expected to say something. “Avalon County appreciates the compliment, —if I may be permitted to answer for it.”

## Page 46

"I want to do the right thing," said Mr. Crewe. "In fact, I have almost made up my mind to go to the Legislature this year. I know it would be a sacrifice of time, in a sense, and all that, but—" He paused, and looked at Austen.

"The Legislature needs leavening."

"Precisely," exclaimed Mr. Crewe, "and when I look around me and see the things crying to be done in this State, and no lawmaker with sense and foresight enough to propose them, it makes me sick. Now, for instance," he continued, and rose with an evident attempt to assault the forestry shelves. But Austen rose too.

"I'd like to go over that with you, Mr. Crewe," said he, "but I have to be back in Ripton."

"How about my case?" his host demanded, with a return to his former abruptness.

"What about it?" asked Austen.

"Are you going to take it?"

"Struggling lawyers don't refuse business."

"Well," said Mr. Crewe, "that's sensible. But what are you going to charge?"

"Now," said Austen, with entire good humour, "when you get on that ground, you are dealing no longer with one voracious unit, but with a whole profession,—a profession, you will allow me to add, which in dignity is second to none. In accordance with the practice of the best men in that profession, I will charge you what I believe is fair—not what I think you are able and willing to pay. Should you dispute the bill, I will not stoop to quarrel with you, but, try to live on bread and butter a while longer."

Mr. Crewe was silent for a moment. It would not be exact to say uncomfortable, for it is to be doubted whether he ever got so. But he felt dimly that the relations of patron and patronized were becoming somewhat jumbled.

"All right," said he, "I guess we can let it go at that. Hello! What the deuce are those women doing here again?"

This irrelevant exclamation was caused by the sight through the open French window—of three ladies in the flower garden, two of whom were bending over the beds. The third, upon whose figure Austen's eyes were riveted, was seated on a stone bench set in a recess of pines, and looking off into the Yale of the Blue. With no great eagerness, but without apology to Austen, Mr. Crewe stepped out of the window and approached them; and as this was as good a way as any to his horse and buggy, Austen followed. One of the ladies straightened at their appearance, scrutinized them through the



glasses she held in her hand, and Austen immediately recognized her as the irreproachable Mrs. Pomfret.

“We didn’t mean to disturb you, Humphrey,” she said. “We knew you would be engaged in business, but I told Alice as we drove by I could not resist stopping for one more look at your Canterbury bells. I knew you wouldn’t mind, but you mustn’t leave your—affairs,—not for an instant.”

The word “affairs” was accompanied by a brief inspection of Austen Vane.

## Page 47

"That's all right," answered Mr. Crewe; "it doesn't cost anything to look at flowers, that's what they're for. Cost something to put 'em in. I got that little feller Ridley to lay 'em out—I believe I told you. He's just beginning. Hello, Alice."

"I think he did it very well, Humphrey," said Miss Pomfret.

"Passably," said Mr. Crewe. "I told him what I wanted and drew a rough sketch of the garden and the colour scheme."

"Then you did it, and not Mr. Ridley. I rather suspected it," said Mrs. Pomfret; "you have such clear and practical ideas about things, Humphrey."

"It's simple enough," said Mr. Crewe, deprecatingly, "after you've seen a few hundred gardens and get the general underlying principle."

"It's very clever," Alice murmured.

"Not at all. A little application will do wonders. A certain definite colour massed here, another definite colour there, and so forth."

Mr. Crewe spoke as though Alice's praise irritated him slightly. He waved his hand to indicate the scheme in general, and glanced at Victoria on the stone bench. From her (Austen thought) seemed to emanate a silent but mirthful criticism, although she continued to gaze persistently down the valley, apparently unaware of their voices. Mr. Crewe looked as if he would have liked to reach her, but the two ladies filled the narrow path, and Mrs. Pomfret put her fingers on his sleeve.

"Humphrey, you must explain it to us. I am so interested in gardens I'm going to have one if Electrics increase their dividend."

Mr. Crewe began, with no great ardour, to descant on the theory of planting, and Austen resolved to remain pocketed and ignored no longer. He retraced his steps and made his way rapidly by another path towards Victoria, who turned her head at his approach, and rose. He acknowledged an inward agitation with the vision in his eye of the tall, white figure against the pines, clad with the art which, in mysterious simplicity, effaces itself.

"I was wondering," she said, as she gave him her hand, "how long it would be before you spoke to me."

"You gave me no chance," said Austen, quickly.

"Do you deserve one?" she asked.

Before he could answer, Mr. Crewe's explanation of his theories had come lamely to a halt. Austen was aware of the renewed scrutiny of Mrs. Pomfret, and then Mr. Crewe, whom no social manacles could shackle, had broken past her and made his way to them. He continued to treat the ground on which Austen was standing as unoccupied.

"Hello, Victoria," he said, "you don't know anything about gardens, do you?"

"I don't believe you do either," was Victoria's surprising reply.

Mr. Crewe laughed at this pleasantry.

"How are you going to prove it?" he demanded.

"By comparing what you've done with Freddie Ridley's original plan," said Victoria.

## Page 48

Mr. Crewe was nettled.

"Ridley has a lot to learn," he retorted. "He had no conception of what was appropriate here."

"Freddie was weak," said Victoria, but he needed the money. Don't you know Mr. Vane?"

"Yes," said Mr. Crewe, shortly, "I've been talking to him—on business."

"Oh," said Victoria, "I had no means of knowing. Mrs. Pomfret, I want to introduce Mr. Vane, and Miss Pomfret, Mr. Vane."

Mrs. Pomfret, who had been hovering on the outskirts of this duel, inclined her head the fraction of an inch, but Alice put out her hand with her sweetest manner.

"When did you arrive?" she asked.

"Well, the fact is, I haven't arrived yet," said Austen.

"Not arrived" exclaimed Alice, with a puzzled glance into Victoria's laughing eyes.

"Perhaps Humphrey will help you along," Victoria suggested, turning to him. "He might be induced to give you his celebrated grievance about his horses."

"I have given it to him," said Mr. Crewe, briefly.

"Cheer up, Mr. Vane, your fortune is made," said Victoria.

"Victoria," said Mrs. Pomfret, in her most imperial voice, "we ought to be going instantly, or we shan't have time to drop you at the Hammonds'."

"I'll take you over in the new motor car," said Mr. Crewe, with his air of conferring a special train.

"How much is gasoline by the gallon?" inquired Victoria.

"I did a favour once for the local manager, and get a special price," said Mr. Crewe.

"Humphrey," said Mrs. Pomfret, taking his hand, "don't forget you are coming to dinner to-night. Four people gave out at the last minute, and there will be just Alice and myself. I've asked old Mr. Fitzhugh."

"All right," said Mr. Crewe, "I'll have the motor car brought around."

The latter part of this remark was, needless to say, addressed to Victoria.

"It's awfully good of you, Humphrey," she answered, "but the Hammonds are on the road to Ripton, and I am going to ask Mr. Vane to drive me down there behind that adorable horse of his."

This announcement produced a varied effect upon those who heard it, although all experienced surprise. Mrs. Pomfret, in addition to an anger which she controlled only as the result of long practice, was horrified, and once more levelled her glasses at Austen.

"I think, Victoria, you had better come with us," she said. "We shall have plenty of time, if we hurry."

By this time Austen had recovered his breath.

"I'll be ready in an instant," he said, and made brief but polite adieus to the three others.

"Good-by," said Alice, vaguely.

"Let me know when anything develops," said Mr. Crewe, with his back to his attorney.

Austen found Victoria, her colour heightened a little, waiting for him by the driveway. The Pomfrets had just driven off, and Mr. Crewe was nowhere to be seen.

## Page 49

"I do not know what you will think of me for taking this for granted, Mr. Vane," she said as he took his seat beside her, "but I couldn't resist the chance of driving behind your horse."

"I realized," he answered smilingly, "that Pepper was the attraction, and I have more reason than ever to be grateful to him."

She glanced covertly at the Vane profile, at the sure, restraining hands on the reins which governed with so nice a touch the mettle of the horse. His silence gave her time to analyze again her interest in this man, which renewed itself at every meeting. In the garden she had been struck by the superiority of a nature which set at naught what had been, to some smaller spirits, a difficult situation. She recognized this quality as inborn, but, not knowing of Sarah Austen, she wondered where he got it. Now it was the fact that he refrained from comment that pleased her most.

"Did Humphrey actually send for you to take up the injured horse case?" she asked.

Austen flushed.

"I'm afraid he did. You seem to know all about it," he added.

"Know all about it Every one within twenty miles of Leith knows about it. I'm sure the horse was doctored when he bought him."

"Take care, you may be called as a witness."

"What I want to know is, why you accepted such a silly case," said Victoria.

Austen looked quizzically into her upturned face, and she dropped her eyes.

"That's exactly what I should have asked myself,—after a while," he said.

She laughed with a delicious understanding of "after a while."

"I suppose you think me frightfully forward," she said, in a lowered voice, "inviting myself to drive and asking you such a question when I scarcely know you. But I just couldn't go on with Mrs. Pomfret,—she irritated me so,—and my front teeth are too valuable to drive with Humphrey Crewe."

Austen smiled, and secretly agreed with her.

"I should have offered, if I had dared," he said.

"Dared! I didn't know that was your failing. I don't believe you even thought of it."

“Nevertheless, the idea occurred to me, and terrified me,” said Austen.

“Why?” she asked, turning upon him suddenly. “Why did it terrify you?”

“I should have been presuming upon an accidental acquaintance, which I had no means of knowing you wished to continue,” he replied, staring at his horse’s head.

“And I?” Victoria asked. “Presumption multiplies tenfold in a woman, doesn’t it?”

“A woman confers,” said Austen.

She smiled, but with a light in her eyes. This simple sentence seemed to reveal yet more of an inner man different from some of those with whom her life had been cast. It was an American point of view—this choosing to believe that the woman conferred. After offering herself as his passenger Victoria, too, had had a moment of terror: the action had been the result of an impulse which she did not care to attempt to define. She changed the subject.

## Page 50

"You have been winning laurels since I saw you last summer," she said. "I hear incidentally you have made our friend Zeb Meader a rich man."

"As riches go, in the town of Mercer," Austen laughed. "As for my laurels, they have not yet begun to chafe."

Here was a topic he would have avoided, and yet he was curious to discover what her attitude would be. He had antagonized her father, and the fact that he was the son of Hilary Vane had given his antagonism prominence.

"I am glad you did it for Zeb."

"I should have done it for anybody—much as I like Zeb," he replied briefly.

She glanced at him.

"It was—courageous of you," she said.

"I have never looked upon it in that light," he answered. "May I ask you how you heard of it?"

She coloured, but faced the question.

"I heard it from my father, at first, and I took an interest—on Zeb Meader's account," she added hastily.

Austen was silent.

"Of course," she continued, "I felt a little like boasting of an 'accidental acquaintance' with the man who saved Zeb Meader's life."

Austen laughed. Then he drew Pepper down to a walk, and turned to her.

"The power of making it more than an accidental acquaintance lies with you," he said quietly.

"I have always had an idea that aggression was a man's prerogative," Victoria answered lightly. "And seeing that you have not appeared at Fairview for something over a year, I can only conclude that you do not choose to exercise it in this case."

Austen was in a cruel quandary.

"I did wish to come," he answered simply, "but—the fact that I have had a disagreement with your father has—made it difficult." "Nonsense" exclaimed Victoria; "just because you have won a suit against his railroad. You don't know my father, Mr. Vane. He isn't



the kind of man with whom that would make any difference. You ought to talk it over with him. He thinks you were foolish to take Zeb Meader's side."

"And you?" Austen demanded quickly.

"You see, I'm a woman," said Victoria, "and I'm prejudiced—for Zeb Meader. Women are always prejudiced,—that's our trouble. It seemed to me that Zeb was old, and unfortunate, and ought to be compensated, since he is unable to work. But of course I suppose I can't be expected to understand."

It was true that she could not be expected to understand. He might not tell her that his difference with Mr. Flint was not a mere matter of taking a small damage suit against his railroad, but a fundamental one. And Austen recognized that the justification of his attitude meant an arraignment of Victoria's father.

## Page 51

"I wish you might know my father better, Mr. Vane," she went on, "I wish you might know him as I know him, if it were possible. You see, I have been his constant companion all my life, and I think very few people understand him as I do, and realize his fine qualities. He makes no attempt to show his best side to the world. His life has been spent in fighting, and I am afraid he is apt to meet the world on that footing. He is a man of such devotion to his duty that he rarely has a day to himself, and I have known him to sit up until the small hours of the morning to settle some little matter of justice. I do not think I am betraying his confidence when I say that he is impressed with your ability, and that he liked your manner the only time he ever talked to you. He believes that you have got, in some way, a wrong idea of what he is trying to do. Why don't you come up and talk to him again?"

"I am afraid your kindness leads you to overrate my importance," Austen replied, with mingled feelings. Victoria's confidence in her father made the situation all the more hopeless.

"I'm sure I don't," she answered quickly; "ever since—ever since I first laid eyes upon you I have had a kind of belief in you."

"Belief?" he echoed.

"Yes," she said, "belief that—that you had a future. I can't describe it," she continued, the colour coming into her face again; "one feels that way about some people without being able to put the feeling into words. And have a feeling, too, that I should like you to be friends with my father."

Neither of them, perhaps, realized the rapidity with which "accidental acquaintance" had melted into intimacy. Austen's blood ran faster, but it was characteristic of him that he tried to steady himself, for he was a Vane. He had thought of her many times during the past year, but gradually the intensity of the impression had faded until it had been so unexpectedly and vividly renewed to-day. He was not a man to lose his head, and the difficulties of the situation made him pause and choose his words, while he dared not so much as glance at her as she sat in the sunlight beside him.

"I should like to be friends with your father," he answered gravely,—the statement being so literally true as to have its pathetically humorous aspect.

"I'll tell him so, Mr. Vane," she said.

Austen turned, with a seriousness that dismayed her.

"I must ask you as a favour not to do that," he said.

"Why?" she asked.



"In the first place," he answered quietly, "I cannot afford to have Mr. Flint misunderstand my motives. And I ought not to mislead you," he went on. "In periods of public controversy, such as we are passing through at present, sometimes men's views differ so sharply as to make intercourse impossible. Your father and I might not agree—politically, let us say. For instance," he added, with evident hesitation, "my father and I disagree."

## Page 52

Victoria was silent. And presently they came to a wire fence overgrown with Virginia creeper, which divided the shaded road from a wide lawn.

“Here we are at the Hammonds’, and—thank you,” she said.

Any reply he might have made was forestalled. The insistent and intolerant horn of an automobile, followed now by the scream of the gears, broke the stillness of the country-side, and a familiar voice cried out—“Do you want the whole road?”

Austen turned into the Hammonds’ drive as the bulldog nose of a motor forged ahead, and Mr. Crewe swung in the driver’s seat.

“Hello, Victoria,” he shouted, “you people ought to have ear-trumpets.”

The car swerved, narrowly missed a watering fountain where the word “Peace” was inscribed, and shot down the hill.

“That manner,” said Victoria, as she jumped out of the buggy, “is a valuable political asset.”

“Does he really intend to go into politics?” Austen asked curiously.

“‘Intend’ is a mild word applied to Humphrey,” she answered; “‘determined’ would suit him better. According to him, there is no game that cannot be won by dynamics. ‘Get out of the way’ is his motto. Mrs. Pomfret will tell you how he means to cover the State with good roads next year, and take a house in Washington the year after.” She held out her hand. “Good-by,—and I am ever so much obliged to you for bringing me here.”

He drove away towards Ripton with many things to think about, with a last picture of her in his mind as she paused for an instant in the flickering shadows, stroking Pepper’s forehead.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE LEOPARD AND HIS SPOTS

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of Mr. Humphrey Crewe, of his value to the town of Leith, and to the State at large, and in these pages only a poor attempt at an appreciation of him may be expected. Mr. Crewe by no means underestimated this claim upon the community, and he had of late been declaring that he was no summer resident. Wedderburn was his home, and there he paid his taxes. Undoubtedly, they were less than city taxes.

Although a young man, Mr. Crewe was in all respects a model citizen, and a person of many activities. He had built a farmers' club, to which the farmers, in gross ingratitude, had never gone. Now it was a summer residence and distinctly rentable. He had a standing offer to erect a library in the village of Leith provided the town would furnish the ground, the books, and permit the name of Crewe to be carved in stone over the doorway. The indifference of the town pained him, and he was naturally not a little grieved at the lack of proper feeling of the country people of America towards those who would better their conditions. He had put a large memorial window in the chapel to his family.

## Page 53

Mr. Crewe had another standing offer to be one of five men to start a farming experiment station—which might pay dividends. He, was a church warden; president of a society for turning over crops (which he had organized); a member of the State Grange; president of the embryo State Economic League (whatever that was); and chairman of the Local Improvement Board—also a creation of his own. By these tokens, and others too numerous to mention, it would seem that the inhabitants of Leith would have jumped at the chance to make such a man one of the five hundred in their State Legislature.

To Whitman is attributed the remark that genius is almost one hundred per cent directness, but whether or not this applied to Mr. Humphrey Crewe remains to be seen. “Dynamics” more surely expressed him. It would not seem to be a very difficult feat, to be sure, to get elected to a State Legislature of five hundred which met once a year: once in ten years, indeed, might have been more appropriate for the five hundred. The town of Leith with its thousand inhabitants had one representative, and Mr. Crewe had made up his mind he was to be that representative.

There was, needless to say, great excitement in Leith over Mr. Crewe’s proposed venture into the unknown seas of politics. I mean, of course, that portion of Leith which recognized in Mr. Crewe an eligible bachelor and a person of social importance, for these qualities were not particularly appealing to the three hundred odd farmers whose votes were expected to send him rejoicing to the State capital.

“It is so rare with us for a gentleman to go into politics, that we ought to do everything we can to elect him,” Mrs. Pomfret went about declaring. “Women do so much in England, I wonder they don’t do more here. I was staying at Aylestone Court last year when the Honourable Billy Aylestone was contesting the family seat with a horrid Radical, and I assure you, my dear, I got quite excited. We did nothing from morning till night but electioneer for the Honourable Billy, and kissed all the babies in the borough. The mothers were so grateful. Now, Edith, do tell Jack instead of playing tennis and canoeing all day he ought to help. It’s the duty of all young men to help. Noblesse oblige, you know. I can’t understand Victoria. She really has influence with these country people, but she says it’s all nonsense. Sometimes I think Victoria has a common streak in her—and no wonder. The other day she actually drove to the Hammonds’ in a buggy with an unknown lawyer from Ripton. But I told you about it. Tell your gardener and the people that do your haying, dear, and your chicken woman. My chicken woman is most apathetic, but do you wonder, with the life they lead?”

Mr. Humphrey Crewe might have had, with King Charles, the watchword “Thorough.” He sent to the town clerk for a check-list, and proceeded to honour each of the two hundred Republican voters with a personal visit. This is a fair example of what took place in the majority of cases.

## Page 54

Out of a cloud of dust emerges an automobile, which halts, with protesting brakes, in front of a neat farmhouse, guarded by great maples. Persistent knocking by a chauffeur at last brings a woman to the door. Mrs. Jenney has a pleasant face and an ample figure.

"Mr. Jenney live here?" cries Mr. Crewe from the driver's seat.

"Yes," says Mrs. Jenney, smiling.

"Tell him I want to see him."

"Guess you'll find him in the apple orchard."

"Where's that?"

The chauffeur takes down the bars, Mr. Jenney pricks up his ears, and presently—to his amazement—perceives a Leviathan approaching him, careening over the ruts of his wood road. Not being an emotional person, he continues to pick apples until he is summarily hailed. Then he goes leisurely towards the Leviathan.

"Are you Mr. Jenney?"

"Callate to be," says Mr. Jenney, pleasantly.

"I'm Humphrey Crewe."

"How be you?" says Mr. Jenney, his eyes wandering over the Leviathan.

"How are the apples this year?" asks Mr. Crewe, graciously.

"Fair to middlin'," says Mr. Jenney.

"Have you ever tasted my Pippins?" says Mr. Crewe. "A little science in cultivation helps along. I'm going to send you a United States government pamphlet on the fruit we can raise here."

Mr. Jenney makes an awkward pause by keeping silent on the subject of the pamphlet until he shall see it.

"Do you take much interest in politics?"

"Not a great deal," answers Mr. Jenney.

"That's the trouble with Americans," Mr. Crewe declares, "they don't care who represents 'em, or whether their government's good or bad."

"Guess that's so," replies Mr. Jenney, politely.

"That sort of thing's got to stop," declares Mr. Crewe; "I'm a candidate for the Republican nomination for representative."

"I want to know!" ejaculates Mr. Jenney, pulling his beard. One would never suspect that this has been one of Mr. Jenney's chief topics of late.

"I'll see that the interests of this town are cared for."

"Let's see," says Mr. Jenney, "there's five hundred in the House, ain't there?"

"It's a ridiculous number," says Mr. Crewe, with truth.

"Gives everybody a chance to go," says Mr. Jenney. "I was thar in '78, and enjoyed it some."

"Who are you for?" demanded Mr. Crewe, combating the tendency of the conversation to slip into a pocket.

"Little early yet, hain't it? Hain't made up my mind. Who's the candidates?" asks Mr. Jenney, continuing to stroke his beard.

"I don't know," says Mr. Crewe, "but I do know I've done something for this town, and I hope you'll take it into consideration. Come and see me when you go to the village. I'll give you a good cigar, and that pamphlet, and we'll talk matters over."

"Never would have thought to see one of them things in my orchard," says Mr. Jenney. "How much do they cost? Much as a locomotive, don't they?"



## Page 55

It would not be exact to say that, after some weeks of this sort of campaigning, Mr. Crewe was discouraged, for such writhing vitality with which nature had charged him that he did not know the meaning of the word. He was merely puzzled, as a June-bug is puzzled when it bumps up against a wire window-screen. He had pledged to him his own gardener, Mrs. Pomfret's, the hired men of three of his neighbours, a few modest souls who habitually took off their hats to him, and Mr. Ball, of the village, who sold groceries to Wedderburn and was a general handy man for the summer people. Mr. Ball was an agitator by temperament and a promoter by preference. If you were a summer resident of importance and needed anything from a sewing-machine to a Holstein heifer, Mr. Ball, the grocer, would accommodate you. When Mrs. Pomfret's cook became inebriate and refractory, Mr. Ball was sent for, and enticed her to the station and on board of a train; when the Chillinghams' tank overflowed, Mr. Ball found the proper valve and saved the house from being washed away. And it was he who, after Mrs. Pomfret, took the keenest interest in Mr. Crewe's campaign. At length came one day when Mr. Crewe pulled up in front of the grocery store and called, as his custom was, loudly for Mr. Ball. The fact that Mr. Ball was waiting on customers made no difference, and presently that gentleman appeared, rubbing his hands together.

"How do you do, Mr. Crewe?" he said, "automobile going all right?"

"What's the matter with these fellers?" said Mr. Crewe. "Haven't I done enough for the town? Didn't I get 'em rural free delivery? Didn't I subscribe to the meeting-house and library, and don't I pay more taxes than anybody else?"

"Certain," assented Mr. Ball, eagerly, "certain you do." It did not seem to occur to him that it was unfair to make him responsible for the scurvy ingratitude of his townsmen. He stepped gingerly down into the dust and climbed up on the tool box.

"Look out," said Mr. Crewe, "don't scratch the varnish. What is it?"

Mr. Ball shifted obediently to the rubber-covered step, and bent his face to his patron's ear.

"It's railrud," he said.

"Railroad!" shouted Mr. Crewe, in a voice that made the grocer clutch his arm in terror. "Don't pinch me like that. Railroad! This town ain't within ten miles of the railroad."

"For the love of David," said Mr. Ball, "don't talk so loud, Mr. Crewe."

"What's the railroad got to do with it?" Mr. Crewe demanded.

Mr. Ball glanced around him, to make sure that no one was within shouting distance.

"What's the railrud got to do with anything in this State?" inquired Mr. Ball, craftily.

"That's different," said Mr. Crewe, shortly, "I'm a corporation man myself. They've got to defend 'emselves."

"Certain. I ain't got anything again' 'em," Mr. Ball agreed quickly. "I guess they know what they're about. By the bye, Mr. Crewe," he added, coming dangerously near the varnish again, and drawing back, "you hain't happened to have seen Job Braden, have you?"

## Page 56

"Job Braden!" exclaimed Mr. Crewe, "Job Braden! What's all this mystery about Job Braden? Somebody whispers that name in my ear every day. If you mean that smooth-faced cuss that stutters and lives on Braden's Hill, I called on him, but he was out. If you see him, tell him to come up to Wedderburn, and I'll talk with him."

Mr. Ball made a gesture to indicate a feeling divided between respect for Mr. Crewe and despair at the hardihood of such a proposition.

"Lord bless you, sir, Job wouldn't go."

"Wouldn't go?"

"He never pays visits,—folks go to him."

"He'd come to see me, wouldn't he?"

"I—I'm afraid riot, Mr. Crewe. Job holds his comb rather high."

"Do you mean to say this two-for-a-cent town has a boss?"

"Silas Grantley was born here," said Mr. Ball—for even the worm will turn. "This town's got a noble history."

"I don't care anything about Silas Grantley. What I want to know is, how this rascal manages to make anything out of the political pickings of a town like Leith."

"Well, Job ain't exactly a rascal, Mr. Crewe. He's got a good many of them hill farmers in a position of—of gratitude. Enough to control the Republican caucus."

"Do you mean he buys their votes?" demanded Mr. Crewe.

"It's like this," explained Mr. Ball, "if one of 'em falls behind in his grocery bill, for example, he can always get money from Job. Job takes a mortgage, but he don't often close down on 'm. And Job has been collectin' credentials in Avalon County for upward of forty years."

"Collecting credentials?"

"Yes. Gets a man nominated to State and county conventions that can't go, and goes himself with a bunch of credentials. He's in a position to negotiate. He was in all them railrud fights with Jethro Bass, and now he does business with Hilary Vane or Brush Bascom when anything especial's goin' on. You'd ought to see him, Mr. Crewe."

"I guess I won't waste my time with any picayune boss if the United Northeastern Railroads has any hand in this matter," declared Mr. Crewe. "Wind her up."

This latter remark was addressed to a long-suffering chauffeur who looked like a Sicilian brigand.

“I didn’t exactly like to suggest it,” said Mr. Ball, rubbing his hands and raising his voice above the whirl of the machine, “but of course I knew Mr. Flint was an intimate friend. A word to him from you—”

But by this Mr. Crewe had got in his second speed and was sweeping around a corner lined with farmers’ teams, whose animals were behaving like circus horses. On his own driveway, where he arrived in incredibly brief time, he met his stenographer, farm superintendent, secretary, housekeeper, and general utility man, Mr. Raikes. Mr. Raikes was elderly, and showed signs of needing a vacation.

“Telephone Mr. Flint, Raikes, and tell him I would like an appointment at his earliest convenience, on important business.”

## Page 57

Mr. Raikes, who was going for his daily stroll beside the river, wheeled and made for the telephone, and brought back the news that Mr. Flint would be happy to see Mr. Crewe the next afternoon at four o'clock.

This interview, about which there has been so much controversy in the newspapers, and denials and counter-denials from the press bureaus of both gentlemen,—this now historic interview began at four o'clock precisely the next day. At that hour Mr. Crewe was ushered into that little room in which Mr. Flint worked when at Fairview. Like Frederick the Great and other famous captains, Mr. Flint believed in an iron bedstead regime. The magnate was, as usual, fortified behind his oak desk; the secretary with a bend in his back was in modest evidence; and an elderly man of comfortable proportions, with a large gold watch-charm portraying the rising sun, and who gave, somehow, the polished impression of a marble, sat near the window smoking a cigar. Mr. Crewe approached the desk with that genial and brisk manner for which he was noted and held out his hand to the railroad president.

"We are both business men, and both punctual, Mr. Flint," he said, and sat down in the empty chair beside his host, eyeing without particular favour him of the watch-charm, whose cigar was not a very good one. "I wanted to have a little private conversation with you which might be of considerable interest to us both." And Mr. Crewe laid down on the desk a somewhat formidable roll of papers.

"I trust the presence of Senator Whitredge will not deter you," answered Mr. Flint. "He is an old friend of mine."

Mr. Crewe was on his feet again with surprising alacrity, and beside the senator's chair.

"How are you, Senator?" he said, "I have never had the pleasure of meeting you, but I know you by reputation."

The senator got to his feet. They shook hands, and exchanged cordial greetings; and during the exchange Mr. Crewe looked out of the window, and the senator's eyes were fixed on the telephone receiver on Mr. Flint's desk. As neither gentleman took hold of the other's fingers very hard, they fell apart quickly.

"I am very happy to meet you, Mr. Crewe," said the senator. Mr. Crewe sat down again, and not being hampered by those shrinking qualities so fatal to success he went on immediately:—"There is nothing which I have to say that the senator cannot hear. I made the appointment with you, Mr. Flint, to talk over a matter which may be of considerable importance to us both. I have made up my mind to go to the Legislature."

Mr. Crewe naturally expected to find visible effects of astonishment and joy on the faces of his hearers at such not inconsiderable news. Mr. Flint, however, looked serious enough, though the senator smiled as he blew his smoke out of the window.

“Have you seen Job Braden, Mr. Crewe?” he asked, with genial jocoseness. “They tell me that Job is still alive and kicking over in your parts.”

## Page 58

"Thank you, Senator," said Mr. Crewe, "that brings me to the very point I wish to emphasize. Everywhere in Leith I am met with the remark, 'Have you seen Job Braden?' And I always answer, 'No, I haven't seen Mr. Braden, and I don't intend to see him.'"

Mr. Whitredge laughed, and blew out a ring of smoke. Mr. Flint's face remained sober.

"Now, Mr. Flint," Mr. Crewe went on, "you and I understand each other, and we're on the same side of the fence. I have inherited some interests in corporations myself, and I have acquired an interest in others. I am a director in several. I believe that it is the duty of property to protect itself, and the duty of all good men in politics,—such as the senator here,"—(bow from Mr. Whitredge) to protect property. I am a practical man, and I think I can convince you, if you don't see it already, that my determination to go to the Legislature is an advantageous thing for your railroad."

"The advent of a reputable citizen into politics is always a good thing for the railroad, Mr. Crewe," said Mr. Flint.

"Exactly," Mr. Crewe agreed, ignoring the non-committal quality of this remark, "and if you get a citizen who is a not inconsiderable property holder, a gentleman, and a college graduate,—a man who, by study and predilection, is qualified to bring about improved conditions in the State, so much the better."

"So much the better," said Mr. Flint.

"I thought you would see it that way," Mr. Crewe continued. "Now a man of your calibre must have studied to some extent the needs of the State, and it must have struck you that certain improvements go hand in hand with the prosperity of your railroad."

"Have a cigar, Mr. Crewe. Have another, Senator?" said Mr. Flint. "I think that is safe as a general proposition, Mr. Crewe."

"To specify," said Mr. Crewe, laying his hand on the roll of papers he had brought, "I have here bills which I have carefully drawn up and which I will leave for your consideration. One is to issue bonds for ten millions to build State roads."

"Ten millions!" said Mr. Flint, and the senator whistled mildly.

"Think about it," said Mr. Crewe, "the perfection of the highways through the State, instead of decreasing your earnings, would increase them tremendously. Visitors by the tens of thousands would come in automobiles, and remain and buy summer places. The State would have its money back in taxes and business in no time at all. I wonder somebody hasn't seen it before—the stupidity of the country legislator is colossal. And we want forestry laws, and laws for improving the condition of the farmers—all practical things. They are all there," Mr. Crewe declared, slapping the bundle; "read them, Mr.

Flint. If you have any suggestions to make, kindly note them on the margin, and I shall be glad to go over them with you.”

By this time the senator was in a rare posture for him—he was seated upright.



## Page 59

"As you know, I am a very busy man, Mr. Crewe," said the railroad president.

"No one appreciates that more fully than I do, Mr. Flint," said Mr. Crewe; "I haven't many idle hours myself. I think you will find the bills and my comments on them well worth your consideration from the point of view of advantage to your railroad. They are typewritten, and in concrete form. In fact, the Northeastern Railroads and myself must work together to our mutual advantage—that has become quite clear to me. I shall have need of your help in passing the measures."

"I'm afraid I don't quite understand you, Mr. Crewe," said Mr. Flint, putting down the papers.

"That is," said Mr. Crewe, "if you approve of the bills, and I am confident that I shall be able to convince you."

"What do you want me to do?" asked the railroad president.

"Well, in the first place," said Mr. Crewe, unabashed, "send word to your man Braden that you've seen me and it's all right."

"I assure you," answered Mr. Flint, giving evidence for the first time of a loss of patience, "that neither the Northeastern Railroads nor myself, have any more to do with this Braden than you have."

Mr. Crewe, being a man of the world, looked incredulous.

"Senator," Mr. Flint continued, turning to Mr. Whitredge, "you know as much about politics in this State as any man of my acquaintance, have you ever heard of any connection between this Braden and the Northeastern Railroads?"

The senator had a laugh that was particularly disarming.

"Bless your soul, no," he replied. "You will pardon me, Mr. Crewe, but you must have been listening to some farmer's tale. The railroad is the bugaboo in all these country romances. I've seen old Job Braden at conventions ever since I was a lad. He's a back number, one of the few remaining disciples and imitators of Jethro Bass: talks like him and acts like him. In the old days when there were a lot of little railroads, he and Bijah Bixby and a few others used to make something out of them, but since the consolidation, and Mr. Flint's presidency, Job stays at home. They tell me he runs Leith yet. You'd better go over and fix it up with him."

A somewhat sarcastic smile of satisfaction was playing over Mr. Flint's face as he listened to the senator's words. As a matter of fact, they were very nearly true as regarded Job Braden, but Mr. Crewe may be pardoned for thinking that Mr. Flint was not showing him quite the confidence due from one business and corporation man to

another. He was by no means abashed,—Mr. Crewe had too much spirit for that. He merely became—as a man whose watchword is “thorough” will—a little more combative.

“Well, read the bills anyway, Mr. Flint, and I’ll come and go over them with you. You can’t fail to see my arguments, and all I ask is that you throw the weight of your organization at the State capital for them when they come up.”

## Page 60

Mr. Flint drummed on the table.

"The men who have held office in this State," he said, "have always been willing to listen to any suggestion I may have thought proper to make to them. This is undoubtedly because I am at the head of the property which pays the largest taxes. Needless to say I am chary of making suggestions. But I am surprised that you should have jumped at a conclusion which is the result of a popular and unfortunately prevalent opinion that the Northeastern Railroads meddled in any way with the government or politics of this State. I am glad of this opportunity of assuring you that we do not," he continued, leaning forward and holding up his hand to ward off interruption, "and I know that Senator Whitredge will bear me out in this statement, too."

The senator nodded gravely. Mr. Crewe, who was anything but a fool, and just as assertive as Mr. Flint, cut in.

"Look here, Mr. Flint," he said, "I know what a lobby is. I haven't been a director in railroads myself for nothing. I have no objection to a lobby. You employ counsel before the Legislature, don't you—"

"We do," said Mr. Flint, interrupting, "the best and most honourable counsel we can find in the State. When necessary, they appear before the legislative committees. As a property holder in the State, and an admirer of its beauties, and as its well-wisher, it will give me great pleasure to look over your bills, and use whatever personal influence I may have as a citizen to forward them, should they meet my approval. And I am especially glad to do this as a neighbour, Mr. Crewe. As a neighbour," he repeated, significantly.

The president of the Northeastern Railroads rose as he spoke these words, and held out his hand to Mr. Crewe. It was perhaps a coincidence that the senator rose also.

"All right," said Mr. Crewe, "I'll call around again in about two weeks. Come and see me sometime, Senator." "Thank you," said the senator, "I shall be happy. And if you are ever in your automobile near the town of Ramsey, stop at my little farm, Mr. Crewe. I trust to be able soon to congratulate you on a step which I am sure will be but the beginning of a long and brilliant political career."

"Thanks," said Mr. Crewe; "by the bye, if you could see your way to drop a hint to that feller Braden, I should be much obliged."

The senator shook his head and laughed.

"Job is an independent cuss," he said, "I'm afraid he'd regard that as an unwarranted trespass on his preserves."



Mr. Crewe was ushered out by the stooping secretary, Mr. Freeman; who, instead of seizing Mr. Crewe's hand as he had Austen Vane's, said not a word. But Mr. Crewe would have been interested if he could have heard Mr. Flint's first remark to the senator after the door was closed on his back. It did not relate to Mr. Crewe, but to the subject under discussion which he had interrupted; namely, the Republican candidates for the twenty senatorial districts of the State.

## Page 61

On its way back to Leith the red motor paused in front of Mr. Ball's store, and that gentleman was summoned in the usual manner.

"Do you see this Braden once in a while?" Mr. Crewe demanded.

Mr. Ball looked knowing.

"Tell him I want to have a talk with him," said Mr. Crewe. "I've been to see Mr. Flint, and I think matters can be arranged. And mind you, no word about this, Ball."

"I guess I understand a thing or two," said Mr. Ball. "Trust me to handle it."

Two days later, as Mr. Crewe was seated in his study, his man entered and stood respectfully waiting for the time when he should look up from his book.

"Well, what is it now, Waters?"

"If you please, sir," said the man, "a strange message has come over the telephone just now that you were to be in room number twelve of the Ripton House to-morrow at ten o'clock. They wouldn't give any name, sir," added the dignified Waters, who, to tell the truth, was somewhat outraged, nor tell where they telephoned from. But it was a man's voice, sir."

"All right," said Mr. Crewe.

He spent much of the afternoon and evening debating whether or not his dignity would permit him to go. But he ordered the motor at half-past nine, and at ten o'clock precisely the clerk at the Ripton House was bowing to him and handing him, deferentially, a dripping pen.

"Where's room number twelve?" said the direct Mr. Crewe.

"Oh," said the clerk, and possessing a full share of the worldly wisdom of his calling, he smiled broadly. "I guess you'll find him up there, Mr. Crewe. Front, show the gentleman to number twelve."

The hall boy knocked on the door of number twelve.

"C—come in," said a voice. "Come in."

Mr. Crewe entered, the hall boy closed the door, and he found himself face to face with a comfortable, smooth-faced man seated with great placidity on a rocking-chair in the centre of the room, between the bed and the marble-topped table: a man to whom, evidently, a rich abundance of thought was sufficient company, for he had neither

newspaper nor book. He rose in a leisurely fashion, and seemed the very essence of the benign as he stretched forth his hand.

"I'm Mr. Crewe," the owner of that name proclaimed, accepting the hand with no exaggeration of cordiality. The situation jarred on him a trifle.

"I know. Seed you on the road once or twice. How be you?"

Mr. Crewe sat down.

"I suppose you are Mr. Braden," he said.

Mr. Braden sank into the rocker and fingered a waistcoat pocket full of cigars that looked like a section of a cartridge-belt.

"T—try one of mine," he said.

"I only smoke once after breakfast," said Mr. Crewe.

"Abstemious, be you? Never could find that it did me any hurt."

## Page 62

This led to an awkward pause, Mr. Crewe not being a man who found profit in idle discussion. He glanced at Mr. Braden's philanthropic and beaming countenance, which would have made the fortune of a bishop. It was not usual for Mr. Crewe to find it difficult to begin a conversation, or to have a companion as self-sufficient as himself. This man Braden had all the fun, apparently, in sitting in a chair and looking into space that Stonewall Jackson had, or an ordinary man in watching a performance of "A Trip to Chinatown." Let it not be inferred, again, that Mr. Crewe was abashed; but he was puzzled.

"I had an engagement in Ripton this morning," he said, "to see about some business matters. And after I received your telephone I thought I'd drop in here."

"Didn't telephone," said Mr. Braden, placidly.

"What!" said Mr. Crewe, "I certainly got a telephone message."

"N—never telephone," said Mr. Braden.

"I certainly got a message from you," Mr. Crewe protested.

"Didn't say it was from me—didn't say so—did they—"

"No," said Mr. Crewe, "but—"

"Told Ball you wanted to have me see you, didn't you?"

Mr. Crewe, when he had unravelled this sentence, did not fancy the way it was put.

"I told Ball I was seeing everybody in Leith," he answered, "and that I had called on you, and you weren't at home. Ball inferred that you had a somewhat singular way of seeing people."

"You don't understand," was Mr. Braden's somewhat enigmatic reply.

"I understand pretty well," said Mr. Crewe. "I'm a candidate for the Republican nomination for representative from Leith, and I want your vote and influence. You probably know what I have done for the town, and that I'm the biggest taxpayer, and an all-the-year-round resident."

"S—some in Noo York—hain't you?"

"Well, you can't expect a man in my position and with my interests to stay at home all the time. I feel that I have a right to ask the town for this nomination. I have some bills here which I'll request you to read over, and you will see that I have ideas which are of

real value to the State. The State needs waking up-progressive measures. You're a farmer, ain't you?"

"Well, I have be'n."

"I can improve the condition of the farmer one hundred per cent, and if my road system is followed, he can get his goods to market for about a tenth of what it costs him now. We have infinitely valuable forests in the State which are being wasted by lumbermen, which ought to be preserved. You read those bills, and what I have written about them."

"You don't understand," said Mr. Braden, drawing a little closer and waving aside the manuscript with his cigar.

"Don't understand what?"

"Don't seem to understand," repeated Mr. Braden, confidently laying his hand on Mr. Crewe's knee. "Candidate for representative, be you?"



## Page 63

"Yes," replied Mr. Crewe, who was beginning to resent the manner in which he deemed he was being played with, "I told you I was."

"M—made all them bills out before you was chose?" said Mr. Braden.

Mr. Crewe grew red in the face.

"I am interested in these questions," he said stiffly.

"Little mite hasty, wahn't it?" Mr. Braden remarked equably, "but you've got plenty of time and money to fool with such things, if you've a mind to. Them don't amount to a hill of beans in politics. Nobody pays any attention to that sort of fireworks down to the capital, and if they was to get into committee them Northeastern Railroads fellers'd bury 'em deeper than the bottom of Salem pond. They don't want no such things as them to pass."

"Pardon me," said Mr. Crewe, "but you haven't read 'em."

"I know what they be," said Mr. Braden, "I've be'n in politics more years than you've be'n livin', I guess. I don't want to read 'em," he announced, his benign manner unchanged.

"I think you have made a mistake so far as the railroad is concerned, Mr. Braden," said Mr. Crewe, "I'm a practical man myself, and I don't indulge in moonshine. I am a director in one or two railroads. I have talked this matter over with Mr. Flint, and incidentally with Senator Whitredge."

"Knowed Whitredge afore you had any teeth," said Mr. Braden, who did not seem to be greatly impressed, "know him intimate. What'd you go to Flint for?"

"We have interests in common," said Mr. Crewe, "and I am rather a close friend of his. My going to the Legislature will be, I think, to our mutual advantage."

"O—ought to have come right to me," said Mr. Braden, leaning over until his face was in close proximity to Mr. Crewe's. "Whitredge told you to come to me, didn't he?"

Mr. Crewe was a little taken aback.

"The senator mentioned your name," he admitted.

"He knows. Said I was the man to see if you was a candidate, didn't he? Told you to talk to Job Braden, didn't he?"

Now Mr. Crewe had no means of knowing whether Senator Whitredge had been in conference with Mr. Braden or not.

"The senator mentioned your name casually, in some connection," said Mr. Crewe.

"He knows," Mr. Braden repeated, with a finality that spoke volumes for the senator's judgment; and he bent over into Mr. Crewe's ear, with the air of conveying a mild but well-merited reproof, "You'd ought to come right to me in the first place. I could have saved you all that unnecessary trouble of seein' folks. There hasn't be'n a representative left the town of Leith for thirty years that I hain't agreed to. Whitredge knows that. If I say you kin go, you kin go. You understand," said Mr. Braden, with his fingers on Mr. Crewe's knee once more.

Five minutes later Mr. Crewe emerged into the dazzling sun of the Ripton square, climbed into his automobile, and turned its head towards Leith, strangely forgetting the main engagement which he said had brought him to town.

## Page 64

### CHAPTER VIII

#### THE TRIALS OF AN HONOURABLE

It was about this time that Mr. Humphrey Crewe was transformed, by one of those subtle and inexplicable changes which occur in American politics, into the Honourable Humphrey Crewe. And, as interesting bits of news about important people are bound to leak out, it became known in Leith that he had subscribed to what is known as a Clipping Bureau. Two weeks after the day he left Mr. Braden's presence in the Ripton House the principal newspapers of the country contained the startling announcement that the well-known summer colony of Leith was to be represented in the State Legislature by a millionaire. The Republican nomination, which Mr. Crewe had secured, was equivalent to an election.

For a little time after that Mr. Crewe, although naturally an important and busy man, scarcely had time to nod to his friends on the road.

"Poor dear Humphrey," said Mrs. Pomfret, "who was so used to dropping in to dinner, hasn't had a moment to write me a line to thank me for the statesman's diary I bought for him in London this spring. They're in that new red leather, and Aylestone says he finds his so useful. I dropped in at Wedderburn to-day to see if I could be of any help, and the poor man was buttonholed by two reporters who had come all the way from New York to see him. I hope he won't overdo it."

It was true. Mr. Crewe was to appear in the Sunday supplements. "Are our Millionaires entering Politics?" Mr. Crewe, with his usual gracious hospitality, showed the reporters over the place, and gave them suggestions as to the best vantage-points in which to plant their cameras. He himself was at length prevailed upon to be taken in a rough homespun suit, and with a walking-stick in his hand, appraising with a knowing eye a flock of his own sheep. Pressed a little, he consented to relate something of the systematic manner in which he had gone about to secure this nomination: how he had visited in person the homes of his fellow-townsmen. "I knew them all, anyway," he is quoted as saying; "we have had the pleasantest of relationships during the many years I have been a resident of Leith."

"Beloved of his townspeople," this part of the article was headed. No, these were not Mr. Crewe's words—he was too modest for that. When urged to give the name of one of his townsmen who might deal with this and other embarrassing topics, Mr. Ball was mentioned. "Beloved of his townspeople" was Mr. Ball's phrase. "Although a multi-millionaire, no man is more considerate of the feelings and the rights of his more humble neighbours. Send him to the Legislature! We'd send him to the United States Senate if we could. He'll land there, anyway." Such was a random estimate (Mr. Ball's) the reporters gathered on their way to Ripton. Mr. Crewe did not hesitate to say that the

prosperity of the farmers had risen as a result of his labours at Wedderburn where the most improved machinery and methods were adopted. His efforts to raise the agricultural, as well as the moral and intellectual, tone of the community had been unceasing.

## Page 65

Then followed an intelligent abstract of the bills he was to introduce —the results of a progressive and statesmanlike brain. There was an account of him as a methodical and painstaking business man whose suggestions to the boards of directors of which he was a member had been invaluable. The article ended with a list of the clubs to which he belonged, of the societies which he had organized and of those of which he was a member,—and it might have been remarked by a discerning reader that most of these societies were State affairs. Finally there was a pen portrait of an Apollo Belvidere who wore the rough garb of a farmer (on the days when the press was present).

Mr. Crewe's incessant trials, which would have taxed a less rugged nature, did not end here. About five o'clock one afternoon a pleasant-appearing gentleman with a mellifluous voice turned up who introduced himself as ex (State) Senator Grady. The senator was from Newcastle, that city out of the mysterious depths of which so many political stars have arisen. Mr. Crewe cancelled a long-deferred engagement with Mrs. Pomfret, and invited the senator to stay to dinner; the senator hesitated, explained that he was just passing through Ripton, and, as it was a pleasant afternoon, had called to "pay his respects"; but Mr. Crewe's well-known hospitality would accept no excuses. Mr. Crewe opened a box of cigars which he had bought especially for the taste of State senators and a particular grade of Scotch whiskey.

They talked politics for four hours. Who would be governor? The senator thought Asa Gray would. The railroad was behind him, Mr. Crewe observed knowingly. The senator remarked that Mr. Crewe was no gosling. Mr. Crewe, as political-geniuses will, asked as many questions as the emperor of Germany—pertinent questions about State politics. Senator Grady was tremendously impressed with his host's programme of bills, and went over them so painstakingly that Mr. Crewe became more and more struck with Senator Grady's intelligence. The senator told Mr. Crewe that just such a man as he was needed to pull the State out of the rut into which she had fallen. Mr. Crewe said that he hoped to find such enlightened men in the Legislature as the senator. The senator let it be known that he had read the newspaper articles, and had remarked that Mr. Crewe was close to the president of the Northeastern Railroads.

"Such a man as you," said the senator, looking at the remainder of the Scotch whiskey, "will have the railroad behind you, sure."

"One more drink," said Mr. Crewe.

"I must go," said Mr. Grady, pouring it out, but that reminds me. It comes over me sudden-like, as I sit here, that you certainly ought to be in the new encyclopedie of the prominent men of the State. But sure you have received an application."

"It is probable that my secretary has one," said Mr. Crewe, "but he hasn't called it to my attention."

## Page 66

"You must get in that book, Mr. Crewe," said the senator, with an intense earnestness which gave the impression of alarm; "after what you've told me to-night I'll see to it myself that you get in. It may be that I've got some of the sample pages here, if I haven't left them at home," said Mr. Grady, fumbling in an ample inside pocket, and drawing forth a bundle. "Sure, here they are. Ain't that luck for you? Listen! 'Asa P. Gray was born on the third of August, eighteen forty-seven, the seventh son of a farmer. See, there's a space in the end they left to fill up when he's elicted governor! Here's another. The Honourable Hilary Vane comes from one of the oldest Puritan families in the State, the Vanes of Camden Street—' Here's another. 'The Honourable Brush Bascom of Putnam County is the son of poor but honourable parents—' Look at the picture of him. Ain't that a handsome steel-engravin' of the gentleman?"

Mr. Crewe gazed contemplatively at the proof, but was too busy with his own thoughts to reflect that there was evidently not much poor or honourable about Mr. Bascom now.

"Who's publishing this?" he asked.

"Fogarty and Company; sure they're the best publishers in the State, as you know, Mr. Crewe. They have the State printing. Wasn't it fortunate I had the proofs with me? Tim Fogarty slipped them into me pocket when I was leavin' Newcastle. 'The book is goin' to press the day after eliction,' says he, 'John,' says he, 'you know I always rely on your judgment, and if you happen to think of anybody between now and then who ought to go in, you'll notify me,' says he. When I read the bills to-night, and saw the scope of your work, it came over me in a flash that Humphrey Crewe was the man they left out. You'll get a good man to write your life, and what you done for the town and State, and all them societies and bills, won't you? 'Twould be a thousand pities not to have it right."

"How much does it cost?" Mr. Crewe inquired.

"Sure I forgot to ask Tim Fogarty. Mebbe he has it here. I signed one myself, but I couldn't afford the steelengravin'. Yes, he slipped one in. Two hundred dollars for a two-page biography, and, three hundred for the steelengravin'. Five hundred dollars. I didn't know it was so cheap as that," exclaimed the senator, "and everybody in the State havin' to own one in self-protection. You don't happen to have a pen about you?"

Mr. Crewe waved the senator towards his own desk, and Mr. Grady filled out the blank.

"It's lucky we are that I didn't drop in after eliction, and the book in press," he remarked; "and I hope you'll give him a good photograph. This's for you, I'll take this to Tim myself," and he handed the pen for Mr. Crewe to sign with.

Mr. Crewe read over the agreement carefully, as a business man should, before putting his signature to it. And then the senator, with renewed invitations for Mr. Crewe to call on him when he came to Newcastle, took his departure. Afterwards Mr. Crewe

remained so long in reflection that his man Waters became alarmed, and sought him out and interrupted his revery.

## Page 67

The next morning Mrs. Pomfret, who was merely “driving by” with her daughter Alice and Beatrice Chillingham, spied Mr. Crewe walking about among the young trees he was growing near the road, and occasionally tapping them with his stout stick. She poked her coachman in the back and cried:—“Humphrey, you’re such an important man now that I despair of ever seeing you again. What was the matter last night?”

“A politician from Newcastle,” answered Mr. Crewe, continuing to tap the trees, and without so much as a glance at Alice.

“Well, if you’re as important as this before you’re elected, I can’t think what it will be afterwards,” Mrs. Pomfret lamented. “Poor dear Humphrey is so conscientious. When can you come, Humphrey?”

“Don’t know,” said Mr. Crewe; “I’ll try to come tonight, but I may be stopped again. Here’s Waters now.”

The three people in Mrs. Pomfret’s victoria were considerably impressed to see the dignified Waters hurrying down the slope from the house towards them. Mr. Crewe continued to tap the trees, but drew a little nearer the carriage.

“If you please, sir,” said Waters, “there’s a telephone call for you from Newcastle. It’s urgent, sir.”

“Who is it?”

“They won’t give their names, sir.”

“All right,” said Mr. Crewe, and with a grin which spoke volumes for the manner in which he was harassed he started towards the house—in no great hurry, however. Reaching the instrument, and saying “Hello” in his usually gracious manner, he was greeted by a voice with a decided Hibernian-American accent.

“Am I talkin’ to Mr. Crewe?”

“Yes.”

“Mr. Humphrey Crewe?”

“Yes—yes, of course you are. Who are you?”

“I’m the president of the Paradise Benevolent and Military Association, Mr. Crewe. Boys that work in the mills, you know,” continued the voice, caressingly. “Sure you’ve heard of us. We’re five hundred strong, and all of us good Republicans as the president. We’re to have our annual fall outing the first of October in Finney Grove, and we’d like to have you come down.”



“The first of October?” said Mr. Crewe. “I’ll consult my engagement book.”

“We’d like to have a good picture of you in our programme, Mr. Crewe. We hope you’ll oblige us. You’re such an important figure in State politics now you’d ought to have a full page.”

There was a short silence.

“What does it cost?” Mr. Crewe demanded.

“Sure,” said the caressing voice of the president, “whatever you like.”

“I’ll send you a check for five dollars, and a picture,” said Mr. Crewe.

The answer to this was a hearty laugh, which the telephone reproduced admirably. The voice now lost a little of its caressing note and partook of a harder quality.

“You’re a splendid humorist, Mr. Crewe. Five dollars wouldn’t pay for the plate and the paper. A gentleman like you could give us twenty-five, and never know it was gone. You won’t be wanting to stop in the Legislature, Mr. Crewe, and we remember our friends in Newcastle.”

## Page 68

"Very well, I'll see what I can do. Good-by, I've got an engagement," said Mr. Crewe, and slammed down the telephone. He seated himself in his chair, and the pensive mood so characteristic (we are told) of statesmen came over him once more.

While these and other conferences and duties too numerous to mention were absorbing Mr. Crewe, he was not too busy to bear in mind the pleasure of those around him who had not received such an abundance of the world's blessings as he. The townspeople of Leith were about to bestow on him their greatest gift. What could he do to show his appreciation? Wrestling with this knotty problem, a brilliant idea occurred to him,—he would have a garden-party: invite everybody in town, and admit them to the sanctities of Wedderburn; yes, even of Wedderburn house, that they might behold with their own eyes the carved ivory elephants and other contents of glass cabinets which reeked of the Sunday afternoons of youth. Being a man of action, Mr. Pardriff was summoned at once from Leith and asked for his lowest price on eight hundred and fifty invitations and a notice of the party in the Ripton Record.

"Goin' to invite Democrats, too?" demanded Mr. Pardriff, glancing at the check-list.

"Everybody," said Mr. Crewe, with unparalleled generosity. "I won't draw any distinction between friends and enemies. They're all neighbours."

"And some of 'em might, by accident, vote the Republican ticket," Mr. Pardriff retorted, narrowing his eyes a little.

Mr. Crewe evidently thought this a negligible suggestion, for he did not reply to it, but presently asked for the political news in Ripton.

"Well," said Mr. Pardriff, "you know they tried to get Austen Vane to run for State senator, don't you?"

"Vane Why, he ain't a full-fledged lawyer yet. I've hired him in an unimportant case. Who asked him to run?"

"Young Tom Gaylord and a delegation."

"He couldn't have got it," said Mr. Crewe.

"I don't know," said Mr. Pardriff, "he might have given Billings a hustle for the nomination."

"You supported Billings, I noticed," said Mr. Crewe.

Mr. Pardriff winked an eye.

“I’m not ready to walk the ties when I go to Newcastle,” he remarked, “and Nat ain’t quite bankrupt yet. The Gaylords,” continued Mr. Pardriff, who always took the cynical view of a man of the world, “have had some row with the Northeastern over lumber shipments. I understand they’re goin’ to buck ’em for a franchise in the next Legislature, just to make it lively. The Gaylords ain’t exactly poverty-stricken, but they might as well try to move Sawanec Mountain as the Northeastern.”

## Page 69

It was a fact that young Tom Gaylord had approached Austen Vane with a “delegation” to request him to be a candidate for the Republican nomination for the State senate in his district against the railroad candidate and Austen’s late opponent, the Honourable Nat Billings. It was a fact also that Austen had invited the delegation to sit down, although there were only two chairs, and that a wrestling match had ensued with young Tom, in the progress of which one chair had been broken. Young Tom thought it was time to fight the railroad, and perceived in Austen the elements of a rebel leader. Austen had undertaken to throw young Tom out of a front window, which was a large, old-fashioned one,—and after Herculean efforts had actually got him on the ledge, when something in the street caught his eye and made him desist abruptly. The something was the vision of a young woman in a brown linen suit seated in a runabout and driving a horse almost as handsome as Pepper.

When the delegation, after exhausting their mental and physical powers of persuasion, had at length taken their departure in disgust, Austen opened mechanically a letter which had very much the appearance of an advertisement, and bearing a one-cent stamp. It announced that a garden-party would take place at Wedderburn, the home of the Honourable Humphrey Crewe, at a not very distant date, and the honour of the bearer’s presence was requested. Refreshments would be served, and the Ripton Band would dispense music. Below, in small print, were minute directions where to enter, where to hitch your team, and where to go out.

Austen was at a loss to know what fairy godmother had prompted Mr. Crewe to send him an invitation, the case of the injured horse not having advanced with noticeable rapidity. Nevertheless, the prospect of the garden-party dawned radiantly for him above what had hitherto been a rather gloomy horizon. Since the afternoon he had driven Victoria to the Hammonds’ he had had daily debates with an imaginary man in his own likeness who, to the detriment of his reading of law, sat across his table and argued with him. The imaginary man was unprincipled, and had no dignity, but he had such influence over Austen Vane that he had induced him to drive twice within sight of Fairview gate, when Austen Vane had turned round again. The imaginary man was for going to call on her and letting subsequent events take care of themselves; Austen Vane, had an uncomfortable quality of reducing a matter first of all to its simplest terms. He knew that Mr. Flint’s views were as fixed, ineradicable, and unchangeable as an epitaph cut in a granite monument; he felt (as Mr. Flint had) that their first conversation had been but a forerunner of, a strife to come between them; and add to this the facts that Mr. Flint was very rich and Austen Vane poor, that Victoria’s friends were not his friends, and that he had grave doubts that the interest she had evinced in him sprang from any other incentive than a desire to have communication with various types of humanity, his hesitation as to entering Mr. Flint’s house was natural enough.

## Page 70

It was of a piece with Mr. Crewe's good fortune of getting what he wanted that the day of the garden-party was the best that September could do in that country, which is to say that it was very beautiful. A pregnant stillness enwrapped the hills, a haze shot with gold dust, like the filmiest of veils, softened the distant purple and the blue-black shadows under the pines. Austen awoke from his dream in this enchanted borderland to find himself in a long line of wagons filled with people in their Sunday clothes,—the men in black, and the young women in white, with gay streamers, wending their way through the rear-entrance drive of Wedderburn, where one of Mr. Crewe's sprucest employees was taking up the invitation cards like tickets,—a precaution to prevent the rowdy element from Ripton coming and eating up the refreshments. Austen obediently tied Pepper in a field, as he was directed, and made his way by a path through the woods towards the house, where the Ripton Band could be heard playing the second air in the programme, "Don't you wish you'd Waited?"

For a really able account of that memorable entertainment see the Ripton Record of that week, for we cannot hope to vie with Mr. Pardriff when his heart is really in his work. How describe the noble figure of Mr. Crewe as it burst upon Austen when he rounded the corner of the house? Clad in a rough-and-ready manner, with a Gladstone collar to indicate the newly acquired statesmanship, and fairly radiating geniality, Mr. Crewe stood at the foot of the steps while the guests made the circuit of the driveway; and they carefully avoided, in obedience to a warning sign, the grass circle in the centre. As man and wife confronted him, Mr. Crewe greeted them in hospitable but stentorian tones that rose above the strains of "Don't you wish you'd Waited?" It was Mr. Ball who introduced his townspeople to the great man who was to represent them.

"How are you?" said Mr. Crewe, with his eyes on the geraniums. "Mr. and Mrs. Perley Wright, eh? Make yourselves at home. Everything's free —you'll find the refreshments on the back porch—just have an eye to the signs posted round, that's all." And Mr. and Mrs. Perley Wright, overwhelmed by such a welcome, would pass on into a back eddy of neighbours, where they would stick, staring at a sign requesting them please not to pick the flowers.

"Can't somebody stir 'em up?" Mr. Crewe shouted in an interval when the band had stopped to gather strength for a new effort. "Can't somebody move 'em round to see the cows and what's in the house and the automobile and the horses? Move around the driveway, please. It's so hot here you can't breathe. Some of you wanted to see what was in the house. Now's your chance."

This graceful appeal had some temporary effect, but the congestion soon returned, when a man of the hour appeared, a man whose genius scattered the groups and who did more to make the party a success than any single individual,—Mr. Hamilton Tooting, in a glorious white silk necktie with purple flowers.

## Page 71

"I'll handle 'em, Mr. Crewe," he said; "a little brains'll start 'em goin'. Come along here, Mr. Wright, and I'll show you the best cows this side of the Hudson River all pedigreed prize winners. Hello, Aust, you take hold and get the wimmen-folks interested in the cabinets. You know where they are."

"There's a person with some sense," remarked Mrs. Pomfret, who had been at a little distance among a group of summer-resident ladies and watching the affair with shining eyes. "I'll help. Come, Edith; come, Victoria where's Victoria?—and dear Mrs. Chillingham. We American women are so deplorably lacking in this kind of experience. Alice, take some of the women into the garden. I'm going to interest that dear, benevolent man who looks so helpless, and doing his best to have a good time."

The dear, benevolent man chanced to be Mr. Job Braden, who was standing somewhat apart with his hands in his pockets. He did not move as Mrs. Pomfret approached him, holding her glasses to her eyes.

"How are you?" exclaimed that lady, extending a white-gloved hand with a cordiality that astonished her friends. "It is so pleasant to see you here, Mr.—Mr.—"

"How be you?" said Mr. Braden, taking her fingers in the gingerly manner he would have handled one of Mr. Crewe's priceless curios. The giraffe Mr. Barnum had once brought to Ripton was not half as interesting as this immaculate and mysterious production of foreign dressmakers and French maids, but he refrained from betraying it. His eye rested on the lorgnette.

"Near-sighted, be you?" he inquired,—a remark so unexpected that for the moment Mrs. Pomfret was deprived of speech.

"I manage to see better with—with these," she gasped, "when we get old—you know."

"You hain't old," said Mr. Braden, gallantly. "If you be," he added, his eye travelling up and down the Parisian curves, I wouldn't have suspected it—not a mite."

"I'm afraid you are given to flattery, Mr.—Mr.—" she replied hurriedly. "Whom have I the pleasure of speaking to?"

"Job Braden's my name," he answered, "but you have the advantage of me."

"How?" demanded the thoroughly bewildered Mrs. Pomfret.

"I hain't heard your name," he said.

"Oh, I'm Mrs. Pomfret—a very old friend of Mr. Crewe's. Whenever he has his friends with him, like this, I come over and help him. It is so difficult for a bachelor to entertain, Mr. Braden."

“Well,” said Mr. Braden, bending alarmingly near her ear, “there’s one way out of it.”

“What’s that?” said Mrs. Pomfret.

“Git married,” declared Mr. Braden.

“How very clever you are, Mr. Braden! I wish poor dear Mr. Crewe would get married—a wife could take so many burdens off his shoulders. You don’t know Mr. Crewe very well, do you?”

“Callate to—so so,” said Mr. Braden.

Mrs. Pomfret was at sea again.

## Page 72

"I mean, do you see him often?"

"Seen him once," said Mr. Braden. "G-guess that's enough."

"You're a shrewd judge of human nature, Mr. Braden," she replied, tapping him on the shoulder with the lorgnette, "but you can have no idea how good he is—how unceasingly he works for others. He is not a man who gives much expression to his feelings, as no doubt you have discovered, but if you knew him as I do, you would realize how much affection he has for his country neighbours and how much he has their welfare at heart."

"Loves 'em—does he—loves 'em?"

"He is like an English gentleman in his sense of responsibility," said Mrs. Pomfret; "over there, you know, it is a part of a country gentleman's duty to improve the condition of his—his neighbours. And then Mr. Crewe is so fond of his townspeople that he couldn't resist doing this for them," and she indicated with a sweep of her eyeglasses the beatitude with which they were surrounded.

"Wahn't no occasion to," said Mr. Braden.

"What!" cried Mrs. Pomfret, who had been walking on ice for some time.

"This hain't England—is it? Hain't England?"

"No," she admitted, "but—"

"Hain't England," said Mr. Braden, and leaned forward until he was within a very few inches of her pearl ear-ring. "He'll be chose all right—d-don't fret—he'll be chose."

"My dear Mr. Braden, I've no doubt of it—Mr. Crewe's so popular," she cried, removing her ear-ring abruptly from the danger zone. "Do make yourself at home," she added, and retired from Mr. Braden's company a trifle disconcerted,—a new experience for Mrs. Pomfret. She wondered whether all country people were like Mr. Braden, but decided, after another experiment or two, that he was an original. More than once during the afternoon she caught sight of him, beaming upon the festivities around him. But she did not renew the conversation.

To Austen Vane, wandering about the grounds, Mr. Crewe's party presented a sociological problem of no small interest. Mr. Crewe himself interested him, and he found himself speculating how far a man would go who charged the fastnesses of the politicians with a determination not to be denied and a bank account to be reckoned with. Austen talked to many of the Leith farmers whom he had known from boyhood, thanks to his custom of roaming the hills; they were for the most part honest men whose occupation in life was the first thought, and they were content to leave politics to Mr.



Braden—that being his profession. To the most intelligent of these Mr. Crewe's garden-party was merely the wanton whim of a millionaire. It was an open secret to them that Job Braden for reasons of his own had chosen Mr. Crewe to represent them, and they were mildly amused at the efforts of Mrs. Pomfret and her assistants to secure votes which were as certain as the sun's rising on the morrow.

## Page 73

It was some time before Austen came upon the object of his search—though scarce admitting to himself that it had an object. In greeting him, after inquiring about his railroad case, Mr. Crewe had indicated with a wave of his hand the general direction of the refreshments; but it was not until Austen had tried in all other quarters that he made his way towards the porch where the lemonade and cake and sandwiches were. It was, after all, the most popular place, though to his mind the refreshments had little to do with its popularity. From the outskirts of the crowd he perceived Victoria presiding over the punchbowl that held the lemonade. He liked to think of her as Victoria; the name had no familiarity for him, but seemed rather to enhance the unattainable quality of her.

Surrounding Victoria were several clean-looking, freckled, and tanned young men of undergraduate age wearing straw hats with coloured ribbons, who showed every eagerness to obey and even anticipate the orders she did not hesitate to give them. Her eye seemed continually on the alert for those of Mr. Crewe's guests who were too bashful to come forward, and discerning them she would send one of her lieutenants forward with supplies. Sometimes she would go herself to the older people; and once, perceiving a tired woman holding a baby (so many brought babies, being unable to leave them), Victoria impulsively left her post and seized the woman by the arm.

"Do come and sit down," she cried; "there's a chair beside me. And oh, what a nice baby! Won't you let me hold him?"

"Why, yes, ma'am," said the woman, looking up at Victoria with grateful, patient eyes, and then with awe at what seemed to her the priceless embroidery on Victoria's waist, "won't he spoil your dress?"

"Bless him, no," said Victoria, poking her finger into a dimple—for he was smiling at her. "What if he does?" and forthwith she seized him in her arms and bore him to the porch, amidst the laughter of those who beheld her, and sat him down on her knee in front of the lemonade bowl, the tired mother beside her. "Will a little lemonade hurt him? Just a very, very little, you know?"

"Why, no, ma'am," said the mother.

"And just a teeny bit of cake," begged Victoria, daintily breaking off a piece, while the baby gurgled and snatched for it. "Do tell me how old he is, and how many more you have."

"He's eleven months on the twenty-seventh," said the mother, "and I've got four more." She sighed, her eyes wandering back to the embroidery. "What between them and the housework and the butter makin', it hain't easy. Be you married?"

"No," said Victoria, laughing and blushing a little.

“You’ll make a good wife for somebody,” said the woman. “I hope you’ll get a good man.”

“I hope so, too,” said Victoria, blushing still deeper amidst the laughter, “but there doesn’t seem to be much chance of it, and good men are very scarce.”

## Page 74

"I guess you're right," said the mother, soberly. "Not but what my man's good enough, but he don't seem to get along, somehow. The farm's wore out, and the mortgage comes around so regular."

"Where do you live?" asked Victoria, suddenly growing serious.

"Fitch's place. 'Tain't very far from the Four Corners, on the Avalon road."

"And you are Mrs. Fitch?"

"Callate to be," said the mother. "If it ain't askin' too much, I'd like to know your name."

"I'm Victoria Flint. I live not very far from the Four Corners—that is, about eight miles. May I come over and see you sometime?"

Although Victoria said this very simply, the mother's eyes widened until one might almost have said they expressed a kind of terror.

"Land sakes alive, be you Mr. Flint's daughter? I might have knowed it from the lace—that dress must have cost a fortune. But I didn't think to find you so common."

Victoria did not smile. She had heard the word "common" so used before, and knew that it was meant for a compliment, and she turned to the woman with a very expressive light in her eyes.

"I will come to see you—this very week," she said. And just then her glance, seemingly drawn in a certain direction, met that of a tall young man which had been fixed upon her during the whole of this scene. She coloured again, abruptly handed the baby back to his mother, and rose.

"I'm neglecting all these people," she said, "but do sit there and rest yourself and—have some more lemonade."

She bowed to Austen, and smiled a little as she filled the glasses, but she did not beckon him. She gave no further sign of her knowledge of his presence until he stood beside her—and then she looked up at him.

"I have been looking for you, Miss Flint," he said.

"I suppose a man would never think of trying the obvious places first," she replied. "Hastings, don't you see that poor old woman over there? She looks so thirsty—give her this."

The boy addressed, with a glance at Austen, did as he was bid, and she sent off a second on another errand.

“Let me help,” said Austen, seizing the cake; and being seized at the same time, by an unusual and inexplicable tremor of shyness, thrust it at the baby.

“Oh, he can’t have anymore; do you want to kill him?” cried Victoria, seizing the plate, and adding mischievously, “I don’t believe you’re of very much use—after all!”

“Then it’s time I learned,” said Austen. “Here’s Mr. Jenney. I’m sure he’ll have a piece.”

“Well,” said Mr. Jenney, the same Mr. Jenney of the apple orchard, but holding out a horny hand with unmistakable warmth, “how be you, Austen?” Looking about him, Mr. Jenney put his hand to his mouth, and added, “Didn’t expect to see you trailin’ on to this here kite.” He took a piece of cake between his thumb and forefinger and glanced bashfully at Victoria.

## Page 75

"Have some lemonade, Mr. Jenney? Do," she urged.

"Well, I don't care if I do," he said, "just a little mite." He did not attempt to stop her as she filled the glass to the brim, but continued to regard her with a mixture of curiosity and admiration. "Seen you nursin' the baby and makin' folks at home. Guess you have the knack of it better'n some I could mention."

This was such a palpable stroke at their host that Victoria laughed, and made haste to turn the subject from herself.

"Mr. Vane seems to be an old friend of yours," she said.

"Why," said Mr. Jenney, laying his hand on Austen's shoulder, "I callate he is. Austen's broke in more'n one of my colts afore he went West and shot that feller. He's as good a judge of horse-flesh as any man in this part of the State. Hear Tom Gaylord and the boys wanted him to be State senator."

"Why didn't you accept, Mr. Vane?"

"Because I don't think the boys could have elected me," answered Austen, laughing.

"He's as popular a man as there is in the county," declared Mr. Jenney. He was a mite wild as a boy, but sence he's sobered down and won that case against the railrud, he could get any office he'd a mind to. He's always adoin' little things for folks, Austen is."

"Did—did that case against the railroad make him so popular?" asked Victoria, glancing at Austen's broad back—for he had made his escape with the cake.

"I guess it helped considerable," Mr. Jenney admitted.

"Why?" asked Victoria.

"Well, it was a fearless thing to do—plumb against his own interests with old Hilary Vane. Austen's a bright lawyer, and I have heard it said he was in line for his father's place as counsel."

"Do—do people dislike the railroad?"

Mr. Jenney rubbed his beard thoughtfully. He began to wonder who this young woman was, and a racial caution seized him.

"Well," he said, "folks has an idea the railrud runs this State to suit themselves. I guess they hain't far wrong. I've be'n to the Legislature and seen some signs of it. Why, Hilary Vane himself has charge of the most considerable part of the politics. Who be you?" Mr. Jenney demanded suddenly.

"I'm Victoria Flint," said Victoria.

"Godfrey!" exclaimed Mr. Jenney, "you don't say so! I might have known it—seen you on the rud more than once. But I don't know all you rich folks apart. Wouldn't have spoke so frank if I'd knowed who you was."

"I'm glad you did, Mr. Jenney," she answered. "I wanted to know what people think."

"Well, it's almighty complicated," said Mr. Jenney, shaking his head. "I don't know by rights what to think. As long as I've said what I have, I'll say this: that the politicians is all for the railrud, and I hain't got a mite of use for the politicians. I'll vote for a feller like Austen Vane every time, if he'll run, and I know other folks that will."

## Page 76

After Mr. Jenney had left her, Victoria stood motionless, gazing off into the haze, until she was startled by the voice of Hastings Weare beside her.

"Say, Victoria, who is that man?" he asked.

"What man?"

Hastings nodded towards Austen, who, with a cake basket in his hand, stood chatting with a group of country people on the edge of the porch.

"Oh, that man!" said Victoria. "His name's Austen Vane, and he's a lawyer in Ripton."

"All I can say is," replied Hastings, with a light in his face, "he's one I'd like to tie to. I'll bet he could whip any four men you could pick out."

Considering that Hastings had himself proposed—although in a very mild form—more than once to Victoria, this was generous.

"I daresay he could," she agreed absently.

"It isn't only the way he's built," persisted Hastings, "he looks as if he were going to be somebody some day. Introduce me to him, will you?"

"Certainly," said Victoria. "Mr. Vane," she called, "I want to introduce an admirer, Mr. Hastings Weare."

"I just wanted to know you," said Hastings, reddening, "and Victoria—I mean Miss Flint—said she'd introduce me."

"I'm much obliged to her," said Austen, smiling.

"Are you in politics?" asked Hastings.

"I'm afraid not," answered Austen, with a glance at Victoria.

"You're not helping Humphrey Crewe, are you?"

"No," said Austen, and added with an illuminating smile, "Mr. Crewe doesn't need any help."

"I'm glad you're not," exclaimed the downright Hastings, with palpable relief in his voice that an idol had not been shattered. "I think Humphrey's a fakir, and all this sort of thing tommyrot. He wouldn't get my vote by giving me lemonade and cake and letting me look at his cows. If you ever run for office, I'd like to cast it for you. My father is only a



summer resident, but since he has gone out of business he stays here till Christmas, and I'll be twenty-one in a year."

Austen had ceased to smile; he was looking into the boy's eyes with that serious expression which men and women found irresistible.

"Thank you, Mr. Weare," he said simply.

Hastings was suddenly overcome with the shyness of youth. He held out his hand, and said, "I'm awfully glad to have met you," and fled.

Victoria, who had looked on with a curious mixture of feelings, turned to Austen.

"That was a real tribute," she said. "Is this the way you affect everybody whom you meet?"

They were standing almost alone. The sun was nearing the western hills beyond the river, and people had for some time been wending their way towards the field where the horses were tied. He did not answer her question, but asked one instead.

"Will you let me drive you home?"

"Do you think you deserve to, after the shameful manner in which you have behaved?"

## Page 77

"I'm quite sure that I don't deserve to," he answered, still looking down at her.

"If you did deserve to, being a woman, I probably shouldn't let you," said Victoria, flashing a look upwards; "as it is, you may."

His face lighted, but she halted in the grass, with her hands behind her, and stared at him with a puzzled expression.

"I'm sure you're a dangerous man," she declared. "First you take in poor little Hastings, and now you're trying to take me in."

"Then I wish I were still more dangerous," he laughed, "for apparently I haven't succeeded."

"I want to talk to you seriously," said Victoria; "that is the only reason I'm permitting you to drive me home."

"I am devoutly thankful for the reason then," he said,—“my horse is tied in the field."

"And aren't you going to say good-by to your host and hostess?"

"Hostess?" he repeated, puzzled.

"Hostesses," she corrected herself, "Mrs. Pomfret and Alice. I thought you had eyes in your head," she added, with a fleeting glance at them.

"Is Crewe engaged to Miss Pomfret?" he asked.

"Are all men simpletons?" said Victoria. "He doesn't know it yet, but he is."

"I think I'd know it, if I were," said Austen, with an emphasis that made her laugh.

"Sometimes fish don't know they're in a net until—until the morning after," said Victoria. "That has a horribly dissipated sound—hasn't it? I know to a moral certainty that Mr. Crewe will eventually lead Miss Pomfret away from the altar. At present," she could not refrain from adding, "he thinks he's in love with some one else."

"Who?"

"It doesn't matter," she replied. "Humphrey's perfectly happy, because he believes most women are in love with him, and he's making up his mind in that magnificent, thorough way of his whether she is worthy to be endowed with his heart and hand, his cows, and all his stocks and bonds. He doesn't know he's going to marry Alice. It almost makes one a Calvinist, doesn't it. He's predestined, but perfectly happy."

“Who is he in love with?” demanded Austen, ungrammatically.

“I’m going to say good-by to him. I’ll meet you in the field, if you don’t care to come. It’s only manners, after all, although the lemonade’s all gone and I haven’t had a drop.”

“I’ll go along too,” he said.

“Aren’t you afraid of Mrs. Pomfret?”

“Not a bit!”

“I am,” said Victoria, “but I think you’d better come just the same.”

Around the corner of the house they found them,—Mr. Crewe urging the departing guests to remain, and not to be bashful in the future about calling.

## Page 78

"We don't always have lemonade and cake," he was saying, "but you can be sure of a welcome, just the same. Good-by, Vane, glad you came. Did they show you through the stables? Did you see the mate to the horse I lost? Beauty, isn't he? Stir 'em up and get the money. I guess we won't see much of each other politically. You're anti-railroad. I don't believe that tack'll work—we can't get along without corporations, you know. You ought to talk to Flint. I'll give you a letter of introduction to him. I don't know what I'd have done without that man Tooting in your father's office. He's a wasted genius in Ripton. What? Good-by, you'll find your wagon, I guess. Well, Victoria, where have you been keeping yourself? I've been so busy I haven't had time to look for you. You're going to stay to dinner, and Hastings, and all the people who have helped."

"No, I'm not," answered Victoria, with a glance at Austen, before whom this announcement was so delicately made, "I'm going home."

"But when am I to see you?" cried Mr. Crewe, as near genuine alarm as he ever got. You never let me see you. I was going to drive you home in the motor by moonlight."

"We all know that you're the most original person, Victoria," said Mrs. Pomfret, "full of whims and strange fancies," she added, with the only brief look at Austen she had deigned to bestow on him. "It never pays to count on you for twenty-four hours. I suppose you're off on another wild expedition."

"I think I've earned the right to it," said Victoria;—I've poured lemonade for Humphrey's constituents the whole afternoon. And besides, I never said I'd stay for dinner. I'm going home. Father's leaving for California in the morning."

"He'd better stay at home and look after her," Mrs. Pomfret remarked, when Victoria was out of hearing.

Since Mrs. Harry Haynes ran off, one can never tell what a woman will do. It wouldn't surprise me a bit if Victoria eloped with a handsome nobody like that. Of course he's after her money, but he wouldn't get it, not if I know Augustus Flint."

"Is he handsome?" said Mr. Crewe, as though the idea were a new one. "Great Scott, I don't believe she gives him a thought. She's only going as far as the field with him. She insisted on leaving her horse there instead of putting him in the stable."

"Catch Alice going as far as the field with him," said Mrs. Pomfret, "but I've done my duty. It's none of my affair."

In the meantime Austen and Victoria had walked on some distance in silence.

"I have an idea with whom Mr. Crewe is in love," he said at length.

“So have I,” replied Victoria, promptly. “Humphrey’s in love with himself. All he desires in a wife—if he desires one—is an inanimate and accommodating looking-glass, in whom he may see what he conceives to be his own image daily. James, you may take the mare home. I’m going to drive with Mr. Vane.”

## Page 79

She stroked Pepper's nose while Austen undid the hitch-rope from around his neck.

"You and I are getting to be friends, aren't we, Pepper?" she asked, as the horse, with quivering nostrils, thrust his head into her hand. Then she sprang lightly into the buggy by Austen's side. The manner of these acts and the generous courage with which she defied opinion appealed to him so strongly that his heart was beating faster than Pepper's hoof-beats on the turf of the pasture.

"You are very good to come with me," he said gravely, when they had reached the road; "perhaps I ought not to have asked you."

"Why?" she asked, with one of her direct looks.

"It was undoubtedly selfish," he said, and added, more lightly, "I don't wish to put you into Mrs. Pomfret's bad graces."

Victoria laughed.

"She thought it her duty to tell father the time you drove me to the Hammonds'. She said I asked you to do it."

"What did he say?" Austen inquired, looking straight ahead of him.

"He didn't say much," she answered. "Father never does. I think he knows that I am to be trusted."

"Even with me?" he asked quizzically, but with a deeper significance.

"I don't think he realizes how dangerous you are," she replied, avoiding the issue. "The last time I saw you, you were actually trying to throw a fat man out of your window. What a violent life you lead, Mr. Vane. I hope you haven't shot any more people—"

"I saw you," he said.

"Is that the way you spend your time in office hours,—throwing people out of the windows?"

"It was only Tom Gaylord."

"He's the man Mr. Jenney said wanted you to be a senator, isn't he?" she asked.

"You have a good memory," he answered her. "Yes. That's the reason I tried to throw him out of the window."



"Why didn't you be a senator?" she asked abruptly. "I always think of you in public life. Why waste your opportunities?"

"I'm not at all sure that was an opportunity. It was only some of Tom's nonsense. I should have had all the politicians in the district against me."

"But you aren't the kind of man who would care about the politicians, surely. If Humphrey Crewe can get elected by the people, I should think you might."

"I can't afford to give garden-parties and buy lemonade," said Austen, and they both laughed. He did not think it worth while mentioning Mr. Braden.

"Sometimes I think you haven't a particle of ambition," she said. "I like men with ambition."

"I shall try to cultivate it," said Austen.

"You seem to be popular enough."

"Most worthless people are popular, because they don't tread on anybody's toes."

"Worthless people don't take up poor people's suits, and win them," she said. "I saw Zeb Meader the other day, and he said you could be President of the United States."

## Page 80

"Zeb meant that I was eligible—having been born in this country," said Austen. "But where did you see him?"

"I—I went to see him."

"All the way to Mercer?"

"It isn't so far in an automobile," she replied, as though in excuse, and added, still more lamely, "Zeb and I became great friends, you know, in the hospital."

He did not answer, but wondered the more at the simplicity and kindness in one brought up as she had been which prompted her to take the trouble to see the humblest of her friends: nay, to take the trouble to have humble friends.

The road wound along a ridge, and at intervals was spread before them the full glory of the September sunset,—the mountains of the west in blue-black silhouette against the saffron sky, the myriad dappled clouds, the crimson fading from the still reaches of the river, and the wine-colour from the eastern hills. Both were silent under the spell, but a yearning arose within him when he glanced at the sunset glow on her face: would sunsets hereafter bring sadness?

His thoughts ran riot as the light faded in the west. Hers were not revealed. And the silence between them seemed gradually to grow into a pact, to become a subtler and more intimate element than speech. A faint tang of autumn smoke was in the air, a white mist crept along the running waters, a silver moon like a new-stamped coin rode triumphant in the sky, impatient to proclaim her glory; and the shadows under the ghost-like sentinel trees in the pastures grew blacker. At last Victoria looked at him.

"You are the only man I know who doesn't insist on talking," she said. There are times when—"

"When there is nothing to say," he suggested.

She laughed softly. He tried to remember the sound of it afterwards, when he rehearsed this phase of the conversation, but couldn't.

"It's because you like the hills, isn't it?" she asked. "You seem such an out-of-door person, and Mr. Jenney said you were always wandering about the country-side."

"Mr. Jenney also made other reflections about my youth," said Austen.

She laughed again, acquiescing in his humour, secretly thankful not to find him sentimental.



“Mr. Jenney said something else that—that I wanted to ask you about,” she went on, breathing more deeply. “It was about the railroad.”

“I am afraid you have not come to an authority,” he replied.

“You said the politicians would be against you if you tried to become a State senator. Do you believe that the politicians are owned by the railroad?”

“Has Jenney been putting such things into your head?”

“Not only Mr. Jenney, but—I have heard other people say that. And Humphrey Crewe said that you hadn’t a chance politically, because you had opposed the railroad and had gone against your own interests.”

Austen was amazed at this new exhibition of courage on her part, though he was sorely pressed.

## Page 81

"Humphrey Crewe isn't much of an authority, either," he said briefly.

"Then you won't tell me?" said Victoria. "Oh, Mr. Vane," she cried, with sudden vehemence, "if such things are going on here, I'm sure my father doesn't know about them. This is only one State, and the railroad runs through so many. He can't know everything, and I have heard him say that he wasn't responsible for what the politicians did in his name. If they are bad, why don't you go to him and tell him so? I'm sure he'd listen to you."

"I'm sure he'd think me a presumptuous idiot," said Austen. "Politicians are not idealists anywhere—the very word has become a term of reproach. Undoubtedly your father desires to set things right as much as any one else—probably more than any one."

"Oh, I know he does," exclaimed Victoria.

"If politics are not all that they should be," he went on, somewhat grimly, with an unpleasant feeling of hypocrisy, "we must remember that they are nobody's fault in particular, and can't be set right in an instant by any one man, no matter how powerful."

She turned her face to him gratefully, but he did not meet her look. They were on the driveway of Fairview.

"I suppose you think me very silly for asking such questions," she said.

"No," he answered gravely, "but politics are so intricate a subject that they are often not understood by those who are in the midst of them. I admire—I think it is very fine in you to want to know."

"You are not one of the men who would not wish a woman to know, are you?"

"No," he said, "no, I'm not."

The note of pain in his voice surprised and troubled her. They were almost in sight of the house.

"I asked you to come to Fairview," she said, assuming a lightness of tone, "and you never appeared. I thought it was horrid of you to forget, after we'd been such friends."

"I didn't forget," replied Austen.

"Then you didn't want to come."

He looked into her eyes, and she dropped them.

"You will have to be the best judge of that," he said.



"But what am I to think?" she persisted.

"Think the best of me you can," he answered, as they drew up on the gravel before the open door of Fairview house. A man was standing in the moonlight on the porch.

"Is that you, Victoria?"

"Yes, father."

"I was getting worried," said Mr. Flint, coming down on the driveway.

"I'm all right," she said, leaping out of the buggy, "Mr. Vane brought me home."

"How are you, Hilary?" said Mr. Flint.

"I'm Austen Vane, Mr. Flint," said Austen.

"How are you?" said Mr. Flint, as curtly as the barest politeness allowed. "What was the matter with your own horse, Victoria?"

"Nothing," she replied, after an instant's pause. Austen wondered many times whether her lips had trembled. "Mr. Vane asked me to drive with him, and I came. Won't—won't you come in, Mr. Vane?"

## Page 82

"No, thanks," said Austen, "I'm afraid I have to go back to Ripton."

"Good-by, and thank you," she said, and gave him her hand. As he pressed it, he thought he felt the slightest pressure in return, and then she fled up the steps. As he drove away, he turned once to look at the great house, with its shades closely drawn, as it stood amidst its setting of shrubbery silent under the moon.

An hour later he sat in Hanover Street before the supper Euphrasia had saved for him. But though he tried nobly, his heart was not in the relation, for her benefit, of Mr. Crewe's garden-party.

## CHAPTER IX

*Mr. Crewe assaults the capital*

Those portions of the biographies of great men which deal with the small beginnings of careers are always eagerly devoured, and for this reason the humble entry of Mr. Crewe into politics may be of interest. Great revolutions have had their origins in back cellars; great builders of railroads have begun life with packs on their shoulders, trudging over the wilderness which they were to traverse in after years in private cars. The history of Napoleon Bonaparte has not a Sunday-school moral, but we can trace therein the results of industry after the future emperor got started. Industry, and the motto "nil desperandum" lived up to, and the watchword "thorough," and a torch of unsuspected genius, and "l'audace, toujours l'audace," and a man may go far in life.

Mr. Humphrey Crewe possessed, as may have been surmised, a dash of all these gifts. For a summary of his character one would not have used the phrase (as a contemporary of his remarked) of "a shrinking violet." The phrase, after all, would have fitted very few great men; genius is sure of itself, and seeks its peers.

The State capital is an old and beautiful and somewhat conservative town. Life there has its joys and sorrows and passions, its ambitions, and heart-burnings, to be sure; a most absorbing novel could be written about it, and the author need not go beyond the city limits or approach the state-house or the Pelican Hotel. The casual visitor in that capital leaves it with a sense of peace, the echo of church bells in his ear, and (if in winter) the impression of dazzling snow. Comedies do not necessarily require a wide stage, nor tragedies an amphitheatre for their enactment.

No casual visitor, for instance, would have suspected from the faces or remarks of the inhabitants whom he chanced to meet that there was excitement in the capital over the prospective arrival of Mr. Humphrey Crewe for the legislative session that winter. Legislative sessions, be it known, no longer took place in the summer, a great relief to Mr. Crewe and to farmers in general, who wished to be at home in haying time.

## Page 83

The capital abounded in comfortable homes and boasted not a dwellings of larger pretensions. Chief among these was the Duncan house—still so called, although Mr. Duncan, who built it, had been dead these fifteen years, and his daughter and heiress, Janet, had married an Italian Marquis and lived in a Roman palace, rehabilitated by the Duncan money. Mr. Duncan, it may be recalled by some readers of “Coniston,” had been a notable man in his day, who had married the heiress of the State, and was president of the Central Railroad, now absorbed in the United Northeastern. The house was a great square of brick, with a wide cornice, surrounded by a shaded lawn; solidly built, in the fashion of the days when rich people stayed at home, with a conservatory and a library that had once been Mr. Duncan’s pride. The Marchesa cared very little about the library, or about the house, for that matter; a great aunt and uncle, spinster and bachelor, were living in it that winter, and they vacated for Mr. Crewe. He travelled to the capital on the legislative pass the Northeastern Railroads had so kindly given him, and brought down his horses and his secretary and servants from Leith a few days before the first of January, when the session was to open, and laid out his bills for the betterment of the State on that library table where Mr. Duncan had lovingly thumbed his folios. Mr. Crewe, with characteristic promptitude, set his secretary to work to make a list of the persons of influence in the town, preparatory to a series of dinner-parties; he dropped into the office of Mr. Ridout, the counsel of the Northeastern and of the Winona Corporation in the capital, to pay his respects as a man of affairs, and incidentally to leave copies of his bills for the improvement of the State. Mr. Ridout was politely interested, and promised to read the bills, and agreed that they ought to pass.

Mr. Crewe also examined the Pelican Hotel, so soon to be a hive, and stood between the snow-banks in the capital park contemplating the statue of the great statesman there, and repeating to himself the quotation inscribed beneath. “The People’s Government, made for the People, made by the People, and answerable to the People.” And he wondered, idly,—for the day was not cold,—how he would look upon a pedestal with the Gladstone collar and the rough woollen coat that would lend themselves so readily to reproduction in marble. Stranger things had happened, and grateful States had been known to reward benefactors.

At length comes the gala night of nights,—the last of the old year,—and the assembling of the five hundred legislators and of the army that is wont to attend them. The afternoon trains, steaming hot, are crowded to the doors, the station a scene of animation, and Main Street, dazzling in snow, is alive with a stream of men, with eddies here and there at the curbs and in the entries. What handshaking, and looking over of new faces, and walking

## Page 84

round and round! What sightseeing by the country members and their wives who have come to attend the inauguration of the new governor, the Honourable Asa P. Gray! There he is, with the whiskers and the tall hat and the comfortable face, which wears already a look of gubernatorial dignity and power. He stands for a moment in the lobby of the Pelican Hotel,—thronged now to suffocation,—to shake hands genially with new friends, who are led up by old friends with two fingers on the elbow. The old friends crack jokes and whisper in the ear of the governor-to-be, who presently goes upstairs, accompanied by the Honourable Hilary Vane, to the bridal suite, which is reserved for him, and which has fire-proof carpet on the floor. The Honourable Hilary has a room next door, connecting with the new governor's by folding doors, but this fact is not generally known to country members. Only old timers, like Bijah Bixby and Job Braden, know that the Honourable Hilary's room corresponds to one which in the old Pelican was called the Throne Room, Number Seven, where Jethro Bass sat in the old days and watched unceasingly the groups in the street from the window.

But Jethro Bass has been dead these twenty years, and his lieutenants shorn of power. An empire has arisen out of the ashes of the ancient kingdoms. Bijah and Job are old, all-powerful still in Clovelly and Leith—influential still in their own estimations; still kicking up their heels behind, still stuttering and whispering into ears, still “going along by when they are talking sly.” But there are no guerrillas now, no condottieri who can be hired: the empire has a paid and standing army, as an empire should. The North Country chiefs, so powerful in the clan warfare of bygone days, are generals now,—chiefs of staff. The captain-general, with a minute piece of Honey Dew under his tongue, sits in Number Seven. A new Number Seven,—with electric lights and a bathroom and a brass bed. *Tempora mutantur*. There is an empire and a feudal system, did one but know it. The clans are part of the empire, and each chief is responsible for his clan—did one but know it. One doesn't know it.

The Honourable Brush Bascom, Duke of Putnam, member of the House, has arrived unostentatiously—as is his custom—and is seated in his own headquarters, number ten (with a bathroom). Number nine belongs from year to year to Mr. Manning, division superintendent of that part of the Northeastern which was the old Central,—a thin gentleman with side-whiskers. He loves life in the capital so much that he takes his vacations there in the winter,—during the sessions of the Legislature, —presumably because it is gay. There are other rooms, higher up, of important men, to be sure, but to enter which it is not so much of an honour. The Honourable Bill Fleming, postmaster of Brampton in Truro (Ephraim Prescott being long since dead and Brampton a large place now), has his vacation during the session in room thirty-six (no bathroom); and the Honourable Elisha Jane, Earl of Haines County in the North Country, and United States consul somewhere, is home on his annual vacation in room fifty-nine (no bath). Senator Whitredge has a room, and Senator Green, and Congressmen Eldridge and Fairplay (no baths, and only temporary).

## Page 85

The five hundred who during the next three months are to register the laws find quarters as best they can. Not all of them are as luxurious as Mr. Crewe in the Duncan house, or the Honourable Brush Bascom in number ten of the Pelican, the rent of either of which would swallow the legislative salary in no time. The Honourable Nat Billings, senator from the Putnam County district, is comfortably installed, to be sure. By gradual and unexplained degrees, the constitution of the State has been changed until there are only twenty senators. Noble five hundred! Steadfast twenty!

A careful perusal of the biographies of great men of the dynamic type leads one to the conclusion that much of their success is due to an assiduous improvement of every opportunity,—and Mr. Humphrey Crewe certainly possessed this quality, also. He is in the Pelican Hotel this evening, meeting the men that count. Mr. Job Braden, who had come down with the idea that he might be of use in introducing the new member from Leith to the notables, was met by this remark:—"You can't introduce me to any of 'em—they all know who I am. Just point any of 'em out you think I ought to know, and I'll go up and talk to 'em. What? Come up to my house after a while and smoke a cigar. The Duncan house, you know—the big one with the conservatory."

Mr. Crewe was right—they all knew him. The Leith millionaire, the summer resident, was a new factor in politics, and the rumours of the size of his fortune had reached a high-water mark in the Pelican Hotel that evening. Pushing through the crowd in the corridor outside the bridal suite waiting to shake hands with the new governor, Mr. Crewe gained an entrance in no time, and did not hesitate to interrupt the somewhat protracted felicitations of an Irish member of the Newcastle delegation.

"How are you, Governor?" he said, with the bonhomie of a man of the world. "I'm Humphrey Crewe, from Leith. You got a letter from me, didn't you, congratulating you upon your election? We didn't do badly for you up there. What?"

"How do you do, Mr. Crewe?" said Mr. Gray, with dignified hospitality, while their fingers slid over each other's; "I'm glad to welcome you here. I've noticed the interest you've taken in the State, and the number of ahem—very useful societies to which you belong."

"Good," said Mr. Crewe, "I do what I can. I just dropped in to shake your hand, and to say that I hope we'll pull together."

The governor lifted his eyebrows a little.

"Why, I hope so, I'm sere, Mr. Crewe," said he.

"I've looked over the policy of the State for the last twenty years in regard to public improvements and the introduction of modern methods as concerns husbandry, and I find it deplorable. You and I, Governor, live in a progressive age, and we can't afford

not to see something done. What? It is my desire to do what I can to help make your administration a notable advance upon those of your predecessors.”



## Page 86

"Why—I greatly appreciate it, Mr. Crewe," said Mr. Gray.

"I'm sure you do. I've looked over your record, and I find you've had experience in State affairs, and that you are a successful and conservative business man. That is the type we want—eh? Business men. You've read over the bills I sent you by registered mail?"

"Ahem," said Mr. Gray, "I've been a good deal occupied since election day, Mr. Crewe."

"Read 'em," said Mr. Crewe, "and I'll call in on you at the state-house day after to-morrow at five o'clock promptly. We'll discuss 'em, Governor, and if, by the light of your legislative experience, you have any suggestions to make, I shall be glad to hear 'em. Before putting the bills in their final shape I've taken the trouble to go over them with my friend, Mr. Flint—our mutual friend, let us say."

"I've had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Flint," said Mr. Gray. "I—ahem —can't say that I know him intimately."

Mr. Crewe looked at Mr. Gray in a manner which plainly indicated that he was not an infant.

"My relations with Mr. Flint and the Northeastern have been very pleasant," said Mr. Crewe. "I may say that I am somewhat of a practical railroad and business man myself."

"We need such men," said Mr. Gray. "Why, how do you do, Cary? How are the boys up in Wheeler?"

"Well, good-by, Governor. See you day after to-morrow at five precisely," said Mr. Crewe.

The next official call of Mr. Crewe was on the Speaker-to-be, Mr. Doby of Hale (for such matters are cut and dried), but any amount of pounding on Mr. Doby's door (number seventy-five) brought no response. Other rural members besides Mr. Crewe came and pounded on that door, and went away again; but Mr. Job Braden suddenly appeared from another part of the corridor, smiling benignly, and apparently not resenting the refusal of his previous offers of help.

"W—want the Speaker?" he inquired.

Mr. Crewe acknowledged that he did.

"Ed only sleeps there," said Mr. Braden. "Guess you'll find him in the Railroad-Room."

"Railroad Room?"

“Hilary Vane’s, Number Seven.” Mr. Braden took hold of the lapel of his fellow-townsmen’s coat. “Callated you didn’t know it all,” he said; “that’s the reason I come down—so’s to help you some.”

Mr. Crewe, although he was not wont to take a second place, followed Mr. Braden down the stairs to the door next to the governor’s, where he pushed ahead of his guide, through the group about the doorway,—none of whom, however, were attempting to enter. They stared in some surprise at Mr. Crewe as he flung open the door without knocking, and slammed it behind him in Mr. Braden’s face. But the bewilderment caused by this act of those without was as nothing to the astonishment of those within—had Mr. Crewe but known it. An oil painting of the prominent men gathered about the marble-topped table

## Page 87

in the centre of the room, with an outline key beneath it, would have been an appropriate work of art to hang in the state-house, as emblematic of the statesmanship of the past twenty years. The Honourable Hilary Vane sat at one end in a padded chair; Mr. Manning, the division superintendent, startled out of a meditation, was upright on the end of the bed; Mr. Ridout, the Northeastern's capital lawyer, was figuring at the other end of the table; the Honourable Brush Bascom was bending over a wide, sad-faced gentleman of some two hundred and fifty pounds who sat at the centre in his shirt-sleeves, poring over numerous sheets in front of him which were covered with names of the five hundred. This gentleman was the Honourable Edward Doby of Hale, who, with the kind assistance of the other gentlemen above-named, was in this secluded spot making up a list of his committees, undisturbed by eager country members. At Mr. Crewe's entrance Mr. Bascom, with great presence of mind, laid down his hat over the principal list, while Mr. Ridout, taking the hint, put the Revised Statutes on the other. There was a short silence; and the Speaker-to-be, whose pencil had been knocked out of his hand; recovered himself sufficiently to relight an extremely frayed cigar.

Not that Mr. Crewe was in the least abashed. He chose this opportunity to make a survey of the situation, nodded to Mr. Ridout, and walked up to the padded armchair.

"How are you, Mr. Vane?" he said. "I thought I'd drop in to shake hands with you, especially as I have business with the Speaker, and heard he was here. But I'm glad to have met you for many reasons. I want you to be one of the vice-presidents of the State Economic League—it won't cost you anything. Ridout has agreed to let his name go on."

The Honourable Hilary, not being an emotional man, merely grunted as he started to rise to his feet. What he was about to say was interrupted by a timid knock, and there followed another brief period of silence.

"It ain't anybody," said Mr. Bascom, and crossing the room, turned the key in the lock. The timid knock was repeated.

"I suppose you're constantly interrupted here by unimportant people," Mr. Crewe remarked.

"Well," said Mr. Vane, slowly, boring into Mr. Crewe with his eye, "that statement isn't far out of the way."

"I don't believe you've ever met me, Mr. Vane. I'm Humphrey Crewe. We have a good friend in common in Mr. Flint."

The Honourable Hilary's hand passed over Mr. Crewe's lightly.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Crewe," he said, and a faint twinkle appeared in his eye. "Job has told everybody you were coming down. Glad to welcome a man of your ahem—stamp into politics."

"I'm a plain business man," answered Mr. Crewe, modestly; "and although I have considerable occupation, I believe that one in my position has duties to perform. I've certain bills—"

"Yes, yes," agreed the Honourable Hilary; "do you know Mr. Brush Bascom and Mr. Manning? Allow me to introduce you,—and General Doby."

## Page 88

"How are you, General?" said Mr. Crewe to the Speaker-to-be, "I'm always glad to shake the hand of a veteran. Indeed, I have thought that a society—"

"I earned my title," said General Doby, somewhat sheepishly, "fighting on Governor Brown's staff. There were twenty of us, and we were resistless, weren't we, Brush?"

"Twenty on a staff!" exclaimed Mr. Crewe.

"Oh, we furnished our own uniforms and paid our own way—except those of us who had passes," declared the General, as though the memory of his military career did not give him unalloyed pleasure. "What's the use of State sovereignty if you can't have a glittering army to follow the governor round?"

Mr. Crewe had never considered this question, and he was not the man to waste time in speculation.

"Doubtless you got a letter from me, General Doby," he said. "We did what we could up our way to put you in the Speaker's chair."

General Doby creased a little in the middle, to signify that he was bowing.

"I trust it will be in my power to reciprocate, Mr. Crewe," he replied.

"We want to treat Mr. Crewe right," Mr. Bascom put in.

"You have probably made a note of my requests," Mr. Crewe continued. "I should like to be on the Judiciary Committee, for one thing. Although I am not a lawyer, I know something of the principles of law, and I understand that this and the Appropriations Committee are the most important. I may say with truth that I should be a useful member of that, as I am accustomed to sitting on financial boards. As my bills are of some considerable importance and deal with practical progressive measures, I have no hesitation in asking for the chairmanship of Public Improvements,—and of course a membership in the Agricultural is essential, as I have bills for them. Gentlemen," he added to the room at large, "I have typewritten manifolds of those bills which I shall be happy to leave here—at headquarters." And suiting the action to the word, he put down a packet on the table.

The Honourable Brush Bascom, accompanied by Mr. Ridout, walked to the window and stood staring at the glitter of the electric light on the snow. The Honourable Hilary gazed steadily at the table, while General Doby blew his nose with painful violence.

"I'll do what I can for you, certainly, Mr. Crewe," he said. "But—what is to become of the other four hundred and ninety-nine? The ways of a Speaker are hard, Mr. Crewe, and I have to do justice to all."

“Well,” answered Mr. Crewe, of course I don’t want to be unreasonable, and I realize the pressure that’s put upon you. But when you consider the importance of the work I came down here to do—”

“I do consider it,” said the Speaker, politely. “It’s a little early to talk about the make-up of committees. I hope to be able to get at them by Sunday. You may be sure I’ll do my best for you.”

“We’d better make a note of it,” said Mr. Crewe; “give me some paper,” and he was reaching around behind General Doby for one of the precious sheets under Mr. Bascom’s hat, when the general, with great presence of mind, sat on it. We have it, from a malicious and untrustworthy source, that the Northeastern Railroads paid for a new one.

## Page 89

"Here, here," cried the Speaker, "make the memorandum here."

At this critical juncture a fortunate diversion occurred. A rap—three times—of no uncertain quality was heard at the door, and Mr. Brush Bascom hastened to open it. A voice cried out:—"Is Manning here? The boys are hollering for those passes," and a wiry, sallow gentleman burst in, none other than the Honourable Elisha Jane, who was taking his consular vacation. When his eyes fell upon Mr. Crewe he halted abruptly, looked a little foolish, and gave a questioning glance at the Honourable Hilary.

"Mountain passes, Lish? Sit down. Did I ever tell you that story about the slide in Rickets Gulch?" asked the Honourable Brush Bascom. But first let me make you acquainted with Mr. Humphrey Crewe of Leith. Mr. Crewe has come down here with the finest lot of bills you ever saw, and we're all going to take hold and put 'em through. Here, Lish, I'll give you a set."

"Read 'em, Mr. Jane," urged Mr. Crewe. "I don't claim much for 'em, but perhaps they will help to set a few little matters right—I hope so."

Mr. Jane opened the bills with deliberation, and cast his eyes over the headings.

"I'll read 'em this very night, Mr. Crewe," he said solemnly; "this meeting you is a particular pleasure, and I have heard in many quarters of these measures."

"Well," admitted Mr. Crewe, "they may help some. I have a few other matters to attend to this evening, so I must say good-night, gentlemen. Don't let me interfere with those I mountain passes, Mr. Manning."

With this parting remark, which proved him to be not merely an idealist in politics, but a practical man, Mr. Crewe took his leave. And he was too much occupied with his own thoughts to pay any attention to the click of the key as it turned in the lock, or to hear United States Senator Whitredge rap (three times) on the door after he had turned the corner, or to know that presently the sliding doors into the governor's bridal suite—were to open a trifle, large enough for the admission of the body of the Honourable Asa P. Gray.

Number Seven still keeps up its reputation as the seat of benevolence, and great public benefactors still meet there to discuss the welfare of their fellow-men: the hallowed council chamber now of an empire, seat of the Governor-general of the State, the Honourable Hilary Vane, and his advisers. For years a benighted people, with a fond belief in their participation of Republican institutions, had elected the noble five hundred of the House and the stanch twenty of the Senate. Noble five hundreds (biggest Legislature in the world) have come and gone; debated, applauded, fought and on occasions denounced, kicked over the traces, and even wept—to no avail. Behold that

political institution of man, representative government There it is on the stage, curtain up, a sublime spectacle for all men to see, and thrill over speeches about



## Page 90

the Rights of Man, and the Forefathers in the Revolution; about Constituents who do not constitute. The High Heavens allow it and smile, and it is well for the atoms that they think themselves free American representatives, that they do not feel the string of predestination around their ankles. The senatorial twenty, from their high carved seats, see the strings and smile, too; yes, and see their own strings, and smile. Wisdom does not wish for flight. "The people" having changed the constitution, the blackbirds are reduced from four and forty to a score. This is cheaper—for the people.

Democracy on the front of the stage before an applauding audience; performers absorbed in their parts, forgetting that the landlord has to be paid in money yet to be earned. Behind the stage, the real play, the absorbing interest, the high stakes—occasional discreet laughter through the peep-hole when an actor makes an impassioned appeal to the gods. Democracy in front, the Feudal System, the Dukes and Earls behind—but in plain clothes; Democracy in stars and spangles and trappings and insignia. Or, a better figure, the Fates weaving the web in that mystic chamber, Number Seven, pausing now and again to smile as a new thread is put in. Proclamations, constitutions, and creeds crumble before conditions; the Law of Dividends is the high law, and the Forum an open vent through which the white steam may rise heavenward and be resolved again into water.

Mr. Crewe took his seat in the popular assemblage next day, although most of the five hundred gave up theirs to the ladies who had come to hear his Excellency deliver his inaugural. The Honourable Asa made a splendid figure, all agreed, and read his speech in a firm and manly voice. A large part of it was about the people; some of it about the sacred government they had inherited from their forefathers; still another concerned the high character and achievements of the inhabitants within the State lines; the name of Abraham Lincoln was mentioned, and, with even greater reverence and fervour, the Republican party which had ennobled and enriched the people—and incidentally elected the governor. There was a noble financial policy, a curtailment of expense. The forests should be protected, roads should be built, and, above all, corporations should be held to a strict accounting.

Needless to say, the speech gave great satisfaction to all, and many old friends left the hall exclaiming that they didn't believe Asa had it in him. As a matter of fact (known only to the initiated), Asa didn't have it in him until last night, before he squeezed through the crack in the folding doors from room number six to room Number Seven. The inspiration came to him then, when he was ennobled by the Governor-general, who represents the Empire. Perpetual Governor-general, who quickens into life puppet governors of his own choosing Asa has agreed, for the honour of the title of governor of his State,

## Page 91

to act the part, open the fairs, lend his magnificent voice to those phrases which it rounds so well. It is fortunate, when we smoke a fine cigar from Havana, that we cannot look into the factory. The sight would disturb us. It was well for the applauding, deep-breathing audience in the state-house that first of January that they did not have a glimpse in room Number Seven the night before, under the sheets that contained the list of the Speaker's committees; it was well that they could not go back to Ripton into the offices on the square, earlier in December, where Mr. Hamilton Tooting was writing the noble part of that inaugural from memoranda given him by the Honourable Hilary Vane. Yes, the versatile Mr. Tooting, and none other, doomed forever to hide the light of his genius under a bushel! The financial part was written by the Governor-general himself—the Honourable Hilary Vane. And when it was all finished and revised, it was put into a long envelope which bore this printed address: Augustus P. Flint, Pres't United Northeastern Railroads, New York. And came back with certain annotations on the margin, which were duly incorporated into it. This is the private history (which must never be told) of the document which on January first became, as far as fame and posterity is concerned, the Honourable Asa P. Gray's—forever and forever.

Mr. Crewe liked the inaugural, and was one of the first to tell Mr. Gray so, and to express his pleasure and appreciation of the fact that his request (mailed in November) had been complied with, that the substance of his bills had been recommended in the governor's programme.

He did not pause to reflect on the maxim, that platforms are made to get in by and inaugurals to get started by.

Although annual efforts have been made by various public-spirited citizens to build a new state-house, economy—with assistance from room Number Seven has triumphed. It is the same state-house from the gallery of which poor William Wetherell witnessed the drama of the Woodchuck Session, although there are more members now, for the population of the State has increased to five hundred thousand. It is well for General Doby, with his two hundred and fifty pounds, that he is in the Speaker's chair; five hundred seats are a good many for that hall, and painful in a long session. The Honourable Brush Bascom can stretch his legs, because he is fortunate enough to have a front seat. Upon inquiry, it turns out that Mr. Bascom has had a front seat for the last twenty years—he has been uniformly lucky in drawing. The Honourable Jacob Botcher (ten years' service) is equally fortunate; the Honourable Jake is a man of large presence, and a voice that sounds as if it came, oracularly, from the caverns of the earth. He is easily heard by the members on the back seats, while Mr. Bascom is not. Mr. Ridout, the capital lawyer, is in the House this year, and singularly enough has a front seat likewise. It was Mr.

## Page 92

Crewe's misfortune to draw number 415, in the extreme corner of the room, and next the steam radiator. But he was not of the metal to accept tamely such a ticketing from the hat of destiny (via the Clerk of the House). He complained, as any man of spirit would, and Mr. Utter, the polite clerk, is profoundly sorry,—and says it maybe managed. Curiously enough, the Honourable Brush Bascom and the Honourable Jacob Botcher join Mr. Crewe in his complaint, and reiterate that it is an outrage that a man of such ability and deserving prominence should be among the submerged four hundred and seventy. It is managed in a mysterious manner we don't pretend to fathom, and behold Mr. Crewe in the front of the Forum, in the seats of the mighty, where he can easily be pointed out from the gallery at the head of the five hundred, between those shining leaders and parliamentarians, the Honourables Brush Bascom and Jake Botcher.

For Mr. Crewe has not come to the Legislature, like the country members in the rear, to acquire a smattering of parliamentary procedure by the day the Speaker is presented with a gold watch, at the end of the session. Not he! Not the practical business man, the member of boards, the chairman and president of societies. He has studied the Rules of the House and parliamentary law, you may be sure. Genius does not come unprepared, and is rarely caught napping. After the Legislature adjourned that week the following telegram was sent over the wires:—

Augustus P. Flint, New York.

Kindly use your influence with Doby to secure my committee appointments. Important as per my conversation with you.

Humphrey Crewe.

Nor was Mr. Crewe idle from Saturday to Monday night, when the committees were to be announced. He sent to the State Tribune office for fifty copies of that valuable paper, which contained a two-column-and-a-half article on Mr. Crewe as a legislator and financier and citizen, with a summary of his bills and an argument as to how the State would benefit by their adoption; an accurate list of Mr. Crewe's societies was inserted, and an account of his life's history, and of those ancestors of his who had been born or lived within the State. Indeed, the accuracy of this article as a whole did great credit to the editor of the State Tribune, who must have spent a tremendous amount of painstaking research upon it; and the article was so good that Mr. Crewe regretted (undoubtedly for the editor's sake) that a request could not be appended to it such as is used upon marriage and funeral notices: "New York, Boston, and Philadelphia papers please copy."

## Page 93

Mr. Crewe thought it his duty to remedy as much as possible the unfortunate limited circulation of the article, and he spent as much as a whole day making out a list of friends and acquaintances whom he thought worthy to receive a copy of the Tribune—marked personal. Victoria Flint got one, and read it to her father at the breakfast table. (Mr. Flint did not open his.) Austen Vane wondered why any man in his obscure and helpless position should have been honoured, but honoured he was. He sent his to Victoria, too, and was surprised to find that she knew his handwriting and wrote him a letter to thank him for it: a letter which provoked on his part much laughter, and elements of other sensations which, according to Charles Reade, should form the ingredients of a good novel. But of this matter later.

Mrs. Pomfret and Alice each got one, and each wrote Mr. Crewe appropriate congratulations. (Alice's answer supervised.) Mrs. Chillingham got one; the Honourable Hilary Vane got one—marked in red ink, lest he should have skipped it in his daily perusal of the paper. Mr. Brush, Bascom got one likewise. But the list of Mr. Crewe's acquaintances is too long and too broad to dwell upon further in these pages.

The Monday-night session came at last, that sensational hour when the Speaker makes those decisions to which he is supposed to have given birth over Sunday in the seclusion of his country home at Hale. Monday-night sessions are, as a rule, confined in attendance to the Honourable Brush Bascom and Mr. Ridout and a few other conscientious members who do not believe in cheating the State, but to-night all is bustle and confusion, and at least four hundred members are pushing down the aisles and squeezing past each other into the narrow seats, and reading the State Tribune or the ringing words of the governor's inaugural which they find in the racks on the back of the seats before them. Speaker Doby, who has been apparently deep in conference with the most important members (among them Mr. Crewe, to whom he has whispered that a violent snow-storm is raging in Hale), raps for order; and after a few preliminaries hands to Mr. Utter, the clerk, amidst a breathless silence, the paper on which the parliamentary career of so many ambitious statesmen depends.

It is not a pleasure to record the perfidy of man, nor the lack of judgment which prevents him, in his circumscribed lights, from recognizing undoubted geniuses when he sees them. Perhaps it was jealousy on General Doby's part, and a selfish desire to occupy the centre of the stage himself, but at any rate we will pass hastily over the disagreeable portions of this narrative. Mr. Crewe settled himself with his feet extended, and with a complacency which he had rightly earned by leaving no stone unturned, to listen. He sat up a little when the Appropriations Committee, headed by the Honourable Jake Botcher, did not contain his name—but it might have been an oversight of Mr. Utters; when the Judiciary

## Page 94

(Mr. Ridout's committee) was read it began to look like malice; committee after committee was revealed, and the name of Humphrey Crewe might not have been contained in the five hundred except as the twelfth member of forestry, until it appeared at the top of National Affairs. Here was a broad enough field, certainly,—the Trusts, the Tariff, the Gold Standard, the Foreign Possessions,—and Mr. Crewe's mind began to soar in spite of himself. Public Improvements was reached, and he straightened. Mr. Beck, a railroad lawyer from Belfast, led it. Mr. Crewe arose, as any man of spirit would, and walked with dignity up the aisle and out of the house. This deliberate attempt to crush genius would inevitably react on itself. The Honourable Hilary Vane and Mr. Flint should be informed of it at once.

## CHAPTER X

*"For bills may come, and bills may go"*

A man with a sense of humour once went to the capital as a member of the five hundred from his town, and he never went back again. One reason for this was that he died the following year, literally, the doctors said, from laughing too much. I know that this statement will be received incredulously, and disputed by those who claim that laughter is a good thing; the honourable gentleman died from too much of a good thing. He was overpowered by having too much to laugh at, and the undiscerning thought him a fool, and the Empire had no need of a court jester. But many of his sayings have lived, nevertheless. He wrote a poem, said to be a plagiarism, which contains the quotation at the beginning of this chapter: "For bills may come, and bills may go, but I go on forever." The first person singular is supposed to relate to the United Northeastern Railroads. It was a poor joke at best.

It is needless to say that the gentleman referred to had a back seat among the submerged four hundred and seventy,—and that he kept it. No discerning and powerful well-wishers came forward and said to him, "Friend, go up higher." He sat, doubled up, in number, and the gods gave him compensation in laughter; he disturbed the Solons around him, who were interested in what was going on in front, and trying to do their duty to their constituents by learning parliamentary procedure before the Speaker got his gold watch and shed tears over it.

The gentleman who laughed and died is forgotten, as he deserves to be, and it never occurred to anybody that he might have been a philosopher, after all. There is something irresistibly funny about predestination; about men who are striving and learning and soberly voting upon measures with which they have as little to do as guinea-pigs. There were certain wise and cynical atheists who did not attend the sessions at all except when they received mysterious hints to do so. These were chiefly

from Newcastle. And there were others who played poker in the state-house cellar waiting for the Word to come to them, when they went up and voted (prudently counting their chips before they did so), and descended again. The man with a sense of humour laughed at these, too, and at the twenty blackbirds in the Senate,—but not so heartily. He laughed at their gravity, for no gravity can equal that of gentlemen who play with stacked cards.

## Page 95

The risible gentleman laughed at the proposed legislation, about which he made the song, and he likened it to a stream that rises hopefully in the mountains, and takes its way singing at the prospect of reaching the ocean, but presently flows into a hole in the ground to fill the forgotten caverns of the earth, and is lost to the knowledge and sight of man. The caverns he labelled respectively Appropriations, Railroad, Judiciary, and their guardians were unmistakably the Honourables Messrs. Bascom, Botcher, and Ridout. The greatest cavern of all he called "The Senate."

If you listen, you can hear the music of the stream of bills as it is rising hopefully and flowing now: "Mr. Crewe of Leith gives notice that on to-morrow or some subsequent day he will introduce a bill entitled, 'An act for the Improvement of the State Highways.' Mr. Crewe of Leith gives notice, *etc.* 'An act for the Improvement of the Practice of Agriculture.' 'An act relating to the State Indebtedness.' 'An act to increase the State Forest Area.' 'An act to incorporate the State Economic League.' 'An act to incorporate the State Children's Charities Association.' 'An act in relation to Abandoned Farms.'" These were some of the most important, and they were duly introduced on the morrow, and gravely referred by the Speaker to various committees. As might be expected, a man whose watchword is, "thorough" immediately got a list of those committees, and lost no time in hunting up the chairmen and the various available members thereof.

As a man of spirit, also, Mr. Crewe wrote to Mr. Flint, protesting as to the manner in which he had been treated concerning committees. In the course of a week he received a kind but necessarily brief letter from the Northeastern's president to remind him that he persisted in a fallacy; as a neighbour, Mr. Flint would help him to the extent of his power, but the Northeastern Railroads could not interfere in legislative or political matters. Mr. Crewe was naturally pained by the lack of confidence of his friend; it seems useless to reiterate that he was far from being a fool, and no man could be in the capital a day during the session without being told of the existence of Number Seven, no matter how little the informant might know of what might be going on there. Mr. Crewe had been fortunate enough to see the inside of that mysterious room, and, being a sufficiently clever man to realize the importance and necessity of government by corporations, had been shocked at nothing he had seen or heard. However, had he had a glimpse of the Speaker's lists under the hopelessly crushed hat of Mr. Bascom, perhaps he might have been shocked, after all.



## Page 96

It was about this time that a touching friendship began which ought, in justice, to be briefly chronicled. It was impossible for the Honourable Brush Bascom and the Honourable Jacob Botcher to have Mr. Crewe sitting between them and not conceive a strong affection for him. The Honourable Brush, though not given to expressing his feelings, betrayed some surprise at the volumes Mr. Crewe had contributed to the stream of bills; and Mr. Botcher, in a Delphic whisper, invited Mr. Crewe to visit him in room forty-eight of the Pelican that evening. To tell the truth, Mr. Crewe returned the feeling of his companions warmly, and he had even entertained the idea of asking them both to dine with him that evening.

Number forty-eight (the Honourable Jake's) was a free-and-easy democratic resort. No three knocks and a password before you turn the key here. Almost before your knuckles hit the panel you heard Mr. Botcher's hearty voice shouting "Come in," in spite of the closed transom. The Honourable Jake, being a tee-totaller, had no bathroom, and none but his intimate friends ever looked in the third from the top bureau drawer.

The proprietor of the Pelican, who in common with the rest of humanity had fallen a victim to the rough and honest charms and hearty good fellowship of the Honourable Jake, always placed a large padded arm-chair in number forty-eight before the sessions, knowing that the Honourable Jake's constituency would be uniformly kind to him. There Mr. Botcher was wont to sit (when he was not depressing one of the tiles in the rotunda), surrounded by his friends and their tobacco smoke, discussing in his frank and manly fashion the public questions of the day.

Mr. Crewe thought it a little strange that, whenever he entered a room in the Pelican, a silence should succeed the buzz of talk which he had heard through the closed transom; but he very naturally attributed this to the constraint which ordinary men would be likely to feel in his presence. In the mouth of one presumptuous member the word "railroad" was cut in two by an agate glance from the Honourable Brush, and Mr. Crewe noted with some surprise that the Democratic leader of the House, Mr. Painter, was seated on Mr. Botcher's mattress, with an expression that was in singular contrast to the look of bold defiance which he had swept over the House that afternoon in announcing his opposition policy. The vulgar political suggestion might have crept into a more trivial mind than Mr. Crewe's that Mr. Painter was being, "put to bed," the bed being very similar to that of Procrustes. Mr. Botcher extracted himself from the nooks and crannies of his armchair.

"How are you, Crewe?" he said hospitably; "we're all friends here—eh, Painter? We don't carry our quarrels outside the swinging doors. You know Mr. Crewe—by sight, of course. Do you know these other gentlemen, Crewe? I didn't expect you so early."

The "other gentlemen" said that they were happy to make the acquaintance of their fellow-member from Leith, and seemingly with one consent began to edge towards the door.



## Page 97

"Don't go, boys," Mr. Bascom protested. "Let me finish that story."

Some of "the boys" seemed to regard this statement as humorous,—more humorous, indeed, than the story itself. And when it was finished they took their departure, a trifle awkwardly, led by Mr. Painter.

"They're a little mite bashful," said Mr. Botcher, apologetically.

"How many more of those bills have you got?" demanded Mr. Bascom, from the steam radiator, with characteristic directness.

"I put 'em all in this morning," said Mr. Crewe, "but I have thought since of two or three other conditions which might be benefited by legislation."

"Well," said Mr. Bascom, kindly, "if you have any more I was going to suggest that you distribute 'em round among the boys. That's the way I do, and most folks don't guess they're your bills. See?"

"What harm is there in that?" demanded Mr. Crewe. "I'm not ashamed of 'em."

"Brush was only lookin' at it from the point of view of gettin' 'em through," honest Mr. Botcher put in, in stentorian tones. "It doesn't do for a new member to be thought a hog about legislation."

Now the Honourable Jacob only meant this in the kindest manner, as we know, and to give inexperience a hint from well-intentioned experience. On the other hand, Mr. Crewe had a dignity and a position to uphold. He was a personality. People who went too far with him were apt to be rebuked by a certain glassy quality in his eye, and this now caused the Honourable Jake to draw back perceptibly.

"I see no reason why a public-spirited man should be open to such an imputation," said Mr. Crewe.

"Certainly not, certainly not," said Mr. Botcher, in stentorian tones of apology, "I was only trying to give you a little friendly advice, but I may have put it too strong. Brush and I—I may as well be plain about it, Mr. Crewe—have taken a liking to you. Couldn't help it, sir, sitting next to you as we do. We take an interest in your career, and we don't want you to make any mistakes. Ain't that about it, Brush?"

"That's about it," said Mr. Bascom.

Mr. Crewe was too big a man not to perceive and appreciate the sterling philanthropy which lay beneath the exteriors of his new friends, who scorned to flatter him.

“I understand the spirit in which your advice is given, gentlemen,” he replied magnanimously, “and I appreciate it. We are all working for the same things, and we all believe that they must be brought about in the same practical way. For instance, we know as practical men that the railroad pays a large tax in this State, and that property must take a hand—a very considerable hand—in legislation. You gentlemen, as important factors in the Republican organization, are loyal to—er—that property, and perhaps for wholly desirable reasons cannot bring forward too many bills under your own names. Whereas I—”

At this point in Mr. Crewe’s remarks the Honourable Jacob Botcher was seized by an appalling coughing fit which threatened to break his arm-chair, probably owing to the fact that he had swallowed something which he had in his mouth the wrong way. Mr. Bascom, assisted by Mr. Crewe, pounded him relentlessly on the back.

## Page 98

"I read that article in the 'Tribune' about you with great interest," said Mr. Bascom, when Mr. Botcher's coughing had subsided. "I had no idea you were so—ahem—well equipped for a political career. But what we wanted to speak to you about was this," he continued, as Mr. Crewe showed signs of breaking in, "those committee appointments you desired."

"Yes," said Mr. Crewe, with some pardonable heat, "the Speaker doesn't seem to know which side his bread's buttered on."

"What I was going to say," proceeded Mr. Bascom, "was that General Doby is a pretty good fellow. Personally, I happen to know that the general feels very badly that he couldn't give you what you wanted. He took a shine to you that night you saw him."

"Yes," Mr. Botcher agreed, for he had quite recovered, the general felt bad—feels bad, I should say. He perceived that you were a man of ability, sir—"

"And that was just the reason," said the Honourable Brush, "that he couldn't make you more useful just now."

"There's a good deal of jealousy, my dear sir, against young members of ability," said Mr. Botcher, in his most oracular and impressive tones. "The competition amongst those—er—who have served the party is very keen for the positions you desired. I personally happen to know that the general had you on the Judiciary and Appropriations, and that some of your—er—well-wishers persuaded him to take you off for your own good."

"It wouldn't do for the party leaders to make you too prominent all at once," said Mr. Bascom. "You are bound to take an active part in what passes here. The general said, 'At all events I will give Mr. Crewe one chairmanship by which he can make a name for himself suited to his talents,' and he insisted on giving you, in spite of some remonstrances from your friends, National Affairs. The general urged, rightly, that with your broad view and knowledge of national policy, it was his duty to put you in that place whatever people might say."

Mr. Crewe listened to these explanations in some surprise; and being a rational man, had to confess that they were—more or less reasonable.

"Scarcely any bills come before that committee," he objected.

"Ah," replied Mr. Bascom, "that is true. But the chairman of that committee is generally supposed to be in line for—er—national honours. It has not always happened in the past, because the men have not proved worthy. But the opportunity is always given to that chairman to make a speech upon national affairs which is listened to with the deepest interest."

“Is that so?” said Mr. Crewe. He wanted to be of service, as we know. He was a man of ideas, and the opening sentences of the speech were already occurring to him.

“Let’s go upstairs and see the general now,” suggested Mr. Botcher, smiling that such a happy thought should have occurred to him.

“Why, I guess we couldn’t do any better,” Mr. Bascom agreed.

## Page 99

"Well," said Mr. Crewe, "I'm willing to hear what he's got to say, anyway."

Taking advantage of this generous concession, Mr. Botcher hastily locked the door, and led the way up the stairway to number seventy-five. After a knock or two here, the door opened a crack, disclosing, instead of General Doby's cherubic countenance, a sallow face with an exceedingly pointed nose. The owner of these features, having only Mr. Botcher in his line of vision, made what was perhaps an unguarded remark.

"Hello, Jake, the general's in number nine—Manning sent for him about half an hour ago."

It was Mr. Botcher himself who almost closed the door on the gentleman's sharp nose, and took Mr. Crewe's arm confidently.

"We'll go up to the desk and see Doby in the morning,—he's busy," said the Honourable Jake.

"What's the matter with seeing him now?" Mr. Crewe demanded. "I know Manning. He's the division superintendent, isn't he?"

Mr. Botcher and Mr. Bascom exchanged glances.

"Why, yes—" said Mr. Bascom, "yes, he is. He's a great friend of General Doby's, and their wives are great friends."

"Intimate friends, sir," said the Honourable Jake

"Well," said Mr. Crewe, "we won't bother 'em but a moment."

It was he who led the way now, briskly, the Honourable Brush and the Honourable Jake pressing closely after him. It was Mr. Crewe who, without pausing to knock, pushed open the door of number nine, which was not quite closed; and it was Mr. Crewe who made the important discovery that the lugubrious division superintendent had a sense of humour. Mr. Manning was seated at a marble-topped table writing on a salmon-coloured card, in the act of pronouncing these words:—"For Mr. Speaker and Mrs. Speaker and all the little Speakers, to New York and return."

Mr. Speaker Doby, standing before the marble-topped table with his hands in his pockets, heard the noise behind him and turned, and a mournful expression spread over his countenance.

"Don't mind me," said Mr. Crewe, waving a hand in the direction of the salmon-coloured tickets; "I hope you have a good time, General. When do you go?"

“Why,” exclaimed the Speaker, “how are you, Mr. Crewe, how are you? It’s only one of Manning’s little jokes.”

“That’s all right, General,” said Mr. Crewe, “I haven’t been a director in railroads for nothing. I’m not as green as he thinks. Am I, Mr. Manning?”

“It never struck me that green was your colour, Mr. Crewe,” answered the division superintendent, smiling a little as he tore the tickets into bits and put them in the waste-basket.

“Well,” said Mr. Crewe, “you needn’t have torn ’em up on my account. I travel on the pass which the Northeastern gives me as a legislator, and I’m thinking seriously of getting Mr. Flint to send me an annual, now that I’m in politics and have to cover the State.”

## Page 100

"We thought you were a reformer, Mr. Crewe," the Honourable Brush Bascom remarked.

"I am a practical man," said Mr. Crewe; "a railroad man, a business man and as such I try to see things as they are."

"Well," said General Doby, who by this time had regained his usual genial air of composure, "I'm glad you said that, Mr. Crewe. As these gentlemen will tell you, if I'd had my wish I'd have had you on every important committee in the House."

"Chairman of every important committee, General," corrected the Honourable Jacob Botcher.

"Yes, chairman of 'em," assented the general, after a glance at Mr. Crewe's countenance to see how this statement fared. "But the fact is, the boys are all jealous of you—on the quiet. I suppose you suspected something of the kind."

"I should have imagined there might be some little feeling," Mr. Crewe assented modestly.

"Exactly," cried the general, "and I had to combat that feeling when I insisted upon putting you at the head of National Affairs. It does not do for a new member, whatever his prominence in the financial world, to be pushed forward too quickly. And unless I am mighty mistaken, Mr. Crewe," he added, with his hand on the new member's shoulder, "you will make yourself felt without any boosting from me."

"I did not come here to remain idle, General," answered Mr. Crewe, considerably mollified.

"Certainly not," said the general, "and I say to some of those men, 'Keep your eye on the gentleman who is Chairman of National Affairs.'"

After a little more of this desultory and pleasant talk, during which recourse was, had to the bathroom for several tall and thin glasses ranged on the shelf there, Mr. Crewe took his departure in a most equable frame of mind. And when the door was closed and locked behind him, Mr. Manning dipped his pen in the ink, once more produced from a drawer in the table the salmon-coloured tickets, and glanced again at the general with a smile.

"For Mr. Speaker and Mrs. Speaker and all the little Speakers, to New York and return."