

Mr. Crewe's Career — Volume 2 eBook

Mr. Crewe's Career — Volume 2 by Winston Churchill

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

Mr. Crewe's Career — Volume 2 eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	7
Page 1.....	8
Page 2.....	10
Page 3.....	11
Page 4.....	12
Page 5.....	13
Page 6.....	15
Page 7.....	17
Page 8.....	19
Page 9.....	21
Page 10.....	23
Page 11.....	25
Page 12.....	27
Page 13.....	29
Page 14.....	31
Page 15.....	33
Page 16.....	35
Page 17.....	37
Page 18.....	39
Page 19.....	41
Page 20.....	43
Page 21.....	45
Page 22.....	47

Page 23.....	49
Page 24.....	50
Page 25.....	51
Page 26.....	53
Page 27.....	55
Page 28.....	57
Page 29.....	59
Page 30.....	61
Page 31.....	63
Page 32.....	65
Page 33.....	67
Page 34.....	69
Page 35.....	71
Page 36.....	73
Page 37.....	75
Page 38.....	77
Page 39.....	78
Page 40.....	79
Page 41.....	80
Page 42.....	82
Page 43.....	84
Page 44.....	85
Page 45.....	87
Page 46.....	88
Page 47.....	89
Page 48.....	90

Page 49.....	91
Page 50.....	92
Page 51.....	93
Page 52.....	95
Page 53.....	96
Page 54.....	98
Page 55.....	99
Page 56.....	100
Page 57.....	102
Page 58.....	104
Page 59.....	105
Page 60.....	107
Page 61.....	109
Page 62.....	111
Page 63.....	113
Page 64.....	115
Page 65.....	117
Page 66.....	119
Page 67.....	121
Page 68.....	123
Page 69.....	125
Page 70.....	126
Page 71.....	127
Page 72.....	128
Page 73.....	130
Page 74.....	132

Page 75.....	134
Page 76.....	136
Page 77.....	138
Page 78.....	140
Page 79.....	142
Page 80.....	144
Page 81.....	146
Page 82.....	148
Page 83.....	150
Page 84.....	152
Page 85.....	154
Page 86.....	156
Page 87.....	158
Page 88.....	160
Page 89.....	162
Page 90.....	163
Page 91.....	164
Page 92.....	166
Page 93.....	168
Page 94.....	170
Page 95.....	172
Page 96.....	174
Page 97.....	176
Page 98.....	178
Page 99.....	180
Page 100.....	182

Page 101.....	184
Page 102.....	186
Page 103.....	187
Page 104.....	189
Page 105.....	191
Page 106.....	193
Page 107.....	195
Page 108.....	197
Page 109.....	199
Page 110.....	201
Page 111.....	203
Page 112.....	205
Page 113.....	207
Page 114.....	209
Page 115.....	211
Page 116.....	213
Page 117.....	215
Page 118.....	217
Page 119.....	219
Page 120.....	221
Page 121.....	223
Page 122.....	225

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
THE HOPPER		1
CHAPTER XII		14
CHAPTER XIII		22
CHAPTER XIV		37
CHAPTER XV		54
CHAPTER XVI		65
CHAPTER XVII		74
CHAPTER XVIII		88
CHAPTER XIX		101
CHAPTER XX		113

Page 1

THE HOPPER

It is certainly not the function of a romance to relate, with the exactness of a House journal, the proceedings of a Legislature. Somebody has likened the state-house to pioneer Kentucky, a dark and bloody ground over which the battles of selfish interests ebbed and flowed,—no place for an innocent and unselfish bystander like Mr. Crewe, who desired only to make of his State an Utopia; whose measures were for the public good—not his own. But if any politician were fatuous enough to believe that Humphrey Crewe was a man to introduce bills and calmly await their fate; a man who, like Senator Sanderson, only came down to the capital when he was notified by telegram, that politician was entirely mistaken.

No sooner had his bills been assigned to the careful and just consideration of the committees in charge of the Honourable Brush Bascom, Mr. Botcher, and others than Mr. Crewe desired of each a day for a hearing. Every member of the five hundred was provided with a copy; nay, nearly every member was personally appealed to, to appear and speak for the measures. Foresters, road builders, and agriculturists (expenses paid) were sent for from other States; Mr. Ball and others came down from Leith, and gentlemen who for a generation had written letters to the newspapers turned up from other localities. In two cases the largest committee rooms proved too small for the gathering which was the result of Mr. Crewe's energy, and the legislative hall had to be lighted. The State Tribune gave column reports of the hearings, and little editorial pushes besides. And yet, when all was over, when it had been proved beyond a doubt that, if the State would consent to spend a little money, she would take the foremost rank among her forty odd sisters for progression, the bills were still under consideration by those hardheaded statesmen, Mr. Bascom and Mr. Botcher and their associates.

It could not be because these gentlemen did not know the arguments and see the necessity. Mr. Crewe had had them to dinner, and had spent so much time in their company presenting his case—to which they absolutely agreed—that they took to a forced seclusion. The member from Leith also wrote letters and telegrams, and sent long typewritten arguments and documents to Mr. Flint. Mr. Crewe, although far from discouraged, began to think there was something mysterious about all this seemingly unnecessary deliberation.

Mr. Crewe, though of great discernment, was only mortal, and while he was fighting his battle single-handed, how was he to know that the gods above him were taking sides and preparing for conflict? The gods do not give out their declarations of war for publication to the Associated Press; and old Tom Gaylord, who may be likened to Mars, had no intention of sending Jupiter notice until he got his cohorts into line. The strife, because it was to be internecine, was the more terrible. Hitherto the Gaylord Lumber Company, like the Winona Manufacturing Company of Newcastle (the mills of which extended for miles along the Tyne), had been a faithful ally of the Empire; and, on

occasions when it was needed, had borrowed the Imperial army to obtain grants, extensions, and franchises.

Page 2

The fact is that old Tom Gaylord, in the autumn previous, had quarreled with Mr. Flint about lumber rates, which had been steadily rising. Mr. Flint had been polite, but firm; and old Tom, who, with all his tremendous properties, could ship by no other railroad than the Northeastern, had left the New York office in a black rage. A more innocent citizen than old Tom would have put his case (which was without doubt a strong one) before the Railroad Commission of the State, but old Tom knew well enough that the Railroad Commission was in reality an economy board of the Northeastern system, as much under Mr. Flint's orders as the conductors and brakemen. Old Tom, in consulting the map, conceived an unheard-of effrontery, a high treason which took away the breath of his secretary and treasurer when it was pointed out to him. The plan contemplated a line of railroad from the heart of the lumber regions down the south side of the valley of the Pingsquit to Kingston, where the lumber could take to the sea. In short, it was a pernicious revival of an obsolete state of affairs, competition, and if persisted in, involved nothing less than a fight to a finish with the army, the lobby of the Northeastern. Other favoured beings stood aghast when they heard of it, and hastened to old Tom with timely counsel; but he had reached a frame of mind which they knew well. He would listen to no reason, and maintained stoutly that there were other lawyers in the world as able in political sagacity and lobby tactics as Hilary Vane; the Honourable Galusha Hammer, for instance, an old and independent and wary war-horse who had more than once wrung compromises out of the Honourable Hilary. The Honourable Galusha Hammer was sent for, and was now industriously, if quietly and unobtrusively, at work. The Honourable Hilary was likewise at work, equally quietly and unobtrusively. When the powers fall out, they do not open up at once with long-distance artillery. There is always a chance of a friendly settlement. The news was worth a good deal, for instance, to Mr. Peter Pardriff (brother of Paul, of Ripton), who refrained, with praiseworthy self-control, from publishing it in the State Tribune, although the temptation to do so must have been great. And most of the senatorial twenty saw the trouble coming and braced their backs against it, but in silence. The capital had seen no such war as this since the days of Jethro Bass.

In the meantime Mr. Crewe, blissfully ignorant of this impending conflict, was preparing a speech on national affairs and national issues which was to startle an unsuspecting State. Mrs. Pomfret, who had received many clippings and pamphlets, had written him weekly letters of a nature spurring to his ambition, which incidentally contained many references to Alice's interest in his career. And Mr. Crewe's mind, when not intent upon affairs of State, sometimes reverted pleasantly to thoughts of Victoria Flint; it occurred to him that the Duncan house was large enough for entertaining, and that he might invite Mrs. Pomfret to bring Victoria and the inevitable Alice to hear his oration, for which Mr. Speaker Doby had set a day.

Page 3

In his desire to give other people pleasure, Mr. Crewe took the trouble to notify a great many of his friends and acquaintances as to the day of his speech, in case they might wish to travel to the State capital and hear him deliver it. Having unexpectedly received in the mail a cheque from Austen Vane in settlement of the case of the injured horse, Austen was likewise invited.

Austen smiled when he opened the letter, and with its businesslike contents there seemed to be wafted from it the perfume and suppliancy of a September day in the Vale of the Blue. From the window of his back office, looking across the railroad tracks, he could see Sawanec, pale in her winter garb against a pale winter sky, and there arose in him the old restless desire for the woods and fields which at times was almost irresistible. His thoughts at length descending from the azure above Sawanec, his eyes fell again on Mr. Crewe's typewritten words: "It may be of interest to you that I am to deliver, on the 15th instant, and as the Chairman of the House Committee on National Affairs, a speech upon national policies which is the result of much thought, and which touches upon such material needs of our State as can be supplied by the Federal Government."

Austen had a brief fancy, whimsical as it was, of going to hear him. Mr. Crewe, as a type absolutely new to him, interested him. He had followed the unusual and somewhat surprising career of the gentleman from Leith with some care, even to the extent of reading of Mr. Crewe's activities in the State Tribunes which had been sent him. Were such qualifications as Mr. Crewe possessed, he wondered, of a kind to sweep their possessor into high office? Were industry, persistency, and a capacity for taking advantage of a fair wind sufficient?

Since his return from Pepper County, Austen Vane had never been to the State capital during a session, although it was common for young lawyers to have cases before the Legislature. It would have been difficult to say why he did not take these cases, aside from the fact that they were not very remunerative. On occasions gentlemen from different parts of the State, and some from outside of it who had certain favours to ask at the hands of the lawmaking body, had visited his back office and closed the door after them, and in the course of the conversation had referred to the relationship of the young lawyer to Hilary Vane. At such times Austen would freely acknowledge the debt of gratitude he owed his father for being in the world—and refer them politely to Mr. Hilary Vane himself. In most cases they had followed his advice, wondering not a little at this isolated example of quixotism.

Page 4

During the sessions, except for a day or two at week ends which were often occupied with conferences, the Honourable Hilary's office was deserted; or rather, as we have seen, his headquarters were removed to room Number Seven in the Pelican Hotel at the capital. Austen got many of the lay clients who came to see his father at such times; and—without giving an exaggerated idea of his income—it might be said that he was beginning to have what may be called a snug practice for a lawyer of his experience. In other words, according to Mr. Tooting, who took an intense interest in the matter, “not wearing the collar” had been more of a financial success for Austen than that gentleman had imagined. There proved to be many clients to whom the fact that young Mr. Vane did not carry a “retainer pass” actually appealed. These clients paid their bills, but they were neither large nor influential, as a rule, with the notable exception of the Gaylord Lumber Company, where the matters for trial were not large. If young Tom Gaylord had had his way, Austen would have been the chief counsel for the corporation.

To tell the truth, Austen Vane had a secret aversion to going to the capital during a session, a feeling that such a visit would cause him unhappiness. In spite of his efforts, and indeed in spite of Hilary's, Austen and his father had grown steadily apart. They met in the office hallway, in the house in Hanover Street when Hilary came home to sleep, and the elder Mr. Vane was not a man to thrive on small talk. His world was the battlefield from which he directed the forces of the great corporation which he served, and the cherished vision of a son in whom he could confide his plans, upon whose aid and counsel he could lean, was gone forever. Hilary Vane had troublesome half-hours, but on the whole he had reached the conclusion that this son, like Sarah Austen, was one of those inexplicable products in which an extravagant and inscrutable nature sometimes indulged. On the rare evenings when the two were at home together, the Honourable Hilary sat under one side of the lamp with a pile of documents and newspapers, and Austen under the other with a book from the circulating library. No public questions could be broached upon which they were not as far apart as the poles, and the Honourable Hilary put literature in the same category as embroidery. Euphrasia, when she paused in her bodily activity to darn their stockings, used to glance at them covertly from time to time, and many a silent tear of which they knew nothing fell on her needle.

On the subject of his protracted weekly absences at the State capital, the Honourable Hilary was as uncommunicative as he would have been had he retired for those periods to a bar-room. He often grunted and cleared his throat and glanced at his son when their talk bordered upon these absences; and he was even conscious of an extreme irritation against himself as well as Austen because of the instinct that bade him keep silent.

Page 5

He told himself fiercely that he had nothing to be ashamed of, nor would he have acknowledged that it was a kind of shame that bade him refrain even from circumstantial accounts of what went on in room Number Seven of the Pelican. He had an idea that Austen knew and silently condemned; and how extremely maddening was this feeling to the Honourable Hilary may well be imagined. All his life long he had deemed himself morally invulnerable, and now to be judged and ethically found wanting by the son of Sarah Austen was, at times, almost insupportable. Were the standards of a long life to be suddenly reversed by a prodigal son?

To get back to Austen. On St. Valentine's Day of that year when, to tell the truth, he was seated in his office scribbling certain descriptions of nature suggested by the valentines in Mr. Hayman's stationery store, the postman brought in a letter from young Tom Gaylord. Austen laughed as he read it. "The Honourable Galusha Hammer is well named," young Tom wrote, "but the conviction has been gaining ground with me that a hammer is about as much use as a shovel would be at the present time. It is not the proper instrument." "But the 'old man'" (it was thus young Tom was wont to designate his parent) "is pig-headed when he gets to fighting, and won't listen to reason. If he believes he can lick the Northeastern with a Hammer, he is durned badly mistaken, and I told him so. I have been giving him sage advice in little drops—after meals. I tell him there is only one man in the State who has sense enough even to shake the Northeastern, and that's you. He thinks this a pretty good joke. Of course I realize where your old man is planted, and that you might have some natural delicacy and wish to refrain from giving him a jar. But come down for an hour and let me talk to you, anyway. The new statesman from Leith is cutting a wide swath. Not a day passes but his voice is heard roaring in the Forum; he has visited all the State institutions, dined and wined the governor and his staff and all the ex-governors he can lay his hands on, and he has that hard-headed and caustic journalist, Mr. Peter Pardriff, of the State Tribune, hypnotized. He has some swells up at his house to hear his speech on national affairs, among them old Flint's daughter, who is a ripper to look at, although I never got nearer to her than across the street. As you may guess, it is something of a card for Crewe to have Flint's daughter here."

Austen sat for a long time after reading this letter, idly watching the snow-clouds gathering around Sawanec. Then he tore up the paper, on which he had been scribbling, into very small bits, consulted a time-table, and at noon, in a tumult of feelings, he found himself in a back seat of the express, bound for the capital.

Arriving at the station, amidst a hurry and bustle of legislators and politicians coming and going, many of whom nodded to him, he stood for a minute in the whirling snow reflecting. Now that he was here, where was he to stay? The idea of spending the night at the Pelican was repellent to him, and he was hesitating between two more modest hostelries when he was hailed by a giant with a flowing white beard, a weather-

beaten face, and a clear eye that shone with a steady and kindly light. It was James Redbrook, the member from Mercer.

Page 6

"Why, how be you, Austen?" he cried, extending a welcome hand; and, when Austen had told him his dilemma: "Come right along up to my lodgings. I live at the Widow Peasley's, and there's a vacant room next to mine."

Austen accepted gratefully, and as they trudged through the storm up the hill, he inquired how legislative matters were progressing. Whereupon Mr. Redbrook unburdened himself.

"Say, I just warmed up all over when I see you, Austen. I'm so glad to run across an honest man. We ain't forgot in Mercer what you did for Zeb Meader, and how you went against your interests. And I guess it ain't done you any harm in the State. As many as thirty or forty members have spoke to me about it. And down here I've got so I just can't hold in any more."

"Is it as bad as that, Mr. Redbrook?" asked Austen, with a serious glance at the farmer's face.

"It's so bad I don't know how to begin," said the member from Mercer, and paused suddenly. "But I don't want to hurt your feelings, Austen, seeing your father is—where he is."

"Go on," said Austen, "I understand."

"Well," said Mr. Redbrook, "it just makes me tremble as an American citizen. The railrud sends them slick cusses down here that sit in the front seats who know all this here parliamentary law and the tricks of the trade, and every time any of us gets up to speak our honest minds, they have us ruled out of order or get the thing laid on the table until some Friday morning when there ain't nobody here, and send it along up to the Senate. They made that fat feller, Doby, Speaker, and he's stuffed all the important committees so that you can't get an honest measure considered. You can talk to the committees all you've a mind to, and they'll just listen and never do anything. There's five hundred in the House, and it ain't any more of a Legislature than a camp-meetin' is. What do you suppose they done last Friday morning, when there wahn't but twenty men at the session? We had an anti-pass law, and all these fellers were breakin' it. It forbid anybody riding on a pass except railroad presidents, directors, express messengers, and persons in misfortune, and they stuck in these words, 'and others to whom passes have been granted by the proper officers.' Ain't that a disgrace to the State? And those twenty senators passed it before we got back on Tuesday. You can't get a bill through that Legislature unless you go up to the Pelican and get permission of Hilary—"

Here Mr. Redbrook stopped abruptly, and glanced contritely at his companion.

"I didn't mean to get goin' so," he said, "but sometimes I wish this American government'd never been started."

"I often feel that way myself, Mr. Redbrook," said Austen.

"I knowed you did. I guess I can tell an honest man when I see one. It's treason to say anything against this Northeastern louder than a whisper. They want an electric railrud bad up in Greenacre, and when some of us spoke for it and tried to get the committee to report it, those cheap fellers from Newcastle started such a catcall we had to set down."

Page 7

By this time they were at the Widow Peasley's, stamping the snow from off their boots.

"How general is this sentiment?" Austen asked, after he had set down his bag in the room he was to occupy.

"Why," said Mr. Redbrook, with conviction, "there's enough feel as I do to turn that House upside down—if we only had a leader. If you was only in there, Austen."

"I'm afraid I shouldn't be of much use," Austen answered. "They'd have given me a back seat, too."

The Widow Peasley's was a frame and gabled house of Revolutionary days with a little terrace in front of it and a retaining wall built up from the sidewalk. Austen, on the steps, stood gazing across at a square mansion with a wide cornice, half hidden by elms and maples and pines. It was set far back from the street, and a driveway entered the picket-fence and swept a wide semicircle to the front door and back again. Before the door was a sleigh of a pattern new to him, with a seat high above the backs of two long-bodied, deep-chested horses, their heads held with difficulty by a little footman with his arms above him. At that moment two figures in furs emerged from the house. The young woman gathered up the reins and leaped lightly to the box, the man followed; the little groom touched his fur helmet and scrambled aboard as the horses sprang forward to the music of the softest of bells. The sleigh swept around the curve, avoided by a clever turn a snow-pile at the entrance, the young woman raised her eyes from the horses, stared at Austen, and bowed. As for Austen, he grew warm as he took off his hat, and he realized that his hand was actually trembling. The sleigh flew on up the hill, but she turned once more to look behind her, and he still had his hat in his hand, the snowflakes falling on his bared head. Then he was aware that James Redbrook was gazing at him curiously.

"That's Flint's daughter, ain't it?" inquired the member from Mercer. "Didn't callate you'd know her."

Austen flushed. He felt exceedingly foolish, but an answer came to him.

"I met her in the hospital. She used to go there to see Zeb Meader."

"That's so," said Mr. Redbrook; "Zeb told me about it, and she used to come to Mercer to see him after he got out. She ain't much like the old man, I callate."

"I don't think she is," said Austen.

"I don't know what she's stayin' with that feller Crewe for," the farmer remarked; of all the eternal darn idiots—why, Brush Bascom and that Botcher and the rest of 'em are trailin' him along and usin' him for the best thing that ever came down here. He sets up

to be a practical man, and don't know as much as some of us hayseeds in the back seats. Where be you goin'?"

"I was going to the Pelican."

"Well, I've got a committee meetin' of Agriculture," said Mr. Redbrook. "Could you be up here at Mis' Peasley's about eight to-night?"

Page 8

"Why, yes," Austen replied, "if you want to see me."

"I do want to see you," said Mr. Redbrook, significantly, and waved a farewell.

Austen took his way slowly across the state-house park, threading among the groups between the snow-banks towards the wide facade of the Pelican Hotel. Presently he paused, and then with a sudden determination crossed the park diagonally into Main Street, walking rapidly southward and scrutinizing the buildings on either side until at length these began to grow wide apart, and he spied a florist's sign with a greenhouse behind it. He halted again, irresolutely, in front of it, flung open the door, and entered a boxlike office filled with the heated scents of flowers. A little man eyed him with an obsequious interest which he must have accorded to other young men on similar errands. Austen may be spared a repetition of the very painful conversation that ensued; suffice it to say that, after mature deliberation, violets were chosen. He had a notion—not analyzed—that she would prefer violets to roses. The information that the flowers were for the daughter of the president of the Northeastern Railroads caused a visible quickening of the little florist's regard, an attitude which aroused a corresponding disgust and depression in Austen.

"Oh, yes," said the florist, "she's up at Crewe's." He glanced at Austen apologetically. "Excuse me," he said, "I ought to know you. Have you a card?"

"No," said Austen, with emphasis.

"And what name, please?"

"No name," said the donor, now heartily repenting of his rashness, and slamming the glass door in a manner that made the panes rattle behind him.

As he stood hesitating on the curb of the crossing, he began to wish that he had not left Ripton.

"Hello, Austen," said a voice, which he recognized as the Honourable Brush Bascom's, "didn't know you ever came down here in session time."

"What are you doing down here, Brush?" Austen asked.

Mr. Bascom grinned in appreciation of this pleasantry.

"I came for my health," he said; "I prefer it to Florida."

"I've heard that it agrees with some people," said Austen.

Mr. Bascom grinned again.

“Just arrived?” he inquired.

“Just,” said Austen.

“I thought you’d get here sooner or later,” said Mr. Bascom. “Some folks try stayin’ away, but it ain’t much use. You’ll find the honourable Hilary doing business at the same old stand, next to the governor, in Number Seven up there.” And Mr. Bascom pointed to the well-known window on the second floor.

“Thanks, Brush,” said Austen, indifferently. “To tell the truth, I came down to hear that promising protege of yours speak on national affairs. I understand you’re pushing his bills along.”

Mr. Bascom, with great deliberation, shut one of his little eyes.

“So long,” he said, “come and see me when you get time.”

Page 9

Austen went slowly down the street and entered the smoke-clouded lobby of the Pelican. He was a man to draw attention, and he was stared at by many politicians there and spoken to by some before he reached the stairs. Mounting, he found the door with the numeral, and knocked. The medley of voices within ceased; there were sounds of rattling papers, and of closing of folding doors. The key turned in the lock, and State Senator Nathaniel Billings appeared in the doorway, with a look of polite inquiry on his convivial face. This expression, when he saw Austen, changed to something like consternation.

"Why, hello, hello," said the senator. "Come in, come in. The Honourable Hilary's here. Where'd you come down?"

"Hello, Nat," said Austen, and went in.

The Honourable Hilary sat in his usual arm-chair; Mr. Botcher severely strained the tensile strength of the bedsprings; Mr. Hamilton Tooting stood before the still waving portieres in front of the folding doors; and Mr. Manning, the division superintendent, sat pensively, with his pen in his mouth, before the marble-topped table from which everything had been removed but a Bible. Two gentlemen, whom Austen recognized as colleagues of Mr. Billings in the State Senate, stood together in a window, pointing out things of interest in the street. Austen walked up to his father and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"How are you, Judge?" he said. "I only came into pay my respects. I hope I have not disturbed any—entertainment going on here," he added, glancing in turn at the thoughtful occupants of the room, and then at the curtains which hid the folding doors to the apartment of his Excellency.

"Why, no," answered the Honourable Hilary, his customary grunt being the only indication of surprise on his part; "didn't know you were coming down."

"I didn't know it myself until this morning," said Austen.

"Legislative case, I suppose," remarked the Honourable Jacob Botcher, in his deep voice.

"No, merely a pleasure trip, Mr. Botcher."

The Honourable Jacob rubbed his throat, the two State senators in the window giggled, and Mr. Hamilton Tooting laughed.

"I thought you took to the mountains in such cases, sir," said Mr. Botcher.

"I came for intellectual pleasure this time," said Austen. "I understand that Mr. Crewe is to deliver an epoch-making speech on the national situation to-morrow."

This was too much even for the gravity of Mr. Manning; Mr. Tooting and Mr. Billings and his two colleagues roared, though the Honourable Jacob's laugh was not so spontaneous.

"Aust," said Mr. Tooting, admiringly, you're all right."

"Well, Judge," said Austen, patting his father's shoulder again, "I'm glad to see you so comfortably fixed. Good-by, and give my regards to the governor. I'm sorry to have missed him," he added, glancing at the portieres that hid the folding doors.

Page 10

"Are you stopping here?" asked the Honourable Hilary.

"No, I met Mr. Redbrook of Mercer, and he took me up to his lodgings. If I can do anything for you, a message will reach me there."

"Humph," said the Honourable Hilary, while the others exchanged significant glances.

Austen had not gone half the length of the hall when he was overtaken by Mr. Tooting.

"Say, Aust, what's up between you and Redbrook?" he asked.

"Nothing. Why?" Austen asked, stopping abruptly.

"Well, I suppose you know there's an anti-railroad feeling growing in that House, and that Redbrook has more influence with the farmers than any other man."

"I didn't know anything about Mr. Redbrook's influence," said Austen.

Mr. Tooting looked unconvinced.

"Say, Aust, if anything's in the wind, I wish you'd let me know. I'll keep it quiet."

"I think I shall be safe in promising that, Ham," said Austen. "When there's anything in the wind, you generally find it out first."

"There's trouble coming for the railroad," said Mr. Tooting. "I can see that. And I guess you saw it before I did."

"They say a ship's about to sink when the rats begin to leave it," said Austen.

Although Austen spoke smilingly, Mr. Tooting looked pained.

"There's no chance for young men in that system," he said.

"Young men write the noble parts of the governor's inaugurals," said Austen.

"Yes," said Mr. Tooting, bitterly, "but you never get to be governor and read 'em. You've got to be a 'come on' with thirty thousand dollars to be a Northeastern governor and live next door to the Honourable Hilary in the Pelican. Well, so long, Aust. If anything's up, give me the tip, that's all I ask."

Reflecting on the singular character of Mr. Tooting, Austen sought the Gaylords' headquarters, and found them at the furthest end of the building from the Railroad Room. The door was opened by young Tom himself, whose face became wreathed in smiles when he saw who the visitor was.

“It’s Austen!” he cried. “I thought you’d come down when you got that appeal of mine.”

Austen did not admit the self-sacrifice as he shook Tom’s hand; but remembered, singularly enough, the closing sentences of Tom’s letter—which had nothing whatever to do with the Gaylord bill.

At this moment a commotion arose within the room, and a high, tremulous, but singularly fierce and compelling voice was heard crying out:—“Get out! Get out, d-n you, all of you, and don’t come back until you’ve got some notion of what you’re a-goin’ to do. Get out, I say!”

These last words were pronounced with such extraordinary vigour that four gentlemen seemed to be physically impelled from the room. Three of them Austen recognized as dismissed and disgruntled soldiers from the lobby army of the Northeastern; the fourth was the Honourable Galusha Hammer, whose mode of progress might be described as “stalking,” and whose lips were forming the word “intolerable.” In the corner old Tom himself could be seen, a wizened figure of wrath.

Page 11

"Who's that?" he demanded of his son, "another d-d fool?"

"No," replied young Tom, "it's Austen Vane."

"What's he doin' here?" old Tom demanded, with a profane qualification as to the region. But young Tom seemed to be the only being capable of serenity amongst the flames that played around him.

"I sent for him because he's got more sense than Galusha and all the rest of 'em put together," he said.

"I guess that's so," old Tom agreed unexpectedly, "but it ain't sayin' much. Bring him in—bring him in, and lock the door."

In obedience to these summons, and a pull from young Tom, Austen entered and sat down.

"You've read the Pingsquit bill?" old Tom demanded.

"Yes," said Austen.

"Just because you won a suit against the Northeastern, and nearly killed a man out West, Tom seems to think you can do anything. He wouldn't, give me any peace until I let him send for you," Mr. Gaylord remarked testily. "Now you're down here, what have you got to propose?"

"I didn't come here to propose anything, Mr. Gaylord," said Austen.

"What!" cried Mr. Gaylord, with one of his customary and forceful exclamations. "What'd you come down for?"

"I've been asking myself that question ever since I came, Mr. Gaylord," said Austen, "and I haven't yet arrived at any conclusion."

Young Tom looked at his friend and laughed, and Mr. Gaylord, who at first gave every indication of being about to explode with anger, suddenly emitted a dry cackle.

"You ain't a d-n fool, anyway," he declared.

"I'm beginning to think I am," said Austen.

"Then you've got sense enough to know it," retorted old Tom. "Most of 'em haven't." And his glance, as it fell upon the younger man, was almost approving. Young Tom's was distinctly so.

"I told you Austen was the only lawyer who'd talk common sense to you," he said.

"I haven't heard much of it yet," said old Tom.

"Perhaps I ought to tell you, Mr. Gaylord," said Austen, smiling a little, "that I didn't come down in any legal capacity. That's only one of Tom's jokes."

"Then what in h—I did you bring him in here for?" demanded old Tom of his son.

"Just for a quiet little powwow," said young Tom, "to make you laugh. He's made you laugh before."

"I don't want to laugh," said old Tom, pettishly. Nevertheless, he seemed to be visibly cooling. "If you ain't in here to make money," he added to Austen, "I don't care how long you stay."

"Say, Austen," said young Tom, "do you remember the time we covered the old man with shavings at the mills in Avalon, and how he chased us with a two-by-four scantling?"

Page 12

"I'd made pulp out'n you if I'd got you," remarked Mr. Gaylord, with a reminiscent chuckle that was almost pleasant. "But you were always a goldurned smart boy, Austen, and you've done well with them little suits." He gazed at Austen a moment with his small, filmy-blue eye. "I don't know but what you might take hold here and make it hot for those d-d rascals in the Northeastern, after all. You couldn't botch it worsen Hammer has, and you might do some good. I said I'd make 'em dance, and by G-d, I'll do it, if I have to pay that Teller Levering in New York, and it takes the rest of my life. Look the situation over, and come back to-morrow and tell me what you think of it."

"I can tell you what I think of it now, Mr. Gaylord," said Austen.

"What's that?" old Tom demanded sharply.

"That you'll never get the bill passed, this session or next, by lobbying."

For the moment the elder Mr. Gaylord was speechless, but young Tom Gaylord clapped his hand heartily on his friend's shoulder.

"That's the reason I wanted to get you down here, Austen," he cried; that's what I've been telling the old man all along—perhaps he'll believe you."

"Then you won't take hold?" said Mr. Gaylord, his voice trembling on the edge of another spasm. "You refuse business?"

"I refuse that kind of business, Mr. Gaylord," Austen answered quietly, though there was a certain note in his voice that young Tom knew well, and which actually averted the imminent explosion from Mr. Gaylord, whose eyes glared and watered. "But aside from that, you must know that the Republican party leaders in this State are the heads of the lobby of the Northeastern Railroads."

"I guess I know about Number Seven as well as you do," old Tom interjected.

Austen's eye flashed.

"Now hold on, father," said young Tom, "that's no way to talk to Austen."

"Knowing Number Seven," Austen continued, "you probably realize that the political and business future of nearly every one of the twenty State senators depends upon the favour of the Northeastern Railroads."

"I know that the d-d fools won't look at money," said Mr. Gaylord; "Hammer's tried 'em."

"I told you that before you started in," young Tom remarked, "but when you get mad, you won't listen to sense. And then there's the Honourable Asa Gray, who wants to represent the Northeastern some day in the United States Senate."

“The bill ought to pass,” shrieked old Tom; “it’s a d-d outrage. There’s no reason why I shouldn’t be allowed to build a railroad if I’ve got the money to do it. What in blazes are we comin’ to in this country if we can’t git competition? If Flint stops that bill, I’ll buy a newspaper and go to the people with the issue and throw his d-d monopoly into bankruptcy.”

“It’s all very well to talk about competition and monopolies and lobbies,” said young Tom, “but how about the Gaylord Lumber Company? How about the time you used the lobby, with Flint’s permission? This kind of virtuous talk is beautiful to listen to when you and Flint get into a row.”

Page 13

At this remark of his son's, the intermittent geyser of old Tom's wrath spouted up again with scalding steam, and in a manner utterly impossible to reproduce upon paper. Young Tom waited patiently for the exhibition to cease, which it did at length in a coughing fit of sheer exhaustion that left his father speechless, if not expressionless, pointing a lean and trembling finger in the direction of a valise on the floor.

"You'll go off in a spell of that kind some day," said young Tom, opening the valise and extracting a bottle. Uncorking it, he pressed it to his father's lips, and with his own pocket-handkerchief (old Tom not possessing such an article) wiped the perspiration from Mr. Gaylord's brow and the drops from his shabby black coat. "There's no use gettin' mad at Austen. He's dead right—you can't lobby this thing through, and you knew it before you started. If you hadn't lost your temper, you wouldn't have tried."

"We'll see, by G-d, we'll see," said the indomitable old Tom, when he got his breath. "You young men think you know a sight, but you haven't got the stuff in you we old Tellers have. Where would I be if it wasn't for fightin'? You mark my words, before this session's ended I'll scare h-l out of Flint—see if I don't."

Young Tom winked at his friend.

"Let's go down to supper," he said.

The dining room of the Pelican Hotel during a midweek of a busy session was a scene of bustle and confusion not likely to be forgotten. Every seat was taken, and gentlemen waited their turn in the marble-flagged rotunda who had not the honour of being known to Mr. Giles, the head waiter. If Mr. Hamilton Tooting were present, and recognized you, he would take great pleasure in pointing out the celebrities, and especially that table over which the Honourable Hilary Vane presided, with the pretty, red-checked waitress hovering around it. At the Honourable Hilary's right hand was the division superintendent, and at his left, Mr. Speaker Doby—a most convenient and congenial arrangement; farther down the board were State Senator Nat Billings, Mr. Ridout (when he did not sup at home), the Honourables Brush Bascom and Elisha Jane, and the Honourable Jacob Botcher made a proper ballast for the foot. This table was known as the Railroad Table, and it was very difficult, at any distance away from it, to hear what was said, except when the Honourable Jacob Botcher made a joke. Next in importance and situation was the Governor's Table—now occupied by the Honourable Asa Gray. Mr. Tooting's description would not have stopped here.

Sensations are common in the Pelican Hotel, but when Austen Vane walked in that evening between the Gaylords, father and son, many a hungry guest laid down his knife and fork and stared. Was the younger Vane (known to be anti-railroad) to take up the Gaylords' war against his own father? All the indications were that way, and a rumour flew from table to table-leaping space, as rumours will—that the Gaylords had sent to Ripton for Austen. There was but one table in the room the occupants of which

appeared not to take any interest in the event, or even to grasp that an event had occurred. The Railroad Table was oblivious.

Page 14

After supper Mr. Tooting found Austen in the rotunda, and drew him mysteriously aside.

“Say, Aust, the Honourable Hilary wants to see you to-night,” he whispered.

“Did he send you with the message?” Austen demanded.

“That’s right,” said Mr. Tooting. “I guess you know what’s up.”

Austen did not answer. At the foot of the stairway was the tall form of Hilary Vane himself, and Austen crossed the rotunda.

“Do you want to see me, Judge?” he asked.

The Honourable Hilary faced about quickly.

“Yes, if you’ve got any spare time.”

“I’ll go to your room at half-past nine to-night, if that’s convenient.”

“All right,” said the Honourable Hilary, starting up the stairs.

Austen turned, and found Mr. Hamilton Tooting at his elbow.

CHAPTER XII

Mr. Redbrook’s party

The storm was over, and the bare trees, when the moon shone between the hurrying clouds, cast lacelike shadows on the white velvet surface of the snow as Austen forged his way up the hill to the Widow Peasley’s in keeping with his promise to Mr. Redbrook. Across the street he paused outside the picket-fence to gaze at the yellow bars of light between the slats of the windows of the Duncan house. It was hard to realize that she was there, within a stone’s throw of where he was to sleep; but the strange, half-startled expression in her eyes that afternoon and the smile—which had in it a curious quality he could not analyze—were so vivid in his consciousness as to give him pain. The incident, as he stood there ankle-deep in the snow, seemed to him another inexplicable and uselessly cruel caprice of fate.

As he pictured her in the dining room behind Mr. Crewe’s silver and cut glass and flowers, it was undoubtedly natural that he should wonder whether she were thinking of him in the Widow Peasley’s lamp-lit cottage, and he smiled at the contrast. After all, it was the contrast between his life and hers. As an American of good antecedents and education, with a Western experience thrown in, social gulfs, although awkward, might be crossed in spite of opposition from ladies like the Rose of Sharon,—who had crossed

them. Nevertheless, the life which Victoria led seemingly accentuated—to a man standing behind a picket-fence in the snow—the voids between.

A stamping of feet in the Widow Peasley's vestibule awoke in him that sense of the ridiculous which was never far from the surface, and he made his way thither in mingled amusement and pain. What happened there is of interest, but may be briefly chronicled. Austen was surprised, on entering, to find Mrs. Peasley's parlour filled with men; and a single glance at their faces in the lamplight assured him that they were of a type which he understood—countrymen of that rugged New England stock to which he himself belonged, whose sons for generations had made lawyers and statesmen and soldiers for the State and nation. Some were talking in low voices, and others sat silent on the chairs and sofa, not awkwardly or uncomfortably, but with a characteristic self-possession and repose. Mr. Redbrook, towering in front of the stove, came forward.

Page 15

"Here you be," he said, taking Austen's hand warmly and a little ceremoniously; "I asked 'em here to meet ye."

"To meet me!" Austen repeated.

"Wanted they should know you," said Mr. Redbrook.

"They've all heard of you and what you did for Zeb."

Austen flushed. He was aware that he was undergoing a cool and critical examination by those present, and that they were men who used all their faculties in making up their minds.

"I'm very glad to meet any friends of yours, Mr. Redbrook," he said. "What I did for Meader isn't worth mentioning. It was an absolutely simple case."

"Twahn't so much what ye did as how ye did it," said Mr. Redbrook. "It's kind of rare in these days," he added, with the manner of commenting to himself on the circumstance, "to find a young lawyer with brains that won't sell 'em to the railrud. That's what appeals to me, and to some other folks I know—especially when we take into account the situation you was in and the chances you had."

Austen's silence under this compliment seemed to create an indefinable though favourable impression, and the member from Mercer permitted himself to smile.

"These men are all friends of mine, and members of the House," he said, "and there's more would have come if they'd had a longer notice. Allow me to make you acquainted with Mr. Widgeon of Hull."

"We kind of wanted to look you over," said Mr. Widgeon, suiting the action to the word. "That's natural ain't it?"

"Kind of size you up," added Mr. Jarley of Wye, raising his eyes. "Callate you're sizable enough."

"Wish you was in the House," remarked Mr. Adams of Barren. "None of us is much on talk, but if we had you, I guess we could lay things wide open."

"If you was thar, and give it to 'em as hot as you did when you was talkin' for Zeb, them skunks in the front seats wouldn't know whether they was afoot or hossback," declared Mr. Williams of Devon, a town adjoining Mercer.

"I used to think railrud gov'ment wahn't so bad until I come to the House this time," remarked a stocky member from Oxford; "it's sheer waste of money for the State to pay a Legislature. They might as well run things from the New York office—you know that."

“We might as well wear so many Northeastern uniforms with brass buttons,” a sinewy hill farmer from Lee put in. He had a lean face that did not move a muscle, but a humorous gray eye that twinkled.

In the meantime Mr. Redbrook looked on with an expression of approval which was (to Austen) distinctly pleasant, but more or less mystifying.

“I guess you ain’t disappointed ’em much,” he declared, when the round was ended; “most of ’em knew me well enough to understand that cattle and live stock in general, includin’ humans, is about as I represent ’em to be.”

“We have some confidence in your judgment, Brother Redbrook,” answered Mr. Terry of Lee, “and now we’ve looked over the goods, it ain’t set back any, I callate.”

Page 16

This observation, which seemed to meet with a general assent, was to Austen more mystifying than ever. He laughed.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I feel as though some expression of thanks were due you for this kind and most unexpected reception." Here a sudden seriousness came into his eyes which served, somehow, only to enhance his charm of manner, and a certain determined ring into his voice. "You have all referred to a condition of affairs," he added, "about which I have thought a great deal, and which I deplore as deeply as you do. There is no doubt that the Northeastern Railroads have seized the government of this State for three main reasons: to throttle competition; to control our railroad commission in order that we may not get the service and safety to which we are entitled, —so increasing dividends; and to make and maintain laws which enable them to bribe with passes, to pay less taxes than they should, and to manipulate political machinery."

"That's right," said Mr. Jarley of Wye, with a decided emphasis.

"That's the kind of talk I like to hear," exclaimed Mr. Terry.

"And nobody's had the gumption to fight 'em," said Mr. Widgeon.

"It looks," said Austen, "as though it must come to a fight in the end. I do not think they will listen to reason. I mean," he added, with a flash of humour, "that they will listen to it, but not act upon it. Gentlemen, I regret to have to say, for obvious reasons, something which you all know, that my father is at the head of the Northeastern machine, which is the Republican party organization."

There was a silence.

"You went again' him, and we honour you for it, Austen," said Mr. Redbrook, at length.

"I want to say," Austen continued, "that I have tried to look at things as Mr. Vane sees them, and that I have a good deal of sympathy for his point of view. Conditions as they exist are the result of an evolution for which no one man is responsible. That does not alter the fact that the conditions are wrong. But the railroads, before they consolidated, found the political boss in power, and had to pay him for favours. The citizen was the culprit to start with, just as he is the culprit now, because he does not take sufficient interest in his government to make it honest. We mustn't blame the railroads too severely, when they grew strong enough, for substituting their own political army to avoid being blackmailed. Long immunity has reenforced them in the belief that they have but one duty to pay dividends. I am afraid," he added, "that they will have to be enlightened somewhat as Pharaoh was enlightened."

"Well, that's sense, too," said Mr. Widgeon; "I guess you're the man to enlighten 'em."

"Moderate talk appeals to me," declared Mr. Jarley.

“And when that fails,” said Mr. Terry, ‘hard, tellin’ blows.”

“Don’t lose track of the fact that we’ve got our eye on you,” said Mr. Emerson of Oxford, who had a blacksmith’s grip, and came back to renew it after he had put on his overshoes. He was the last to linger, and when the door had closed on him Austen turned to Mr. Redbrook.

Page 17

"Now what does all this mean?" he demanded.

"It means," said Mr. Redbrook, "that when the time comes, we want you to run for governor."

Austen went to the mantelpiece, and stood for a long time with his back turned, staring at a crayon portrait of Colonel Peasley, in the uniform in which he had fallen at the battle of Gettysburg. Then he swung about and seized the member from Mercer by both broad shoulders.

"James Redbrook," he said, "until to-night I thought you were about as long-headed and sensible a man as there was in the State."

"So I be," replied Mr. Redbrook, with a grin. "You ask young Tom Gaylord."

"So Tom put you up to this nonsense."

"It ain't nonsense," retorted Mr. Redbrook, stoutly, "and Tom didn't put me up to it. It's the' best notion that ever came into my mind."

Austen, still clinging to Mr. Redbrook's shoulders, shook his head slowly.

"James," he said, "there are plenty of men who are better equipped than I for the place, and in a better situation to undertake it. I—I'm much obliged to you. But I'll help. I've got to go," he added; "the Honourable Hilary wants to see me."

He went into the entry and put on his overshoes and his coat, while James Redbrook regarded him with a curious mingling of pain and benevolence on his rugged face.

"I won't press you now, Austen," he said, "but think on it. For God's sake, think on it."

Outside, Austen paused in the snow once more, his brain awl with a strange exaltation the like of which he had never felt before. Although eminently human, it was not the fact that honest men had asked him to be their governor which uplifted him,—but that they believed him to be as honest as themselves. In that hour he had tasted life as he had never yet tasted it, he had lived as he might never live again. Not one of them, he remembered suddenly, had uttered a sentence of the political claptrap of which he had heard so much. They had spoken from the soul; not bitterly, not passionately, but their words had rung with the determination which had made their forefathers and his leave home, toil, and kindred to fight and die at Bunker Hill and Gettysburg for a principle. It had been given him to look that eight into the heart of a nation, and he was awed.

As he stood there under the winter moon, he gradually became conscious of music, of an air that seemed the very expression of his mood. His eyes, irresistibly drawn

towards the Duncan house, were caught by the fluttering of lace curtains at an open window. The notes were those of a piano,—though the instrument mattered little,—that with which they were charged for him set the night wind quivering. It was not simple music, although it had in it a grand simplicity. At times it rose, vibrant with inexpressible feeling, and fell again into gentler, yearning cadences that wrung the soul with a longing that was world-old and world-wide, that reached out towards the unattainable stare—and, reaching, became immortal. Thus was the end of it, fainting as it drifted heavenward.

Page 18

Then the window was closed.

Austen walked on; whither, he knew not. After a certain time of which he had no cognizance he found himself under the glaring arc-light that hung over Main Street before the Pelican Hotel, in front of what was known as the ladies' entrance. He slipped in there, avoiding the crowded lobby with its shifting groups and its haze of smoke,—plainly to be seen behind the great plates of glass,—went upstairs, and gained room Number. Seven unnoticed. Then, after the briefest moment of hesitation, he knocked. A voice responded—the Honourable Hilary's. There was but one light burning in the room, and Mr. Vane sat in his accustomed chair in the corner, alone. He was not reading, nor was he drowsing, but his head was dropped forward a little on his breast. He raised it slowly at his son's entrance, and regarded Austen fixedly, though silently.

"You wanted to see me, Judge?" said Austen.

"Come at last, have you?" said Mr. Vane.

"I didn't intend to be late," said Austen.

"Seem to have a good deal of business on hand these days," the Honourable Hilary remarked.

Austen took a step forward, and stopped. Mr. Vane was preparing a piece of Honey Dew.

"If you would like to know what the business was, Judge, I am here to tell you."

The Honourable Hilary grunted.

"I ain't good enough to be confided in, I guess," he said; "I wouldn't understand motives from principle."

Austen looked at his father for a few moments in silence. To-night he seemed at a greater distance than ever before, and more lonely than ever. When Austen had entered the room and had seen him sitting with his head bowed forward, the hostility of months of misunderstanding had fallen away from the son, and he had longed to fly to him as he had as a child after punishment. Differences in after life, alas, are not always to be bridged thus.

"Judge," he said slowly, with an attempt to control his voice, wouldn't it have been fairer to wait awhile, before you made a remark like that? Whatever our dealings may have been, I have never lied to you. Anything you may want to know, I am here to tell you."

"So you're going to take up lobbying, are you? I had a notion you were above lobbying."

Austen was angered. But like all men of character, his face became stern under provocation, and he spoke more deliberately.

"Before we go any farther," he said, "would you mind telling me who your informant is on this point?"

"I guess I don't need an informant. My eyesight is as good as ever," said the Honourable Hilary.

"Your deductions are usually more accurate. If any one has told you that I am about to engage in lobbying, they have lied to you."

"Wouldn't engage in lobbying, would you?" the Honourable Hilary asked, with the air of making a casual inquiry.

Austen flushed, but kept his temper.

Page 19

"I prefer the practice of law," he replied.

"Saw you were associatin' with saints," his father remarked.

Austen bit his lip, and then laughed outright,—the canonization of old Tom Gaylord being too much for him.

"Now, Judge," he said, "it isn't like you to draw hasty conclusions. Because I sat down to supper with the Gaylords it isn't fair to infer that they have retained me in a legislative case."

The Honourable Hilary did not respond to his son's humour, but shifted the Honey Dew to the left cheek.

"Old Tom going in for reform?"

"He may bring it about," answered Austen, instantly becoming serious again, "whether he's going in for it or not."

For the first time the Honourable Hilary raised his eyes to his son's face, and shot at him a penetrating look of characteristic shrewdness. But he followed in conversation the same rule as in examining a witness, rarely asking a direct question, except as a tactical surprise.

"Old Tom ought to have his railroad, oughtn't he?"

"So far as I can see, it would be a benefit to the people of that part of the State," said Austen.

"Building it for the people, is he?"

"His motive doesn't count. The bill should be judged on its merits, and proper measures for the safeguarding of public interests should be put into it."

"Don't think the bill will be judged on its merits, do you?"

"No, I don't," replied Austen, "and neither do you."

"Did you tell old Tom so?" asked Mr. Vane, after a pause. "Did you tell old Tom so when he sent for you to take hold?"

"He didn't send for me," answered Austen, quietly, "and I have no business dealings with him except small suits. What I did tell him was that he would never get the bill through this session or next by lobbying."

The Honourable Hilary never showed surprise. He emitted a grunt which evinced at once impatience and amusement.

“Why not?” he asked.

“Well, Judge, I’ll tell you what I told him—although you both know. It’s because the Northeastern owns the Republican party machine, which is the lobby, and because most of the twenty State senators are dependent upon the Northeastern for future favours.”

“Did you tell Tom Gaylord that?” demanded Mr. Vane. “What did he say?”

Austen braced himself. He did not find the answer easy.

“He said he knew about Number Seven as well as I did.”

The Honourable Hilary rose abruptly—perhaps in some secret agitation —Austen could not discern. His father walked as far as the door, and turned slowly and faced him, but he did not speak. His mouth was tightly closed, almost as in pain, and Austen went towards him, appealingly.

Page 20

"Judge," he said, "you sent for me. You have asked me questions which I felt obliged in honesty to answer. God knows I don't wish to differ with you, but circumstances seem always against us. I will talk plainly, if you will let me. I try to look at things from your point of view. I know that you believe that a political system should go hand in hand with the great commercial system which you are engaged in building. I disagree with your beliefs, but I do not think that your pursuit of them has not been sincere, and justified by your conscience. I suppose that you sent for me to know whether Mr. Gaylord has employed me to lobby for his bill. He has not, because I refused that employment. But I will tell you that, in my opinion, if a man of any ability whatever should get up on the floor of the House and make an argument for the Pingsquit bill, the sentiment against the Northeastern and its political power is so great that the House would compel the committee to report the bill, and pass it. You probably know this already, but I mention it for your own good if you do not, in the hope that, through you, the Northeastern Railroads may be induced to relax their grip upon the government of this State."

The Honourable Hilary advanced, until only the marble-topped table was between himself and his son. A slight noise in the adjoining room caused him to turn his head momentarily. Then he faced Austen again.

"Did you tell Gaylord this?" he asked.

Austen made a gesture of distaste, and turned away.

"No," he said, "I reserved the opinion, whatever it is worth, for your ears alone."

"I've heard that kind of calculation before," said the Honourable Hilary. "My experience is that they never come to much. As for this nonsense about the Northeastern Railroads running things," he added more vigorously, "I guess when it's once in a man's head there's no getting it out. The railroad employs the best lawyers it can find to look after its interests. I'm one of 'em, and I'm proud of it. If I hadn't been one of 'em, the chances are you'd never be where you are, that you'd never have gone to college and the law school. The Republican party realizes that the Northeastern is most vitally connected with the material interests of this State; that the prosperity of the road means the prosperity of the State. And the leaders of the party protect the road from vindictive assaults on it like Gaylord's, and from scatterbrains and agitators like your friend Redbrook."

Austen shook his head sadly as he gazed at his father. He had always recognized the futility of arguments, if argument on this point ever arose between them.

"It's no use, Judge," he said. "If material prosperity alone were to be considered, your contention would have some weight. The perpetuation of the principle of American

government has to be thought of. Government by a railroad will lead in the end to anarchy. You are courting destruction as it is.”

Page 21

"If you came in here to quote your confounded Emerson—" the Honourable Hilary began, but Austen slipped around the table and took him by the arm and led him perforce to his chair.

"No, Judge, that isn't Emerson," he answered. "It's just common sense, only it sounds to you like drivel. I'm going now,—unless you want to hear some more about the plots I've been getting into. But I want to say this. I ask you to remember that you're my father, and that—I'm fond of you. And that, if you and I happen to be on opposite sides, it won't make any difference as far as my feelings are concerned. I'm always ready to tell you frankly what I'm doing, if you wish to know. Good-by. I suppose I'll see you in Ripton at the end of the week." And he pressed his father's shoulder.

Mr. Vane looked up at his son with a curious expression. Perhaps (as when Austen returned from the shooting of Mr. Blodgett in the West) there was a smattering of admiration and pride in that look, and something of an affection which had long ceased in its strivings for utterance. It was the unconscious tribute, too,—slight as was its exhibition,—of the man whose life has been spent in the conquest of material things to the man who has the audacity, insensate though it seem, to fling these to the winds in his search after ideals.

"Good-by, Austen," said Mr. Vane.

Austen got as far as the door, cast another look back at his father,—who was sitting motionless, with head bowed, as when he came,—and went out. So Mr. Vane remained for a full minute after the door had closed, and then he raised his head sharply and gave a piercing glance at the curtains that separated Number Seven from the governor's room. In three strides he had reached them, flung them open, and the folding doors behind them, already parted by four inches. The gas was turned low, but under the chandelier was the figure of a young man struggling with an overcoat. The Honourable Hilary did not hesitate, but came forward with a swiftness that paralyzed the young man, who turned upon him a face on which was meant to be written surprise and a just indignation, but in reality was a mixture of impudence and pallid fright. The Honourable Hilary, towering above him, and with that grip on his arm, was a formidable person.

"Listening, were you, Ham?" he demanded.

"No," cried Mr. Tooting, with a vehemence he meant for force. "No, I wasn't. Listening to who?"

"Humph!" said the Honourable Hilary, still retaining with one hand the grip on Mr. Tooting's arm, and with the other turning up the gas until it flared in Mr. Tooting's face. "What are you doing in the governor's room?"

"I left my overcoat in here this afternoon when you sent me to bring up the senator."

“Ham,” said Mr. Vane, “it isn’t any use lying to me.”

“I ain’t lying to you,” said Mr. Tooting, “I never did. I often lied for you,” he added, “and you didn’t raise any objections that I remember.”

Page 22

Mr. Vane let go of the arm contemptuously.

"I've done dirty work for the Northeastern for a good many years," cried Mr. Tooting, seemingly gaining confidence now that he was free; "I've slaved for 'em, and what have they done for me? They wouldn't even back me for county solicitor when I wanted the job."

"Turned reformer, Ham?"

"I guess I've got as much right to turn reformer as some folks I know."

"I guess you have," agreed the Honourable Hilary; unexpectedly. He seated himself on a chair, and proceeded to regard Mr. Tooting in a manner extremely disconcerting to that gentleman. This quality of impenetrability, of never being sure when he was angry, had baffled more able opponents of Hilary Vane than Mr. Hamilton Tooting.

"Good-night, Ham."

"I want to say—" Mr. Tooting began.

"Good-night, Ham," said Mr. Vane, once more.

Mr. Tooting looked at him, slowly buttoned up his overcoat, and departed.

CHAPTER XIII

THE REALM OF PEGASUS

The eventful day of Mr. Humphrey Crewe's speech on national affairs dawned without a cloud in the sky. The snow was of a dazzling whiteness and sprinkled with diamond dust; and the air of such transcendent clearness that Austen could see—by leaning a little out of the Widow Peasley's window—the powdered top of Holdfast Mountain some thirty miles away. For once, a glance at the mountain sufficed him; and he directed his gaze through the trees at the Duncan house, engaging in a pleasant game of conjecture as to which was her window. In such weather the heights of Helicon seemed as attainable as the peak of Holdfast; and he had but to beckon a shining Pegasus from out a sun-shaft in the sky. Obstacles were mere specks on the snow.

He forgot to close the window, and dressed in a temperature which would have meant, for many mortals, pneumonia. The events of yesterday; painful and agitating as they had been, had fallen away in the prospect that lay before him—he would see her to-day, and speak with her. These words, like a refrain; were humming in his head as honest Mr. Redbrook talked during breakfast, while Austen's answers may have been both intelligent and humorous. Mr. Redbrook, at least; gave no sign that they were not. He

was aware that Mr. Redbrook was bringing arguments to bear on the matter of the meeting of the evening before, but he fended these lightly, while in spirit he flung a gem-studded bridle aver the neck of Pegasus.

And after breakfast—away from the haunts of men! Away from the bickerings, the subjection of mean spirits; material loss and gain and material passion! By eight o'clock (the Widow Peasley's household being an early and orderly one) he was swinging across the long hills, cleaving for himself a furrowed path in the untrodden snow, breathing deep as he gazed across the blue spaces from the crests. Bellerophon or Perseus, aided by immortals, felt no greater sense of achievements to come than he. Out here, on the wind-swept hills that rolled onward and upward to the mountains, the world was his.

Page 23

With the same speed he returned, still by untrodden paths until he reached the country road that ended in the city street. Some who saw him paused in their steps, caught unconsciously by the rhythmic perfection of his motion. Ahead of him he beheld the state-house, its dial aflame in the light, emblematic to him of the presence within it of a spirit which cleansed it of impurities. She would be there; nay, when he looked at the dial from a different angle, was there. As he drew nearer, there rose out of the void her presence beside him which he had daily tried to summon since that autumn afternoon—her voice and her eyes, and many of the infinite expressions of each and both. Sprites that they were, they had failed him until to-day, when he was to see her again!

And then, somehow, he had threaded the groups beside the battle-flags in the corridor, and mounted the stairway. The doorkeeper of the House looked into his face, and, with that rare knowledge of mankind which doorkeepers possess, let him in. There were many ladies on the floor (such being the chivalrous custom when a debate or a speech of the importance of Mr. Crewe's was going on), but Austen swept them with a glance of disappointment. Was it possible, after all, that she had not come, or—more agitating thought—had gone back to New York?

At this disturbing point in his reflections Austen became aware that the hall was ringing with a loud and compelling voice which originated in front of the Speaker's desk.

The Honourable Humphrey Crewe was delivering his long-heralded speech on national affairs, and was arrayed for the occasion in a manner befitting the American statesman, with the conventional frock coat, which he wore unbuttoned. But the Gladstone collar and a tie gave the touch of individuality to his dress which was needed to set him aside as a marked man. Austen suddenly remembered, with an irresistible smile, that one of the reasons which he had assigned for his visit to the capital was to hear this very speech, to see how Mr. Crewe would carry off what appeared to be a somewhat difficult situation. Whether or not this motive had drawn others,—for the millionaire's speech had not lacked advertisement,—it is impossible to say, but there was standing room only on the floor of the House that day.

The fact that Mr. Crewe was gratified could not be wholly concealed. The thing that fascinated Austen Vane and others who listened was the aplomb with which the speech was delivered. The member from Leith showed no trace of the nervousness naturally to be expected in a maiden effort, but spoke with the deliberation of an old campaigner, of the man of weight and influence that he was. He leaned, part of the time, with his elbow on the clerk's desk, with his feet crossed; again, when he wished to emphasize a point, he came forward and seized with both hands the back of his chair. Sometimes he thrust his thumb in his waistcoat pocket, and turned with an appeal to

Page 24

Mr. Speaker Doby, who was apparently too thrilled and surprised to indulge in conversation with those on the bench beside him, and who made no attempt to quell hand-clapping and even occasional whistling; again, after the manner of experts, Mr. Crewe addressed himself forcibly to an individual in the audience, usually a sensitive and responsive person like the Honourable Jacob Botcher, who on such occasions assumed a look of infinite wisdom and nodded his head slowly. There was no doubt about it that the compelling personality of Mr. Humphrey Crewe was creating a sensation. Genius is sure of itself, and statesmen are born, not made.

Able and powerful as was Mr. Crewe's discourse, the man and not the words had fastened the wandering attention of Austen Vane. He did not perceive his friend of the evening before, Mr. Widgeon, coming towards him up the side aisle, until he felt a touch on the arm.

"Take my seat. It ain't exactly a front one," whispered the member from Hull, "my wife's cousin's comin' on the noon train. Not a bad speech, is it?" he added. "Acts like a veteran. I didn't callate he had it in him."

Thus aroused, Austen made his way towards the vacant chair, and when he was seated raised his eyes to the gallery rail, and Mr. Crewe, the legislative chamber, and its audience ceased to exist. It is quite impossible—unless one is a poetical genius—to reproduce on paper that gone and sickly sensation which is, paradoxically, so exquisite. The psychological cause of it in this instance was, primarily, the sight, by Austen Vane, of his own violets on a black, tailor-made gown trimmed with wide braid, and secondarily of an oval face framed in a black hat, the subtle curves of which no living man could describe. The face was turned in his direction, and he felt an additional thrill when he realized that she must have been watching him as he came in, for she was leaning forward with a gloved hand on the railing.

He performed that act of conventionality known as a bow, and she nodded her head—black hat and all. The real salutation was a divine ray which passed between their eyes—hers and his—over the commonplace mortals between. And after that, although the patient legislative clock in the corner which had marked the space of other great events (such as the Woodchuck Session) continued to tick, undisturbed in this instance by the pole of the sergeant-at-arms, time became a lost dimension for Austen Vane. He made a few unimportant discoveries such as the fact that Mrs. Pomfret and her daughter were seated beside Victoria, listening with a rapt attention; and that Mr. Crewe had begun to read statistics; and that some people were gaping and others leaving. He could look up at the gallery without turning his head, and sometimes he caught her momentary glance, and again, with her chin in her hand, she was watching Mr. Crewe with a little smile creasing the corners of her eyes.

Page 25

A horrible thought crossed Austen's mind—perhaps they were not his violets after all! Because she had smiled at him, yesterday and to-day, he had soared heavenwards on wings of his own making. Perhaps they were Mr. Crewe's violets. Had she not come to visit Mr. Crewe, to listen to his piece de resistance, without knowing that he, Austen Vane, would be in the capital? The idea that her interest in Austen Vane was possibly connected with the study of mankind had a sobering effect on him; and the notion that she had another sort of interest in Mr. Crewe seemed ridiculous enough, but disturbing, and supported by facts.

Austen had reached this phase in his reflections when he was aroused by a metallic sound which arose above the resonant tones of the orator of the day. A certain vessel, to the use of which, according to Mr. Dickens, the satire male portion of the American nation was at one time addicted,—a cuspidor, in plain language,—had been started, by some unknown agency in the back seats, rolling down the centre aisle, and gathering impetus as it went, bumped the louder on each successive step until it hurled itself with a clash against the clerk's desk, at the feet of the orator himself. During its descent a titter arose which gradually swelled into a roar of laughter, and Austen's attention was once more focused upon the member from Leith. But if any man had so misjudged the quality of Humphrey Crewe as to suppose for an instant that he could be put out of countenance by such a manoeuvre, that man was mightily mistaken. Mr. Crewe paused, with his forefinger on the page, and fixed a glassy eye on the remote neighbourhood in the back seats where the disturbance had started.

"I am much obliged to the gentleman," he said coldly, "but he has sent me an article which I never use, under any conditions. I would not deprive him of its convenience."

Whereupon, it is not too much to say, Mr. Crews was accorded an ovation, led by his stanch friend and admirer, the Honourable Jacob Botcher, although that worthy had been known to use the article in question.

Mr. Speaker Doby glanced at the faithful clock, and arose majestically.

"I regret to say," he announced, "that the time of the gentleman from Leith is up."

Mr. Botcher rose slowly to his feet.

"Mr. Speaker," he began, in a voice that rumbled through the crevices of the gallery, "I move you, sir, that a vote of thanks be accorded to the gentleman from Leith for his exceedingly able and instructive speech on national affairs."

"Second the motion," said the Honourable Brush Bascom, instantly.

"And leave to print in the State Tribune!" cried a voice from somewhere among the submerged four hundred and seventy.

“Gentlemen of the House,” said Mr. Crewe, when the laughter had subsided, “I have given you a speech which is the result of much thought and preparation on my part. I have not flaunted the star-spangled banner in your faces, or indulged in oratorical fireworks. Mine have been the words of a plain business man, and I have not indulged in wild accusations or flights of imagination. Perhaps, if I had,” he added, “there are some who would have been better pleased. I thank my friends for their kind attention and approbation.”

Page 26

Nevertheless, amidst somewhat of a pandemonium, the vote of thanks was given and the House adjourned; while Mr. Crewe's friends of whom he had spoken could be seen pressing around him and shaking him by the hand. Austen got to his feet, his eyes again sought the gallery, whence he believed he received a look of understanding from a face upon which amusement seemed plainly written. She had turned to glance down at him, despite the fact that Mrs. Pomfret was urging her to leave. Austen started for the door, and managed to reach it long before his neighbours had left the vicinity of their seats. Once in the corridor, his eye singled her out amongst those descending the gallery stairs, and he had a little thrill of pride and despair when he realized that she was the object of the scrutiny, too, of the men around him; the women were interested, likewise, in Mrs. Pomfret, whose appearance, although appropriate enough for a New York matinee, proclaimed her as hailing from that mysterious and fabulous city of wealth. This lady, with her lorgnette, was examining the faces about her in undisguised curiosity, and at the same time talking to Victoria in a voice which she took no pains to lower.

"I think it outrageous," she was saying. "If some Radical member had done that in Parliament, he would have been expelled from the House. But of course in Parliament they wouldn't have those horrid things to roll down the aisles. Poor dear Humphrey! The career of a gentleman in politics is a thankless one in this country. I wonder at his fortitude."

Victoria's eyes alone betokened her amusement.

"How do you do, Mr. Vane?" she said. "I'm so glad to see you again."

Austen said something which he felt was entirely commonplace and inadequate to express his own sentiments, while Alice gave him an uncertain bow, and Mrs. Pomfret turned her glasses upon him.

"You remember Mr. Vane," said Victoria; "you met him at Humphrey's."

"Did I?" answered Mrs. Pomfret. "How do you do? Can't something be done to punish those rowdies?"

Austen grew red.

"Mr. Vane isn't a member of the House," said Victoria.

"Oh," exclaimed Mrs. Pomfret. "Something ought to be done about it. In England such a thing wouldn't be allowed to drop for a minute. If I lived in this State, I think I should do something. Nobody in America seems to have the spirit even to make a protest."

Austen turned quietly to Victoria.

“When are you going away?” he asked.

“To-morrow morning—earlier than I like to think of. I have to be in New York by to-morrow night.”

She flashed at him a look of approbation for his self-control, and then, by a swift transition which he had often remarked, her expression changed to one of amusement, although a seriousness lurked in the depths of her eyes. Mrs. Pomfret had gone on, with Alice, and they followed.

“And—am I not to see you again before you go?” he exclaimed.

Page 27

He didn't stop to reason than upon the probable consequences of his act in seeking her. Nature, which is stronger than reason, was compelling him.

"That depends," said Victoria.

"Upon whom?"

"Upon you."

They were on the lower stairs by this times, and there was silence between then for a few moments as they descended,—principally because, after this exalting remark, Austen could not trust himself to speak.

"Will you go driving with me?" he asked, and was immediately thunderstruck at his boldness.

"Yes," she answered, simply.

"How soon may I come?" he demanded,

She laughed softly, but with a joyous note which was not hidden from him as they stepped out of the darkened corridor into the dazzling winter noonday.

"I will be ready at three o'clock," she said.

He looked at his watch.

"Two hours and a half!" he cried.

"If that is too early," she said mischievously, "we can go later."

"Too early!" he repeated. But the rest of his protest was cut short by Mr. Crewe.

"Hello, Victoria, what did you think of my speech?"

"The destinies of the nation are settled," said Victoria. "Do you know Mr. Vane?"

"Oh, yes, how are you?" said Mr. Crewe; "glad to see you," and he extended a furred glove. "Were you there?"

"Yes," said Austen.

"I'll send you a copy. I'd like to talk it over with you. Come on, Victoria, I've arranged for an early lunch. Come on, Mrs. Pomfret—get in, Alice."

Mrs. Pomfret, still protesting against the profane interruption to Mr. Crewe's speech, bent her head to enter Mr. Crewe's booby sleigh, which had his crest on the panel. Alice was hustled in next, but Victoria avoided his ready assistance and got in herself, Mr. Crewe getting in beside her.

"Au revoir," she called out to Austen, as the door slammed. The coachman gathered his horses together, and off they went at a brisk trot. Then the little group which had been watching the performance dispersed. Halfway across the park Austen perceived some one signaling violently to him, and discovered his friend, young Tom Gaylord.

"Come to dinner with me," said young Tom, "and tell me whether the speech of your friend from Leith will send him to Congress. I saw you hobnobbing with him just now. What's the matter, Austen? I haven't seen that guilty expression on your face since we were at college together."

"What's the best livery-stable in town?" Austen asked.

"By George, I wondered why you came down here. Who are you going to take out in a sleigh? There's a girl in it, is there?"

"Not yet, Tom," said Austen.

"I've often asked myself why I ever had any use for such a secretive cuss as you," declared young Mr. Gaylord. "But if you're really goin' to get interested in girls, you ought to see old Flint's daughter. I wrote you about her. Why," exclaimed Tom, "wasn't she one of those that got into Crewe's sleigh?"

Page 28

"Tom," said Austen, "where did you say that livery-stable was?"

"Oh, dang the livery-stable!" answered Mr. Gaylord. "I hear there's quite a sentiment for you for governor. How about it? You know I've always said you could be United States senator and President. If you'll only say the word, Austen, we'll work up a movement around the State that'll be hard to beat."

"Tom," said Austen, laying his hand on young Mr. Gaylord's farther shoulder, "you're a pretty good fellow. Where did you say that livery-stable was?"

"I'll go sleigh-riding with you," said Mr. Gaylord. "I guess the Pingsquit bill can rest one afternoon."

"Tom, I don't know any man I'd rather take than you," said Austen.

The unsuspecting Tom was too good-natured to be offended, and shortly after dinner Austen found himself in the process of being looked over by a stout gentleman named Putter, proprietor of Putter's Livery, who claimed to be a judge of men as well as horses. Austen had been through his stalls and chosen a mare.

"Durned if you don't look like a man who can handle a horse," said Mr. Putter. And as long as you're a friend of Tom Gaylord's I'll let you have her. Nobody drives that mare but me. What's your name?"

"Vane."

"Ain't any relation to old Hilary, be you?"

"I'm his son," said Austen, "only he doesn't boast about it."

"Godfrey!" exclaimed Mr. Putter, with a broad grin, "I guess you kin have her. Ain't you the man that shot a feller out West? Seems to me I heerd somethin' about it."

"Which one did you hear about?" Austen asked.

"Good Lord!" said Mr. Putter, "you didn't shoot more'n one, did you?"

It was just three o'clock when Austen drove into the semicircle opposite the Widow Peasley's, rang Mr. Crewe's door-bell, and leaped into the sleigh once more, the mare's nature being such as to make it undesirable to leave her. Presently Mr. Crewe's butler appeared, and stood dubiously in the vestibule.

"Will you tell Miss Flint that Mr. Vane has called for her, and that I cannot leave the horse?"

The man retired with obvious disapproval. Then Austen heard Victoria's voice in the hallway:—"Don't make a goose of yourself, Humphrey." Here she appeared, the colour fresh in her cheeks, her slender figure clad in a fur which even Austen knew was priceless. She sprang into the sleigh, the butler, with annoying deliberation, and with the air of saying that this was an affair of which he washed his hands, tucked in Mr. Putter's best robe about her feet, the mare leaped forward, and they were off, out of the circle and flying up the hill on the hard snow-tracks.

"Whew!" exclaimed Victoria, "what a relief! Are you staying in that dear little house?" she asked, with a glance at the Widow Peasley's.

"Yes," said Austen.

"I wish I were."

Page 29

He looked at her shyly. He was not a man to do homage to material gods, but the pomp and circumstance with which she was surrounded had had a sobering effect upon him, and added to his sense of the instability and unreality of the present moment. He had an almost guilty feeling of having broken an unwritten law, of abducting a princess, and the old Duncan house had seemed to frown protestingly that such an act should have taken place under its windows. If Victoria had been—to him—an ordinary mortal in expensive furs instead of a princess, he would have snapped his fingers at the pomp and circumstance. These typified the comforts which, in a wild and forgetful moment, he might ask her to leave. Not that he believed she would leave them. He had lived long enough to know that an interest by a woman in a man—especially a man beyond the beaten track of her observation—did not necessarily mean that she might marry him if he asked her. And yet—oh, Tantalus! here she was beside him, for one afternoon again his very own, their two souls ringing with the harmony of whirling worlds in sunlit space. He sought refuge in thin thought; he strove, in oblivion, to drain the cup of the hour of its nectar, even as he had done before. Generations of Puritan Vanes (whose descendant alone had harassed poor Sarah Austere) were in his blood; and there they hung in the long gallery of Time, mutely but sternly forbidding when he raised his hand to the stem.

In silence they reached the crest where the little city ended abruptly in view of the paradise of the silent hills,—his paradise, where there were no palaces or thought of palaces. The wild wind of the morning was still. In this realm at least, a heritage from his mother, seemingly untrodden by the foot of man, the woman at his side was his. From Holdfast over the spruces to Sawanec in the blue distance he was lord, a domain the wealth of which could not be reckoned in the coin of Midas. He turned to her as they flew down the slope, and she averted her face, perchance perceiving in that look a possession from which a woman shrinks; and her remark, startlingly indicative of the accord between them, lent a no less startling reality to the enchantment.

“This is your land, isn’t it?” she said.

“I sometimes feel as though it were,” he answered. “I was out here this morning, when the wind was at play,” and he pointed with his whip at a fantastic snowdrift, before I saw you.”

“You looked as though you had come from it,” she answered. You seemed—I suppose you will think me silly—but you seemed to bring something of this with you into that hail. I always think of you as out on the hills and mountains.”

“And you,” he said, “belong here, too.”

She drew a deep breath.



“I wish I did. But you—you really do belong here. You seem to have absorbed all the clearness of it, and the strength and vigour. I was watching you this morning, and you were so utterly out of place in those surroundings.” Victoria paused, her colour deepening.

Page 30

His blood kept pace with the mare's footsteps, but he did not reply.

"What did you think of Humphrey's speech?" she asked, abruptly changing the subject.

"I thought it a surprisingly good one,—what I heard of it," he answered. "That wasn't much. I didn't think he'd do as well."

"Humphrey's clever in a great many ways," Victoria agreed. "If he didn't have such an impenetrable conceit, he might go far, because he learns quickly, and has an industry that is simply appalling. But he hasn't quite the manner for politics, has he?"

"I think I should call his manner a drawback," said Austen, "though not by any means an insurmountable one."

Victoria laughed.

"The other qualities all need to be very great," she said. "He was furious at me for coming out this afternoon. He had it all arranged to drive over to the Forge, and had an early lunch."

"And I," said Austen, "have all the more reason to be grateful to you."

"Oh, if you knew the favour you were doing me," she cried, "bringing me out here where I can breathe. I hope you don't think I dislike Humphrey," she went on. "Of course, if I did, I shouldn't visit him. You see, I have known him for so long."

"I hadn't a notion that you disliked him," said Austen. "I am curious about his career; that's one reason I came down. He somehow inspires curiosity."

"And awe," she added. "Humphrey's career has all the fascination of a runaway locomotive. One watches it transfixed, awaiting the inevitable crash."

Their eyes met, and they both laughed.

"It's no use trying to be a humbug," said Victoria, "I can't. And I do like Humphrey, in spite of his career."

And they laughed again. The music of the bells ran faster and faster still, keeping time to a wilder music of the sunlit hills and sky; nor was it strange that her voice, when she spoke, did not break the spell, but laid upon him a deeper sense of magic.

"This brings back the fairy books," she said, "and all those wonderful and never-to-be-forgotten sensations of the truant, doesn't it? You've been a truant—haven't you?"

“Yes,” he laughed, “I’ve been a truant, but I never quite realized the possibilities of the part—until to-day.”

She was silent a moment, and turned away her head, surveying the landscape that fell away for miles beyond.

“When I was a child,” she said, “I used to think that by opening a door I could step into an enchanted realm like this. Only I could never find the door. Perhaps,” she added, gayly pursuing the conceit, “it was because you had the key, and I didn’t know you in those days.” She gave him a swift, searching look, smiling, whimsical yet startled,—so elusive that the memory of it afterwards was wont to come and go like a flash of light. “Who are you?” she asked.

His blood leaped, but he smiled in delighted understanding of her mood. Sarah Austen had brought just such a magic touch to an excursion, and even at that moment Austen found himself marvelling a little at the strange resemblance between the two.

Page 31

"I am a plain person whose ancestors came from a village called Camden Street," he replied. "Camden Street is there, on a shelf of the hills, and through the arch of its elms you can look off over the forests of the lowlands until they end in the blue reaches of the ocean,—if you could see far enough."

"If you could see far enough," said Victoria, unconsciously repeating his words. "But that doesn't explain you," she exclaimed: "You are like nobody I ever met, and you have a supernatural faculty of appearing suddenly, from nowhere, and whisking me away like the lady in the fable, out of myself and the world I live in. If I become so inordinately grateful as to talk nonsense, you mustn't blame me. Try not to think of the number of times I've seen you, or when it was we first met."

"I believe," said Austen, gravely, "it was when a mammoth beast had his cave on Holdfast, and the valleys were covered with cocoanut-palms."

"And you appeared suddenly then, too, and rescued me. You have always been uniformly kind," she said, "but—a little intangible."

"A myth," he suggested, "with neither height, breadth, nor thickness."

"You have height and breadth," she answered, measuring him swiftly with her eye; "I am not sure about the thickness. Perhaps. What I mean to say is, that you seem to be a person in the world, but not of it. Your exits and entrances are too mysterious, and then you carry me out of it, —although I invite myself, which is not at all proper."

"I came down here to see you," he said, and took a firmer grip on the reins. "I exist to that extent."

"That's unworthy of you," she cried. "I don't believe you—would have known I was here unless you had caught eight of me."

"I should have known it," he said.

"How?"

"Because I heard you playing. I am sure it was you playing."

"Yes, it was I," she answered simply, "but I did not know that—you heard. Where were you?"

"I suppose," he replied, "a sane witness would have testified that I was in the street—one of those partial and material truths which are so misleading."

She laughed again, joyously.



“Seriously, why did you come down here?” she insisted. “I am not so absorbed in Humphrey’s career that I cannot take an interest in yours. In fact, yours interests me more, because it is more mysterious. Humphrey’s,” she added, laughing, “is charted from day to day, and announced in bulletins. He is more generous to his friends than—you.”

“I have nothing to chart,” said Austen, “except such pilgrimages as this,—and these, after all, are unchartable. Your friend, Mr. Crewe, on the other hand, is well away on his voyage after the Golden Fleece. I hope he is provided with a Lynceus.”

Page 32

She was silent for a long time, but he was feverishly conscious of her gaze upon him, and did not dare to turn his eyes to hers. The look in them he beheld without the aid of physical vision, and in that look was the world-old riddle of her sex typified in the image on the African desert, which Napoleon had tried to read, and failed. And while wisdom was in the look, there was in it likewise the eternal questioning of a fate quite as inscrutable, against which wisdom would avail nothing. It was that look which, for Austen, revealed in her in their infinite variety all women who had lived; those who could resist, and those who could yield, and yielding all, bestow a gift which left them still priceless; those to whom sorrow might bring sadness, and knowledge mourning, and yet could rob them of no jot of sweetness. And knowing this, he knew that to gain her now (could such a high prize be gained!) would be to lose her. If he were anything to her (realize it or not as she might), it was because he found strength to resist this greatest temptation of his life. Yield, and his guerdon was lost, and he would be Austen Vane no longer—yield, and his right to act, which would make him of value in her eyes as well as in his own, was gone forever.

Well he knew what the question in her eyes meant or something of what it meant, so inexplicably is the soul of woman linked to events. He had pondered often on that which she had asked him when he had brought her home over the hills in the autumn twilight. He remembered her words, and the very inflection of her voice. “Then you won’t tell me?” How could he tell her? He became aware that she was speaking now, in an even tone.

“I had an odd experience this morning, when I was waiting for Mrs. Pomfret outside the state-house,” she said. “A man was standing looking up at the statue of the patriot with a strange, rapt expression on his face,—such a good face,—and he was so big and honest and uncompromising I wanted to talk to him. I didn’t realize that I was staring at him so hard, because I was trying to remember where I had seen him before,—and then I remembered suddenly that it was with you.”

“With me?” Austen repeated.

“You were standing with him, in front of the little house, when I save you yesterday. His name was Redbrook. It appears that he had seen me,” Victoria replied, “when I went to Mercer to call on Zeb Meader. And he asked me if I knew you.”

“Of course you denied it,” said Austen.

“I couldn’t, very well,” laughed Victoria, “because you had confessed to the acquaintance first.”

“He merely wished to have the fact corroborated. Mr. Redbrook is a man who likes to be sure of his ground.”



“He told me a very interesting thing about you,” she continued slowly, with her eye upon. Austen’s profile. “He said that a great many men wanted you to be their candidate for governor of the State,—more than you had any idea of,—and that you wouldn’t consent. Mr. Redbrook grew so enthusiastic that he forgot, for the moment, my —relationship to the railroad. He is not the only person with whom I have talked who has —forgotten it, or hasn’t known of it.”

Page 33

Austen was silent.

"Why won't you be a candidate," she asked, in a low voice, "if such men as that want you?"

"I am afraid Mr. Redbrook exaggerates," he said. "The popular demand of which he spoke is rather mythical. And I should be inclined to accuse him, too, of a friendly attempt to install me in your good graces."

"No," answered Victoria, smiling, with serious eyes, "I won't be put off that way. Mr. Redbrook isn't the kind of man that exaggerates—I've seen enough of his type to know that. And he told me about your—reception last night at the Widow Peasley's. You wouldn't have told me," she added reproachfully.

He laughed.

"It was scarcely a subject I could have ventured," he said.

"But I asked you," she objected. "Now tell me, why did you refuse to be their candidate? It wasn't because you were not likely to get elected, was it?"

He permitted himself a glance which was a tribute of admiration—a glance which she returned steadfastly.

"It isn't likely that I should have been elected," he answered, "but you are right—that is not the reason I refused."

"I thought not," she said, "I did not believe you were the kind of man to refuse for that reason. And you would have been elected."

"What makes you think so?" he asked curiously.

"I have been thinking since I saw you last—yes, and I have been making inquiries. I have been trying to find out things—which you will not tell me." She paused, with a little catch of her breath, and went on again. "Do you believe I came all the way up here just to hear Humphrey Crewe make a speech and to drive with him in a high sleigh and listen to him talk about his career? When serious men of the people like Mr. Redbrook and that nice Mr. Jenney at Leith and a lot of others who do not ordinarily care for politics are thinking and indignant, I have come to the conclusion there must be a cause for it. They say that the railroad governs them through disreputable politicians,—and I—I am beginning to believe it is true. I have had some of the politicians pointed out to me in the Legislature, and they look like it."

Austen did not smile. She was speaking quietly, but he saw that she was breathing deeply, and he knew that she possessed a courage which went far beyond that of most women, and an insight into life and affairs.

“I am going to find out,” she said, “whether these things are true.”

“And then?” he asked involuntarily.

“If they are true, I am going to tell my father about them, and ask him to investigate. Nobody seems to have the courage to go to him.”

Page 34

Austen did not answer. He felt the implication; he knew that, without realizing his difficulties, and carried on by a feeling long pent up, she had measured him unjustly, and yet he felt no resentment, and no shock. Perhaps he might feel that later. Now he was filled only with a sympathy that was yet another common bond between them. Suppose she did find out? He knew that she would not falter until she came to the end of her investigation, to the revelation of Mr. Flint's code of business ethics. Should the revolt take place, she would be satisfied with nothing less than the truth, even as he, Austen Vane, had not been satisfied. And he thought of the life-long faith that would be broken thereby.

They had made the circle of the hills, and the sparkling lights of the city lay under them like blue diamond points in the twilight of the valley. The crests behind them deepened in purple as the saffron faded in the west, and a gossamer cloud of Tyrian dye floated over Holdfast. In silence they turned for a last lingering look, and in silence went down the slope into the world again, and through the streets to the driveway of the Duncan house. It was only when they had stopped before the door that she trusted herself to speak.

"I ought not to have said what I did," she began, in a low voice; "I didn't realize—but I cannot understand you."

"You have said nothing which you need ever have cause to regret," he replied. He was too great for excuses, too great for any sorrow save what she herself might feel, as great as the silent hills from which he came.

She stood for a moment on the edge of the steps, her eyes lustrous,—yet gazing into his with a searching, troubled look that haunted him for many days. But her self-command was unshaken, her power to control speech was the equal of his. And this power of silence in her revealed in such instants—was her greatest fascination for Austen, the thing which set her apart among women; which embodied for him the whole charm and mystery of her sex.

"Good-by," she said simply.

"Good-by," he said, and seized her hand—and drove away.

Without ringing the bell Victoria slipped into the hall,—for the latch was not caught,—and her first impulse was to run up the staircase to her room. But she heard Mrs. Pomfret's voice on the landing above and fled, as to a refuge, into the dark drawing-room, where she stood for a moment motionless, listening for the sound of his sleigh-bells as they faintly on the winter's night. Then she seated herself to think, if she could, though it is difficult to think when one's heart is beating a little wildly. It was Victoria's nature to think things out. For the first time in her life she knew sorrow, and it made it worse that that sorrow was indefinable. She felt an accountable attraction for this man



who had so strangely come into her life, whose problems had suddenly become her problems. But she did not connect the attraction for Austen Vane with her misery. She recalled him as he had left her, big and strong and sorrowful, with a yearning look that was undisguised, and while her faith in him came surging back again, she could not understand.

Page 35

Gradually she became aware of men's voices, and turned with a start to perceive that the door of the library was open, and that Humphrey Crewe and another were standing in the doorway against the light. With an effort of memory she identified the other man as the Mr. Tooting who had made himself so useful at Mr. Crewe's garden party.

"I told you I could make you governor, Mr. Crewe," Mr. Tooting was saying. "Say, why do you think the Northeastern crowd—why do you think Hilary Vane is pushing your bills down the sidings? I'll tell you, because they know you're a man of ability, and they're afraid of you, and they know you're a gentleman, and can't be trusted with their deals, so they just shunted you off at Kodunk with a jolly about sendin' you to Congress if you made a hit on a national speech. I've been in the business a good many years, and I've seen and done some things for the Northeastern that stick in my throat"—(at this point Victoria sat down again and gripped the arms of her chair), "I don't like to see a decent man sawbucked the way they're teeterin' you, Mr. Crewe. I know what I'm talkin' about, and I tell you that Ridout and Jake Botcher and Brush Bascom haven't any more notion of lettin' your bills out of committee than they have Gaylord's. Why? Because they've got orders not to."

"You're making some serious charges, Mr. Tooting," said Mr. Crewe.

"And what's more, I can prove 'em. You know yourself that anybody who talks against the Northeastern is booted down and blacklisted. You've seen that, haven't you?"

"I have observed," said Mr. Crewe, "that things do not seem to be as they should in a free government."

"And it makes your blood boil as an American citizen, don't it? It does mine," said Mr. Tooting, with fine indignation. "I was a poor boy, and had to earn my living, but I've made up my mind I've worn the collar long enough—if I have to break rocks. And I want to repeat what I said a little while ago," he added, weaving his thumb into Mr. Crewe's buttonhole; "I know a thing or two, and I've got some brains, as they know, and I can make you governor of this State if you'll only say the word. It's a cinch."

Victoria started to rise once more, and realized that to escape she would have to cross the room directly in front of the two men. She remained sitting where she was in a fearful fascination, awaiting Humphrey Crewe's answer. There was a moment's pause.

"I believe you made the remark, Mr. Tooting," he said, "that in your opinion there is enough anti-railroad sentiment in the House to pass any bill which the railroad opposes."

"If a leader was to get up there, like you, with the arguments I could put into his hands, they would make the committee discharge that Pingsquit bill of the Gaylords', and pass it."

“On what do you base your opinion?” asked Mr. Crewe.

“Well,” said Mr. Tooting, “I guess I’m a pretty shrewd observer and have had practice enough. But you know Austen Vane, don’t you?”

Page 36

Victoria held her breath.

"I've a slight acquaintance with him," replied Mr. Crewe; "I've helped him along in one or two minor legal matters. He seems to be a little —well, pushing, you might say."

"I want to tell you one thing about Austen," continued Mr. Tooting. "Although I don't stand much for old Hilary, I'd take Austen Vane's opinion on most things as soon as that of any man in the State. If he only had some sense about himself, he could be governor next time —there's a whole lot that wants him. I happen to know some of 'em offered it to him last night."

"Austen Vane governor!" exclaimed Mr. Crewe, with a politely deprecating laugh.

"It may sound funny," said Mr. Tooting, stoutly; "I never understood what he has about him. He's never done anything but buck old Hilary in that damage case and send back a retainer pass to old Flint, but he's got something in his make-up that gets under your belt, and a good many of these old hayseeds'll eat out of his hand, right now. Well, I don't want this to go any farther, you're a gentleman,—but Austen came down here yesterday and had the whole thing sized up by last night. Old Hilary thought the Gaylords sent for him to lobby their bill through. They may have sent for him, all right, but he wouldn't lobby for 'em. He could have made a pile of money out of 'em. Austen doesn't seem to care about money—he's queer. He says as long as he has a horse and a few books and a couple of sandwiches a day he's all right. Hilary had him up in Number Seven tryin' to find out what he came down for, and Austen told him pretty straight—what he didn't tell the Gaylords, either. He kind of likes old Hilary,—because he's his father, I guess,—and he said there were enough men in that House to turn Hilary and his crowd upside down. That's how I know for certain. If Austen Vane said it, I'll borrow money to bet on it," declared Mr. Tooting.

"You don't think young Vane is going to get into the race?" queried Mr. Crewe.

"No," said Mr. Tooting, somewhat contemptuously. "No, I tell you he hasn't got that kind of sense. He never took any trouble to get ahead, and I guess he's sort of sensitive about old Hilary. It'd make a good deal of a scandal in the family, with Austen as an anti-railroad candidate." Mr. Tooting lowered his voice to a tone that was caressingly confidential. "I tell you, and you sleep on it, a man of your brains and money can't lose. It's a chance in a million, and when you win you've got this little State tight in your pocket, and a desk in the millionaire's club at Washington. Well, so long," said Mr. Tooting, "you think that over."

"You have, at least, put things in a new and interesting light," said Mr. Crewe. "I will try to decide what my duty is."

“Your duty’s pretty plain to me,” said Mr. Tooting. “If I had money, I’d know that the best way to use it is for the people,—ain’t that so?”

Page 37

"In the meantime," Mr. Crewe continued, "you may drop in to-morrow at three."

"You'd better make it to-morrow night, hadn't you?" said Mr. Tooting, significantly.
"There ain't any back way to this house."

"As you choose," said Mr. Crewe.

They passed within a few feet of Victoria, who resisted an almost uncontrollable impulse to rise and confront them. The words given her to use were surging in her brain, and yet she withheld them why, she knew not. Perhaps it was because, after such communion as the afternoon had brought, the repulsion she felt for Mr. Tooting aided her to sit where she was. She heard the outside door open and close, and she saw Humphrey Crewe walk past her again into his library, and that door closed, and she was left in darkness. Darkness indeed for Victoria, who throughout her life had lived in light alone; in the light she had shed, and the light which she had kindled in others. With a throb which was an exquisite pain, she understood now the compassion in Austen's eyes, and she saw so simply and so clearly why he had not told her that her face burned with the shame of her demand. The one of all others to whom she could go in this trouble was denied her, and his lips were sealed, who would have spoken honestly and without prejudice. She rose and went quietly out into the biting winter night, and stood staring through the trees at the friendly reddened windows of the little cottage across the way with a yearning that passed her understanding. Out of those windows, to Victoria, shone honesty and truth, and the peace which these alone may bring.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DESCENDANTS OF HORATIUS

So the twenty honourable members of the State Senate had been dubbed by the man who had a sense of humour and a smattering of the classics, because they had been put there to hold the bridge against the Tarquins who would invade the dominions of the Northeastern. Twenty picked men, and true they were indeed, but a better name for their body would have been the 'Life Guard of the Sovereign.' The five hundred far below them might rage and at times revolt, but the twenty in their shining armour stood undaunted above the vulnerable ground and smiled grimly at the mob. The citadel was safe.

The real Horatius of the stirring time of which we write was that old and tried veteran, the Honourable Brush Bascom; and Spurius Lartius might be typified by the indomitable warrior, the Honourable Jacob Botcher, while the Honourable Samuel Doby of Hale, Speaker of the House, was unquestionably Herminius. How the three held the bridge that year will be told in as few and as stirring words as possible. A greater than Porsena

confronted them, and well it was for them, and for the Empire, that the Body Guard of the Twenty stood behind them.

“Lars Porsena of Clusium,
By the Nine Gods he swore.”

Page 38

The morning after the State Tribune had printed that memorable speech on national affairs—statistics and all, with an editorial which gave every evidence of Mr. Peter Pardriff's best sparkle—Mr. Crewe appeared on the floor of the House with a new look in his eye which made discerning men turn and stare at him. It was the look of the great when they are justly indignant, when their trust—nobly given—has been betrayed. Washington, for instance, must have had just such a look on the battlefield of Trenton. The Honourable Jacob Botcher, pressing forward as fast as his bulk would permit and with the newspaper in his hand, was met by a calm and distant manner which discomposed that statesman, and froze his stout index finger to the editorial which “perhaps Mr. Crewe had not seen.”

Mr. Crewe was too big for resentment, but he knew how to meet people who didn't measure up to his standards. Yes, he had seen the editorial, and the weather still continued fine. The Honourable Jacob was left behind scratching his head, and presently he sought a front seat in which to think, the back ones not giving him room enough. The brisk, cheery greeting of the Honourable Brush Bascom fared no better, but Mr. Bascom was a philosopher, and did not disturb the great when their minds were revolving on national affairs and the welfare of humanity in general. Mr. Speaker Doby and Mr. Ridout got but abstract salutations also, and were correspondingly dismayed.

That day, and for many days thereafter, Mr. Crewe spent some time—as was entirely proper—among the back seats, making the acquaintance of his humbler fellow members of the submerged four hundred and seventy. He had too long neglected this, so he told them, but his mind had been on high matters. During many of his mature years he had pondered as to how the welfare of community and State could be improved, and the result of that thought was embodied in the bills of which they had doubtless received copies. If not, down went their names in a leather-bound memorandum, and they got copies in the next mails.

The delight of some of the simple rustic members at this unbending of a great man may be imagined. To tell the truth, they had looked with little favour upon the intimacy which had sprung up between him and those tyrannical potentates, Messrs. Botcher and Bascom, and many who had the courage of their convictions expressed then very frankly. Messrs. Botcher and Bascom were, when all was said, mere train despatchers of the Northeastern, who might some day bring on a wreck the like of which the State had never seen. Mr. Crewe was in a receptive mood; indeed his nature, like Nebuchadnezzar's, seemed to have experienced some indefinable and vital change. Was this the Mr. Crewe the humble rural members had pictured to themselves? Was this the Mr. Crewe who, at the beginning of the session, had told them roundly it was their duty to vote for his bills?

Page 39

Mr. Crewe was surprised, he said, to hear so much sentiment against the Northeastern Railroads. Yes, he was a friend of Mr. Flint's—they were neighbours in the country. But if these charges had any foundation whatever, they ought to be looked into—they ought to be taken up. A sovereign people should not be governed by a railroad. Mr. Crewe was a business man, but first of all he was a citizen; as a business man he did not intend to talk vaguely, but to investigate thoroughly. And then, if charges should be made, he would make them specifically, and as a citizen contend for the right.

It is difficult to restrain one's pen in dealing with a hero, but it is not too much to say that Mr. Crewe impressed many of the country members favourably. How, indeed, could he help doing so? His language was moderate, his poise that of a man of affairs, and there was a look in his eye and a determination in his manner that boded ill for the Northeastern if he should, after weighing the facts, decide that they ought to be flagellated. His friendship with Mr. Flint and the suspicion that he might be inclined to fancy Mr. Flint's daughter would not influence him in the least; of that many of his hearers were sure. Not a few of them were invited to dinner at the Duncan house, and shown the library and the conservatory.

"Walk right in," said Mr. Crewe. "You can't hurt the flowers unless you bump against the pots, and if you walk straight you can't do that. I brought the plants down from my own hothouse in Leith. Those are French geraniums—very hard to get. They're double, you see, and don't look like the scrawny things you see in this country. Yes (with a good-natured smile), I guess they do cost something. I'll ask my secretary what I paid for that plant. Is that dinner, Waters? Come right in, gentlemen, we won't wait for ceremony."

Whereupon the delegation would file into the dining room in solemn silence behind the imperturbable Waters, with dubious glances at Mr. Waters' imperturbable understudy in green and buff and silver buttons. Honest red hands, used to milking at five o'clock in the morning, and hands not so red that measured dry goods over rural counters for insistent female customers fingered in some dismay what seemed an inexplicable array of table furniture.

"It don't make any difference which fork you take," said the good-natured owner of this palace of luxury, "only I shouldn't advise you to use one for the soup you wouldn't get much of it—what? Yes, this house suits me very well. It was built by old man Duncan, you know, and his daughter married an Italian nobleman and lives in a castle. The State ought to buy the house for a governor's mansion. It's a disgrace that our governor should have to live in the Pelican Hotel, and especially in a room next to that of the chief counsel of the Northeastern, with only a curtain and a couple of folding doors between."

"That's right," declared an up-state member, the governor hadn't ought to live next to Vane. But as to gettin' him a house like this—kind of royal, ain't it? Couldn't do justice to it on fifteen hundred a year, could he? Costs you a little mite more to live in it, don't it?"

Page 40

"It costs me something," Mr. Crewe admitted modestly. "But then our governors are all rich men, or they couldn't afford to pay the Northeastern lobby campaign expenses. Not that I believe in a rich man for governor, gentlemen. My contention is that the State should pay its governors a sufficient salary to make them independent of the Northeastern, a salary on which they can live as befits a chief executive."

These sentiments, and others of a similar tenor, were usually received in silence by his rural guests, but Mr. Crewe, being a broad-minded man of human understanding, did not set down their lack of response to surliness or suspicion of a motive, but rather to the innate caution of the hill farmer; and doubtless, also, to a natural awe of the unwonted splendour with which they were surrounded. In a brief time his kindly hospitality became a byword in the capital, and fabulous accounts of it were carried home at week ends to toiling wives and sons and daughters, to incredulous citizens who sat on cracker boxes and found the Sunday papers stale and unprofitable for weeks thereafter. The geraniums—the price of which Mr. Crewe had forgotten to find out—were appraised at four figures, and the conservatory became the hanging gardens of Babylon under glass; the functionary in buff and green and silver buttons and his duties furnished the subject for long and heated arguments. And incidentally everybody who had a farm for sale wrote to Mr. Crewe. Since the motives of every philanthropist and public benefactor are inevitably challenged by cynics, there were many who asked the question, "What did Mr. Crewe want?" It is painful even to touch upon this when we know that Mr. Crewe was merely doing his duty as he saw it, when we know that he spelled the word, mentally, with a capital D.

There were many, too, who remarked that a touching friendship in the front seats (formerly plainly visible to the naked eye from the back) had been strained—at least. Mr. Crewe still sat with Mr. Botcher and Mr. Bascom, but he was not a man to pretend after the fires had cooled. The Honourable Jacob Botcher, with his eyes shut so tight, that his honest face wore an expression of agony, seemed to pray every morning for the renewal of that friendship when the chaplain begged the Lord to guide the Legislature into the paths of truth; and the Honourable Brush Bascom wore an air of resignation which was painful to see. Conversation languished, and the cosey and familiar haunts of the Pelican knew Mr. Crewe no more.

Mr. Crewe never forgot, of course, that he was a gentleman, and a certain polite intercourse existed. During the sessions, as a matter of fact, Mr. Bascom had many things to whisper to Mr. Botcher, and Mr. Butcher to Mr. Bascom, and in order to facilitate this Mr. Crewe changed seats with the Honourable Jacob. Neither was our hero a man to neglect, on account of strained relations, to insist upon his rights. His eyes were open now, and he saw men and things

Page 41

political as they were; he knew that his bills for the emancipation of the State were prisoners in the maw of the dragon, and not likely to see the light of law. Not a legislative day passed that he did not demand, with a firmness and restraint which did him infinite credit, that Mr. Bascom's and Mr. Butcher's committees report those bills to the House either favourably or unfavourably. And we must do exact justice, likewise, to Messrs. Bascom and Butcher; they, too, incited perhaps thereto by Mr. Crewe's example, answered courteously that the very excellent bills in question were of such weight and importance as not to be decided on lightly, and that there were necessary State expenditures which had first to be passed upon. Mr. Speaker Doby, with all the will in the world, could do nothing: and on such occasions (Mr. Crewe could see) Mr. Doby bore a striking resemblance to the picture of the mockturtle in "Alice m Wonderland"—a fact which had been pointed out by Miss Victoria Flint. In truth, all three of these gentlemen wore, when questioned, such a sorrowful and injured air as would have deceived a more experienced politician than the new member from Leith. The will to oblige was infinite.

There was no doubt about the fact that the session was rapidly drawing to a close; and likewise that the committees guided by the Honourables Jacob Butcher and Brush Bascom, composed of members carefully picked by that judge of mankind, Mr. Doby, were wrestling day and night (behind closed doors) with the intellectual problems presented by the bills of the member from Leith. It is not to be supposed that a man of Mr. Crewe's shrewdness would rest at the word of the chairmen. Other members were catechized, and in justice to Messrs. Bascom and Botcher it must be admitted that the assertions of these gentlemen were confirmed. It appeared that the amount of thought which was being lavished upon these measures was appalling.

By this time Mr. Crewe had made some new friends, as was inevitable when such a man unbent. Three of these friends owned, by a singular chance, weekly newspapers, and having conceived a liking as well as an admiration for him, began to say pleasant things about him in their columns—which Mr. Crewe (always thoughtful) sent to other friends of his. These new and accidental newspaper friends declared weekly that measures of paramount importance were slumbering in committees, and cited the measures. Other friends of Mr. Crewe were so inspired by affection and awe that they actually neglected their business and spent whole days in the rural districts telling people what a fine man Mr. Crewe was and circulating petitions for his bills; and incidentally the committees of Mr. Butcher and Mr. Bascom were flooded with these petitions, representing the spontaneous sentiment of an aggrieved populace.

"Just then a scout came flying,
All wild with haste and fear
To arms! to arms! Sir Consul
Lars Porsena is here.

On the low hills to westward
The Consul fixed his eye,
And saw the swarthy storm of dust
Rise fast along the sky.”

Page 42

It will not do to push a comparison too far, and Mr. Hamilton Tooting, of course, ought not to be made to act the part of Tarquin the Proud. Like Tarquin, however, he had been deposed—one of those fatuous acts which the wisest will commit. No more could the Honourable Hilary well be likened to Pandora, for he only opened the box wide enough to allow one mischievous sprite to take wings—one mischievous sprite that was to prove a host. Talented and invaluable lieutenant that he was, Mr. Tooting had become an exile, to explain to any audience who should make it worth his while the mysterious acts by which the puppets on the stage were moved, and who moved them; who, for instance, wrote the declamation which his Excellency Asa Gray recited as his own. Mr. Tooting, as we have seen, had a remarkable business head, and combined with it—as Austen Vane remarked—the rare instinct of the Norway rat which goes down to the sea in ships—when they are safe. Burrowing continually amongst the bowels of the vessel, Mr. Tooting knew the weak timbers better than the Honourable Hilary Vanes who thought the ship as sound as the day Augustus Flint had launched her. But we have got a long way from Horatius in our imagery.

Little birds flutter around the capital, picking up what crumbs they may. One of them, occasionally fed by that humanitarian, the Honourable Jacob Botcher, whispered a secret that made the humanitarian knit his brows. He was the scout that came flying (if by a burst of imagination we can conceive the Honourable Jacob in this aerial act)—came flying to the Consul in room Number Seven with the news that Mr. Hamilton Tooting had been detected on two evenings slipping into the Duncan house. But the Consul—strong man that he was—merely laughed. The Honourable Elisha Jane did some scouting on his own account. Some people are so small as to be repelled by greatness, to be jealous of high gifts and power, and it was perhaps inevitable that a few of the humbler members whom Mr. Crewe had entertained should betray his hospitality, and misinterpret his pure motives.

It was a mere coincidence, perhaps, that after Mr. Jane's investigation the intellectual concentration which one of the committees had bestowed on two of Mr. Crewe's bills came to an end. These bills, it is true, carried no appropriation, and, were, respectively, the acts to incorporate the State Economic League and the Children's Charities Association. These suddenly appeared in the House one morning, with favourable recommendations, and, *mirabile dicta*, the end of the day saw them through the Senate and signed by the governor. At last Mr. Crewe by his Excellency had stamped the mark of his genius on the statute books, and the Honourable Jacob Botcher, holding out an olive branch, took the liberty of congratulating him.

A vainer man, a lighter character than Humphrey Crewe, would have been content to have got something; and let it rest at that. Little Mr. Butcher or Mr. Speaker Doby, with his sorrowful smile, guessed the iron hand within the velvet glove of the Leith statesman; little they knew the man they were dealing with. Once aroused, he would not be pacified by bribes of cheap olive branches and laurels. When the proper time

came, he would fling down the gauntlet—before Rome itself, and then let Horatius and his friends beware.

Page 43

The hour has struck at last—and the man is not wanting. The French Revolution found Napoleon ready, and our own Civil War General Ulysses Grant. Of that ever memorable session but three days remained, and those who had been prepared to rise in the good cause had long since despaired. The Pingsquit bill, and all other bills that spelled liberty, were still prisoners in the hands of grim jailers, and Thomas Gaylord, the elder, had worn several holes in the carpet of his private room in the Pelican, and could often be descried from Main Street running up and down between the windows like a caged lion, while young Tom had been spied standing, with his hands in his pockets, smiling on the world.

Young Tom had his own way of doing things, though he little dreamed of the help Heaven was to send him in this matter. There was, in the lower House, a young man by the name of Harper, a lawyer from Brighton, who was sufficiently eccentric not to carry a pass. The light of fame, as the sunset gilds a weathercock on a steeple, sometimes touches such men for an instant and makes them immortal. The name of Mr. Harper is remembered, because it is linked with a greater one. But Mr. Harper was the first man over the wall.

History chooses odd moments for her entrances. It was at the end of one of those busy afternoon sessions, with a full house, when Messrs. Bascom, Botcher, and Ridout had done enough of blocking and hacking and hewing to satisfy those doughty defenders of the bridge, that a slight, unprepossessing-looking young man with spectacles arose to make a motion. The Honourable Jacob Botcher, with his books and papers under his arm, was already picking his way up the aisle, nodding genially to such of the faithful as he saw; Mr. Bascom was at the Speaker's desk, and Mr. Ridout receiving a messenger from the Honourable Hilary at the door. The Speaker, not without some difficulty, recognized Mr. Harper amidst what seemed the beginning of an exodus—and Mr. Harper read his motion.

Men halted in the aisles, and nudged other men to make them stop talking. Mr. Harper's voice was not loud, and it shook a trifle with excitement, but those who heard passed on the news so swiftly to those who had not that the House was sitting (or standing) in amazed silence by the time the motion reached the Speaker, who had actually risen to receive it. Mr. Doby regarded it for a few seconds and raised his eyes mournfully to Mr. Harper himself, as much as to say that he would give the young man a chance to take it back if he could—if the words had not been spoken which would bring the offender to the block in the bloom and enthusiasm of youth. Misguided Mr. Harper had committed unutterable treason to the Empire!

"The gentleman from Brighton, Mr. Harper," said the Speaker, sadly, "offers the following resolution, and moves its adoption: 'Resolved, that the Committee on Incorporations be instructed to report House bill number 302, entitled "An act to incorporate the Pingsquit Railroad," by eleven-thirty o'clock to-morrow morning'—the gentleman from Putnam, Mr. Bascom."

Page 44

The House listened and looked on entranced, as though they were the spectators to a tragedy. And indeed it seemed as though they were. Necks were craned to see Mr. Harper; he didn't look like a hero, but one never can tell about these little men. He had hurled defiance at the Northeastern Railroads, and that was enough for Mr. Redbrook and Mr. Widgeon and their friends, who prepared to rush into the fray trusting to Heaven for speech and parliamentary law. O for a leader now! Horatius is on the bridge, scarce concealing his disdain for this puny opponent, and Lartius and Herminius not taking the trouble to arm. Mr. Bascom will crush this one with the flat of his sword.

"Mr. Speaker," said that gentleman, informally, "as Chairman of the Committee on Incorporations, I rise to protest against such an unheard-of motion in this House. The very essence of orderly procedure, of effective business, depends on the confidence of the House in its committees, and in all of my years as a member I have never known of such a thing. Gentlemen of the House, your committee are giving to this bill and other measures their undivided attention, and will report them at the earliest practicable moment. I hope that this motion will be voted down."

Mr. Bascom, with a glance around to assure himself that most of the hundred members of the Newcastle delegation—vassals of the Winona Corporation and subject to the Empire—had not made use of their passes and boarded, as usual, the six o'clock train, took his seat. A buzz of excitement ran over the house, a dozen men were on their feet, including the plainly agitated Mr. Harper himself. But who is this, in the lunar cockpit before the Speaker's desk, demanding firmly to be heard—so firmly that Mr. Harper, with a glance at him, sits down again; so firmly that Mr. Speaker Doby, hypnotized by an eye, makes the blunder that will eventually cost him his own head?

"The gentleman from Leith, Mr. Crewe."

As though sensing a drama, the mutterings were hushed once more. Mr. Jacob Botcher leaned forward, and cracked his seat; but none, even those who had tasted of his hospitality, recognized that the Black Knight had entered the lists—the greatest deeds of this world, and the heroes of them, coming unheralded out of the plain clay. Mr. Crewe was the calmest man under the roof as he saluted the Speaker, walked up to the clerk's desk, turned his back to it, and leaned both elbows on it; and he regarded the sea of faces with the identical self-possession he had exhibited when he had made his famous address on national affairs. He did not raise his voice at the beginning, but his very presence seemed to compel silence, and curiosity was at fever heat. What was he going to say?

"Gentlemen of the House," said Mr. Crewe, "I have listened to the gentleman from Putnam with some—amusement. He has made the statement that he and his committee are giving to the Pingsquit bill and other measures—some other measures—their undivided attention. Of this I have no doubt whatever. He neglected to define

the species of attention he is giving them—I should define it as the kindly care which the warden of a penitentiary bestows upon his charges.”

Page 45

Mr. Crewe was interrupted here. The submerged four hundred and seventy had had time to rub their eyes and get their breath, to realize that their champion had dealt Mr. Bascom a blow to cleave his helm, and a roar of mingled laughter and exultation arose in the back seats, and there was more craning to see the glittering eyes of the Honourable Brush and the expressions of his two companions-in-arms. Mr. Speaker Doby beat the stone with his gavel, while Mr. Crewe continued to lean back calmly until the noise was over.

“Gentlemen,” he went on, “I will enter at the proper time into a situation—known, I believe, to most of you—that brings about a condition of affairs by which the gentleman’s committee, or the gentleman himself, with his capacious pockets, does not have to account to the House for every bill assigned to him by the Speaker. I have taken the trouble to examine a little into the gentleman’s past record—he has been chairman of such committees for years past, and I find no trace that bills inimical to certain great interests have ever been reported back by him. The Pingsquit bill involves the vital principle of competition. I have read it with considerable care and believe it to be, in itself, a good measure, which deserves a fair hearing. I have had no conversation whatever with those who are said to be its promoters. If the bill is to pass, it has little enough time to get to the Senate. By the gentleman from Putnam’s own statement his committee have given it its share of attention, and I believe this House is entitled to know the verdict, is entitled to accept or reject a report. I hope the motion will prevail.”

He sat down amidst a storm of applause which would have turned the head of a lesser man. No such personal ovation had been seen in the House for years. How the Speaker got order; how the Honourable Brush Bascom declared that Mr. Crewe would be called upon to prove his statements; how Mr. Botcher regretted that a new member of such promise should go off at half-cock; how Mr. Ridout hinted that the new member might think he had an animus; how Mr. Terry of Lee and Mr. Widgeon of Hull denounced, in plain hill language, the Northeastern Railroads and lauded the man of prominence who had the grit to oppose them, need not be gone into. Mr. Crewe at length demanded the previous question, which was carried, and the motion was carried, too, two hundred and fifty to one hundred and fifty-two. The House adjourned.

We will spare the blushes of the hero of this occasion, who was threatened with suffocation by an inundation from the back seats. In answer to the congratulations and queries, he replied modestly that nobody else seemed to have had the sand to do it, so he did it himself. He regarded it as a matter of duty, however unpleasant and unforeseen; and if, as they said, he had been a pioneer, education and a knowledge of railroads and the world had helped him. Whereupon, adding tactfully that he desired the evening to himself to prepare for the battle of the morrow (of which he foresaw he was to bear the burden), he extricated himself from his admirers and made his way unostentatiously out of a side door into his sleigh. For the man who had kindled a fire—the blaze of which was to mark an epoch—he was exceptionally calm. Not so the only visitor whom Waters had instructions to admit that evening.

Page 46

"Say, you hit it just right," cried the visitor, too exultant to take off his overcoat. "I've been down through the Pelican, and there ain't been such excitement since Snow and Giddings had the fight for United States senator in the '80's. The place is all torn up, and you can't get a room there for love or money. They tell me they've been havin' conferences steady in Number Seven since the session closed, and Hilary Vane's sent for all the Federal and State office-holders to be here in the morning and lobby. Botcher and Jane and Bascom are circulatin' like hot water, tellin' everybody that because they wouldn't saddle the State with a debt with your bills you turned sour on 'em, and that you're more of a corporation and railroad man than any of 'em. They've got their machine to working a thousand to the minute, and everybody they have a slant on is going into line. One of them fellers, a conductor, told me he had to go with 'em. But our boys ain't idle, I can tell you that. I was in the back of the gallery when you spoke up, and I shook 'em off the leash right away."

Mr. Crewe leaned back from the table and thrust his hands in his pockets and smiled. He was in one of his delightful moods.

"Take off your overcoat, Tooting," he said; "you'll find one of my best political cigars over there, in the usual place."

"Well, I guessed about right, didn't I?" inquired Mr. Tooting, biting off one of the political cigars. "I gave you a pretty straight tip, didn't I, that young Tom Gaylord was goin' to have somebody make that motion to-day? But say, it's funny he couldn't get a better one than that feller Harper. If you hadn't come along, they'd have smashed him to pulp. I'll bet the most surprised man in the State to-night, next to Brush Bascom, is young Tom Gaylord. It's a wonder he ain't been up here to thank you."

"Maybe he has been," replied Mr. Crewe. "I told Waters to keep everybody out to-night because I want to know exactly what I'm going to say on the floor tomorrow. I don't want 'em to give me trouble. Did you bring some of those papers with you?"

Mr. Tooting fished a bundle from his overcoat pocket. The papers in question, of which he had a great number stored away in Ripton, represented the foresight, on Mr. Tooting's part, of years. He was a young man with a praiseworthy ambition to get on in the world, and during his apprenticeship in the office of the Honourable Hilary Vane many letters and documents had passed through his hands. A less industrious person would have neglected the opportunity. Mr. Tooting copied them; and some, which would have gone into the waste-basket, he laid carefully aside, bearing in mind the adage about little scraps of paper—if there is one. At any rate, he now had a manuscript collection which was unique in its way, which would have been worth much to a great many men, and with characteristic generosity he was placing it at the disposal of Mr. Crewe.

Page 47

Mr. Crewe, in reading them, had other sensations. He warmed with indignation as an American citizen that a man should sit in a mahogany office in New York and dictate the government of a free and sovereign State; and he found himself in the grip of a righteous wrath when he recalled what Mr. Flint had written to him. "As a neighbour, it will give me the greatest pleasure to help you to the extent of my power, but the Northeastern Railroads cannot interfere in legislative or political matters." The effrontery of it was appalling! Where, he demanded of Mr. Tooting, did the common people come in? And this extremely pertinent question Mr. Tooting was unable to answer.

But the wheels of justice had begun to turn.

Mr. Tooting had not exaggerated the tumult and affright at the Pelican Hotel. The private telephone in Number Seven was busy all evening, while more or less prominent gentlemen were using continually the public ones in the boxes in the reading room downstairs. The Feudal system was showing what it could do, and the word had gone out to all the holders of fiefs that the vassals should be summoned. The Duke of Putnam had sent out a general call to the office-holders in that county. Theirs not to reason why—but obey; and some of them, late as was the hour, were already travelling (free) towards the capital. Even the congressional delegation in Washington had received telegrams, and sent them again to Federal office-holders in various parts of the State. If Mr. Crewe had chosen to listen, he could have heard the tramp of armed men. But he was not of the metal to be dismayed by the prospect of a great conflict. He was as cool as Cromwell, and after Mr. Tooting had left him to take charge once more of his own armies in the yield, the genlemon from Leith went to bed and slept soundly.

The day of the battle dawned darkly, with great flakes flying. As early as seven o'clock the later cohorts began to arrive, and were soon as thick as bees in the Pelican, circulating in the lobby, conferring in various rooms of which they had the numbers with occupants in bed and out. A wonderful organization, that Feudal System, which could mobilize an army overnight! And each unit of it, like the bee, working unselfishly for the good of the whole; like the bee, flying straight for the object to be attained. Every member of the House from Putnam County, for instance, was seen by one of these indefatigable captains, and if the member had a mortgage or an ambition, or a wife and family that made life a problem, or a situation on the railroad or in some of the larger manufacturing establishments, let him beware! If he lived in lodgings in the town, he stuck his head out of the window to perceive a cheery neighbour from the country on his doorstep. Think of a system which could do this, not for Putnam County alone, but for all the counties in the State!

Page 48

The Honourable Hilary Vane, captain-general of the Forces, had had but four hours' sleep, and his Excellency, the Honourable Asa Gray, when he arose in the twilight of the morning, had to step carefully to avoid the cigar butts on the floor which—like so many empty cartridge shells were unpleasant reminders that a rebellion of no mean magnitude had arisen against the power to which he owed allegiance, and by the favour of which he was attended with pomp and circumstance wherever he chose to go.

Long before eleven o'clock the paths to the state-house were thronged with people. Beside the office-holders and their friends who were in town, there were many residents of the capital city in the habit of going to hear the livelier debates. Not that the powers of the Empire had permitted debates on most subjects, but there could be no harm in allowing the lower House to discuss as fiercely as they pleased dog and sheep laws and hedgehog bounties. But now! The oldest resident couldn't remember a case of high treason and rebellion against the Northeastern such as this promised to be, and the sensation took on an added flavour from the fact that the arch rebel was a figure of picturesque interest, a millionaire with money enough to rent the Duncan house and fill its long-disused stable with horses, who was a capitalist himself and a friend of Mr. Flint's; of whom it was said that he was going to marry Mr. Flint's daughter!

Long before eleven, too, the chiefs over tens and the chiefs over hundreds had gathered their men and marched them into the state-house; and Mr. Tooting, who was everywhere that morning, noticed that some of these led soldiers had pieces of paper in their hands. The chaplain arose to pray for guidance, and the House was crowded to its capacity, and the gallery filled with eager and expectant faces—but the hero of the hour had not yet arrived. When at length he did walk down the aisle, as unconcernedly as though he were an unknown man entering a theatre, feminine whispers of "There he is!" could plainly be heard above the buzz, and simultaneous applause broke out in spots, causing the Speaker to rap sharply with his gavel. Poor Mr. Speaker Doby! He looked more like the mock-turtle than ever! and might have exclaimed, too, that once he had been a real turtle: only yesterday, in fact, before he had made the inconceivable blunder of recognizing Mr. Humphrey Crewe. Mr. Speaker Doby had spent a part of the night in room Number Seven listening to things about himself. Herminius the unspeakable has given the enemy a foothold in Rome.

Apparently unaware that he was the centre of interest, Mr. Crewe, carrying a neat little bag full of papers, took his seat beside the Honourable Jacob Botcher, nodding to that erstwhile friend as a man of the world should. And Mr. Botcher, not to be outdone, nodded back.

Page 49

We shall skip over the painful interval that elapsed before the bill in question was reached: painful, at least, for every one but Mr. Crewe, who sat with his knees crossed and his arms folded. The hosts were facing each other, awaiting the word; the rebels prayerfully watching their gallant leader; and the loyal vassals—whose wavering ranks had been added to overnight—with their eyes on Mr. Bascom. And in justice to that veteran it must be said, despite the knock-out blow he had received, that he seemed as debonair as ever.

“Now while the three were tightening
The harness on their backs.”

Mr. Speaker Doby read many committee reports, and at the beginning of each there was a stir of expectation that it might be the signal for battle. But at length he fumbled among his papers, cleared away the lump in his throat, and glanced significantly at Mr. Bascom.

“The Committee on Incorporations, to whom was referred House bill number 302, entitled “An act to incorporate the Pingsquit Railroad,” having considered the same, report the same with the following resolution: ‘Resolved, that it is inexpedient to legislate. Brush Bascom, for the Committee.’ Gentlemen, are you ready for the question? As many as are of opinion that the report of the Committee should be adopted—the gentleman from Putnam, Mr. Bascom.”

Again let us do exact justice, and let us not be led by our feelings to give a prejudiced account of this struggle. The Honourable Brush Bascom, skilled from youth in the use of weapons, opened the combat so adroitly that more than once the followers of his noble opponent winced and trembled. The bill, Mr. Bascom said, would have been reported that day, anyway—a statement received with mingled cheers and jeers. Then followed a brief and somewhat intimate history of the Gaylord Lumber Company, not at all flattering to that corporation. Mr. Bascom hinted, at an animus: there was no more need for a railroad in the Pingsquit Valley than there was for a merry-go-round in the cellar of the state-house. (Loud laughter from everybody, some irreverent person crying out that a merry-go-round was better than poker tables.) When Mr. Bascom came to discuss the gentleman from Leith, and recited the names of the committees for which Mr. Crewe—in his desire to be of service to the State had applied, there was more laughter, even amongst Mr. Crewe’s friends, and Mr. Speaker Doby relaxed so far as to smile sadly. Mr. Bascom laid his watch on the clerk’s desk and began to read the list of bills Mr. Crewe had introduced, and as this reading proceeded some of the light-minded showed a tendency to become slightly hysterical. Mr. Bascom said that he would like to see all those bills grow into laws,—with certain slight changes,—but that he could not conscientiously vote to saddle the people with another Civil War debt. It was well for the State, he hinted, that those committees were composed of stanch men who would do their duty in all weathers, regardless of demagogues who sought to gratify inordinate ambitions.

Page 50

The hope of the revolutionists bore these strokes and others as mighty with complacency, as though they had been so many playful taps; and while the battle surged hotly around him he sat calmly listening or making occasional notes with a gold pencil. Born leader that he was, he was biding his time. Mr. Bascom's attack was met valiantly, but unskillfully, from the back seats. The Honourable Jacob Botcher arose, and filled the hall with extracts from the "Book of Arguments"—in which he had been coached overnight by the Honourable Hilary Vane. Mr. Botcher's tone towards his erstwhile friend was regretful,—a good man gone wrong through impulse and inexperience. "I am, sir," said Mr. Bascom to the Speaker, "sincerely sorry—sincerely sorry that an individual of such ability as the member from Leith should be led, by the representations of political adventurers and brigands and malcontents, into his present deplorable position of criticising a State which is his only by adoption, the political conditions of which were as sound and as free from corporate domination, sir, as those of any State in the broad Union." (Loud cheers.) This appeal to State pride by Mr. Botches is a master stroke, and the friends of the champion of the liberties of the people are beginning (some of them) to be a little nervous and doubtful.

Following Mr. Botches were wild and scattering speeches from the back benches—unskillful and pitiable counter-strokes. Where was the champion? Had he been tampered with overnight, and persuaded of the futility of rebellion? Persuaded that his head would be more useful on his own neck in the councils of the nation than on exhibition to the populace from the point of a pike? It looks, to a calm spectator from the gallery, as though the rebel forces are growing weaker and more demoralized every moment. Mr. Redbrook's speech, vehement and honest, helps a little; people listen to an honest and forceful man, however he may lack technical knowledge, but the majority of the replies are mere incoherent denunciations of the Northeastern Railroads.

On the other hand, the astounding discipline amongst the legions of the Empire excites the admiration and despair even of their enemies; there is no random fighting here and breaking of ranks to do useless hacking. A grave farmer with a beard delivers a short and temperate speech (which he has by heart), mildly inquiring what the State would do without the Northeastern Railroads; and the very moderation of this query coming from a plain and hard-headed agriculturist (the boss of Grenville, if one but knew it!) has a telling effect. And then to cap the climax, to make the attitude of the rebels even more ridiculous in the minds of thinking people, Mr. Ridout is given the floor. Skilled in debate when he chooses to enter it, his knowledge of the law only exceeded by his knowledge of how it is to be evaded—to Lartius is assigned the task of following up the rout. And Mr. Crewe has ceased taking notes.

Page 51

When the House leader and attorney for the Northeastern took his seat, the victory to all appearances was won. It was a victory for conservatism and established order against sensationalism and anarchy—Mr. Ridout had contrived to make that clear without actually saying so. It was as if the Ute Indians had sought to capture Washington and conduct the government. Just as ridiculous as that! The debate seemed to be exhausted, and the long-suffering Mr. Doby was inquiring for the fiftieth time if the House were ready for the question, when Mr. Crewe of Leith arose and was recognized. In three months he had acquired such a remarkable knowledge of the game of parliamentary tactics as to be able, patiently, to wait until the bolt of his opponents had been shot; and a glance sufficed to revive the drooping spirits of his followers, and to assure them that their leader knew what he was about.

“Mr. Speaker,” he said, “I have listened with great care to the masterly defence of that corporation on which our material prosperity and civic welfare is founded (laughter); I have listened to the gentleman’s learned discussion of the finances of that road, tending to prove that it is an eleemosynary institution on a grand scale. I do not wish to question unduly the intellects of those members of this House who by their votes will prove that they have been convinced by the gentleman’s argument.” Here Mr. Crewe paused and drew a slip of paper from his pocket and surveyed the back seats. “But I perceive,” he continued, “that a great interest has been taken in this debate—so great an interest that since yesterday numbers of gentlemen have come in from various parts of the State to listen to it (laughter and astonishment), gentlemen who hold Federal and State offices. (Renewed laughter and searching of the House.) I repeat, Mr. Speaker, that I do not wish to question the intellects of my fellow-members, but I notice that many of them who are seated near the Federal and State office-holders in question have in their hands slips of paper similar to this. And I have reason to believe that these slips were written by somebody in room Number Seven of the Pelican Hotel.” (Tremendous commotion, and craning to see whether one’s neighbour has a slip. The faces of the redoubtable three a study.)

“I procured one of these slips,” Mr. Crewe continued, “through a fellow-member who has no use for it—whose intelligence, in fact, is underrated by the gentlemen in Number Seven. I will read the slip.

“Vote yes on the question. Yes means that the report of the Committee will be accepted, and that the Pingsquit bill will not pass. Wait for Bascom’s signal, and destroy this paper.”

There was no need, indeed, for Mr. Crewe to say any more than that—no need for the admirable discussion of railroad finance from an expert’s standpoint which followed to controvert Mr. Ridout’s misleading statements. The reading of the words on the slip of paper of which he had so mysteriously got possession (through Mr. Hamilton Tooting) was sufficient to bring about a disorder that for a full minute—Mr. Speaker Doby found it impossible to quell. The gallery shook with laughter, and honourable members with

slips of paper in their hands were made as conspicuous as if they had been caught wearing dunces' caps.

Page 52

It was then only, with belated wisdom, that Mr. Bascom and his two noble companions gave up the fight, and let the horde across the bridge—too late, as we shall see. The populace, led by a redoubtable leader, have learned their strength. It is true that the shining senatorial twenty of the body-guard stand ready to be hacked to pieces at their posts before the Pingsquit bill shall become a law; and should unutterable treason take place here, his Excellency is prepared to be drawn and quartered rather than sign it. It is the Senate which, in this somewhat inaccurate repetition of history, hold the citadel if not the bridge; and in spite of the howling mob below their windows, scornfully refuse even to discuss the Pingsquit bill. The Honourable Hilary Vane, whose face they study at dinner time, is not worried. Popular wrath does not continue to boil, and many changes will take place in the year before the Legislature meets again.

This is the Honourable Hilary's public face. But are there not private conferences in room Number Seven of which we can know nothing —exceedingly uncomfortable conferences for Horatius and his companions? Are there not private telegrams and letters to the president of the Northeastern in New York advising him that the Pingsquit bill has passed the House, and that a certain Mr. Crewe is primarily responsible? And are there not queries—which history may disclose in after years—as to whether Mr. Crewe's abilities as a statesman have not been seriously underrated by those who should have been the first to perceive them? Verily, pride goeth before a fall.

In this modern version of ours, the fathers throng about another than Horatius after the session of that memorable morning. Publicly and privately, Mr. Crewe is being congratulated, and we know enough of his character to appreciate the modesty with which the congratulations are accepted. He is the same Humphrey Crewe that he was before he became the corner-stone of the temple; success is a mere outward and visible sign of intrinsic worth in the inner man, and Mr. Crewe had never for a moment underestimated his true value.

"There's, no use wasting time in talking about it," he told the grateful members who sought to press his hands. "Go home and organize. I've got your name. Get your neighbours into line, and keep me informed. I'll pay for the postage-stamps. I'm no impractical reformer, and if we're going to do this thing, we'll have to do it right."

They left him, impressed by the force of this argument, with an added respect for Mr. Crewe, and a vague feeling that they were pledged to something which made not a few of them a trifle uneasy. Mr. Redbrook was one of these.

The felicitations of his new-found friend and convert, Mr. Tooting, Mr. Crewe cut short with the terseness of a born commander.

"Never mind that," he said, "and follow 'em up and get 'em pledged if you can."

Page 53

Get 'em pledged! Pledged to what? Mr. Tooting evidently knew, for he wasted no precious moments in asking questions.

There is no time at this place to go into the feelings of Mr. Tom Gaylord the younger when he learned that his bill had passed the House. He, too, meeting Mr. Crewe in the square, took the opportunity to express his gratitude to the member from Leith.

"Come in on Friday afternoon, Gaylord," answered Mr. Crewe. "I've got several things to talk to you about. Your general acquaintance around the State will be useful, and there must be men you know of in the lumber sections who can help us considerably."

"Help us?" repeated young Tom, in same surprise.

"Certainly," replied Mr. Crewe; "you don't think we're going to drop the fight here, do you? We've got to put a stop in this State to political domination by a railroad, and as long as there doesn't seem to be anyone else to take hold, I'm going to. Your bill's a good bill, and we'll pass it next session."

Young Tom regarded Mr. Crewe with a frank stare.

"I'm going up to the Pingsquit Valley on Friday," he answered.

"Then you'd better come up to Leith to see me as soon as you get back," said Mr. Crewe. "These things can't wait, and have to be dealt with practically."

Young Tom had not been the virtual head of the Gaylord Company for some years without gaining a little knowledge of politics and humanity. The invitation to Leith he valued, of course, but he felt that it would not do to accept it with too much ardour. He was, he said, a very busy man.

"That's the trouble with most people," declared Mr. Crewe; "they won't take the time to bother about politics, and then they complain when things don't go right. Now I'm givin' my time to it, when I've got other large interests to attend to."

On his way back to the Pelican, young Tom halted several times reflectively, as certain points in this conversation which he seemed to have missed at the time—came back to him. His gratitude to Mr. Crewe as a public benefactor was profound, of course; but young Tom's sense of humour was peculiar, and he laughed more than once, out loud, at nothing at all. Then he became grave again, and went into the hotel and wrote a long letter, which he addressed to Mr. Austen Vane.

And now, before this chapter which contains these memorable events is closed, one more strange and significant fact is to be chronicled. On the evening of the day which saw Mr. Crewe triumphantly leading the insurgent forces to victory, that gentleman sent his private secretary to the office of the State Tribune to leave an order for fifty copies of



the paper to be delivered in the morning. Morning came, and the fifty copies, and Mr. Crewe's personal copy in addition, were handed to him by the faithful Waters when he entered his dining room at an early hour. Life is full of disillusion. Could this be the State Tribune he held in his hand? The State Tribune of Mr. Peter Pardriff, who had stood so staunchly for Mr. Crewe and better things? Who had hitherto held the words of the Leith statesman in such golden estimate as to curtail advertising columns when it was necessary to print them for the public good?

Page 54

Mr. Crewe's eye travelled from column to column, from page to page, in vain. By some incredible oversight on the part of Mr. Pardriff, the ringing words were not there,—nay, the soul-stirring events of that eventful day appeared, on closer inspection, to have been deliberately edited out! The terrible indignation of the righteous arose as Mr. Crewe read (in the legislative proceedings of the day before) that the Pingsquit bill had been discussed by certain members—of whom he was one—and passed. This was all—literally all! If Mr. Pardriff had lived in the eighteenth century, he would probably have referred as casually to the Boston massacre as a street fight—which it was.

Profoundly disgusted with human kind,—as the noblest of us will be at times,—Mr. Crewe flung down the paper, and actually forgot to send the fifty copies to his friends!

CHAPTER XV

THE DISTURBANCE OF JUNE SEVENTH

After Mr. Speaker Doby had got his gold watch from an admiring and apparently reunited House, and had wept over it, the Legislature adjourned. This was about the first of April, that sloppiest and windiest of months in a northern climate, and Mr. Crewe had intended, as usual, to make a little trip southward to a club of which he was a member. A sense of duty, instead, took him to Leith, where he sat through the days in his study, dictating letters, poring over a great map of the State which he had hung on the wall, and scanning long printed lists. If we could stand behind him, we should see that these are what are known as check-lists, or rosters of the voters in various towns.

Mr. Crewe also has an unusual number of visitors for this muddy weather, when the snow-water is making brooks of the roads. Interested observers—if there were any—might have remarked that his friendship with Mr. Hamilton Tooting had increased, that gentleman coming up from Ripton at least twice a week, and aiding Mr. Crewe to multiply his acquaintances by bringing numerous strangers to see him. Mr. Tooting, as we know, had abandoned the law office of the Honourable Hilary Vane and was now engaged in travelling over the State, apparently in search of health. These were signs, surely, which the wise might have read with profit: in the offices, for instance, of the Honourable Hilary Vane in Ripton Square, where seismic disturbances were registered; but the movement of the needle (to the Honourable Hilary's eye) was almost imperceptible. What observer, however experienced, would have believed that such delicate tracings could herald a volcanic eruption?

Page 55

Throughout the month of April the needle kept up its persistent registering, and the Honourable Hilary continued to smile. The Honourable Jacob Botcher, who had made a trip to Ripton and had cited that very decided earthquake shock of the Pingsquit bill, had been ridiculed for his pains, and had gone away again comforted by communion with a strong man. The Honourable Jacob had felt little shocks in his fief: Mr. Tooting had visited it, sitting with his feet on the tables of hotel waiting-rooms, holding private intercourse with gentlemen who had been disappointed in office. Mr. Tooting had likewise been a sojourner in the domain of the Duke of Putnam. But the Honourable Brush was not troubled, and had presented Mr. Tooting with a cigar.

In spite of the strange omission of the State Tribune to print his speech and to give his victory in the matter of the Pingsquit bill proper recognition, Mr. Crewe was too big a man to stop his subscription to the paper. Conscious that he had done his duty in that matter, neither praise nor blame could affect him; and although he had not been mentioned since, he read it assiduously every afternoon upon its arrival at Leith, feeling confident that Mr. Peter Pardriff (who had always in private conversation proclaimed himself emphatically for reform) would not eventually refuse—to a prophet—public recognition. One afternoon towards the end of that month of April, when the sun had made the last snow-drift into a pool, Mr. Crewe settled himself on his south porch and opened the State Tribune, and his heart gave a bound as his eye fell upon the following heading to the leading editorial:—

A worthy public Servant for governor

Had his reward come at last? Had Mr. Peter Pardriff seen the error of his way? Mr. Crewe leisurely folded back the sheet, and called to his secretary, who was never far distant.

“Look here,” he said, “I guess Pardriff’s recovered his senses. Look here!”

The tired secretary, ready with his pencil and notebook to order fifty copies, responded, staring over his employer’s shoulder. It has been said of men in battle that they have been shot and have run forward some hundred feet without knowing what has happened to them. And so Mr. Crewe got five or six lines into that editorial before he realized in full the baseness of Mr. Pardriff’s treachery.

“These are times” (so ran Mr. Pardriff’s composition) “when the sure and steady hand of a strong man is needed at the helm of State. A man of conservative, business habits of mind; a man who weighs the value of traditions equally with the just demands of a new era; a man with a knowledge of public affairs derived from long experience;” (!!!) “a man who has never sought office, but has held it by the will of the people, and who himself is a proof that the conduct of State institutions in the past has been just and equitable. One who

Page 56

has served with distinction upon such boards as the Railroad Commission, the Board of Equalization, *etc.*, *etc.*” (!!!) “A stanch Republican, one who puts party before—” here the newspaper began to shake a little, and Mr. Crewe could not for the moment see whether the next word were place or principle. He skipped a few lines. The Tribune, it appeared, had a scintillating idea, which surely must have occurred to others in the State. “Why not the Honourable Adam B. Hunt of Edmundton for the next governor?”

The Honourable Adam B. Hunt of Edmundton!

It is a pleasure to record, at this crisis, that Mr. Crewe fixed upon his secretary as steady an eye as though Mr. Pardriff’s bullet had missed its mark.

“Get me,” he said coolly, “the ‘State Encyclopaedia of Prominent Men.’” (Just printed. Fogarty and Co., Newcastle, publishers.)

The secretary fetched it, open at the handsome and lifelike steel-engraving of the Honourable Adam, with his broad forehead and kindly, twinkling eyes, and the tuft of beard on his chin; with his ample statesman’s coat in natural creases, and his white shirt-front and little black tie. Mr. Crewe gazed at this work of art long and earnestly. The Honourable Adam B. Hunt did not in the least have the appearance of a bolt from the blue. And then Mr. Crewe read his biography.

Two things he shrewdly noted about that biography; it was placed, out of alphabetical order, fourth in the book, and it was longer than any other with one exception that of Mr. Ridout, the capital lawyer. Mr. Ridout’s place was second in this invaluable volume, he being preceded only by a harmless patriarch. These facts were laid before Mr. Tooting, who was directed by telephone to come to Leith as soon as he should arrive in Ripton from his latest excursion. It was nine o’clock at night when that long-suffering and mud-bespattered individual put in an appearance at the door of his friend’s study.

“Because I didn’t get on to it,” answered Mr. Tooting, in response to a reproach for not having registered a warning—for he was Mr. Crewe’s seismograph. “I knew old Adam was on the Railroads’ governor’s bench, but I hadn’t any notion he’d been moved up to the top of the batting list. I told you right. Ridout was going to be their next governor if you hadn’t singed him with the Pingsquit bill. This was done pretty slick, wasn’t it? Hilary got back from New York day before yesterday, and Pardriff has the editorial to-day. Say, I always told you Pardriff wasn’t a reformer, didn’t I?”

Mr. Crewe looked pained.

“I prefer to believe the best of people until I know the worst,” he said. “I did not think Mr. Pardriff capable of ingratitude.”

What Mr. Crewe meant by this remark is enigmatical.

“He ain’t,” replied Mr. Tooting, “he’s grateful for that red ticket he carries around with him when he travels, and he’s grateful to the Honourable Adam B. Hunt for favours to come. Peter Pardriff’s a grateful cuss, all-right, all right.”

Page 57

Mr. Crewe tapped his fingers on the desk thoughtfully.

"The need of a reform campaign is more apparent than ever," he remarked.

Mr. Tooting put his tongue in his cheek; and, seeing a dreamy expression on his friend's face, accidentally helped himself to a cigar out of the wrong box.

"It's up to a man with a sense of duty and money to make it," Mr. Tooting agreed, taking a long pull at the Havana.

"As for the money," replied Mr. Crewe, "the good citizens of the State should be willing to contribute largely. I have had a list of men of means prepared, who will receive notices at the proper time."

Mr. Hamilton Tooting spread out his feet, and appeared to be studying them carefully.

"It's funny you should have mentioned cash," he said, after a moment's silence, "and it's tough on you to have to be the public-spirited man to put it up at the start. I've got a little memorandum here," he added, fumbling apologetically in his pocket; "it certainly costs something to move the boys around and keep 'em indignant."

Mr. Tooting put the paper on the edge of the desk, and Mr. Crewe, without looking, reached out his hand for it, the pained expression returning to his face.

"Tooting," he said, "you've got a very flippant way of speaking of serious things. It strikes me that these expenses are out of all proportion to the simplicity of the task involved. It strikes me—ahem that you might find, in some quarters at least, a freer response to a movement founded on principle."

"That's right," declared Mr. Tooting, "I've thought so myself. I've got mad, and told 'em so to their faces. But you've said yourself, Mr. Crewe, that we've got to deal with this thing practically."

"Certainly," Mr. Crewe interrupted. He loved the word.

"And we've got to get workers, haven't we? And it costs money to move 'em round, don't it? We haven't got a bushel basket of passes. Look here," and he pushed another paper at Mr. Crewe, "here's ten new ones who've made up their minds that you're the finest man in the State. That makes twenty."

Mr. Crewe took that paper deprecatingly, but nevertheless began a fire of cross-questions on Mr. Tooting as to the personality, habits, and occupations of the discerning ten in question, making certain little marks of his own against each name. Thus it will be seen that Mr. Crewe knew perfectly what he was about—although no one else did except Mr. Tooting, who merely looked mysterious when questioned on the streets of

Ripton or Newcastle or Kingston. It was generally supposed, however, that the gentleman from Leith was going to run for the State Senate, and was attempting to get a following in other counties, in order to push through his measures next time. Hence the tiny fluctuations of Hilary Vane's seismograph an instrument, as will be shown, utterly out-of-date. Not so the motto toujours l'audace. Geniuses continue (at long intervals) to be born, and to live up to that motto.

Page 58

That seismograph of the Honourable Hilary's persisted in tracing only a slightly ragged line throughout the beautiful month of May, in which favourable season the campaign of the Honourable Adam B. Hunt took root and flourished—apparently from the seed planted by the State Tribune. The ground, as usual, had been carefully prepared, and trained gardeners raked, and watered, and weeded the patch. It had been decreed and countersigned that the Honourable Adam B. Hunt was the flower that was to grow this year.

There must be something vitally wrong with an instrument which failed to register the great earthquake shock of June the seventh!

Now that we have come to the point where this shock is to be recorded on these pages, we begin to doubt whether our own pen will be able adequately to register it, and whether the sheet is long enough and broad enough upon which to portray the relative importance of the disturbance created. The trouble is, that there is nothing to measure it by. What other event in the history of the State produced the vexation of spirit, the anger, the tears, the profanity; the derision, the laughter of fools, the contempt; the hope, the glee, the prayers, the awe, the dumb amazement at the superb courage of this act? No, for a just comparison we shall have to reach back to history and fable: David and Goliath; Theseus and the Minotaur; or, better still, Cadmus and the Dragon! It was Cadmus (if we remember rightly) who wasted no time whatever, but actually jumped down the dragon's throat and cut him up from the inside! And it was Cadmus, likewise, who afterwards sowed the dragon's teeth.

That wondrous clear and fresh summer morning of June the seventh will not be forgotten for many years. The trees were in their early leaf in Ripton Square, and the dark pine patches on Sawanec looked (from Austen's little office) like cloud shadows against the shimmer of the tender green. He sat at his table, which was covered with open law-books and papers, but his eyes were on the distant mountain, and every scent-laden breeze wafted in at his open window seemed the bearer of a tremulous, wistful, yet imperious message—"Come!" Throughout the changing seasons Sawanec called to him in words of love: sometimes her face was hidden by cloud and fog and yet he heard her voice! Sometimes her perfume as to-day—made him dream; sometimes, when the western heavens were flooded with the golden light of the infinite, she veiled herself in magic purple, when to gaze at her was an exquisite agony, and she became as one forbidden to man. Though his soul cried out to her across the spaces, she was not for him. She was not for him!

Page 59

With a sigh he turned to his law-books again, and sat for a while staring steadfastly at a section of the 'Act of Consolidation of the Northeastern Railroads' which he had stumbled on that morning. The section, if he read its meaning aright, was fraught with the gravest consequences for the Northeastern Railroads; if he read its meaning aright, the Northeastern Railroads had been violating it persistently for many years and were liable for unknown sums in damages. The discovery of it had dazed him, and the consequences resulting from a successful suit under the section would be so great that he had searched diligently, though in vain, for some modification of it since its enactment. Why had not some one discovered it before? This query appeared to be unanswerable, until the simple—though none the less remarkable—solution came to him, that perhaps no definite occasion had hitherto arisen for seeking it. Undoubtedly the Railroads' attorneys must know of its existence—his own father, Hilary Vane, having been instrumental in drawing up the Act. And a long period had elapsed under which the Northeastern Railroads had been a law unto themselves.

The discovery was of grave import to Austen. A month before, chiefly through the efforts of his friend, Tom, who was gradually taking his father's place in the Gaylord Lumber Company, Austen had been appointed junior counsel for that corporation. The Honourable Galusha Hammer still remained the senior counsel, but was now confined in his house at Newcastle by an illness which made the probability of his return to active life extremely doubtful; and Tom had repeatedly declared that in the event of his non-recovery Austen should have Mr. Hammer's place. As counsel for the Gaylord Lumber Company, it was clearly his duty to call the attention of young Mr. Gaylord to the section; and in case Mr. Hammer did not resume his law practice, it would fall upon Austen himself to bring the suit. His opponent in this matter would be his own father.

The consequences of this culminating conflict between them, the coming of which he had long dreaded—although he had not foreseen its specific cause—weighed heavily upon Austen. It was Tom Gaylord himself who abruptly aroused him from his revery by bursting in at the door.

"Have you heard what's up?" he cried, flinging down a newspaper before Austen's eyes. "Have you seen the Guardian?"

"What's the matter now, Tom?"

"Matter!" exclaimed Tom; "read that. Your friend and client, the Honourable Humphrey Crewe, is out for governor."

"Humphrey Crewe for governor!"

"On an anti-railroad platform. I might have known something of the kind was up when he began to associate with Tooting, and from the way he spoke to me in March. But

who'd have thought he'd have the cheek to come out for governor? Did you ever hear of such tommyrot?"

Austen looked grave.

"I'm not sure it's such tommyrot," he said.

Page 60

"Not tommyrot?" Tom ejaculated. "Everybody's laughing. When I passed the Honourable Hilary's door just now, Brush Bascom and some of the old liners were there, reciting parts of the proclamation, and the boys down in the Ripton House are having the time of their lives."

Austen took the Guardian, and there, sure enough, filling a leading column, and in a little coarser type than the rest of the page, he read:

Downwith railroad rule!

The Honourable Humphrey Crewe of Leith, at the request of twenty prominent citizens, consents to become a candidate for the Republican Nomination for Governor.

Ringling letter of acceptance, in which he denounces the political power of the Northeastern Railroads, and declares that the State is governed from a gilded suite of offices in New York.

"The following letter, evincing as it does a public opinion thoroughly aroused in all parts of the State against the present disgraceful political conditions, speaks for itself. The standing and character of its signers give it a status which Republican voters cannot ignore."

The letter followed. It prayed Mr. Crewe, in the name of decency and good government, to carry the standard of honest men to victory. Too long had a proud and sovereign State writhed under the heel of an all-devouring corporation! Too long had the Northeastern Railroads elected, for their own selfish ends, governors and legislatures and controlled railroad commissions The spirit of 1776 was abroad in the land. It was eminently fitting that the Honourable Humphrey Crewe of Leith, who had dared to fling down the gauntlet in the face of an arrogant power, should be the leader of the plain people, to recover the rights which had been wrested from them. Had he not given the highest proof that he had the people's interests at heart? He was clearly a man who "did things."

At this point Austen looked up and smiled.

"Tom," he asked, "has it struck you that this is written in the same inimitable style as a part of the message of the Honourable Asa Gray?"

Tom slapped his knee.

"That's exactly what I said I!" he cried. "Tooting wrote it. I'll swear to it."

"And the twenty prominent citizens—do you know any of 'em, Tom?"

“Well,” said Tom, in delighted appreciation, “I’ve heard of three of ’em, and that’s more than any man I’ve met can boast of. Ed Dubois cuts my hair when I go to Kingston. He certainly is a prominent citizen in the fourth ward. Jim Kendall runs the weekly newspaper in Grantley—I understood it was for sale. Bill Clements is prominent enough up at Groveton. He wanted a trolley franchise some years ago, you remember.”

“And didn’t get it.”

Page 61

Mr. Crewe's answer was characteristically terse and businesslike. The overwhelming compliment of a request from such gentlemen must be treated in the nature of a command—and yet he had hesitated for several weeks, during which period he had cast about for another more worthy of the honour. Then followed a somewhat technical and (to the lay mind) obscure recapitulation of the iniquities the Northeastern was committing, which proved beyond peradventure that Mr. Crewe knew what he was talking about; such phrases as “rolling stock,” “milking the road”—an imposing array of facts and figures. Mr. Crewe made it plain that he was a man who “did things.” And if it were the will of Heaven that he became governor, certain material benefits would as inevitably ensue as the day follows the night. The list of the material benefits, for which there was a crying need, bore a strong resemblance to a summary of the worthy measures upon which Mr. Crewe had spent so much time and labour in the last Legislature.

Austen laid down the paper, leaned back in his chair, and thrust his hands in his pockets, and with a little vertical pucker in his forehead, regarded his friend.

“What do you think of that?” Tom demanded. “Now, what do you think of it?”

“I think,” said Austen, “that he'll scare the life out of the Northeastern before he gets through with them.”

“What!” exclaimed Tom, incredulously. He had always been willing to accept Austen's judgment on men and affairs, but this was pretty stiff. “What makes you think so?”

“Well, people don't know Mr. Crewe, for one thing. And they are beginning to have a glimmer of light upon the Railroad.”

“Do you mean to say he has a chance for the nomination?”

“I don't know. It depends upon how much the voters find out about him before the convention.”

Tom sat down rather heavily.

“You could have been governor,” he complained reproachfully, “by raising your hand. You've got more ability than any man in the State, and you sit here gazin' at that mountain and lettin' a darned fool millionaire walk in ahead of you.”

Austen rose and crossed over to Mr. Gaylord's chair, and, his hands still in his pockets, looked down thoughtfully into that gentleman's square and rugged face.

“Tom,” he said, “there's no use discussing this delusion of yours, which seems to be the only flaw in an otherwise sane character. We must try to keep it from the world.”

Tom laughed in spite of himself.

"I'm hanged if I understand you," he declared, "but I never did. You think Crewe and Tooting may carry off the governorship, and you don't seem to care."

"I do care," said Austen, briefly. He went to the window and stood for a moment with his back to his friend, staring across at Sawanec. Tom had learned by long experience to respect these moods, although they were to him inexplicable. At length Austen turned.

Page 62

"Tom," he said, "can you come in to-morrow about this time? If you can't, I'll go to your office if you will let me know when you'll be in. There's a matter of business I want to talk to you about."

Tom pulled out his watch.

"I've got to catch a train for Mercer," he replied, "but I will come in in the morning and see you."

A quarter of an hour later Austen went down the narrow wooden flight of stairs into the street, and as he emerged from the entry almost bumped into the figure of a young man that was hurrying by. He reached out and grasped the young man by the collar, pulling him up so short as almost to choke him.

"Hully gee!" cried the young man whose progress had been so rudely arrested. "Great snakes!" (A cough.) "What're you tryin' to do? Oh," (apologetically) "it's you, Aust. Let me go. This day ain't long enough for me. Let me go."

Austen kept his grip and regarded Mr. Tooting thoughtfully.

"I want to speak to you, Ham," he said; "better come upstairs."

"Say, Aust, on the dead, I haven't time. Pardriff's waitin' for some copy now."

"Just for a minute, Ham," said Austen; "I won't keep you long."

"Leggo my collar, then, if you don't want to choke me. Say, I don't believe you know how strong you are."

"I didn't know you wore a collar any more, Ham," said Austen.

Mr. Tooting grinned in appreciation of this joke.

"You must think you've got one of your Wild West necktie parties on," he gasped. "I'll come. But if you love me, don't let the boys in Hilary's office see me."

"They use the other entry," answered Austen, indicating that Mr. Tooting should go up first—which he did. When they reached the office Austen shut the door, and stood with his back against it, regarding Mr. Tooting thoughtfully.

At first Mr. Tooting returned the look with interest swagger—aggression would be too emphatic, and defiance would not do. His was the air, perhaps, of Talleyrand when he said, "There seems to be an inexplicable something in me that brings bad luck to governments that neglect me:" the air of a man who has made a brilliant coup d'etat. All day he had worn that air—since five o'clock in the morning, when he had sprung

from his pallet. The world might now behold the stuff that was in Hamilton Tooting. Power flowed out of his right hand from an inexhaustible reservoir which he had had the sagacity to tap, and men leaped into action at his touch. He, the once, neglected, had the destiny of a State in his keeping.

Gradually, however, it became for some strange reason difficult to maintain that aggressive stare upon Austen Vane, who shook his head slowly.

“Ham, why did you do it?” he asked.

“Why?” cried Mr. Tooting, fiercely biting back a treasonable smile. “Why not? Ain’t he the best man in the State to make a winner? Hasn’t he got the money, and the brains, and the get-up-and-git? Why, it’s a sure thing. I’ve been around the State, and I know the sentiment. We’ve got ’em licked, right now. What have you got against it? You’re on our side, Aust.”

Page 63

"Ham," said Austen, "are you sure you have the names and addresses of those twenty prominent citizens right, so that any voter may go out and find 'em?"

"What are you kidding about, Aust?" retorted Mr. Tooting, biting back the smile again. "Say, you never get down to business with me. You don't blame Crewe for comin' out, do you?"

"I don't see how Mr. Crewe could have resisted such an overwhelming demand," said Austen. "He couldn't shirk such a duty. He says so himself, doesn't he?"

"Oh, go on!" exclaimed Mr. Tooting, who was not able to repress a grin.

"The letter of the twenty must have been a great surprise to Mr. Crewe. He says he was astonished. Did the whole delegation go up to Leith, or only a committee?"

Mr. Tooting's grin had by this time spread all over his face—a flood beyond his control.

"Well, there's no use puffin' it on with you, Aust. That was done pretty slick, that twenty-prominent-citizen business, if I do say it myself. But you don't know that feller Crewe—he's a full-size cyclone when he gets started, and nothin' but a range of mountains could stop him."

"It must be fairly exciting to—ride him, Ham."

"Say, but it just is. Kind of breathless, though. He ain't very well known around the State, and he was bound to run—and I just couldn't let him come out without any clothes on."

"I quite appreciate your delicacy, Ham."

Mr. Tooting's face took on once more a sheepish look, which changed almost immediately to one of disquietude.

"Say, I'll come back again some day and kid with you. I've got to go, Aust—that's straight. This is my busy day."

"Wouldn't you gain some time if you left by the window?" Austen asked.

At this suggestion Mr. Tooting's expressive countenance showed genuine alarm.

"Say, you ain't going to put up any Wild West tricks on me, are you? I heard you nearly flung Tom Gaylord out of the one in the other room."

"If this were a less civilized place, Ham, I'd initiate you into what is known as the bullet dance. As it is, I have a great mind to speed you on your way by assisting you downstairs."

Mr. Hamilton Tooting became ashy pale.

"I haven't done anything to you, Aust. Say—you didn't—?" He did not finish.

Terrified by something in Austen's eye, which may or may not have been there at the time of the Blodgett incident, Mr. Tooting fled without completing his inquiry. And, his imagination being great, he reproduced for himself such a vivid sensation of a bullet-hole in his spine that he missed his footing near the bottom, and measured his length in the entry. Such are the humiliating experiences which sometimes befall the Talleyrands—but rarely creep into their biographies.

Austen, from the top of the stairway, saw this catastrophe, but did not smile. He turned on his heel, and made his way slowly around the corner of the passage into the other part of the building, and paused at the open doorway of the Honourable Hilary's outer office. By the street windows sat the Honourable Brush Bascom, sphinx-like, absorbing wisdom and clouds of cigar smoke which emanated from the Honourable Nat Billings.

Page 64

"Howdy, Austen?" said Brush, genially, lookin' for the Honourable Hilary? Flint got up from New York this morning, and sent for him a couple of hours ago. He'll be back at two."

"Have you read the pronunciamento?" inquired Mr. Billings. "Say, Austen, knowin' your sentiments, I wonder you weren't one of the twenty prominent citizens."

"All you anti-railroad fellers ought to get together," Mr. Bascom suggested; "you've got us terrified since your friend from Leith turned the light of publicity on us this morning. I hear Ham Tooting's been in and made you an offer."

News travels fast in Ripton.

"Austen kicked him downstairs," said Jimmy Towle, the office boy, who had made a breathless entrance during the conversation, and felt it to be the psychological moment to give vent to the news with which he was bursting.

"Is that straight?" Mr. Billings demanded. He wished he had done it himself. "Is that straight?" he repeated, but Austen had gone.

"Of course it's straight," said Jimmy Towle, vigorously. A shrewd observer of human nature, he had little respect for Senator Billings. "Ned Johnson saw him pick himself up at the foot of Austen's stairway."

The Honourable Brush's agate eyes caught the light, and he addressed Mr. Billings in a voice which, by dint of long training, only carried a few feet.

"There's the man the Northeastern's got to look out for," he said. "The Humphrey Crewes don't count. But if Austen Vane ever gets started, there'll be trouble. Old man Flint's got some such idea as that, too. I overheard him givin' it to old Hilary once, up at Fairview, and Hilary said he couldn't control him. I guess nobody else can control him. I wish I'd seen him kick Ham downstairs."

"I'd like to kick him downstairs," said Mr. Billings, savagely biting off another cigar.

"I guess you hadn't better try it, Nat," said Mr. Bascom.

Meanwhile Austen had returned to his own office, and shut the door. His luncheon hour came and went, and still he sat by the open window gazing out across the teeming plain, and up the green valley whence the Blue came singing from the highlands. In spirit he followed the water to Leith, and beyond, where it swung in a wide circle and hurried between wondrous hills like those in the backgrounds of the old Italians: hills of close-cropped pastures, dotted with shapely sentinel oaks and maples which cast sharp, rounded shadows on the slopes at noonday; with thin fantastic elms on the gentle sky-lines, and forests massed here and there—silent, impenetrable hills from a

story-book of a land of mystery. The river coursed between them on its rocky bed, flinging its myriad gems to the sun. This was the Vale of the Blue, and she had touched it with meaning for him, and gone.

Page 65

He drew from his coat a worn pocket-book, and from the pocket-book a letter. It was dated in New York in February, and though he knew it by heart he found a strange solace in the pain which it gave him to reread it. He stared at the monogram on the paper, which seemed so emblematic of her; for he had often reflected that her things—even such minute insignia as this—belonged to her. She impressed them not only with her taste, but with her character. The entwined letters, Y. F., of the design were not, he thought, of a meaningless, frivolous daintiness, but stood for something. Then he read the note again. It was only a note.

“My dear Mr. Vane: I have come back to find my mother ill, and I am taking her to France. We are sailing, unexpectedly, to-morrow, there being a difficulty about a passage later. I cannot refrain from sending you a line before I go to tell you that I did you an injustice. You will no doubt think it strange that I should write to you, but I shall be troubled until it is off my mind. I am ashamed to have been so stupid. I think I know now why you would not consent to be a candidate, and I respect you for it.

“Sincerely your friend,

“Victoria Flint.”

What did she know? What had she found out? Had she seen her father and talked to him? That was scarcely possible, since her mother had been ill and she had left at once. Austen had asked himself these questions many times, and was no nearer the solution. He had heard nothing of her since, and he told himself that perhaps it was better, after all, that she was still away. To know that she was at Fairview, and not to be able to see her, were torture indeed.

The note was formal enough, and at times he pretended to be glad that it was. How could it be otherwise? And why should he interpret her interest in him in other terms than those in which it was written? She had a warm heart—that he knew; and he felt for her sake that he had no right to wish for more than the note expressed. After several unsuccessful attempts; he had answered it in a line, “I thank you, and I understand.”

CHAPTER XVI

THE “BOOK OF ARGUMENTS” IS OPENED

The Honourable Hilary Vane returned that day from Fairview in no very equable frame of mind. It is not for us to be present at the Councils on the Palatine when the “Book of Arguments” is opened, and those fitting the occasion are chosen and sent out to the faithful who own printing-presses and free passes. The Honourable Hilary Vane bore away from the residence of his emperor a great many memoranda in an envelope, and he must have sighed as he drove through the leafy roads for Mr. Hamilton Tooting, with

his fertile mind and active body. A year ago, and Mr. Tooting would have seized these memoranda of majesty, and covered their margins with

Page 66

new suggestions: Mr. Tooting, on occasions, had even made additions to the “Book of Arguments” itself—additions which had been used in New York and other States with telling effect against Mr. Crewes there. Mr. Tooting knew by heart the time of going to press of every country newspaper which had passes (in exchange for advertising!). It was two o’clock when the Honourable Hilary reached his office, and by three all the edicts would have gone forth, and the grape-shot and canister would have been on their way to demolish the arrogance of this petty Lord of Leith..

“Tooting’s a dangerous man, Vane. You oughtn’t to have let him go,” Mr. Flint had said. “I don’t care a snap of my finger for the other fellow.”

How Mr. Tooting’s ears would have burned, and how his blood would have sung with pride to have heard himself called dangerous by the president of the Northeastern!

He who, during all the valuable years of his services, had never had a sign that that potentate was cognizant of his humble existence.

The Honourable Brush Bascom, as we know, was a clever man; and although it had never been given him to improve on the “Book of Arguments,” he had ideas of his own. On reading Mr. Crewe’s defiance that morning, he had, with characteristic promptitude and a desire to be useful, taken the first train out of Putnam for Ripton, to range himself by the side of the Honourable Hilary in the hour of need. The Feudal System anticipates, and Mr. Bascom did not wait for a telegram.

On the arrival of the chief counsel from Fairview other captains had put in an appearance, but Mr. Bascom alone was summoned, by a nod, into the private office. What passed between them seems too sacred to write about. The Honourable Hilary would take one of the slips from the packet and give it to Mr. Bascom.

“If that were recommended, editorially, to the Hull Mercury, it might serve to clear away certain misconceptions in that section.

“Certain,” Mr. Bascom would reply.

“It has been thought wise,” the Honourable Hilary continued, “to send an annual to the Groveton News. Roberts, his name is. Suppose you recommend to Mr. Roberts that an editorial on this subject would be timely.”

Slip number two. Mr. Bascom marks it ‘Roberts.’ Subject: “What would the State do without the Railroad?”

“And Grenville, being a Prohibition centre, you might get this worked up for the Advertiser there.”

Mr. Bascom's agate eyes are full of light as he takes slip number three. Subject: "Mr. Humphrey Crewe has the best-stocked wine cellar in the State, and champagne every night for dinner." Slip number four, taken direct from the second chapter of the "Book of Arguments": "Mr. Crewe is a reformer because he has been disappointed in his inordinate ambitions," *etc.* Slip number five: "Mr. Crewe is a summer resident, with a house in New York," *etc.*, *etc.*

Page 67

Slip number six, "Book of Arguments," paragraph, chapter: "Humphrey Crewe, Defamer of our State." Assigned, among others, to the Ripton Record.

"Paul Pardriff went up to Leith to-day," said Mr. Bascom.

"Go to see him," replied the Honourable Hilary. "I've been thinking for some time that the advertising in the Ripton Record deserves an additional annual."

Mr. Bascom, having been despatched on this business, and having voluntarily assumed control of the Empire Bureau of Publication, the chief counsel transacted other necessary legal business with State Senator Billings and other gentlemen who were waiting. At three o'clock word was sent in that Mr. Austen Vane was outside, and wished to speak with his father as soon as the latter was at leisure. Whereupon the Honourable Hilary shooed out the minor clients, leaned back in his chair, and commanded that his son be admitted.

"Judge," said Austen, as he closed the door behind him, "I don't want to bother you."

The Honourable Hilary regarded his son for a moment fixedly out of his little eyes.

"Humph" he said.

Austen looked down at his father. The Honourable Hilary's expression was not one which would have aroused, in the ordinary man who beheld him, a feeling of sympathy or compassion: it was the impenetrable look with which he had faced his opponents for many years. But Austen felt compassion.

"Perhaps I'd better come in another time—when you are less busy," he suggested.

"Who said I was busy?" inquired the Honourable Hilary.

Austen smiled a little sadly. One would have thought, by that smile, that the son was the older and wiser of the two.

"I didn't mean to cast any reflection on your habitual industry, Judge," he said.

"Humph!" exclaimed Mr. Vane. "I've got more to do than sit in the window and read poetry, if that's what you mean."

"You never learned how to enjoy life, did you, Judge?" he said. "I don't believe you ever really had a good time. Own up."

"I've had sterner things to think about. I've had 'to earn my living —and give you a good time."



"I appreciate it," said Austen.

"Humph! Sometimes I think you don't show it a great deal," the Honourable Hilary answered.

"I show it as far as I can, Judge," said his son. "I can't help the way I was made."

"I try to take account of that," said the Honourable Hilary.

Austen laughed.

"I'll drop in to-morrow morning," he said.

But the Honourable Hilary pointed to a chair on the other side of the desk.

"Sit down. To-day's as good as to-morrow," he remarked, with sententious significance, characteristically throwing the burden of explanation on the visitor.

Austen found the opening unexpectedly difficult. He felt that this was a crisis in their relations, and that it had come at an unfortunate hour.

Page 68

"Judge," he said, trying to control the feeling that threatened to creep into his voice, "we have jogged along for some years pretty peaceably, and I hope you won't misunderstand what I'm going to say."

The Honourable Hilary grunted.

"It was at your request that I went into the law. I have learned to like that profession. I have stuck to it as well as my wandering, Bohemian nature will permit, and while I do not expect you necessarily to feel any pride in such progress as I have made, I have hoped—that you might feel an interest."

The Honourable Hilary grunted again.

"I suppose I am by nature a free-lance," Austen continued. "You were good enough to acknowledge the force of my argument when I told you it would be best for me to strike out for myself. And I suppose it was inevitable, such being the case, and you the chief counsel for the Northeastern Railroads, that I should at some time or another be called upon to bring suits against your client. It would have been better, perhaps, if I had not started to practise in this State. I did so from what I believe was a desire common to both of us to—to live together."

The Honourable Hilary reached for his Honey Dew, but he did not speak.

"To live together," Austen repeated. "I want to say that, if I had gone away, I believe I should always have regretted the fact." He paused, and took from his pocket a slip of paper. "I made up my mind from the start that I would always be frank with you. In spite of my desire to amass riches, there are some suits against the Northeastern which I have—somewhat quixotically—refused. Here is a section of the act which permitted the consolidation of the Northeastern Railroads. You are no doubt aware of its existence."

The Honourable Hilary took the slip of paper in his hand and stared at it. "The rates for fares and freights existing at the time of the passage of this act shall not be increased on the roads leased or united under it." What his sensations were when he read it no man might have read in his face, but his hand trembled a little, and along silence ensued before he gave it back to his son with the simple comment—"Well?"

"I do not wish to be understood to ask your legal opinion, although you probably know that lumber rates have been steadily raised, and if a suit under that section were successful the Gaylord Lumber Company could recover a very large sum of money from the Northeastern Railroads," said Austen. "Having discovered the section, I believe it to be my duty to call it to the attention of the Gaylords. What I wish to know is, whether my taking the case would cause you any personal inconvenience or distress? If so, I will refuse it."

“No,” answered the Honourable Hilary, “it won’t. Bring suit. Much use it’ll be. Do you expect they can recover under that section?”

“I think it is worth trying,” said Austen.

Page 69

"Why didn't somebody try it before?" asked the Honourable Hilary.

"See here, Judge, I wish you'd let me out of an argument about it. Suit is going to be brought, whether I bring it or another man. If you would prefer for any reason that I shouldn't bring it—I won't. I'd much rather resign as counsel for the Gaylords—and I am prepared to do so."

"Bring suit," answered the Honourable Hilary, quickly, "bring suit by all means. And now's your time. This seems to be a popular season for attacking the property which is the foundation of the State's prosperity." ("Book of Arguments," chapter 3.)

In spite of himself, Austen smiled again. Long habit had accustomed Hilary Vane to put business considerations before family ties; and this habit had been the secret of his particular success. And now, rather than admit by the least sign the importance of his son's discovery of the statute (which he had had in mind for many years, and to which he had more than once, by the way, called Mr. Flint's attention), the Honourable Hilary deliberately belittled the matter as part and parcel of the political tactics against the Northeastern.

Sears caused by differences of opinion are soon healed; words count for nothing, and it is the soul that attracts or repels. Mr. Vane was not analytical, he had been through a harassing day, and he was unaware that it was not Austen's opposition, but Austen's smile, which set the torch to his anger. Once, shortly after his marriage, when he had come home in wrath after a protracted quarrel with Mr. Tredway over the orthodoxy of the new minister, in the middle of his indignant recital of Mr. Tredway's unwarranted attitude, Sarah Austen had smiled. The smile had had in it, to be sure, nothing of conscious superiority, but it had been utterly inexplicable to Hilary Vane. He had known for the first time what it was to feel murder in the heart, and if he had not rushed out of the room, he was sure he would have strangled her. After all, the Hilary Vanes of this world cannot reasonably be expected to perceive the humour in their endeavours.

Now the son's smile seemed the reincarnation of the mother's. That smile was in itself a refutation of motive on Austen's part which no words could have made more emphatic; it had in it (unconsciously, too) compassion for and understanding of the Honourable Hilary's mood and limitations. Out of the corner of his mental vision—without grasping it—the Honourable Hilary perceived this vaguely. It was the smile in which a parent privately indulges when a child kicks his toy locomotive because its mechanism is broken. It was the smile of one who, forgetful of the scheme of the firmament and the spinning planets, will not be moved to anger by him who sees but the four sides of a pit.

Hilary Vane grew red around the eyes—a danger signal of the old days.

Page 70

"Take the suit," he said. "If you don't, I'll make it known all over the State that you started it. I'll tell Mr. Flint to-morrow. Take it, do you hear me? You ask me if I have any pride in you. I answer, yes. I'd like to see what you can do. I've done what I could for you, and now I wash my hands of you. Go,—ruin yourself if you want to. You've always been headed that way, and there's no use trying to stop you. You don't seem to have any notion of decency or order, or any idea of the principle on which this government was based. Attack property destroy it. So much the better for you and your kind. Join the Humphrey Crewes—you belong with 'em. Give those of us who stand for order and decency as much trouble as you can. Brand us as rascals trying to enrich ourselves with politics, and proclaim yourselves saints nobly striving to get back the rights of the people. If you don't bring that suit, I tell you I'll give you the credit for it—and I mean what I say."

Austen got to his feet. His own expression, curiously enough, had not changed to one of anger. His face had set, but his eyes held the look that seemed still to express compassion, and what he felt was a sorrow that went to the depths of his nature. What he had so long feared—what he knew they had both feared—had come at last.

"Good-by, Judge," he said.

Hilary Vane stared at him dumbly. His anger had not cooled, his eyes still flamed, but he suddenly found himself bereft of speech. Austen put his hand on his father's shoulder, and looked down silently into his face. But Hilary was stiff as in a rigour, expressionless save for the defiant red in his eye.

"I don't think you meant all that, Judge, and I don't intend to hold it against you."

Still Hilary stared, his lips in the tight line which was the emblem of his character, his body rigid. He saw his son turn and walk to the door, and turn again with his handle on the knob, and Hilary did not move. The door closed, and still he sat there, motionless, expressionless.

Austen was hailed by those in the outer office, but he walked through them as though the place were empty. Rumours sprang up behind him of which he was unconscious; the long-expected quarrel had come; Austen had joined the motley ranks of the rebels under Mr. Crewe. Only the office boy, Jimmy Towle, interrupted the jokes that were flying by repeating, with dogged vehemence, "I tell you it ain't so. Austen kicked Ham downstairs. Ned Johnson saw him." Nor was it on account of this particular deed that Austen was a hero in Jimmy's eyes.

Page 71

Austen, finding himself in the square, looked at his watch. It was four o'clock. He made his way under the maples to the house in Hanover Street, halted for a moment contemplatively before the familiar classic pillars of its porch, took a key from his pocket, and (unprecedented action!) entered by the front door. Climbing to the attic, he found two valises—one of which he had brought back from Pepper County—and took them to his own room. They held, with a little crowding, most of his possessions, including a photograph of Sarah Austen, which he left on the bureau to the last. Once or twice he paused in his packing to gaze at the face, striving to fathom the fleeting quality of her glance which the photograph had so strangely caught. In that glance nature had stamped her enigma—for Sarah Austen was a child of nature. Hers was the gentle look of wild things—but it was more; it was the understanding of—the unwritten law of creation, the law by which the flowers grow, and wither; the law by which the animal springs upon its prey, and, unerring, seeks its mate; the law of the song of the waters, and the song of the morning stars; the law that permits evil and pain and dumb, incomprehensible suffering; the law that floods at sunset the mountain lands with colour and the soul with light; and the law that rends the branches in the blue storm. Of what avail was anger against it, or the puny rage of man? Hilary Vane, not recognizing it, had spent his force upon it, like a hawk against a mountain wall, but Austen looked at his mother's face and understood. In it was not the wisdom of creeds and cities, but the unworldly wisdom which comprehends and condones.

His packing finished, with one last glance at the room Austen went downstairs with his valises and laid them on the doorstep. Then he went to the stable and harnessed Pepper, putting into the buggy his stable blanket and halter and currycomb, and, driving around to the front of the house, hitched the horse at the stone post, and packed the valises in the back of the buggy. After that he walked slowly to the back of the house and looked in at the kitchen window. Euphrasia, her thin arms bare to the elbow, was bending over a wash-tub. He spoke her name, and as she lifted her head a light came into her face which seemed to make her young again. She dried her hands hastily on her apron as she drew towards him. He sprang through the window, and patted her on the back—his usual salutation. And as she raised her eyes to his (those ordinarily sharp eyes of Euphrasia's), they shone with an admiration she had accorded to no other human being since he had come into the world. Terms of endearment she had, characteristically, never used, she threw her soul into the sounding of his name.

"Off to the hills, Austen? I saw you a-harnessing of Pepper."

"Phrasie," he said, still patting her, "I'm going to the country for a while."

"To the country?" she repeated.

Page 72

"To stay on a farm for a sort of vacation."

Her face brightened.

"Goin' to take a real vacation, be you?"

He laughed.

"Oh, I don't have to work very hard, Phrasie. You know I get out a good deal. I just thought—I just thought I'd like to—sleep in the country—for a while."

"Well," answered Euphrasia, "I guess if you've took the notion, you've got to go. It was that way with your mother before you. I've seen her leave the house on a bright Sabbath half an hour before meetin' to be gone the whole day, and Hilary and all the ministers in town couldn't stop her."

"I'll drop in once in a while to see you, Phrasie. I'll be at Jabe Jenney's."

"Jabe's is not more than three or four miles from Flint's place," Euphrasia remarked.

"I've thought of that," said Austen.

"You'd thought of it!"

Austen coloured.

"The distance is nothing," he said quickly, "with Pepper."

"And you'll come and see me?" asked Euphrasia.

"If you'll do something for me," he said.

"I always do what you want, Austen. You know I'm not able to refuse you."

He laid his hands on her shoulders.

"You'll promise?" he asked.

"I'll promise," said Euphrasia, solemnly.

He was silent for a moment, looking down at her.

"I want you to promise to stay here and take care of the Judge."

Fright crept into her eyes, but his own were smiling, reassuring.

“Take care of him!” she cried, the very mention of Hilary raising the pitch of her voice. “I guess I’ll have to. Haven’t I took care of him nigh on forty years, and small thanks and recompense I get for it except when you’re here. I’ve wore out my life takin’ care of him” (more gently). “What do you mean by makin’ me promise such a thing, Austen?”

“Well,” said Austen, slowly, “the Judge is worried now. Things are not going as smoothly with him as usual.”

“Money?” demanded Euphrasia. “He ain’t lost money, has he?”

A light began to dance in Austen’s eyes in spite of the weight within him.

“Now, Phrasie,” he said, lifting her chin a little, “you know you don’t care any more about money than I do.”

“Lord help me,” she exclaimed, “Lord help me if I didn’t! And as long as you don’t care for it, and no sense can be knocked into your head about it, I hope you’ll marry somebody that does know the value of it. If Hilary was to lose what he has now, before it comes rightly to you, he’d ought to be put in jail.”

Austen laughed, and shook his head.

“Phrasie, the Lord did you a grave injustice when he didn’t make you a man, but I suppose he’ll give you a recompense hereafter. No, I believe I am safe in saying that the Judge’s securities are still secure. Not that I really know—or care—” (shakes of the head from Euphrasia). “Poor old Judge! Worse things than finance are troubling him now.”

Page 73

"Not a woman!" cried Euphrasia, horror-stricken at the very thought. "He hasn't took it into his head after all these years—"

"No," said Austen, laughing, "no, no. It's not quite as bad as that, but it's pretty bad."

"In Heaven's name, what is it?" she demanded. "Reformers," said Austen.

"Reformers?" she repeated. "What might they be?"

"Well," answered Austen, "you might call them a new kind of caterpillar —only they feed on corporations instead of trees."

Euphrasia shook her head vigorously.

"Go 'long," she exclaimed. "When you talk like that I never can follow you, Austen. If Hilary has any worries, I guess he brought 'em on himself. I never knew him to fail."

"Ambitious and designing persons are making trouble for his railroad."

"Well, I never took much stock in that railroad," said Euphrasia, with emphasis. "I never was on it but an engine gave out, and the cars was jammed, and it wasn't less than an hour late. And then they're eternally smashin' folks or runnin' 'em down. You served 'em right when you made 'em pay that Meader man six thousand dollars, and I told Hilary so." She paused, and stared at Austen fixedly as a thought came into her head. "You ain't leavin' him because of this trouble, are you, Austen?"

"Phrasie," he said, "I—I don't want to quarrel with him now. I think it would be easy to quarrel with him."

"You mean him quarrel with you," returned Euphrasia. "I'd like to see him! If he did, it wouldn't take me long to pack up and leave."

"That's just it. I don't want that to happen. And I've had a longing to go out and pay a little visit to Jabe up in the hills, and drive his colts for him. You see," he said, "I've got a kind of affection for the Judge."

Euphrasia looked at him, and her lips trembled.

"He don't deserve it," she declared, "but I suppose he's your father."

"He can't get out of that," said Austen.

"I'd like to see him try it," said Euphrasia. "Come in soon, Austen," she whispered, "come in soon."

She stood on the lawn and watched him as he drove away, and he waved good-by to her over the hood of the buggy. When he was out of sight she lifted her head, gave her eyes a vigorous brush with her checked apron, and went back to her washing.

It was not until Euphrasia had supper on the table that Hilary Vane came home, and she glanced at him sharply as he took his usual seat. It is a curious fact that it is possible for two persons to live together for more than a third of a century, and at the end of that time understand each other little better than at the beginning. The sole bond between Euphrasia and Hilary was that of Sarah Austen and her son. Euphrasia never knew when Hilary was tired, or when he was cold, or hungry, or cross, although she provided for all these emergencies. Her service to him was unflagging, but he had never been under the slightest delusion that it was not an inheritance from his wife. There must have been some affection between Mr. Vane and his housekeeper, hidden away in the strong boxes of both but up to the present this was only a theory—not quite as probable as that about the inhabitants of Mars.

Page 74

He ate his supper to-night with his usual appetite, which had always been sparing; and he would have eaten the same amount if the Northeastern Railroads had been going into the hands of a receiver the next day. Often he did not exchange a word with Euphrasia between home-coming and bed-going, and this was apparently to be one of these occasions. After supper he went, as usual, to sit on the steps of his porch, and to cut his piece of Honey Dew, which never varied a milligram. Nine o'clock struck, and Euphrasia, who had shut up the back of the house, was on her way to bed with her lamp in her hand, when she came face to face with him in the narrow passageway.

"Where's Austen?" he asked.

Euphrasia halted. The lamp shook, but she raised it to the level of his eyes.

"Don't you know?" she demanded.

"No," he said, with unparalleled humility.

She put down the lamp on the little table that stood beside her.

"He didn't tell you he was a-goin'?"

"No," said Hilary.

"Then how did you know he wasn't just buggy-ridin'?" she said.

Hilary Vane was mute.

"You've be'n to his room!" she exclaimed. "You've seen his things are gone!"

He confessed it by his silence. Then, with amazing swiftness and vigour for one of her age, Euphrasia seized him by the arms and shook him.

"What have you done to him?" she cried; "what have you done to him? You sent him off. You've never understood him—you've never behaved like a father to him. You ain't worthy to have him." She flung herself away and stood facing Hilary at a little distance. What a fool I was! What a fool! I might have known it, and I promised him."

"Promised him?" Hilary repeated. The shaking, the vehemence and anger, of Euphrasia seemed to have had no effect whatever on the main trend of his thoughts.

"Where has he gone?"

"You can find out for yourself," she retorted bitterly. "I wish on your account it was to China. He came here this afternoon, as gentle as ever, and packed up his things, and said he was goin' away because you was worried. Worried!" she exclaimed scornfully.



“His worry and his trouble don’t count—but yours. And he made me promise to stay with you. If it wasn’t for him,” she cried, picking up the lamp, “I’d leave you this very night.”

She swept past him, and up the narrow stairway to her bedroom.

CHAPTER XVII

BUSY DAYS AT WEDDERBURN

There is no blast so powerful, so withering, as the blast of ridicule. Only the strongest men can withstand it, only reformers who are such in deed, and not alone in name, can snap their fingers at it, and liken it to the crackling of thorns under a pot. Confucius and Martin Luther must have been ridiculed, Mr. Crewe reflected, and although he did not have time to assure himself on these historical points,

Page 75

the thought stayed him. Sixty odd weekly newspapers, filled with arguments from the Book, attacked him all at once; and if by chance he should have missed the best part of this flattering personal attention, the editorials which contained the most spice were copied at the end of the week into the columns of his erstwhile friend, the State Tribune, now the organ of that mysterious personality, the Honourable Adam B. Hunt. 'Et tu, Brute!'

Moreover, Mr. Peter Pardriff had something of his own to say. Some gentlemen of prominence (not among the twenty signers of the new Declaration of Independence) had been interviewed by the Tribune reporter on the subject of Mr. Crewe's candidacy. Here are some of the answers, duly tabulated.

"Negligible."—Congressman Fairplay.

"One less vote for the Honourable Adam B. Hunt."—The Honourable Jacob Botcher.

"A monumental farce."—Ex-Governor Broadbent.

"Who is Mr. Crewe?"—Senator Whitredge. (Ah ha! Senator, this want shall be supplied, at least.)

"I have been very busy. I do not know what candidates are in the field."—Mr. Augustus P. Flint, president of the Northeastern Railroads. (The unkindest cut of all!)

"I have heard that a Mr. Crewe is a candidate, but I do not know much about him. They tell me he is a summer resident at Leith."—The Honourable Hilary Vane.

"A millionaire's freak—not to be taken seriously.—State Senator Nathaniel Billings."

The State Tribune itself seemed to be especially interested in the past careers of the twenty signers. Who composed this dauntless band, whose members had arisen with remarkable unanimity and martyr's zeal in such widely scattered parts of the State? Had each been simultaneously inspired with the same high thought, and—more amazing still—with the idea of the same peerless leader? The Tribune modestly ventured the theory that Mr. Crewe had appeared to each of the twenty in a dream, with a flaming sword pointing to the steam of the dragon's breath. Or, perhaps, a star had led each of the twenty to Leith. (This likening of Mr. H—n T—g to a star caused much merriment among that gentleman's former friends and acquaintances.) The Tribune could not account for this phenomenon by any natural laws, and was forced to believe that the thing was a miracle—in which case it behooved the Northeastern Railroads to read the handwriting on the wall. Unless—unless the twenty did not exist! Unless the whole thing were a joke! The Tribune remembered a time when a signed statement, purporting to come from a certain Mrs. Amanda P. Pillow, of 22 Blair Street, Newcastle,

had appeared, to the effect that three bottles of Rand's Peach Nectar had cured her of dropsy. On investigation there was no Blair Street, and Mrs. Amanda P. Pillow was as yet unborn. The one sure thing about the statement was that Rand's Peach Nectar could be had, in large or small quantities, as desired. And the Tribune was prepared to state; on its own authority, that a Mr. Humphrey Crewe did exist, and might reluctantly consent to take the nomination for the governorship. In industry and zeal he was said to resemble the celebrated and lamented Mr. Rand, of the Peach Nectar.

Page 76

Ingratitude merely injures those who are capable of it, although it sometimes produces sadness in great souls. What were Mr. Crewe's feelings when he read this drivel? When he perused the extracts from the "Book of Arguments" which appeared (with astonishing unanimity, too!) in sixty odd weekly newspapers of the State—an assortment of arguments for each county.

"Brush Bascom's doin' that work now," said Mr. Tooting, contemptuously, "and he's doin' it with a shovel. Look here! He's got the same squib in three towns within a dozen miles of each other, the one beginning 'Political conditions in this State are as clean as those of any State in the Union, and the United Northeastern Railroads is a corporation which is, fortunately, above calumny. A summer resident who, to satisfy his lust for office, is rolling to defame—'"

"Yes," interrupted Mr. Crewe, "never mind reading any more of that rot."

"It's botched," said Mr. Tooting, whose artistic soul was jarred. "I'd have put that in Avalon County, and Weave, and Marshall. I know men that take all three of those papers in Putnam."

No need of balloonists to see what the enemy is about, when we have a Mr. Tooting.

"They're stung!" he cried, as he ran rapidly through the bundle of papers—Mr. Crewe having subscribed, with characteristic generosity, to the entire press of the State. "Flint gave 'em out all this stuff about the railroad bein' a sacred institution. You've got 'em on the run right now, Mr. Crewe. You'll notice that, Democrats and Republicans, they've dropped everybody else, that they've all been sicked on to you. They're scared."

"I came to that conclusion some time ago," replied Mr. Crewe, who was sorting over his letters.

"And look there!" exclaimed Mr. Tooting, tearing out a paragraph, "there's the best campaign material we've had yet. Say, I'll bet Flint taken that doddering idiot's pass away for writing that."

Mr. Crewe took the extract, and read:—

"A summer resident of Leith, who is said to be a millionaire many times over, and who had a somewhat farcical career as a legislator last winter, has announced himself as a candidate for the Republican nomination on a platform attacking the Northeastern Railroads. Mr. Humphrey Crewe declares that the Northeastern Railroads govern us. What if they do? Every sober-minded citizen, will agree that they give us a pretty good government. More power to them."

Mr. Crewe permitted himself to smile.

“They are playing into our hands, sure enough. What?”

This is an example of the spirit in which the ridicule and abuse was met.

It was Senator Whitredge—only, last autumn so pleased to meet Mr. Crewe at Mr. Flint’s—who asked the hypocritical question, “Who is Humphrey Crewe?” A biography (in pamphlet form, illustrated,—send your name and address) is being prepared by the invaluable Mr. Tooting, who only sleeps six hours these days. We shall see it presently, when it emerges from that busy hive at Wedderburn.

Page 77

Wedderburn was a hive, sure enough. Not having a balloon ourselves, it is difficult to see all that is going on there; but there can be no mistake (except by the Honourable Hilary's seismograph) that it has become the centre of extraordinary activity. The outside world has paused to draw breath at the spectacle, and members of the metropolitan press are filling the rooms of the Ripton House and adding to the prosperity of its livery-stable. Mr. Crewe is a difficult man to see these days—there are so many visitors at Wedderburn, and the representatives of the metropolitan press hitch their horses and stroll around the grounds, or sit on the porch and converse with gentlemen from various counties of the State who (as the Tribune would put it) have been led by a star to Leith.

On the occasion of one of these gatherings, when Mr. Crewe had been inaccessible for four hours, Mrs. Pomfret drove up in a victoria with her daughter Alice.

"I'm sure I don't know when we're going to see poor dear Humphrey again," said Mrs. Pomfret, examining the group on the porch through her gold-mounted lenses; these awful people are always here when I come. I wonder if they sleep here, in the hammocks and lounging chairs! Alice, we must be very polite to them—so much depends on it."

"I'm always polite, mother," answered Alice, "except when you tell me not to be. The trouble is I never know myself."

The victoria stopped in front of the door, and the irreproachable Waters advanced across the porch.

"Waters," said Mrs. Pomfret, "I suppose Mr. Crewe is too busy to come out."

"I'm afraid so, madam," replied Waters; "there's a line of gentlemen waitin' here" (he eyed them with no uncertain disapproval). and I've positive orders not to disturb him, madam."

"I quite understand, at a time like this," said Mrs. Pomfret, and added, for the benefit of her audience, "when Mr. Crewe has been public-spirited and unselfish enough to undertake such a gigantic task. Tell him Miss Pomfret and I call from time to time because we are so interested, and that the whole of Leith wishes him success."

"I'll tell him, madam," said Waters,

But Mrs. Pomfret did not give the signal for her coachman to drive on. She looked, instead, at the patient gathering.

"Good morning, gentlemen," she said.

"Mother!" whispered Alice, "what are you going to do?"

The gentlemen rose.

"I'm Mrs. Pomfret," she said, as though that simple announcement were quite sufficient,—as it was, for the metropolitan press. Not a man of them who had not seen Mrs. Pomfret's important movements on both sides of the water chronicled. "I take the liberty of speaking to you, as we all seem to be united in a common cause. How is the campaign looking?"

Some of the gentlemen shifted their cigars from one hand to the other, and grinned sheepishly.

"I am so interested," continued Mrs. Pomfret; "it is so unusual in America for a gentleman to be willing to undertake such a thing, to subject himself to low criticism, and to have his pure motives questioned. Mr. Crewe has rare courage—I have always said so. And we are all going to put our shoulder to the wheel, and help him all we can."

Page 78

There was one clever man there who was quick to see his opportunity, and seize it for his newspaper.

“And are you going to help Mr. Crewe in his campaign, Mrs. Pomfret?”

“Most assuredly,” answered Mrs. Pomfret. “Women in this country could do so much if they only would. You know,” she added, in her most winning manner, “you know that a woman can often get a vote when a man can’t.”

“And you, and—other ladies will go around to the public meetings?”

“Why not, my friend; if Mr. Crewe has no objection? and I can conceive of none.”

“You would have an organization of society ladies to help Mr. Crewe?”

“That’s rather a crude way of putting it,” answered Mrs. Pomfret, with her glasses raised judicially. “Women in what you call I society are, I am glad to say, taking an increasing interest in politics. They are beginning to realize that it is a duty.”

“Thank you,” said the reporter; “and now would you mind if I took a photograph of you in your carriage.”

“Oh, mother,” protested Alice, “you won’t let him do that!”

“Be quiet, Alice. Lady Aylestone and the duchess are photographed in every conceivable pose for political purposes. Wymans, just drive around to the other side of the circle.”

The article appeared next day, and gave, as may be imagined, a tremendous impetus to Mr. Crewe’s cause. “A new era in American politics!” “Society to take a hand in the gubernatorial campaign of Millionaire Humphrey Crewe!” “Noted social leader, Mrs. Patterson Pomfret, declares it a duty, and saga that English women have the right idea.” And a photograph of Mrs. Patterson Pomfret herself, in her victoria, occupied a generous portion of the front page.

“What’s all this rubbish about Mrs. Pomfret?” was Mr. Crewe’s grateful comment when he saw it. “I spent two valuable hours with that reporter givin’ him material and statistics, and I can’t find that he’s used a word of it.”

“Never you mind about that,” Mr. Tooting replied. “The more advertising you get, the better, and this shows that the right people are behind you. Mrs. Pomfret’s a smart woman, all right. She knows her job. And here’s more advertising,” he continued, shoving another sheet across the desk, “a fine likeness of you in caricature labelled, ‘Ajax defying the Lightning.’ Who’s Ajax? There was an Italian, a street contractor, with

that name—or something like it—in Newcastle a couple of years ago—in the eighth ward.”

In these days, when false rumours fly apace to the injury of innocent men, it is well to get at the truth, if possible. It is not true that Mr. Paul Pardriff, of the ‘Ripton Record,’ has been to Wedderburn. Mr. Pardriff was getting into a buggy to go—somewhere—when he chanced to meet the Honourable Brush Bascom, and the buggy was sent back to the livery-stable. Mr. Tooting had been to see Mr. Pardriff before the world-quaking announcement of June 7th, and had found

Page 79

Mr. Pardriff a reformer who did not believe that the railroad should run the State. But the editor of the Ripton Record was a man after Emerson's own heart: "a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds"—and Mr. Pardriff did not go to Wedderburn. He went off on an excursion up the State instead, for he had been working too hard; and he returned, as many men do from their travels, a conservative. He listened coldly to Mr. Tooting's impassioned pleas for cleaner politics, until Mr. Tooting revealed the fact that his pockets were full of copy. It seems that a biography was to be printed—a biography which would, undoubtedly, be in great demand; the biography of a public benefactor, illustrated with original photographs and views in the country. Mr. Tooting and Mr. Pardriff both being men of the world, some exceeding plain talk ensued between them, and when two such minds unite, a way out is sure to be found. One can be both a conservative and a radical—if one is clever. There were other columns in Mr. Pardriff's paper besides editorial columns; editorial columns, Mr. Pardriff said, were sacred to his convictions. Certain thumb-worn schedules were referred to. Paul Pardriff, Ripton, agreed to be the publisher of the biography.

The next edition of the Record was an example of what Mr. Emerson meant. Three columns contained extracts of absorbing interest from the forthcoming biography and, on another page, an editorial. The Honourable Humphrey Crewe, of Leith, is an estimable gentleman and a good citizen, whose public endeavours have been of great benefit to the community. A citizen of Avalon County, the Record regrets that it cannot support his candidacy for the Republican gubernatorial nomination. We are not among those who seek to impugn motives, and while giving Mr. Crewe every credit that his charges against the Northeastern Railroads are made in good faith, we beg to differ from him. That corporation is an institution which has stood the test of time, and enriches every year the State treasury by a large sum in taxes. Its management is in safe, conservative hands. No one will deny Mr. Crewe's zeal for the State's welfare, but it must be borne in mind that he is a newcomer in politics, and that conditions, seen from the surface, are sometimes deceptive. We predict for Mr. Crewe a long and useful career, but we do not think that at this time, and on this platform, he will obtain the governorship."

"Moral courage is what the age needs," had been Mr. Crewe's true and sententious remark when he read this editorial. But, bearing in mind a biblical adage, he did not blame Mr. Tooting for his diplomacy. "Send in the next man."

Mr. Tooting opened the study door and glanced over the public-spirited citizens awaiting, on the porch, the pleasure of their leader.

"Come along, Caldwell," said Mr. Tooting. "He wants your report from Kingston. Get a hustle on!"

Mr. Caldwell made his report, received many brief and business-like suggestions, and retired, impressed. Whereupon Mr. Crewe commanded Mr. Tooting to order his automobile—an occasional and rapid spin over the country roads being the only diversion the candidate permitted himself. Wishing to be alone with his thoughts, he did not take Mr. Tooting with him on these excursions.

Page 80

"And by the way," said Mr. Crewe, as he seized the steering wheel a few moments later, "just drop a line to Austen Vane, will you, and tell him I want to see him up here within a day or two. Make an appointment. It has occurred to me that he might be very useful."

Mr. Tooting stood on the driveway watching the cloud of dust settle on the road below. Then he indulged in a long and peculiarly significant whistle through his teeth, rolled his eyes heavenward, and went into the house. He remembered Austen's remark about riding a cyclone.

Mr. Crewe took the Tunbridge road. On his excursion of the day before he had met Mrs. Pomfret, who had held up her hand, and he had protestingly brought the car to a stop.

"Your horses don't frighten," he had said.

"No, but I wanted to speak to you, Humphrey," Mrs. Pomfret had replied; "you are becoming so important that nobody ever has a glimpse of you. I wanted to tell you what an interest we take in this splendid thing you are doing."

"Well," said Mr. Crewe, "it was a plain duty, and nobody else seemed willing to undertake it."

Mrs. Pomfret's eyes had flashed.

"Men of that type are scarce," she answered. "But you'll win. You're the kind of man that wins."

"Oh, yes, I'll win," said Mr. Crewe.

"You're so magnificently sure of yourself," cried Mrs. Pomfret. "Alice is taking such an interest. Every day she asks, 'When is Humphrey going to make his first speech?' You'll let us know in time, won't you?"

"Did you put all that nonsense in the New York Flare?" asked Mr. Crewe.

"Oh, Humphrey, I hope you liked it," cried Mrs. Pomfret. "Don't make the mistake of despising what women can do. They elected the Honourable Billy Aylestone—he said so himself. I'm getting all the women interested."

"Who've you been calling on now?" he inquired.

Mrs. Pomfret hesitated.

"I've been up at Fairview to see about Mrs. Flint. She isn't much better."

"Is Victoria home?" Mr. Crewe demanded, with undisguised interest.

“Poor dear girl!” said Mrs. Pomfret, “of course I wouldn’t have mentioned the subject to her, but she wanted to know all about it. It naturally makes an awkward situation between you and her, doesn’t it?”

“Oh, Victoria’s level-headed enough,” Mr. Crewe had answered; “I guess she knows something about old Flint and his methods by this time. At any rate, it won’t make any difference with me,” he added magnanimously, and threw in his clutch. He had encircled Fairview in his drive that day, and was, curiously enough, headed in that direction now. Slow to make up his mind in some things, as every eligible man must be, he was now coming rapidly to the notion that he might eventually decide upon Victoria as the most fitting mate for one in his position. Still, there was no hurry. As for going to Fairview House, that might be awkward, besides being open to misconstruction by his constituents. Mr. Crewe reflected, as he rushed up the hills, that he had missed Victoria since she had been abroad—and a man so continually occupied as he did not have time to miss many people. Mr. Crewe made up his mind he would encircle Fairview every day until he ran across her.

Page 81

The goddess of fortune sometimes blesses the persistent even before they begin to persist—perhaps from sheer weariness at the remembrance of previous importuning. Victoria, on a brand-new and somewhat sensitive five-year-old, was coming out of the stone archway when Mr. Crewe (without any signal this time!) threw on his brakes. An exhibition of horsemanship followed, on Victoria's part, which Mr. Crewe beheld with admiration. The five-year-old swung about like a weathercock in a gust of wind, assuming an upright position, like the unicorn in the British coat of arms. Victoria cut him, and he came down on all fours and danced into the wire fence that encircled the Fairview domain, whereupon he got another stinging reminder that there was some one on his back.

"Bravo!" cried Mr. Crewe, leaning on the steering wheel and watching the performance with delight. Never, he thought, had Victoria been more appealing; strangely enough, he had not remembered that she was quite so handsome, or that her colour was so vivid; or that her body was so straight and long and supple. He liked the way in which she gave it to that horse, and he made up his mind that she would grace any position, however high. Presently the horse made a leap into the road in front of the motor and stood trembling, ready to bolt.

"For Heaven's sake, Humphrey," she cried, "shut off your power? Don't sit there like an idiot—do you think I'm doing this for pleasure?"

Mr. Crewe good-naturedly turned off his switch, and the motor, with a dying sigh, was silent. He even liked the notion of being commanded to do a thing; there was a relish about it that was new. The other women of his acquaintance addressed him more deferentially.

"Get hold of the bridle," he said to the chauffeur. "You've got no business to have an animal like that," was his remark to Victoria.

"Don't touch him!" she said to the man, who was approaching with a true machinist's fear of a high-spirited horse. "You've got no business to have a motor like that, if you can't handle it any better than you do."

"You managed him all right. I'll say that for you," said Mr. Crewe.

"No thanks to you," she replied. Now that the horse was comparatively quiet, she sat and regarded Mr. Crewe with an amusement which was gradually getting the better of her anger. A few moments since, and she wished with great intensity that she had been using the whip on his shoulders instead. Now that she had time to gather up the threads of the situation, the irresistibly comic aspect of it grew upon her, and little creases came into the corners of her eyes—which Mr. Crewe admired. She recalled—with indignation, to be sure—the conversation she had overheard in the dining room of the Duncan house, but her indignation was particularly directed, on that occasion,

towards Mr. Tooting. Here was Humphrey Crewe, sitting talking to her in the road—Humphrey Crewe, whose candidacy for the governorship impugned her father's management of the Northeastern Railroads—and she was unable to take the matter seriously! There must be something wrong with her, she thought.

Page 82

"So you're home again," Mr. Crewe observed, his eyes still bearing witness to the indubitable fact. "I shouldn't have known it—I've been so busy."

"Is the Legislature still in session?" Victoria soberly inquired.

"You are a little behind the times—ain't you?" said Mr. Crewe, in surprise. "How long have you been home? Hasn't anybody told you what's going on?"

"I only came up ten days ago," she answered, "and I'm afraid I've been something of a recluse. What is going on?"

"Well," he declared, "I should have thought you'd heard it, anyway. I'll send you up a few newspapers when I get back. I'm a candidate for the governorship."

Victoria bit her lip, and leaned over to brush a fly from the neck of her horse.

"You are getting on rapidly, Humphrey," she said. "Do you think you've got—any chance?"

"Any chance!" he repeated, with some pardonable force. "I'm sure to be nominated. There's an overwhelming sentiment among the voters of this State for decent politics. It didn't take me long to find that out. The only wonder is that somebody hasn't seen it before."

"Perhaps," she answered, giving him a steady look, "perhaps somebody has."

One of Mr. Crewe's greatest elements of strength was his imperviousness to this kind of a remark.

"If anybody's seen it," he replied, "they haven't the courage of their convictions." Such were the workings of Mr. Crewe's mind that he had already forgotten that first talk with Mr. Hamilton Tooting. "Not that I want to take too much credit on myself," he added, with becoming modesty, "I have had some experience in the world, and it was natural that I should get a fresh view. Are you coming down to Leith in a few days?"

"I may," said Victoria.

"Telephone me," said Mr. Crewe, "and if I can get off, I will. I'd like to talk to you. You have more sense than most women I know."

"You overwhelm me, Humphrey. Compliments sound strangely on your lips."

"When I say a thing, I mean it," Mr. Crewe declared. "I don't pay compliments. I'd make it a point to take a little time off to talk to you. You see, so many men are interested in

this thing from various parts of the State, and we are so busy organizing, that it absorbs most of my day."

"I couldn't think of encroaching," Victoria protested.

"That's all right—you can be a great help. I've got confidence in your judgment. By the way," he asked suddenly, "you haven't seen your friend Austen Vane since you got back, have you?"

"Why do you call him my friend?" said Victoria. Mr. Crew perceived that the exercise had heightened her colour, and the transition appealed to his sense of beauty.

"Perhaps I put it a little strongly," he replied. "You seemed to take an interest in him, for some reason. I suppose it's because you like new types."

"I like Mr. Vane very much,—and for himself," she said quietly. "But I haven't seen him since I came back. Nor do I think I am likely to see him. What made you ask about him?"

Page 83

"Well, he seems to be a man of some local standing, and he ought to be in this campaign. If you happen to see him, you might mention the subject to him. I've sent for him to come up and see me."

"Mr. Vane doesn't seem to me to be a person one can send for like that," Victoria remarked judicially. "As to advising him as to what course he should take politically—that would even be straining my friendship for you, Humphrey. On reflection," she added, smiling, "there may appear to you reasons why I should not care to meddle with—politics, just now."

"I can't see it," said Mr. Crewe; "you've got a mind of your own, and you've never been afraid to use it, so far as I know. If you should see that Vane man, just give him a notion of what I'm trying to do."

"What are you trying to do?" inquired Victoria, sweetly.

"I'm trying to clean up this State politically," said Mr. Crewe, "and I'm going to do it. When you come down to Leith, I'll tell you about it, and I'll send you the newspapers to-day. Don't be in a hurry," he cried, addressing over his shoulder two farmers in a wagon who had driven up a few moments before, and who were apparently anxious to pass. "Wind her up, Adolphe."

The chauffeur, standing by the crank, started the engine instantly, and the gears screamed as Mr. Crewe threw in his low speed. The five-year-old whirled, and bolted down the road at a pace which would have seemed to challenge a racing car; and the girl in the saddle, bending to the motion of the horse, was seen to raise her hand in warning.

"Better stay whar you be," shouted one of the farmers; "don't go to follerin' her. The hoes is runnin' away."

Mr. Crewe steered his car into the Fairview entrance, and backed into the road again, facing the other way. He had decided to go home.

"That lady can take care of herself," he said, and started off towards Leith, wondering how it was that Mr. Flint had not confided his recent political troubles to his daughter.

"That hoss is ugly, sure enough," said the farmer who had spoken before.

Victoria flew on, down the narrow road. After twenty strides she did not attempt to disguise from herself the fact that the five-year-old was in a frenzy of fear, and running away. Victoria had been run away with before, and having some knowledge of the animal she rode, she did not waste her strength by pulling on the curb, but sought rather to quiet him with her voice, which had no effect whatever. He was beyond appeal, his head was down, and his ears trembling backwards and straining for a sound of the



terror that pursued him. The road ran through the forest, and Victoria reflected that the grade, on the whole, was downward to the East Tunbridge station, where the road crossed the track and took to the hills beyond. Once among them, she would be safe—he might run as far, as he pleased. But could she pass the station? She held a firm rein, and tried to keep her mind clear.

Page 84

Suddenly, at a slight bend of the road, the corner of the little red building came in sight, some hundreds of yards ahead; and, on the side where it stood, in the clearing, was a white mass which Victoria recognized as a pile of lumber. She saw several men on the top of the pile, standing motionless; she heard one of them shout; the horse swerved, and she felt herself flung violently to the left.

Her first thought, after striking, was one of self-congratulation that her safety stirrup and habit had behaved properly. Before she could rise, a man was leaning over her—and in the instant she had the impression that he was a friend. Other people had had this impression of him on first acquaintance—his size, his genial, brick-red face, and his honest blue eyes all doubtless contributing.

“Are you hurt, Miss Flint?” he asked.

“Not in the least,” she replied, springing to her feet to prove the contrary. What’s become of my horse?”

“Two of the men have gone after him,” he said, staring at her with undisguised but honest admiration. Whereupon he became suddenly embarrassed, and pulled out a handkerchief the size of a table napkin. “Let me dust you off.”

“Thank you,” said Victoria, laughing, and beginning the process herself. Her new acquaintance plied the handkerchief, his face a brighter brick-red than ever.

“Thank God, there wasn’t a freight on the siding,” he remarked, so fervently that Victoria stole a glance at him. The dusting process continued.

“There,” she exclaimed, at last, adjusting her stock and shaking her skirt, “I’m ever so much obliged. It was very foolish in me to tumble off, wasn’t it?”

“It was the only thing you could have done,” he declared. “I had a good view of it, and he flung you like a bean out of a shooter. That’s a powerful horse. I guess you’re the kind that likes to take risks.”

Victoria laughed at his expressive phrase, and crossed the road, and sat down on the edge of the lumber pile, in the shade.

“There seems to be nothing to do but wait,” she said, “and to thank you again. Will you tell me your name?”

“I’m Tom Gaylord,” he replied.

Her colour, always so near the surface, rose a little as she regarded him. So this was Austen Vane’s particular friend, whom he had tried to put out of his window. A

Herculean task, Victoria thought, from Tom's appearance. Tom sat down within a few feet of her.

"I've seen you a good many times, Miss Flint," he remarked, applying the handkerchief to his face.

"And I've seen you—once, Mr. Gaylord," some mischievous impulse prompted her to answer. Perhaps the impulse was more deep-seated, after all.

"Where?" demanded Tom, promptly.

"You were engaged," said Victoria, "in a struggle in a window on Ripton Square. It looked, for a time," she continued, "as if you were going to be dropped on the roof of the porch."

Page 85

Tom gazed at her in confusion and surprise.

"You seem to be fond, too, of dangerous exercise," she observed.

"Do you mean to say you remembered me from that?" he exclaimed. "Oh, you know Austen Vane, don't you?"

"Does Mr. Vane acknowledge the acquaintance?" Victoria inquired.

"It's funny, but you remind me of Austen," said Tom, grinning; "you seem to have the same queer way of saying things that he has." Here he was conscious of another fit of embarrassment. "I hope you don't mind what I say, Miss Flint."

"Not at all," said Victoria. She turned, and looked across the track.

"I suppose they are having a lot of trouble in catching my horse," she remarked.

"They'll get him," Tom assured her, "one of those men is my manager. He always gets what he starts out for. What were we talking about? Oh, Austen Vane. You see, I've known him ever since I was a shaver, and I think the world of him. If he asked me to go to South America and get him a zebra to-morrow, I believe I'd do it."

"That is real devotion," said Victoria. The more she saw of young Tom, the better she liked him, although his conversation was apt to be slightly embarrassing.

"We've been through a lot of rows together," Tom continued, warming to his subject, "in school and college. You see, Austen's the kind of man who doesn't care what anybody thinks, if he takes it into his head to do a thing. It was a great piece of luck for me that he shot that fellow out West, or he wouldn't be here now. You heard about that, didn't you?"

"Yes," said Victoria, "I believe I did."

"And yet," said Tom, "although I'm as good a friend as he has, I never quite got under his skin. There's some things I wouldn't talk to him about. I've learned that. I never told him, for instance, that I saw him out in a sleigh with you at the capital."

"Oh," said Victoria; and she added, "Is he ashamed of it?"

"It's not that," replied Tom, hastily, "but I guess if he'd wanted me to know about it, he'd have told me."

Victoria had begun to realize that, in the few minutes which had elapsed since she had found herself on the roadside, gazing up into young Tom's eyes, she had somehow become quite intimate with him.

"I fancy he would have told you all there was to tell about it—if the matter had occurred to him again," she said, with the air of finally dismissing a subject already too prolonged. But Tom knew nothing of the shades and conventions of the art of conversation.

"He's never told me he knew you at all!" he exclaimed, staring at Victoria. Apparently some of the aspects of this now significant omission on Austen's part were beginning to dawn on Tom.

"It wasn't worth mentioning," said Victoria, briefly, seeking for a pretext to change the subject.

"I don't believe that," said Tom, "you can't expect me to sit here and look at you and believe that. How long has he known you?"

Page 86

"I saw him once or twice last summer, at Leith," said Victoria, now wavering between laughter and exasperation. She had got herself into a quandary indeed when she had to parry the appalling frankness of such inquiries.

"The more you see of him, the more you'll admire him, I'll prophesy," said Tom. "If he'd been content to travel along the easy road, as most fellows are, he would have been counsel for the Northeastern. Instead of that—" here Tom halted abruptly, and turned scarlet: "I forgot," he said, "I'm always putting my foot in it, with ladies."

He was so painfully confused that Victoria felt herself suffering with him, and longed to comfort him.

"Please go on, Mr. Gaylord," she said; "I am very much interested in my neighbours here, and I know that a great many of them think that the railroad meddles in politics. I've tried to find out what they think, but it is so difficult for a woman to understand. If matters are wrong, I'm sure my father will right them when he knows the situation. He has so much to attend to." She paused. Tom was still mopping his forehead. "You may say anything you like to me, and I shall not take offence."

Tom's admiration of her was heightened by this attitude.

"Austen wouldn't join Mr. Crewe in his little game, anyway," he said. "When Ham Tooting, Crewe's manager, came to him he kicked him downstairs."

Victoria burst out laughing.

"I constantly hear of these ferocious deeds which Mr. Vane commits," she said, "and yet he seems exceptionally good-natured and mild-mannered."

"That's straight—he kicked him downstairs. Served Tooting right, too."

"There does seem to have been an element of justice in it," Victoria remarked.

"You haven't seen Austen since he left his father?" Mr. Gaylord inquired.

"Left him! Where—has he gone?"

"Gone up to live with Jabe Jenney. If Austen cared anything about money, he never would have broken with the old man, who has some little put away."

"Why did he leave his father?" asked Victoria, not taking the trouble now to conceal her interest.

"Well," said Tom, "you know they never did get along. It hasn't been Austen's fault—he's tried. After he came back from the West he stayed here to please old Hilary, when

he might have gone to New York and made a fortune at the law, with his brains. But after Austen saw the kind of law the old man practised he wouldn't stand for it, and got an office of his own."

Victoria's eyes grew serious.

"What kind of law does Hilary Vane practise?" she asked.

Tom hesitated and began to mop his forehead again.

"Please don't mind me," Victoria pleaded.

"Well, all right," said Tom, "I'll tell you the truth, or die for it. But I don't want to make you-unhappy."

"You will do me a kindness, Mr. Gaylord," she said, "by telling me what you believe to be true."

Page 87

There was a note in her voice which young Tom did not understand. Afterwards, when he reflected about the matter, he wondered if she were unhappy.

"I don't want to blame Hilary too much," he answered. "I know Austen don't. Hilary's grown up with that way of doing things, and in the old days there was no other way. Hilary is the chief counsel for the Northeastern, and he runs the Republican organization in this State for their benefit. But Austen made up his mind that there was no reason why he should grow up that way. He says that a lawyer should keep to his profession, and not become a lobbyist in the interest of his clients. He lived with the old man until the other day, because he has a real soft spot for him. Austen put up with a good deal. And then Hilary turned loose on him and said a lot of things he couldn't stand. Austen didn't answer, but went up and packed his bags and made Hilary's housekeeper promise to stay with him, or she'd have left, too. They say Hilary's sorry, now. He's fond of Austen, but he can't get along with him."

"Do—Do you know what they quarreled about?" asked Victoria, in a low voice.

"This spring," said Tom, "the Gaylord Lumber Company made Austen junior counsel. He ran across a law the other day that nobody else seems to have had sense enough to discover, by which we can sue the railroad for excessive freight rates. It means a lot of money. He went right in to Hilary and showed him the section, told him that suit was going to be brought, and offered to resign. Hilary flew off the track—and said if he didn't bring suit he'd publish it all over the State that Austen started it. Galusha Hammer, our senior counsel, is sick, and I don't think he'll ever get well. That makes Austen senior counsel. But he persuaded old Tom, my father, not to bring this suit until after the political campaign, until Mr. Crewe gets through with his fireworks. Hilary doesn't know that."

"I see," said Victoria.

Down the hill, on the far side of the track, she perceived the two men approaching with a horse; then she remembered the fact that she had been thrown, and that it was her horse. She rose to her feet.

"I'm ever so much obliged to you, Mr. Gaylord," she said; "you have done me a great favour by—telling me these things. And thanks for letting them catch the horse. I'm afraid I've put you to a lot of bother."

"Not at all," said Tom, "not at all." He was studying her face. Its expression troubled and moved him strangely, for he was not an analytical person. "I didn't mean to tell you those things when I began," he apologized, "but you wanted to hear them."

"I wanted to hear them," repeated Victoria. She held out her hand to him.

“You’re not going to ride home!” he exclaimed. “I’ll take you up in my buggy—it’s in the station shed.”

She smiled, turned and questioned and thanked the men, examined the girths and bridle, and stroked the five-year-old on the neck. He was wet from mane to fetlocks.

Page 88

"I don't think he'll care to run much farther," she said. "If you'll pull him over to the lumber pile, Mr. Gaylord, I'll mount him."

They performed her bidding in silence, each paying her a tribute in his thoughts. As for the five-year-old, he was quiet enough by this time. When she was in the saddle she held out her hand once more to Tom.

"I hope we shall meet soon again," she said, and smiling back at him, started on her way towards Fairview.

Tom stood for a moment looking after her, while the two men indulged in surprised comments.

"Andrews," said young Mr. Gaylord, "just fetch my buggy and follow her until she gets into the gate."

CHAPTER XVIII

A SPIRIT IN THE WOODS

Empires crack before they crumble, and the first cracks seem easily mended—even as they have been mended before. A revolt in Gaul or Britain or Thrace is little to be minded, and a prophet in Judea less. And yet into him who sits in the seat of power a premonition of something impending gradually creeps—a premonition which he will not acknowledge, will not define. Yesterday, by the pointing of a finger, he created a province; to-day he dares not, but consoles himself by saying he does not wish to point. No antagonist worthy of his steel has openly defied him, worthy of recognition by the opposition of a legion. But the sense of security has been subtly and indefinitely shaken.

By the strange telepathy which defies language, to the Honourable Hilary Vane, Governor of the Province, some such unacknowledged forebodings have likewise been communicated. A week after his conversation with Austen, on the return of his emperor from a trip to New York, the Honourable Hilary was summoned again to the foot of the throne, and his thoughts as he climbed the ridges towards Fairview were not in harmony with the carols of the birds in the depths of the forest and the joy of the bright June weather. Loneliness he had felt before, and to its ills he had applied the antidote of labour. The burden that sat upon his spirit to-day was not mere loneliness; to the truth of this his soul attested, but Hilary Vane had never listened to the promptings of his soul. He would have been shocked if you had told him this. Did he not confess, with his eyes shut, his sins every Sunday? Did he not publicly acknowledge his soul?

Austen Vane had once remarked that, if some keen American lawyer would really put his mind to the evasion of the Ten Commandments, the High Heavens themselves

might be cheated. This saying would have shocked the Honourable Hilary inexpressibly. He had never been employed by a syndicate to draw up papers to avoid these mandates; he revered them, as he revered the Law, which he spelled with a capital. He spelled the word Soul with a capital likewise, and certainly no higher recognition could be desired than this! Never in the Honourable Hilary's long, laborious,

Page 89

and preeminently model existence had he realized that happiness is harmony. It would not be true to assert that, on this wonderful June day, a glimmering of this truth dawned upon him. Such a statement would be open to the charge of exaggeration, and his frame of mind was pessimistic. But he had got so far as to ask himself the question,—Cui bono? and repeated it several times on his drive, until a verse of Scripture came, unbidden, to his lips. “For what hate man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun?” and “there is one event unto all.” Austen’s saying, that he had never learned how to enjoy life, he remembered, too. What had Austen meant by that?

Hitherto Hilary Vane had never failed of self-justification in any event which had befallen him; and while this consciousness of the rectitude of his own attitude had not made him happier, there had been a certain grim pleasure in it. To the fact that he had ruined, by sheer over-righteousness, the last years of the sunny life of Sarah Austen he had been oblivious—until to-day. The strange, retrospective mood which had come over him this afternoon led his thoughts into strange paths, and he found himself wondering if, after all, it had not been in his power to make her happier. Her dryad-like face, with its sweet, elusive smile, seemed to peer at him now wistfully out of the forest, and suddenly a new and startling thought rose up within him—after six and thirty years. Perhaps she had belonged in the forest! Perhaps, because he had sought to cage her, she had pined and died! The thought gave Hilary unwonted pain, and he strove to put it away from him; but memories such as these, once aroused, are not easily set at rest, and he bent his head as he recalled (with a new and significant pathos) those hopeless and pitiful flights into the wilds she loved.

Now Austen had gone. Was there a Law behind these actions of mother and son which he had persisted in denouncing as vagaries? Austen was a man: a man, Hilary could not but see, who had the respect of his fellows, whose judgment and talents were becoming recognized. Was it possible that he, Hilary Vane, could have been one of those referred to by the Preacher? During the week which had passed since Austen’s departure the house in Hanover Street had been haunted for Hilary. The going of his son had not left a mere void,—that would have been pain enough. Ghosts were there, ghosts which he could but dimly feel and see, and more than once, in the long evenings, he had taken to the streets to avoid them.

In that week Hilary’s fear of meeting his son in the street or in the passages of the building had been equalled by a yearning to see him. Every morning, at the hour Austen was wont to drive Pepper to the Ripton House stables across the square, Hilary had contrived to be standing near his windows—a little back, and out of sight. And—stranger still!—he had turned from these glimpses to the reports of the Honourable Brush Bascom and his associates with a distaste he had never felt before.

Page 90

With some such thoughts as these Hilary Vane turned into the last straight stretch of the avenue that led to Fairview House, with its red and white awnings gleaming in the morning sun. On the lawn, against a white and purple mass of lilacs and the darker background of pines, a straight and infinitely graceful figure in white caught his eye and held it. He recognized Victoria. She wore a simple summer gown, the soft outline of its flounces mingling subtly with the white clusters behind her. She turned her head at the sound of the wheels and looked at him; the distance was not too great for a bow, but Hilary did not bow. Something in her face deterred him from this act,—something which he himself did not understand or define. He sought to pronounce the incident negligible. What was the girl, or her look, to him? And yet (he found himself strangely thinking) he had read in her eyes a trace of the riddle which had been relentlessly pursuing him; there was an odd relation in her look to that of Sarah Austen. During the long years he had been coming to Fairview, even before the new house was built, when Victoria was in pinafores, he had never understood her. When she was a child, he had vaguely recognized in her a spirit antagonistic to his own, and her sayings had had a disconcerting ring. And now this simple glance of hers had troubled him—only more definitely.

It was a new experience for the Honourable Hilary to go into a business meeting with his faculties astray. Absently he rang the stable bell, surrendered his horse, and followed a footman to the retired part of the house occupied by the railroad president. Entering the oak-bound sanctum, he crossed it and took a seat by the window, merely nodding to Mr. Flint, who was dictating a letter. Mr. Flint took his time about the letter, but when it was finished he dismissed the stenographer with an impatient and powerful wave of the hand—as though brushing the man bodily out of the room. Remaining motionless until the door had closed, Mr. Flint turned abruptly and fixed his eyes on the contemplative figure of his chief counsel.

“Well?” he said.

“Well, Flint,” answered the Honourable Hilary.

“Well,” said Mr. Flint, “that bridge over Maple River has got loosened up so by the freshet that we have to keep freight cars on it to hold it down, and somebody is trying to make trouble by writing a public letter to the Railroad Commission, and calling attention to the head-on collision at Barker’s Station.”

“Well,” replied the Honourable Hilary, again, “that won’t have any influence on the Railroad Commission.”

“No,” said Mr. Flint, “but it all goes to increase this confounded public sentiment that’s in the air, like smallpox. Another jackass pretends to have kept a table of the through trains on the Sumsic division, and says they’ve averaged forty-five minutes late at Edmonton. He says the through express made the run faster thirty years ago.”

Page 91

"I guess that's so," said the Honourable Hilary, "I was counsel for that road then. I read that letter. He says there isn't an engine on the division that could pull his hat off, up grade."

Neither of the two gentlemen appeared to deem this statement humorous.

"What these incendiaries don't understand," said Mr. Flint, "is that we have to pay dividends."

"It's because they don't get 'em," replied Mr. Vane, sententiously.

"The track slid into the water at Glendale," continued Mr. Flint. "I suppose they'll tell us we ought to rock ballast that line. You'll see the Railroad Commission, and give 'em a sketch of a report."

"I had a talk with Young yesterday," said Mr. Vane, his eyes on the stretch of lawn and forest framed by the window. For the sake of the ignorant, it may be well to add that the Honourable Orrin Young was the chairman of the Commission.

"And now," said Mr. Flint, "not that this Crewe business amounts to that" (here the railroad president snapped his fingers with the intensity of a small pistol shot), "but what's he been doing?"

"Political advertising," said the Honourable Hilary.

"Plenty of it, I guess," Mr. Flint remarked acidly. "That's one thing Tooting can't teach him. He's a natural-born genius at it."

"Tooting can help—even at that," answered Mr. Vane, ironically. "They've got a sketch of so-called Northeastern methods in forty weekly newspapers this week, with a picture of that public benefactor and martyr, Humphrey Crewe. Here's a sample of it."

Mr. Flint waved the sample away.

"You've made a list of the newspapers that printed it?" Mr. Flint demanded. Had he lived in another age he might have added, "Have the malefactors burned alive in my garden."

"Brush has seen some of 'em," said Mr. Vane, no doubt referring to the editors, "and I had some of 'em come to Ripton. They've got a lot to say about the freedom of the press, and their right to take political advertising. Crewe's matter is in the form of a despatch, and most of 'em pointed out at the top of the editorial columns that their papers are not responsible for despatches in the news columns. Six of 'em are out and out for Crewe, and those fellows are honest enough."

“Take away their passes and advertising,” said Mr. Flint. (“Off with their heads!” said the Queen of Hearts.)

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you, Flint; they might make capital out of it. I think you’ll find that five of ’em have sent their passes back, anyway.”

“Freeman will give you some new ideas” (from the “Book of Arguments,” although Mr. Flint did not say so) “which have occurred to me might be distributed for editorial purposes next week. And, by the way, what have you done about that brilliant Mr. Coombes of the ‘Johnstown Ray,’ who says ‘the Northeastern Railroads give us a pretty good government’?”

Page 92

The Honourable Hilary shook his head.

“Too much zeal,” he observed. “I guess he won’t do it again.”

For a while after that they talked of strictly legal matters, which the chief counsel produced in order out of his bag. But when these were finally disposed of, Mr. Flint led the conversation back to the Honourable Humphrey Crewe, who stood harmless—to be sure—like a bull on the track which it might be unwise to run over.

“He doesn’t amount to a soap bubble in a gale,” Mr. Flint declared contemptuously. “Sometimes I think we made a great mistake to notice him.”

“We haven’t noticed him,” said Mr. Vane; “the newspapers have.”

Mr. Flint brushed this distinction aside.

“That,” he said irritably, “and letting Tooting go—”

The Honourable Hilary’s eyes began to grow red. In former days Mr. Flint had not often questioned his judgment.

“There’s one thing more I wanted to mention to you,” said the chief counsel. “In past years I have frequently drawn your attention to that section of the act of consolidation which declares that rates and fares existing at the time of its passage shall not be increased.”

“Well,” said Mr. Flint, impatiently, “well, what of it?”

“Only this,” replied the Honourable Hilary, “you disregarded my advice, and the rates on many things are higher than they were.”

“Upon my word, Vane,” said Mr. Flint, “I wish you’d chosen some other day to croak. What do you want me to do? Put all the rates back because this upstart politician Crewe is making a noise? Who’s going to dig up that section?”

“Somebody has dug it up,” said Mr. Vane:

This was the last straw.

“Speak out, man!” he cried. “What are you leading up to?”

“Just this,” answered the Honourable Hilary; “that the Gaylord Lumber Company are going to bring suit under that section.”

Mr. Flint rose, thrust his hands in his pockets, and paced the room twice.

“Have they got a case?” he demanded.

“It looks a little that way tome,” said Mr. Vane. “I’m not prepared to give a definite opinion as yet.”

Mr. Flint measured the room twice again.

“Did that old fool Hammer stumble on to this?”

“Hammer’s sick,” said Mr. Vane; “they say he’s got Bright’s disease. My son discovered that section.”

There was a certain ring of pride in the Honourable Hilary’s voice, and a lifting of the head as he pronounced the words “my son,” which did not escape Mr. Flint. The railroad president walked slowly to the arm of the chair in which his chief counsel was seated, and stood looking down at him. But the Honourable Hilary appeared unconscious of what was impending.

Page 93

"Your son!" exclaimed Mr. Flint. "So your son, the son of the man who has been my legal adviser and confidant and friend for thirty years, is going to join the Crewel and Tootings in their assaults on established decency and order! He's out for cheap political preferment, too, is he? By thunder! I thought that he had some such thing in his mind when he came in here and threw his pass in my face and took that Meader suit. I don't mind telling you that he's the man I've been afraid of all along. He's got a head on him—I saw that at the start. I trusted to you to control him, and this is how you do it."

It was characteristic of the Honourable Hilary, when confronting an angry man, to grow cooler as the other's temper increased.

"I don't want to control him," he said.

"I guess you couldn't," retorted Mr. Flint.

"That's a better way of putting it," replied the Honourable Hilary, "I couldn't."

The chief counsel for the Northeastern Railroads got up and went to the window, where he stood for some time with his back turned to the president. Then Hilary Vane faced about.

"Mr. Flint," he began, in his peculiar deep and resonant voice, "you've said some things to-day that I won't forget. I want to tell you, first of all, that I admire my son."

"I thought so," Mr. Flint interrupted.

"And more than that," the Honourable Hilary continued, "I prophesy that the time will come when you'll admire him. Austen Vane never did an underhanded thing in his life—or committed a mean action. He's be'n wild, but he's always told me the truth. I've done him injustice a good many times, but I won't stand up and listen to another man do him injustice." Here he paused, and picked up his bag. "I'm going down to Ripton to write out my resignation as counsel for your roads, and as soon as you can find another man to act, I shall consider it accepted."

It is difficult to put down on paper the sensations of the president of the Northeastern Railroads as he listened to these words from a man with whom he had been in business relations for over a quarter of a century, a man upon whose judgment he had always relied implicitly, who had been a strong fortress in time of trouble. Such sentences had an incendiary, blasphemous ring on Hilary Vane's lips—at first. It was as if the sky had fallen, and the Northeastern had been wiped out of existence.

Mr. Flint's feelings were, in a sense, akin to those of a traveller by sea who wakens out of a sound sleep in his cabin, with peculiar and unpleasant sensations, which he gradually discovers are due to cold water, and he realizes that the boat on which he is travelling is sinking.

The Honourable Hilary, with his bag, was halfway to the door, when Mr. Flint crossed the room in three strides and seized him by the arm.

“Hold on, Vane,” he said, speaking with some difficulty; “I’m—I’m a little upset this morning, and my temper got the best of me. You and I have been good friends for too many years for us to part this way. Sit down a minute, for God’s sake, and let’s cool off. I didn’t intend to say what I did. I apologize.”

Page 94

Mr. Flint dropped his counsel's arm, and pulled out a handkerchief, and mopped his face. "Sit down, Hilary," he said.

The Honourable Hilary's tight lips trembled. Only three or four times in their long friendship had the president made use of his first name.

"You wouldn't leave me in the lurch now, Hilary," Mr. Flint continued, "when all this nonsense is in the air? Think of the effect such an announcement would have! Everybody knows and respects you, and we can't do without your advice and counsel. But I won't put it on that ground. I'd never forgive myself, as long as I lived, if I lost one of my oldest and most valued personal friends in this way."

The Honourable Hilary looked at Mr. Flint, and sat down. He began to cut a piece of Honey Dew, but his hand shook. It was difficult, as we know, for him to give expression to his feelings.

"All right," he said.

Half an hour later Victoria, from under the awning of the little balcony in front of her mother's sitting room, saw her father come out bareheaded into the sun and escort the Honourable Hilary Vane to his buggy. This was an unwonted proceeding.

Victoria loved to sit in that balcony, a book lying neglected in her lap, listening to the summer sounds: the tinkle of distant cattle bells, the bass note of a hurrying bee, the strangely compelling song of the hermit-thrush, which made her breathe quickly; the summer wind, stirring wantonly, was prodigal with perfumes gathered from the pines and the sweet June clover in the fields and the banks of flowers; in the distance, across the gentle foreground of the hills, Sawanec beckoned —did Victoria but raise her eyes! —to a land of enchantment.

The appearance of her father and Hilary had broken her reverie, and a new thought, like a pain, had clutched her. The buggy rolled slowly down the drive, and Mr. Flint, staring after it a moment, went in the house. After a few minutes he emerged again, an old felt hat on his head which he was wont to wear in the country and a stick in his hand. Without raising his eyes, he started slowly across the lawn; and to Victoria, leaning forward intently over the balcony rail, there seemed an unwonted lack of purpose in his movements. Usually he struck out briskly in the direction of the pastures where his prize Guernseys were feeding, stopping on the way to pick up the manager of his farm. There are signs, unknown to men, which women read, and Victoria felt her heart beating, as she turned and entered the sitting room through the French window. A trained nurse was softly closing the door of the bedroom on the right.

"Mrs. Flint is asleep," she said.

"I am going out for a little while, Miss Oliver," Victoria answered, and the nurse returned a gentle smile of understanding.

Page 95

Victoria, descending the stairs, hastily pinned on a hat which she kept in the coat closet, and hurried across the lawn in the direction Mr. Flint had taken. Reaching the pine grove, thinned by a famous landscape architect, she paused involuntarily to wonder again at the ultramarine of Sawanec through the upright columns of the trunks under the high canopy of boughs. The grove was on a plateau, which was cut on the side nearest the mountain by the line of a gray stone wall, under which the land fell away sharply. Mr. Flint was seated on a bench, his hands clasped across his stick, and as she came softly over the carpet of the needles he did not hear her until she stood beside him.

"You didn't tell me that you were going for a walk," she said reproachfully.

He started, and dropped his stick. She stooped quickly, picked it up for him, and settled herself at his side.

"I—I didn't expect to go, Victoria," he answered.

"You see," she said, "it's useless to try to slip away. I saw you from the balcony."

"How's your mother feeling?" he asked.

"She's asleep. She seems better to me since she's come back to Fairview."

Mr. Flint stared at the mountain with unseeing eyes.

"Father," said Victoria, "don't you think you ought to stay up here at least a week, and rest? I think so."

"No," he said, "no. There's a directors' meeting of a trust company to-morrow which I have to attend. I'm not tired."

Victoria shook her head, smiling at him with serious eyes.

"I don't believe you know when you are tired," she declared. "I can't see the good of all these directors' meetings. Why don't you retire, and live the rest of your life in peace? You've got—money enough, and even if you haven't," she added, with the little quiver of earnestness that sometimes came into her voice, "we could sell this big house and go back to the farmhouse to live. We used to be so happy there."

He turned abruptly, and fixed upon her a steadfast, searching stare that held, nevertheless, a strange tenderness in it.

"You don't care for all this, do you, Victoria?" he demanded, waving his stick to indicate the domain of Fairview.

She laughed gently, and raised her eyes to the green roof of the needles.

"If we could only keep the pine grove!" she sighed. "Do you remember what good times we had in the farmhouse, when you and I used to go off for whole days together?"

"Yes," said Mr. Flint, "yes."

"We don't do that any more," said Victoria. "It's only a little drive and a walk, now and then. And they seem to be growing—scarcer."

Mr. Flint moved uneasily, and made an attempt to clear his voice.

"I know it," he said, and further speech seemingly failed him. Victoria had the greater courage of the two.

"Why don't we?" she asked.

"I've often thought of it," he replied, still seeking his words with difficulty. "I find myself with more to do every year, Victoria, instead of less."

Page 96

"Then why don't you give it up?"

"Why?" he asked, "why? Sometimes I wish with my whole soul I could give it up. I've always said that you had more sense than most women, but even you could not understand."

"I could understand," said Victoria.

He threw at her another glance,—a ring in her words proclaimed their truth in spite of his determined doubt. In her eyes—had he but known it!—was a wisdom that exceeded his.

"You don't realize what you're saying," he exclaimed; "I can't leave the helm."

"Isn't it," she said, "rather the power that is so hard to relinquish?"

The feelings of Augustus Flint when he heard this question were of a complex nature. It was the second time that day he had been shocked, —the first being when Hilary Vane had unexpectedly defended his son. The word Victoria had used, power, had touched him on the quick. What had she meant by it? Had she been his wife and not his daughter, he would have flown into a rage. Augustus Flint was not a man given to the psychological amusement of self-examination; he had never analyzed his motives. He had had little to do with women, except Victoria. The Rose of Sharon knew him as the fountainhead from which authority and money flowed, but Victoria, since her childhood, had been his refuge from care, and in the haven of her companionship he had lost himself for brief moments of his life. She was the one being he really loved, with whom he consulted on such affairs of importance as he felt to be within her scope and province,—the cattle, the men on the place outside of the household, the wisdom of buying the Baker farm; bequests to charities, paintings, the library; and recently he had left to her judgment the European baths and the kind of treatment which her mother had required. Victoria had consulted with the physicians in Paris, and had made these decisions herself. From a child she had never shown a disposition to evade responsibility.

To his intimate business friends, Mr. Flint was in the habit of speaking of her as his right-hand man, but she was circumscribed by her sex,—or rather by Mr. Flint's idea of her sex,—and it never occurred to him that she could enter into the larger problems of his life. For this reason he had never asked himself whether such a state of affairs would be desirable. In reality it was her sympathy he craved, and such an interpretation of himself as he chose to present to her.

So her question was a shock. He suddenly beheld his daughter transformed, a new personality who had been thinking, and thinking along paths which he had never cared to travel.

“The power!” he repeated. “What do you mean by that, Victoria?”

She sat for a moment on the end of the bench, gazing at him with a questioning, searching look which he found disconcerting. What had happened to his daughter? He little guessed the tumult in her breast. She herself could not fully understand the strange turn the conversation had taken towards the gateway of the vital things.

Page 97

"It is natural for men to love power, isn't it?"

"I suppose so," said Mr. Flint, uneasily. "I don't know what you're driving at, Victoria."

"You control the lives and fortunes of a great many people."

"That's just it," answered Mr. Flint, with a dash at this opening; "my responsibilities are tremendous. I can't relinquish them."

"There is no—younger man to take your place? Not that I mean you are old, father," she continued, "but you have worked very hard all your life, and deserve a holiday the rest of it."

"I don't know of any younger man," said Mr. Flint. "I don't mean to say I'm the only person in the world who can safeguard the stockholders' interests in the Northeastern. But I know the road and its problems. I don't understand this from you, Victoria. It doesn't sound like you. And as for letting go the helm now," he added, with a short laugh tinged with bitterness, "I'd be posted all over the country as a coward."

"Why?" asked Victoria, in the same quiet way.

"Why? Because a lot of discontented and disappointed people who have made failures of their lives are trying to give me as much trouble as they can."

"Are you sure they are all disappointed and discontented, father?" she said.

"What," exclaimed Mr. Flint, "you ask me that question? You, my own daughter, about people who are trying to make me out a rascal!"

"I don't think they are trying to make you out a rascal—at least most of them are not," said Victoria. "I don't think the—what you might call the personal aspect enters in with the honest ones."

Mr. Flint was inexpressibly amazed. He drew a long breath.

"Who are the honest ones?" he cried. "Do you mean to say that you, my own daughter, are defending these charlatans?"

"Listen, father," said Victoria. "I didn't mean to worry you, I didn't mean to bring up that subject to-day. Come—let's go for a walk and see the new barn."

But Mr. Flint remained firmly planted on the bench.

"Then you did intend to bring up the subject—some day?" he asked.

“Yes,” said Victoria. She sat down again. “I have often wanted to hear —your side of it.”

“Whose side have you heard?” demanded Mr. Flint.

A crimson flush crept into her cheek, but her father was too disturbed to notice it.

“You know,” she said gently, “I go about the country a good deal, and I hear people talking,—farmers, and labourers, and people in the country stores who don’t know that I’m your daughter.”

“What do they say?” asked Mr. Flint, leaning forward eagerly and aggressively.

Victoria hesitated, turning over the matter in her mind.

“You understand, I am merely repeating what they say—”

“Yes, yes,” he interrupted, “I want to know how far this thing has gone among them.”

Page 98

"Well," continued Victoria, looking at him bravely, "as nearly as I can remember their argument it is this: that the Northeastern Railroads control the politics of the State for their own benefit. That you appoint the governors and those that go to the Legislature, and that—Hilary Vane gets them elected. They say that he manages a political machine—that's the right word, isn't it?—for you. And that no laws can be passed of which you do not approve. And they say that the politicians whom Hilary Vane commands, and the men whom they put into office are all beholden to the railroad, and are of a sort which good citizens cannot support. They say that the railroad has destroyed the people's government."

Mr. Flint, for the moment forgetting or ignoring the charges, glanced at her in astonishment. The arraignment betrayed an amount of thought on the subject which he had not suspected.

"Upon my word, Victoria," he said, "you ought to take the stump for Humphrey Crewe."

She reached out with a womanly gesture, and laid her hand upon his.

"I am only telling you—what I hear," she said.

"Won't you explain to me the way you look at it? These people don't all seem to be dishonest men or charlatans. Some of them, I know, are honest." And her colour rose again.

"Then they are dupes and fools," Mr. Flint declared vehemently. "I don't know how to explain it to you the subject is too vast, too far-reaching. One must have had some business experience to grasp it. I don't mean to say you're not intelligent, but I'm at a loss where to begin with you. Looked at from their limited point of view, it would seem as if they had a case. I don't mean your friend, Humphrey Crewe—it's anything to get office with him. Why, he came up here and begged me—"

"I wasn't thinking of Humphrey Crewe," said Victoria. Mr. Flint gave an ejaculation of distaste.

"He's no more of a reformer than I am. And now we've got that wild son of Hilary Vane's—the son of one of my oldest friends and associates—making trouble. He's bitten with this thing, too, and he's got some brains in his head. Why," exclaimed Mr. Flint, stopping abruptly and facing his daughter, "you know him! He's the one who drove you home that evening from Crewe's party."

"I remember," Victoria faltered, drawing her hand away.

"I wasn't very civil to him that night, but I've always been on the lookout for him. I sent him a pass once, and he came up here and gave me as insolent a talking to as I ever had in my life."

How well Victoria recalled that first visit, and how she had wondered about the cause of it! So her father and Austen Vane had quarrelled from the first.

"I'm sure he didn't mean to be insolent," she said, in a low voice. "He isn't at all that sort."

"I don't know what sort he is, except that he isn't my sort," Mr. Flint retorted, intent upon the subject which had kindled his anger earlier in the day. "I don't pretend to understand him. He could probably have been counsel for the road if he had behaved decently. Instead, he starts in with suits against us. He's hit upon something now."

Page 99

The president of the Northeastern dug savagely into the ground with his stick, and suddenly perceived that his daughter had her face turned away from his, towards the mountain.

“Well, I won’t bore you with that.”

She turned with a look in her eyes that bewildered him.

“You’re not—boring me,” she said.

“I didn’t intend to go into all that,” he explained more calmly, “but the last few days have been trying, we’ve got to expect the wind to blow from all directions.”

Victoria smiled at him faintly.

“I have told you,” she said, “that what you need is a trip abroad. Perhaps some day you will remember it.”

“Maybe I’ll go in the autumn,” he answered, smiling back at her. “These little flurries don’t amount to anything more than mosquito-bites—only mosquitoes are irritating. You and I understand each other, Victoria, and now listen. I’ll give you the broad view of this subject, the view I’ve got to take, and I’ve lived in the world and seen more of it than some folks who think they know it all. I am virtually the trustee for thousands of stockholders, many of whom are widows and orphans. These people are innocent; they rely on my ability, and my honesty, for their incomes. Few men who have not had experience in railroad management know one-tenth of the difficulties and obstructions encountered by a railroad president who strives to do his duty by the road. My business is to run the Northeastern as economically as is consistent with good service and safety, and to give the stockholders the best return for their money. I am the steward—and so long as I am the steward,” he exclaimed, “I’m going to do what I think is right, taking into consideration all the difficulties that confront me.”

He got up and took a turn or two on the pine-needles. Victoria regarded him in silence. He appeared to her at that moment the embodiment of the power he represented. Force seemed to emanate from him, and she understood more clearly than ever how, from a poor boy on an obscure farm in Truro, he had risen to his present height.

“I don’t say the service is what it should be,” he went on, “but give me time—give me time. With all this prosperity in the country we can’t handle the freight. We haven’t got cars enough, tracks enough, engines enough. I won’t go into that with you. But I do expect you to understand this: that politicians are politicians; they have always been corrupt as long as I have known them, and in my opinion they always will be. The Northeastern is the largest property holder in the State, pays the biggest tax, and has the most at stake. The politicians could ruin us in a single session of the Legislature—

and what's more, they would do it. We'd have to be paying blackmail all the time to prevent measures that would compel us to go out of business. This is a fact, and not a theory. What little influence I exert politically I have to maintain in

Page 100

order to protect the property of my stockholders from annihilation. It isn't to be supposed," he concluded, "that I'm going to see the State turned over to a man like Humphrey Crewe. I wish to Heaven that this and every other State had a George Washington for governor and a majority of Robert Morris in the Legislature. If they exist, in these days, the people won't elect 'em—that's all. The kind of man the people will elect, if you let 'em alone, is—a man who brings in a bill and comes to you privately and wants you to buy him off."

"Oh, father," Victoria cried, "I can't believe that of the people I see about here! They seem so kind and honest and high-principled."

Mr. Flint gave a short laugh.

"They're dupes, I tell you. They're at the mercy of any political schemer who thinks it worth his while to fool 'em. Take Leith, for instance. There's a man over there who has controlled every office in that town for twenty-five years or more. He buys and sells votes and credentials like cattle. His name is Job Braden."

"Why," said Victoria, "I saw him at Humphrey Crewe's garden-party."

"I guess you did," said Mr. Flint, "and I guess Humphrey Crewe saw him before he went."

Victoria was silent, the recollection of the talk between Mr. Tooting and Mr. Crewe running through her mind, and Mr. Tooting's saying that he had done "dirty things" for the Northeastern. She felt that this was something she could not tell her father, nor could she answer his argument with what Tom Gaylord had said. She could not, indeed, answer Mr. Flint's argument at all; the subject, as he had declared, being too vast for her. And moreover, as she well knew, Mr. Flint was a man whom other men could not easily answer; he bore them down, even as he had borne her down. Involuntarily her mind turned to Austen, and she wondered what he had said; she wondered how he would have answered her father—whether he could have answered him. And she knew not what to think. Could it be right, in a position of power and responsibility, to acknowledge evil and deal with it as evil? That was, in effect, the gist of Mr. Flint's contention. She did not know. She had never (strangely enough, she thought) sought before to analyze the ethical side of her father's character. One aspect of him she had shared with her mother, that he was a tower of defence and strength, and that his name alone had often been sufficient to get difficult things done.

Was he right in this? And were his opponents charlatans, or dupes, or idealists who could never be effective? Mr. Crewe wanted an office; Tom Gaylord had a suit against the road, and Austen Vane was going to bring that suit! What did she really know of

Austen Vane? But her soul cried out treason at this, and she found herself repeating, with intensity, "I believe in him! I believe in him!" She would have given worlds to have been able to stand up before her father and tell him that Austen would not bring the suit at this time that Austen had not allowed his name to be mentioned for office in this connection, and had spurned Mr. Crewe's advances. But she had not seen Austen since February.



Page 101

What was his side of it? He had never told her, and she respected his motives—yet, what was his side? Fresh from the inevitably deep impressions which her father's personality had stamped upon her, she wondered if Austen could cope with the argument before which she had been so helpless.

The fact that she made of each of these two men the embodiment of a different and opposed idea did not occur to Victoria until that afternoon. Unconsciously, each had impersonated the combatants in a struggle which was going on in her own breast. Her father himself, instinctively, had chosen Austen Vane for his antagonist without knowing that she had an interest in him. Would Mr. Flint ever know? Or would the time come when she would be forced to take a side? The blood mounted to her temples as she put the question from her.

CHAPTER XIX

MR. JABE JENNEY ENTERTAINS

Mr. Flint had dropped the subject with his last remark, nor had Victoria attempted to pursue it. Bewildered and not a little depressed (a new experience for her), she had tried to hide her feelings. He, too, was harassed and tired, and she had drawn him away from the bench and through the pine woods to the pastures to look at his cattle and the model barn he was building for them. At half-past three, in her runabout, she had driven him to the East Tunbridge station, where he had taken the train for New York. He had waved her a good-by from the platform, and smiled: and for a long time, as she drove through the silent roads, his words and his manner remained as vivid as though he were still by her side. He was a man who had fought and conquered, and who fought on for the sheer love of it.

It was a blue day in the hill country. At noon the clouds had crowned Sawanec—a sure sign of rain; the rain had come and gone, a June downpour, and the overcast sky lent (Victoria fancied) to the country-side a new atmosphere. The hills did not look the same. It was the kind of a day when certain finished country places are at their best—or rather seem best to express their meaning; a day for an event; a day set strangely apart with an indefinable distinction. Victoria recalled such days in her youth when weddings or garden-parties had brought canopies into service, or news had arrived to upset the routine of the household. Raindrops silvered the pines, and the light winds shook them down on the road in a musical shower.

Victoria was troubled, as she drove, over a question which had recurred to her many times since her talk that morning: had she been hypocritical in not telling her father that she had seen more of Austen Vane than she had implied by her silence? For many years Victoria had chosen her own companions; when the custom had begun, her mother had made a protest which Mr. Flint had answered with a laugh; he thought

Victoria's judgment better than his wife's. Ever since that time the Rose of Sharon had taken

Page 102

the attitude of having washed her hands of responsibility for a course which must inevitably lead to ruin. She discussed some of Victoria's acquaintances with Mrs. Pomfret and other intimates; and Mrs. Pomfret had lost no time in telling Mrs. Flint about her daughter's sleigh-ride at the State capital with a young man from Ripton who seemed to be seeing entirely too much of Victoria. Mrs. Pomfret had marked certain danger signs, and as a conscientious woman was obliged to speak of them. Mrs. Pomfret did not wish to see Victoria make a mesalliance.

"My dear Fanny," Mrs. Flint had cried, lifting herself from the lace pillows, "what do you expect me to do especially when I have nervous prostration? I've tried to do my duty by Victoria—goodness knows—to bring her up—among the sons and daughters of the people who are my friends. They tell me that she has temperament—whatever that may be. I'm sure I never found out, except that the best thing to do with people who have it is to let them alone and pray for them. When we go abroad I like the Ritz and Claridge's and that new hotel in Rome. I see my friends there. Victoria, if you please, likes the little hotels in the narrow streets where you see nobody, and where you are most uncomfortable." (Miss Oliver, it's time for those seven drops.) "As I was saying, Victoria's enigmatical hopeless, although a French comtesse who wouldn't look at anybody at the baths this spring became wild about her, and a certain type of elderly English peer always wants to marry her. (I suppose I do look pale to-day.) Victoria loves art, and really knows something about it. She adores to potter around those queer places abroad where you see strange English and Germans and Americans with red books in their hands. What am I to do about this young man of whom you speak—whatever his name is? I suppose Victoria will marry him—it would be just like her. But what can I do, Fanny? I can't manage her, and it's no use going to her father. He would only laugh. Augustus actually told me once there was no such thing as social position in this country!"

"American men of affairs," Mrs. Pomfret judicially replied, "are too busy to consider position. They make it, my dear, as a by-product." Mrs. Pomfret smiled, and mentally noted this aptly technical witticism for use again.

"I suppose they do," assented the Rose of Sharon, "and their daughters sometimes squander it, just as their sons squander their money."

"I'm not at all sure that Victoria is going to squander it," was Mrs. Pomfret's comforting remark. "She is too much of a personage, and she has great wealth behind her. I wish Alice were more like her, in some ways. Alice is so helpless, she has to be prodded and prompted continually. I can't leave her for a moment. And when she is married, I'm going into a sanatorium for six months."

"I hear," said Mrs. Flint, "that Humphrey Crewe is quite epris."

Page 103

"Poor dear Humphrey!" exclaimed Mrs. Pomfret, "he can think of nothing else but politics."

But we are not to take up again, as yet, the deeds of the crafty Ulysses. In order to relate an important conversation between Mrs. Pomfret and the Rose of Sharon, we have gone back a week in this history, and have left Victoria—absorbed in her thoughts—driving over a wood road of many puddles that led to the Four Corners, near Avalon. The road climbed the song-laden valley of a brook, redolent now with scents of which the rain had robbed the fern, but at length Victoria reached an upland where the young corn was springing from the, black furrows that followed the contours of the hillsides, where the big-eyed cattle lay under the heavy maples and oaks or gazed at her across the fences.

Victoria drew up in front of an unpainted farm-house straggling beside the road, a farm-house which began with the dignity of fluted pilasters and ended in a tumble-down open shed filled with a rusty sleigh and a hundred nondescript articles—some of which seemed to be moving. Intently studying this phenomenon from her runabout, she finally discovered that the moving objects were children; one of whom, a little girl, came out and stared at her.

"How do you do, Mary?" said Victoria. "Isn't your name Mary?"

The child nodded.

"I remember you," she said; "you're the rich lady, mother met at the party, that got father a job."

Victoria smiled. And such was the potency of the smile that the child joined in it.

"Where's brother?" asked Victoria. "He must be quite grown up since we gave him lemonade."

Mary pointed to the woodshed.

"O dear!" exclaimed Victoria, leaping out of the runabout and hitching her horse, "aren't you afraid some of those sharp iron things will fall on him?" She herself rescued brother from what seemed untimely and certain death, and set him down in safety in the middle of the grass plot. He looked up at her with the air of one whose dignity has been irretrievably injured, and she laughed as she reached down and pulled his nose. Then his face, too, became wreathed in smiles.

"Mary, how old are you?"

"Seven, ma'am."

“And I’m five,” Mary’s sister chimed in.

“I want you to promise me,” said Victoria, “that you won’t let brother play in that shed. And the very next time I come I’ll bring you both the nicest thing I can think of.”

Mary began to dance.

“We’ll promise, we’ll promise!” she cried for both, and at this juncture Mrs. Fitch, who had run from the washtub to get into her Sunday waist, came out of the door.

“So you hain’t forgot me!” she exclaimed. “I was almost afeard you’d forgot me.”

“I’ve been away,” said Victoria, gently taking the woman’s hand and sitting down on the doorstep.

“Don’t set there,” said Mrs. Fitch; “come into the parlour. You’ll dirty your dress—Mary!” This last in admonition.

Page 104

"Let her stay where she is," said Victoria, putting her arm around the child. "The dress washes, and it's so nice outside."

"You rich folks certainly do have strange notions," declared Mrs. Fitch, fingering the flounce on Victoria's skirt, which formed the subject of conversation for the next few minutes.

"How are you getting on?" Victoria asked at length.

A look of pain came into the woman's eyes.

"You've be'n so good to us, and done so much gettin' Eben a job on your father's place, that I don't feel as if I ought to lie to you. He done it again—on Saturday night. First time in three months. The manager up at Fairview don't know it. Eben was all right Monday."

"I'm sorry," said Victoria, simply. "Was it bad?"

"It might have be'n. Young Mr. Vane is stayin' up at Jabe Jenney's—you know, the first house as you turn off the hill road. Mr. Vane heard some way what you'd done for us, and he saw Eben in Ripton Saturday night, and made him get into his buggy and come home. I guess he had a time with Eben. Mr. Vane, he came around here on Sunday, and gave him as stiff a talkin' to as he ever got, I guess. He told Eben he'd ought to be ashamed of himself goin' back on folks who was tryin' to help him pay his mortgage. And I'll say this for Eben, he was downright ashamed. He told Mr. Vane he could lick him if he caught him drunk again, and Mr. Vane said he would. My, what a pretty colour you've got to-day."

Victoria rose. "I'm going to send you down some washing," she said.

Mrs. Fitch insisted upon untying the horse, while Victoria renewed her promises to the children.

There were two ways of going back to Fairview,—a long and a short way, —and the long way led by Jabe Jenney's farm. Victoria came to the fork in the road, paused,—and took the long way. Several times after this, she pulled her horse down to a walk, and was apparently on the point of turning around again: a disinterested observer in a farm wagon, whom she passed, thought that she had missed her road. "The first house after you turn off the hill road," Mrs. Fitch had said. She could still, of course, keep on the hill road, but that would take her to Weymouth, and she would never get home.

It is useless to go into the reasons for this act of Victoria's. She did not know them herself. The nearer Victoria got to Mr. Jenney's, the more she wished herself back at the forks. Suppose Mrs. Fitch told him of her visit! Perhaps she could pass the Jenneys' unnoticed. The chances of this, indeed, seemed highly favourable, and it was



characteristic of her sex that she began to pray fervently to this end. Then she turned off the hill road, feeling as though she had but to look back to see the smoke of the burning bridges.

Page 105

Victoria remembered the farm now; for Mr. Jabe Jenney, being a person of importance in the town of Leith, had a house commensurate with his estate. The house was not large, but its dignity was akin to Mr. Jenney's position: it was painted a spotless white, and not a shingle or a nail was out of place. Before it stood the great trees planted by Mr. Jenney's ancestors, which Victoria and other people had often paused on their drives to admire, and on the hillside was a little, old-fashioned flower garden; lilacs clustered about the small-paned windows, and a bitter-sweet clung to the roof and pillars of the porch. These details of the place (which she had never before known as Mr. Jenney's) flashed into Victoria's mind before she caught sight of the great trees themselves looming against the sombre blue-black of the sky: the wind, rising fitfully, stirred the leaves with a sound like falling waters, and a great drop fell upon her cheek. Victoria raised her eyes in alarm, and across the open spaces, toward the hills which piled higher and higher yet against the sky, was a white veil of rain. She touched with her whip the shoulder of her horse, recalling a farm a quarter of a mile beyond—she must not be caught here!

More drops followed, and the great trees seemed to reach out to her a protecting shelter. She spoke to the horse. Beyond the farm-house, on the other side of the road, was a group of gray, slate-shingled barns, and here two figures confronted her. One was that of the comfortable, middle-aged Mr. Jenney himself, standing on the threshold of the barn, and laughing heartily, and crying: "Hang on to him That's right—get him by the nose!"

The person thus addressed had led a young horse to water at the spring which bubbled out of a sugar-kettle hard by; and the horse, quivering, had barely touched his nostrils to the water when he reared backward, jerking the halter-rope taut. Then followed, with bewildering rapidity, a series of manoeuvres on the part of the horse to get away, and on the part of the person to prevent this, and inasmuch as the struggle took place in the middle of the road, Victoria had to stop. By the time the person had got the horse by the nose,—shutting off his wind,—the rain was coming down in earnest.

"Drive right in," cried Mr. Jenney, hospitably; "you'll get wet. Look out, Austen, there's a lady comin'. Why, it's Miss Flint!"

Victoria knew that her face must be on fire. She felt Austen Vane's quick glance upon her, but she did not dare look to the right or left as she drove into the barn. There seemed no excuse for any other course.

"How be you?" said Mr. Jenney; "kind of lucky you happened along here, wahn't it? You'd have been soaked before you got to Harris's. How be you? I ain't seen you since that highfalutin party up to Crewe's."

"It's very kind of you to let me come in, Mr. Jenney."

“But I have a rain-coat and a boot, and—I really ought to be going on.”

Page 106

Here Victoria produced the rain-coat from under the seat. The garment was a dark blue, and Mr. Jenney felt of its gossamer weight with a good-natured contempt.

“That wouldn’t be any more good than so much cheesecloth,” he declared, nodding in the direction of the white sheet of the storm. “Would it, Austen.”

She turned her head slowly and met Austen’s eyes. Fortunate that the barn was darkened, that he might not see how deep the colour mantling in her temples! His head was bare, and she had never really marked before the superb setting of it on his shoulders, for he wore a gray flannel shirt open at the neck, revealing a bronzed throat. His sinewy arms—weather-burned, too—were bare above the elbows.

Explanations of her presence sprang to her lips, but she put them from her as subterfuges unworthy of him. She would not attempt to deceive him in the least. She had wished to see him again—nor did she analyze her motives. Once more beside him, the feeling of confidence, of belief in him, rose within her and swept all else away—burned in a swift consuming flame the doubts of absence. He took her hand, but she withdrew it quickly.

“This is a fortunate accident,” he said, “fortunate, at least, for me.”

“Perhaps Mr. Jenney will not agree with you,” she retorted.

But Mr. Jenney was hitching the horse and throwing a blanket over him. Suddenly, before they realized it, the farmer had vanished into the storm, and this unexplained desertion of their host gave rise to an awkward silence between them, which each for a while strove vainly to break. In the great moments of life, trivialities become dwarfed and ludicrous, and the burden of such occasions is on the woman.

“So you’ve taken to farming,” she said, “isn’t it about haying time?”

He laughed.

“We begin next week. And you—you’ve come back in season for it. I hope that your mother is better.”

“Yes,” replied Victoria, simply, “the baths helped her. But I’m glad to get back,—I like my own country so much better,—and especially this part of it,” she added. “I can bear to be away from New York in the winter, but not from Fairview in the summer.”

At this instant Mr. Jenney appeared at the barn door bearing a huge green umbrella.

“Come over to the house—Mis’ Jenney is expectin’ you,” he said.

Victoria hesitated. To refuse would be ungracious; moreover, she could risk no misinterpretation of her acts, and she accepted. Mrs. Jenney met her on the doorstep, and conducted her into that sanctum reserved for occasions, the parlour, with its Bible, its flat, old-fashioned piano, its samplers, its crayon portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Jenney after their honeymoon; with its aroma that suggested Sundays and best manners. Mrs. Jenney, with incredible rapidity (for her figure was not what it had been at the time of the crayon portrait), had got into a black dress, over which she wore a spotless apron. She sat in the parlour with her guest until Mr. Jenney reappeared with shining face and damp hair.

Page 107

"You'll excuse me, my dear," said Mrs. Jenney, "but the supper's on the stove, and I have to run out now and then."

Mr. Jenney was entertaining. He had the shrewd, humorous outlook upon life characteristic of the best type of New England farmer, and Victoria got along with him famously. His comments upon his neighbours were kindly but incisive, except when the question of spirituous liquors occurred to him. Austen Vane he thought the world of, and dwelt upon this subject a little longer than Victoria, under the circumstances, would have wished.

"He comes out here just like it was home," said Mr. Jenney, "and helps with the horses and cows the same as if he wasn't gettin' to be one of the greatest lawyers in the State."

"O dear, Mr. Jenney," said Victoria, glancing out of the window, "I'll really have to go home. I'm sure it won't stop raining for hours. But I shall be perfectly dry in my rain-coat,—no matter how much you may despise it."

"You're not a-going to do anything of the kind," cried Mrs. Jenney from the doorway. "Supper's all ready, and you're going to walk right in."

"Oh, I really have to go," Victoria exclaimed.

"Now I know it ain't as grand as you'd get at home," said Mr. Jenney. "It ain't what we'd give you, Miss Victoria,—that's only simple home fare,—it's what you'd give us. It's the honour of having you," he added,—and Victoria thought that no courtier could have worded an invitation better. She would not be missed at Fairview. Her mother was inaccessible at this hour, and the servants would think of her as dining at Leith. The picture of the great, lonely house, of the ceremonious dinner which awaited her single presence, gave her an irresistible longing to sit down with these simple, kindly souls. Austen was the only obstacle. He, too, had changed his clothes, and now appeared, smiling at her behind Mrs. Jenney. The look of prospective disappointment in the good woman's face decided Victoria.

"I'll stay, with pleasure," she said.

Mr. Jenney pronounced grace. Victoria sat across the table from Austen, and several times the consciousness of his grave look upon her as she talked heightened the colour in her cheek. He said but little during the meal. Victoria heard how well Mrs. Jenney's oldest son was doing in Springfield, and how the unmarried daughter was teaching, now, in the West. Asked about Europe, that land of perpetual mystery to the native American, the girl spoke so simply and vividly of some of the wonders she had seen that she held the older people entranced long after the meal was finished. But at length she observed, with a start, the gathering darkness. In the momentary happiness of this experience, she had been forgetful.

“I will drive home with you, if you’ll allow me,” said Austen.

“Oh, no, I really don’t need an escort, Mr. Vane. I’m so used to driving about at night, I never think of it,” she answered.

Page 108

"Of course he'll drive home with you, dear," said Mrs. Jenney. "And, Jabe, you'll hitch up and go and fetch Austen back."

"Certain," Mr. Jenney agreed.

The rain had ceased, and the indistinct outline of the trees and fences betrayed the fact that the clouds were already thinning under the moon. Austen had lighted the side lamps of the runabout, revealing the shining pools on the road as they drove along—for the first few minutes in silence.

"It was very good of you to stay," he said; "you do not know how much pleasure you have given them."

Her feminine appreciation responded to the tact of this remark: it was so distinctly what he should have said.

How delicate, she thought, must be his understanding of her, that he should have spoken so!

"I was glad to stay," she answered, in a low voice. "I—enjoyed it, too."

"They have very little in their lives," he said, and added, with a characteristic touch, "I do not mean to say that your coming would not be an event in any household."

She laughed with him, softly, at this sally.

"Not to speak of the visit you are making them," she replied.

"Oh, I'm one of the family," he said; "I come and go. Jabe's is my country house, when I can't stand the city any longer."

She saw that he did not intend to tell her why he had left Ripton on this occasion. There fell another silence. They were like prisoners, and each strove to explore the bounds of their captivity: each sought a lawful ground of communication. Victoria suddenly remembered—with an access of indignation—her father's words, "I do not know what sort he is, but he is not my sort." A while ago, and she had blamed herself vehemently for coming to Jabe Jenney's, and now the act had suddenly become sanctified in her sight. She did not analyze her feeling for Austen, but she was consumed with a fierce desire that justice should be done him. "He was honourable—honourable!" she found herself repeating under her breath. No man or woman could look into his face, take his hand, sit by his side, without feeling that he was as dependable as the stars in their courses. And her father should know this, must be made to know it. This man was to be distinguished from opportunists and self-seekers, from fanatics who strike at random. His chief possession was a priceless one—a conscience.



As for Austen, it sufficed him for the moment that he had been lifted, by another seeming caprice of fortune, to a seat of torture the agony whereof was exquisite. An hour, and only the ceaseless pricking memory of it would abide. The barriers had risen higher since he had seen her last, but still he might look into her face and know the radiance of her presence. Could he only trust himself to guard his tongue! But the heart on such occasions will cheat language of its meaning.

“What have you been doing since I saw you last?” she asked. “It seems that you still continue to lead a life of violence.”

Page 109

"Sometimes I wish I did," he answered, with a laugh; "the humdrum existence of getting practice enough to keep a horse is not the most exciting in the world. To what particular deed of violence do you refer?"

"The last achievement, which is in every one's mouth, that of assisting Mr. Tooting down-stairs."

"I have been defamed," Austen laughed; "he fell down, I believe. But as I have a somewhat evil reputation, and as he came out of my entry, people draw their own conclusions. I can't imagine who told you that story."

"Never mind," she answered. "You see, I have certain sources of information about you."

He tingled over this, and puzzled over it so long that she laughed.

"Does that surprise you?" she asked. "I fail to see why I should be expected to lose all interest in my friends—even if they appear to have lost interest in me."

"Oh, don't say that!" he cried so sharply that she wished her words unsaid. "You can't mean it! You don't know!"

She trembled at the vigorous passion he put into the words.

"No, I don't mean it," she said gently.

The wind had made a rent in the sheet of the clouds, and through it burst the moon in her full glory, flooding field and pasture, and the black stretches of pine forest at their feet. Below them the land fell away, and fell again to the distant broadening valley, to where a mist of white vapour hid the course of the Blue. And beyond, the hills rose again, tier upon tier, to the shadowy outline of Sawanec herself against the hurrying clouds and the light-washed sky. Victoria, gazing at the scene, drew a deep breath, and turned and looked at him in the quick way which he remembered so well.

"Sometimes," she said, "it is so beautiful that it hurts to look at it. You love it—do you ever feel that way?"

"Yes," he said, but his answer was more than the monosyllable. "I can see that mountain from my window, and it seriously interferes with my work. I really ought to move into another building."

There was a little catch in her laugh.

“And I watch it,” she continued, “I watch it from the pine grove by the hour. Sometimes it smiles, and sometimes it is sad, and sometimes it is far, far away, so remote and mysterious that I wonder if it is ever to come back and smile again.”

“Have you ever seen the sunrise from its peak?” said Austen.

“No. Oh, how I should love to see it!” she exclaimed.

“Yes, you would like to see it,” he answered simply. He would like to take her there, to climb, with her hand in his, the well-known paths in the darkness, to reach the summit in the rosy-fingered dawn: to see her stand on the granite at his side in the full glory of the red light, and to show her a world which she was henceforth to share with him.

Some such image, some such vision of his figure on the rock, may have been in her mind as she turned her face again toward the mountain.

Page 110

"You are cold," he said, reaching for the mackintosh in the back of the trap.

"No," she said. But she stopped the horse and acquiesced by slipping her arms into the coat, and he felt upon his hand the caress of a stray wisp of hair at her neck. Under a spell of thought and feeling, seemingly laid by the magic of the night, neither spoke for a space. And then Victoria summoned her forces, and turned to him again. Her tone bespoke the subtle intimacy that always sprang up between them, despite bars and conventions.

"I was sure you would understand why I wrote you from New York," she said, "although I hesitated a long time before doing so. It was very stupid of me not to realize the scruples which made you refuse to be a candidate for the governorship, and I wanted to—to apologize."

"It wasn't necessary," said Austen, "but—I valued the note." The words seemed so absurdly inadequate to express his appreciation of the treasure which he carried with him, at that moment, in his pocket. "But, really," he added, smiling at her in the moonlight, "I must protest against your belief that I could have been an effective candidate! I have roamed about the State, and I have made some very good friends here and there among the hill farmers, like Mr. Jenney. Mr. Redbrook is one of these. But it would have been absurd of me even to think of a candidacy founded on personal friendships. I assure you," he added, smiling, "there was no self denial in my refusal."

She gave him an appraising glance which he found at once enchanting and disconcerting.

"You are one of those people, I think, who do not know their own value. If I were a man, and such men as Mr. Redbrook and Mr. Jenney knew me and believed sufficiently in me and in my integrity of purpose to ask me to be their candidate" (here she hesitated an instant), "and I believed that the cause were a good one, I should not have felt justified in refusing. That is what I meant. I have always thought of you as a man of force and a man of action. But I did not see—the obstacle in your way."

She hesitated once more, and added, with a courage which did not fail of its direct appeal, "I did not realize that you would be publicly opposing your father. And I did not realize that you would not care to criticise —mine."

On the last word she faltered and glanced at his profile.

Had she gone too far?

"I felt that you would understand," he answered. He could not trust himself to speak further. How much did she know? And how much was she capable of grasping?



His reticence served only to fortify her trust—to elevate it. It was impossible for her not to feel something of that which was in him and crying for utterance. She was a woman. And if this one action had been but the holding of her coat, she would have known. A man who could keep silent under these conditions must indeed be a rock of might and honour; and she felt sure now, with a surging of joy, that the light she had seen shining from it was the beacon of truth. A question trembled on her lips—the question for which she had long been gathering strength. Whatever the outcome of this communion, she felt that there must be absolute truth between them.

Page 111

"I want to ask you something, Mr. Vane—I have been wanting to for a long time."

She saw the muscles of his jaw tighten,—a manner he had when earnest or determined,—and she wondered in agitation whether he divined what she was going to say. He turned his face slowly to hers, and his eyes were troubled.

"Yes," he said.

"You have always spared my feelings," she went on. "Now—now I am asking for the truth—as you see it. Do the Northeastern Railroads wrongfully govern this State for their own ends?"

Austen, too, as he thought over it afterwards, in the night, was surprised at her concise phrasing, suggestive; as it was, of much reflection. But at the moment, although he had been prepared for and had braced himself against something of this nature, he was nevertheless overcome by the absolute and fearless directness of her speech.

"That is a question," he answered, "which you will have to ask your father."

"I have asked him," she said, in a low voice; "I want to know what—you believe."

"You have asked him!" he repeated, in astonishment.

"Yes. You mustn't think that, in asking you, I am unfair to him in any way—or that I doubt his sincerity. We have been" (her voice caught a little) "the closest friends ever since I was a child." She paused. "But I want to know what you believe."

The fact that she emphasized the last pronoun sent another thrill through him. Did it, then, make any difference to her what he believed? Did she mean to differentiate him from out of the multitude? He had to steady himself before he answered:—"I have sometimes thought that my own view might not be broad enough."

She turned to him again.

"Why are you evading?" she asked. "I am sure it is not because you have not settled convictions. And I have asked you—a favour."

"You have done me an honour," he answered, and faced her suddenly. "You must see," he cried, with a power and passion in his voice that startled and thrilled her in turn, "you must see that it's because I wish to be fair that I hesitate. I would tell you—anything. I do not agree with my own father,—we have been—apart—for years because of this. And I do—not agree with Mr. Flint. I am sure that they both are wrong. But I cannot help seeing their point of view. These practices are the result of an evolution, of an evolution of their time. They were forced to cope with conditions in the way they did, or

go to the wall. They make the mistake of believing that the practices are still necessary to-day."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, a great hope rising within her at these words. "Oh, and you believe they are not!" His explanation seemed so simple, so inspiring. And above and beyond that, he was sure. Conviction rang in every word. Had he not, she remembered, staked his career by disagreeing with his father? Yes, and he had been slow to condemn; he had seen their side. It was they who condemned him. He must have justice—he should have it!

Page 112

"I believe such practices are not necessary now," he said firmly. "A new generation has come—a generation more jealous of its political rights, and not so willing to be rid of them by farming them out. A change has taken place even in the older men, like Mr. Jenney and Mr. Redbrook, who simply did not think about these questions ten years ago. Men of this type, who could be leaders, are ready to assume their responsibilities, are ready to deal fairly with railroads and citizens alike. This is a matter of belief. I believe it—Mr. Flint and my father do not. They see the politicians, and I see the people. I belong to one generation, and they to another. With the convictions they have, added to the fact that they are in a position of heavy responsibility toward the owners of their property, they cannot be blamed for hesitating to try any experiments."

"And the practices are—bad?" Victoria asked.

"They are entirely subversive of the principles of American government, to say the least," replied Austen, grimly. He was thinking of the pass which Mr. Flint had sent him, and of the kind of men Mr. Flint employed to make the practices effective.

They descended into the darkness of a deep valley, scored out between the hills by one of the rushing tributaries of the Blue. The moon fell down behind the opposite ridge, and the road ran through a deep forest. He no longer saw the shades of meaning in her face, but in the blackness of Erebus he could have sensed her presence at his side. Speech, though of this strange kind of which neither felt the strangeness, had come and gone between them, and now silence spoke as eloquently. Twice or thrice their eyes met through the gloom,—and there was light. At length she spoke with the impulsiveness in her voice that he found so appealing.

"You must see my father—you must talk to him. He doesn't know how fair you are!"

To Austen the inference was obvious that Mr. Flint had conceived for him a special animosity, which he must have mentioned to Victoria, and this inference opened the way to a wide speculation in which he was at once elated and depressed. Why had he been so singled out? And had Victoria defended him? Once before he remembered that she had told him he must see Mr. Flint. They had gained the ridge now, and the moon had risen again for them, striking black shadows from the maples on the granite-cropped pastures. A little farther on was a road which might have been called the rear entrance to Fairview.

What was he to say?

"I am afraid Mr. Flint has other things to do than to see me," he answered. "If he wished to see me, he would say so."

"Would you go to see him, if he were to ask you?" said Victoria.

“Yes,” he replied, “but that is not likely to happen. Indeed, you are giving my opinion entirely too much importance in your father’s eyes,” he added, with an attempt to carry it off lightly; “there is no more reason why he should care to discuss the subject with me than with any other citizen of the State of my age who thinks as I do.”

Page 113

"Oh, yes, there is," said Victoria; "he regards you as a person whose opinion has some weight. I am sure of that. He thinks of you as a person of convictions—and he has heard things about you. You talked to him once," she went on, astonished at her own boldness, "and made him angry. Why don't you talk to him again?" she cried, seeing that Austen was silent. "I am sure that what you said about the change of public opinion in the State would appeal to him. And oh, don't quarrel with him! You have a faculty of differing with people without quarrelling with them. My father has so many cares, and he tries so hard to do right as he sees it. You must remember that he was a poor farmer's son, and that he began to work at fourteen in Brampton, running errands for a country printer. He never had any advantages except those he made for himself, and he had to fight his way in a hard school against men who were not always honourable. It is no wonder that he sometimes takes—a material view of things. But he is reasonable and willing to listen to what other men have to say, if he is not antagonized."

"I understand," said Austen, who thought Mr. Flint blest in his advocate. Indeed, Victoria's simple reference to her father's origin had touched him deeply. "I understand, but I cannot go to him. There is every reason why I cannot," he added, and she knew that he was speaking with difficulty, as under great emotion.

"But if he should send for you?" she asked. She felt his look fixed upon her with a strange intensity, and her heart leaped as she dropped her eyes.

"If Mr. Flint should send for me," he answered slowly, "I would come—and gladly. But it must be of his own free will."

Victoria repeated the words over to herself, "It must be of his own free will," waiting until she should be alone to seek their full interpretation. She turned, and looked across the lawn at Fairview House shining in the light. In another minute they had drawn up before the open door.

"Won't you come in—and wait for Mr. Jenney?" she asked.

He gazed down into her face, searchingly, and took her hand.

"Good night," he said; "Mr. Jenney is not far behind. I think—I think I should like the walk."

CHAPTER XX

MR. CREWE: AN APPRECIATION (1)

It is given to some rare mortals—with whom fame precedes grey hairs or baldness to read, while still on the rising tide of their efforts, that portion of their lives which has already been inscribed on the scroll of history—or something like it. Mr. Crewe in kilts at

five; and (prophetic picture!) with a train of cars which—so the family tradition runs—was afterwards demolished; Mr. Crewe at fourteen, in delicate health; this picture was taken abroad, with a long-suffering tutor who could speak feelingly, if he would, of embryo geniuses. Even at this early period Humphrey

Page 114

Crewe's thirst for knowledge was insatiable: he cared little, the biography tells us, for galleries and churches and ruins, but his comments upon foreign methods of doing business were astonishingly precocious. He recommended to amazed clerks in provincial banks the use of cheques, ridiculed to speechless station-masters the side-entrance railway carriage with its want of room, and the size of the goods trucks. He is said to have been the first to suggest that soda-water fountains might be run at a large profit in London.

In college, in addition to keeping up his classical courses, he found time to make an exhaustive study of the railroads of the United States, embodying these ideas in a pamphlet published shortly after graduation. This pamphlet is now, unfortunately, very rare, but the anonymous biographer managed to get one and quote from it. If Mr. Crewe's suggestions had been carried out, seventy-five per cent of the railroad accidents might have been eliminated. Thorough was his watchword even then. And even at that period he foresaw, with the prophecy of genius, the days of single-track congestion.

His efforts to improve Leith and the State in general, to ameliorate the condition of his neighbours, were fittingly and delicately dwelt upon. A desire to take upon himself the burden of citizenship led—as we know—to further self-denial. He felt called upon to go to the Legislature—and this is what he saw:—(Mr. Crewe is quoted here at length in an admirable, concise, and hair-raising statement given in an interview to his biographer. But we have been with him, and know what he saw. It is, for lack of space, reluctantly omitted.)

And now we are to take up where the biography left off; to relate, in a chapter if possible, one of the most remarkable campaigns in the history of this country. A certain reformer of whose acquaintance the honest chronicler boasts (a reformer who got elected!) found, on his first visit to the headquarters he had hired—two citizens under the influence of liquor and a little girl with a skip rope. Such are the beginnings that try men's souls.

The window of every independent shopkeeper in Ripton contained a large-sized picture of the Leith statesman, his determined chin slightly thrust down into the Gladstone collar. Underneath were the words, "I will put an end to graft and railroad rule. I am a Candidate of the People. Opening rally of the People's Campaign at the Opera House, at 8 P.M., July 10th. The Hon. Humphrey Crewe, of Leith, will tell the citizens of Ripton how their State is governed."

"Father," said Victoria, as she read this announcement (three columns wide, in the Ripton Record) as they sat at breakfast together, "do you mind my going? I can get Hastings Weare to take me."

“Not at all,” said Mr. Flint, who had returned from New York in a better frame of mind. “I should like a trustworthy account of that meeting. Only,” he added, “I should advise you to go early, Victoria, in order to get a seat.”

Page 115

"You don't object to my listening to criticism of you?"

"Not by Humphrey Crewe," laughed Mr. Flint.

Early suppers instead of dinners were the rule at Leith on the evening of the historic day, and the candidate himself, in his red Leviathan, was not inconsiderably annoyed, on the way to Ripton, by innumerable carryalls and traps filled with brightly gowned recruits of that organization of Mrs. Pomfret's which Beatrice Chillingham had nicknamed "The Ladies' Auxiliary." In vain Mr. Crewe tooted his horn: the sound of it was drowned by the gay talk and laughter in the carryalls, and shrieks ensued when the Leviathan cut by with only six inches to spare, and the candidate turned and addressed the drivers in language more forceful than polite, and told the ladies they acted as if they were going to a Punch-and-Judy show.

"Poor dear Humphrey!" said, Mrs. Pomfret, "is so much in earnest. I wouldn't give a snap for a man without a temper."

"Poor dear Humphrey" said Beatrice Chillingham, in an undertone to her neighbour, "is exceedingly rude and ungrateful. That's what I think."

The occupants of one vehicle heard the horn, and sought the top of a grassy mound to let the Leviathan go by. And the Leviathan, with characteristic contrariness, stopped.

"Hello," said Mr. Crewe, with a pull at his cap. "I intended to be on the lookout for you."

"That is very thoughtful, Humphrey, considering how many things you have to be on the lookout for this evening," Victoria replied.

"That's all right," was Mr. Crewe's gracious reply. "I knew you'd be sufficiently broad-minded to come, and I hope you won't take offence at certain remarks I think it my duty to make."

"Don't let my presence affect you," she answered, smiling; "I have come prepared for anything."

"I'll tell Tooting to give you a good seat," he called back, as he started onward.

Hastings Weare looked up at her, with laughter-brimming eyes.

"Victoria, you're a wonder!" he remarked. "Say, do you remember that tall fellow we met at Humphrey's party, Austen Vane?"

Yes."

"I saw him on the street in Ripton the other day, and he came right up and spoke to me. He hadn't forgotten my name. Now, he'd be my notion of a candidate. He makes you feel as if your presence in the world meant something to him."

"I think he does feel that way," replied Victoria.

"I don't blame him if he feels that way about you," said Hastings, who made love openly.

"Hastings," she answered, "when you get a little older, you will learn to confine yourself to your own opinions."

"When I do," he retorted audaciously, "they never make you blush like that."

"It's probably because you have never learned to be original," she replied. But Hastings had been set to thinking.

Page 116

Mrs. Pomfret, with her foresight and her talent for management, had given the Ladies' Auxiliary notice that they were not to go farther forward than the twelfth row. She herself, with some especially favoured ones, occupied a box, which was the nearest thing to being on the stage. One unforeseen result of Mrs. Pomfret's arrangement was that the first eleven rows were vacant, with the exception of one old man and five or six schoolboys. Such is the courage of humanity in general! On the arrival of the candidate, instead of a surging crowd lining the sidewalk, he found only a fringe of the curious, whose usual post of observation was the railroad station, standing silently on the curb. Within, Mr. Tooting's duties as an usher had not been onerous. He met Mr. Crewe in the vestibule, and drew him into the private office.

"The railroad's fixed 'em," said the manager, indignantly, but sotto voce; "I've found that out. Hilary Vane had the word passed around town that if they came, somethin' would fall on 'em. The Tredways and all the people who own factories served notice on their men that if they paid any attention to this meeting they'd lose their job. But say, the people are watchin' you, just the same."

"How many people are in there?" Mr. Crewe demanded.

"Twenty-seven, when I came out," said Mr. Tooting, with commendable accuracy. "But it wants fifteen minutes to eight."

"And who," asked Mr. Crewe, "is to introduce me?"

An expression of indignation spread over Mr. Tooting's face.

"There ain't a man in Ripton's got sand enough!" he exclaimed. "Sol Gridley was a-goin' to, but he went to New York on the noon train. I guess it's a pleasure trip," Mr. Tooting hinted darkly.

"Why," said Mr. Crewe, "he's the fellow—"

"Exactly," Mr. Tooting replied, "and he did get a lot of 'em, travelling about. But Sol has got to work on the quiet, you understand. He feels he can't come out right away."

"And how about Amos Ricketts? Where's he?"

"Amos," said Mr. Tooting, regretfully, "was taken very sudden about five o'clock. One of his spells come on, and he sent me word to the Ripton House. He had his speech all made up, and it was a good one, too. He was going to tell folks pretty straight how the railroad beat him for mayor."

Mr. Crewe made a gesture of disgust.

"I'll introduce myself," he said. "They all know me, anyhow."

“Say,” said Mr. Tooting, laying a hand on his candidate’s arm. “You couldn’t do any better. I’ve bin for that all along.”

“Hold on,” said Mr. Crewe, listening, “a lot of people are coming in now.”

What Mr. Crewe had heard, however, was the arrival of the Ladies’ Auxiliary,—five and thirty strong, from Leith. But stay! Who are these coming? More ladies—ladies in groups of two and three and five! ladies of Ripton whose husbands, for some unexplained reason, have stayed at home; and Mr. Tooting, as he watched them with mingled feelings, became a woman’s suffragist on the spot. He dived into the private office once more, where he found Mr. Crewe seated with his legs crossed, calmly reading a last winter’s playbill. (Note for a more complete biography.)

Page 117

"Well, Tooting," he said, "I thought they'd begin to come."

"They're mostly women," Mr. Tooting informed him.

"Women!"

"Hold on!" said Mr. Tooting, who had the true showman's instinct. "Can't you see that folks are curious? They're afraid to come 'emselves, and they're sendin' their wives and daughters. If you get the women tonight, they'll go home and club the men into line."

Eight strokes boomed out from the tower of the neighbouring town hall, and an expectant flutter spread over the audience,—a flutter which disseminated faint odours of sachet and other mysterious substances in which feminine apparel is said to be laid away. The stage was empty, save for a table which held a pitcher of water and a glass.

"It's a pretty good imitation of a matinee," Hastings Weare remarked. "I wonder whom the front seats are reserved for. Say, Victoria, there's your friend Mr. Vane in the corner. He's looking over here."

"He has a perfect right to look where he chooses," said Victoria. She wondered whether he would come over and sit next to her if she turned around, and decided instantly that he wouldn't. Presently, when she thought Hastings was off his guard, she did turn, to meet, as she expected, Austen's glance fixed upon her. Their greeting was the signal of two people with a mutual understanding. He did not rise, and although she acknowledged to herself a feeling of disappointment, she gave him credit for a nice comprehension of the situation. Beside him was his friend Tom Gaylord, who presented to her a very puzzled face. And then, if there had been a band, it would have been time to play "See, the Conquering Hero Comes!"

Why wasn't there a band? No such mistake, Mr. Tooting vowed, should be made at the next rally.

It was Mrs. Pomfret who led the applause from her box as the candidate walked modestly up the side aisle and presently appeared, alone, on the stage. The flutter of excitement was renewed, and this time it might almost be called a flutter of apprehension. But we who have heard Mr. Crewe speak are in no alarm for our candidate. He takes a glass of iced water; he arranges, with the utmost sangfroid, his notes on the desk and adjusts the reading light. Then he steps forward and surveys the scattered groups.

"Ladies—" a titter ran through the audience,—a titter which started somewhere in the near neighbourhood of Mr. Hastings Weare—and rose instantly to several hysterical peals of feminine laughter. Mrs. Pomfret, outraged, sweeps the frivolous offenders with her lorgnette; Mr. Crewe, with his arm resting, on the reading-desk, merely raises the

palm of his hand to a perpendicular reproof,—“and gentlemen.” At this point the audience is thoroughly cowed. “Ladies and gentlemen and fellow citizens. I thank you for the honour you have done me in coming here to listen to the opening speech of my campaign to-night. It is a campaign

Page 118

for decency and good government, and I know that the common people of the State—of whom I have the honour to be one—demand these things. I cannot say as much for the so-called prominent citizens,” said Mr. Crewe, glancing about him; “not one of your prominent citizens in Ripton would venture to offend the powers that be by consenting to introduce me to-night, or dared come into this theatre and take seats within thirty feet of this platform.” Here Mr. Crewe let his eyes rest significantly on the eleven empty rows, while his hearers squirmed in terrified silence at this audacity. Even the Ripton women knew that this was high treason beneath the walls of the citadel, and many of them glanced furtively at the strangely composed daughter of Augustus P. Flint.

“I will show you that I can stand on my own feet,” Mr. Crewe continued. “I will introduce myself. I am Humphrey Crewe of Leith, and I claim to have added something to the welfare and prosperity of this State, and I intend to add more before I have finished.”

At this point, as might have been expected, spontaneous applause broke forth, originating in the right-hand stage box. Here was a daring defiance indeed, a courage of such a high order that it completely carried away the ladies and drew reluctant plaudits from the male element. “Give it to ’em, Humphrey!” said one of those who happened to be sitting next to Miss Flint, and who received a very severe pinch in the arm in consequence.

“I thank the gentleman,” answered Mr. Crewe, “and I propose to —(Handclapping and satchet.) I propose to show that you spend something like two hundred thousand dollars a year to elect legislators and send ’em to the capital, when the real government of your State is in a room in the Pelican Hotel known as the Railroad Room, and the real governor is a citizen of your town, the Honourable Hilary Vane, who sits there and acts for his master, Mr. Augustus P. Flint of New York. And I propose to prove to you that, before the Honourable Adam B. Hunt appeared as that which has come to be known as the ‘regular’ candidate, Mr. Flint sent for him to go to New York and exacted certain promises from him. Not that it was necessary, but the Northeastern Railroads never take any chances. (Laughter.) The Honourable Adam B. Hunt is what they call a ‘safe’ man, meaning by that a man who will do what Mr. Flint wants him to do. While I am not ‘safe’ because I have dared to defy them in your name, and will do what the people want me to do. (Clapping and cheers from a gentleman in the darkness, afterwards identified as Mr. Tooting.) Now, my friends, are you going to continue to allow a citizen of New York to nominate your governors, and do you intend, tamely, to give the Honourable Adam B. Hunt your votes?”

“They ain’t got any votes,” said a voice—not that of Mr. Hastings Weare, for it came from the depths of the gallery.

“The hand that rocks the cradle sways the world,” answered Mr. Crewe, and there was no doubt about the sincerity of the applause this time.

Page 119

"The campaign of the Honourable Humphrey Crewe of Leith," said the State Tribune next day, "was inaugurated at the Opera House in Ripton last night before an enthusiastic audience consisting of Mr. Austen Vane, Mr. Thomas Gaylord, Jr., Mr. Hamilton Tooting, two reporters, and seventy-four ladies, who cheered the speaker to the echo. About half of these ladies were summer residents of Leith in charge of the well-known social leader, Mrs. Patterson Pomfret,—an organized league which, it is understood, will follow the candidate about the State in the English fashion, kissing the babies and teaching the mothers hygienic cooking and how to ondulate the hair."

After speaking for an hour and a half, the Honourable Humphrey Crewe declared that he would be glad to meet any of the audience who wished to shake his hand, and it was Mrs. Pomfret who reached him first.

"Don't be discouraged, Humphrey,—you are magnificent," she whispered.

"Discouraged!" echoed Mr. Crewe. "You can't kill an idea, and we'll see who's right and who's wrong before I get through with 'em."

"What a noble spirit!" Mrs. Pomfret exclaimed aside to Mrs. Chillingham. Then she added, in a louder tone, "Ladies, if you will kindly tell me your names, I shall be happy to introduce you to the candidate. Well, Victoria, I didn't expect to see you here."

"Why not?" said Victoria. "Humphrey, accept my congratulations."

"Did you like it?" asked Mr. Crewe. "I thought it was a pretty good speech myself. There's nothing like telling the truth, you know. And, by the way, I hope to see you in a day or two, before I start for Kingston. Telephone me when you come down to Leith."

The congratulations bestowed on the candidate by the daughter of the president of the Northeastern Railroads quite took the breath out of the spectators who witnessed the incident, and gave rise to the wildest conjectures. And the admiration of Mr. Hastings Weare was unbounded.

"You've got the most magnificent nerve I ever saw, Victoria," he exclaimed, as they made their way towards the door.

"You forget Humphrey," she replied.

Hastings looked at her and chuckled. In fact, he chuckled all the way home. In the vestibule they met Mr. Austen Vane and Mr. Thomas Gaylord, the latter coming forward with a certain palpable embarrassment. All through the evening Tom had been trying to account for her presence at the meeting, until Austen had begged him to keep his speculations to himself. "She can't be engaged to him!" Mr. Gaylord had exclaimed more than once, under his breath. "Why not?" Austen had answered; "there's a good

deal about him to admire.” “Because she’s got more sense,” said Tom doggedly. Hence he was at a loss for words when she greeted him.

“Well, Mr. Gaylord,” she said, “you see no bones were broken, after all. But I appreciated your precaution in sending the buggy behind me, although it wasn’t necessary.

Page 120

"I felt somewhat responsible," replied Tom, and words failed him. "Here's Austen Vane," he added, indicating by a nod of the head the obvious presence of that gentleman.

"You'll excuse me. There's a man here I want to see."

"What's the matter with Mr. Gaylord?" Victoria asked. "He seems so —queer."

They were standing apart, alone, Hastings Weare having gone to the stables for the runabout.

"Mr. Gaylord imagines he doesn't get along with the opposite sex," Austen replied, with just a shade of constraint.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Victoria; "we got along perfectly the other day when he rescued me from the bushes. What's the matter with him?"

Austen laughed, and their eyes met.

"I think he is rather surprised to see you here," he said.

"And you?" returned Victoria. "Aren't you equally out of place?"

He did not care to go into an explanation of Tom's suspicion in regard to Mr. Crewe.

"My curiosity was too much for me," he replied, smiling.

"So was mine," she replied, and suddenly demanded: "What did you think of Humphrey's speech?"

Their eyes met. And despite the attempted seriousness of her tone they joined in an irresistible and spontaneous laughter. They were again on that plane of mutual understanding and intimacy for which neither could account.

"I have no criticism to make of Mr. Crewe as an orator, at least," he said.

Then she grew serious again, and regarded him steadfastly.

"And—what he said?" she asked.

Austen wondered again at the courage she had displayed. All he had been able to think of in the theatre, while listening to Mr. Crewe's words of denunciation of the Northeastern Railroads, had been of the effect they might have on Victoria's feelings, and from time to time he had glanced anxiously at her profile. And now, looking into her face, questioning, trustful—he could not even attempt to evade. He was silent.

"I shouldn't have asked you that," she said. "One reason I came was because—because I wanted to hear the worst. You were too considerate to tell me—all."

He looked mutely into her eyes, and a great desire arose in him to be able to carry her away from it all. Many times within the past year, when the troubles and complications of his life had weighed upon him, his thoughts had turned to, that Western country, limited only by the bright horizons where the sun rose and set. If he could only take her there, or into his own hills, where no man might follow them! It was a primeval longing, and, being a woman and the object of it, she saw its essential meaning in his face. For a brief moment they stood as completely alone as on the crest of Sawanec.

"Good night," she said, in a low voice.

He did not trust himself to speak at once, but went down the steps with her to the curb, where Hastings Weare was waiting in the runabout.

Page 121

"I was just telling Miss Flint," said that young gentleman, "that you would have been my candidate."

Austen's face relaxed.

"Thank you, Mr. Weare," he said simply; and to Victoria, "Good night."

At the corner, when she turned, she saw him still standing on the edge of the sidewalk, his tall figure thrown into bold relief by the light which flooded from the entrance. The account of the Ripton meeting, substantially as it appeared in the State Tribune, was by a singular coincidence copied at once into sixty-odd weekly newspapers, and must have caused endless merriment throughout the State. Congressman Fairplay's prophecy of "negligible" was an exaggeration, and one gentleman who had rashly predicted that Mr. Crewe would get twenty delegates out of a thousand hid himself for shame. On the whole, the "monumental farce" forecast seemed best to fit the situation. A conference was held at Leith between the candidate, Mr. Tooting, and the Honourable Timothy Watling of Newcastle, who was preparing the nominating speech, although the convention was more than two months distant. Mr. Watling was skilled in rounded periods of oratory and in other things political; and both he and Mr. Tooting reiterated their opinion that there was no particle of doubt about Mr. Crewe's nomination.

"But we'll have to fight fire with fire," Mr. Tooting declared. It was probably an accident that he happened to kick, at this instant, Mr. Watling under cover of the table. Mr. Watling was an old and valued friend.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Crewe, "I haven't the slightest doubt of my nomination, either. I do not hesitate to say, however, that the expenses of this campaign, at this early stage, seem to me out of all proportion. Let me see what you have there."

The Honourable Timothy Wading had produced a typewritten list containing some eighty towns and wards, each followed by a name and the number of the delegates therefrom—and figures.

"They'd all be enthusiastic Crewe men—if they could be seen by the right party," declared Mr. Tooting.

Mr. Crewe ran his eye over the list.

"Whom would you suggest to see 'em?" he asked coldly.

"There's only one party I know of that has much influence over 'em," Mr. Tooting replied, with a genial but deferential indication of his friend.

At this point Mr. Crewe's secretary left the room on an errand, and the three statesmen went into executive session. In politics, as in charity, it is a good rule not to let one's

right hand know what the left hand doeth. Half an hour later the three emerged into the sunlight, Mr. Tooting and Mr. Watling smoking large cigars.

“You’ve got a great lay-out here, Mr. Crewe,” Mr. Watling remarked. “It must have stood you in a little money, eh? Yes, I’ll get mileage books, and you’ll hear from me every day or two.”

Page 122

And now we are come to the infinitely difficult task of relating in a whirlwind manner the story of a whirlwind campaign—a campaign that was to make the oldest resident sit up and take notice. In the space of four short weeks a miracle had begun to show itself. First, there was the Kingston meeting, with the candidate, his thumb in his watch-pocket, seated in an open carriage beside Mr. Hamilton Tooting,—a carriage draped with a sheet on which was painted “Down with Railroad Ring Rule.”

The carriage was preceded by the Kingston Brass Band, producing throbbing martial melodies, and followed (we are not going to believe the State Tribune any longer) by a jostling and cheering crowd. The band halts before the G.A.R. Hall; the candidate alights, with a bow of acknowledgment, and goes to the private office until the musicians are seated in front of the platform, when he enters to renewed cheering and the tune of “See, the Conquering Hero Comes!”

An honest historian must admit that there were two accounts of this meeting. Both agree that Mr. Crewe introduced himself, and poured a withering sarcasm on the heads of Kingston’s prominent citizens. One account, which the ill-natured declared to be in Mr. Tooting’s style, and which appeared (in slightly larger type than that of the other columns) in the Kingston and local papers, stated that the hall was crowded to suffocation, and that the candidate was “accorded an ovation which lasted for fully five minutes.”

Mr. Crewe’s speech was printed—in this slightly larger type. Woe to the Honourable Adam B. Hunt, who had gone to New York to see whether he could be governor! Why didn’t he come out on the platform? Because he couldn’t. “Safe” candidates couldn’t talk. His subservient and fawning reports on accidents while chairman of the Railroad Commission were ruthlessly quoted (amid cheers and laughter). What kind of railroad service was Kingston getting compared to what it should have? Compared, indeed, to what it had twenty years ago? An informal reception was held afterwards.

More meetings followed, at the rate of four a week, in county after county. At the end of fifteen days a selectman (whose name will go down in history) voluntarily mounted the platform and introduced the Honourable Humphrey Crewe to the audience; not, to be sure, as the saviour of the State; and from that day onward Mr. Crewe did not lack for a sponsor. On the other hand, the sponsors became more pronounced, and at Harwich (a free-thinking district) a whole board of selectmen and five prominent citizens sat gravely beside the candidate in the town hall.

(1) Paul Pardriff, Ripton. Sent post free, on application, to voters and others.