THE SPIDER'S WEB

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THE SPIDER'S WEB

BY

REGINALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN

Author of "The House of Bondage," etc., etc.

BETTY STOOD AT THE WINDOW IN THE FULL LIGHT OF THE STREET-LAMP

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Illustrated by
JEAN PALEOLOGUE

NEW YORK
MOFFAT, YARD AND COMPANY
1913

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To
EVERETT HARRÉ
Gratefully

That's the shout, the shout we shall utter
When, with rifles and spades,
We stand, with the old Red Flag aflutter
On the barricades!
—FRANCIS ADAMS.

Thou orb of many orbs!
Thou seething principle! Thou well-kept, latent germ!
Thou center!
Around the idea of thee the strange sad war revolving,
With all its angry and vehement play of causes,
(With yet unknown results to come, for thrice a thousand years)....
—WHITMAN.

While three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three.
—SWINBURNE.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

EXPLANATION

In order to warn off trespassers, I have begun my novel with four chapters that an expert bookmaker—indeed, my own book-maker—has pronounced dull: I knew that only those to whom the book belonged would persevere. By the same token, being aware that the story which is prefaced by an apology is ended with suspicion, I preface this story with an apology: I want to apologize to my friends for using them and to my enemies for not giving them what they have expected; I want to create in the minds of the former the suspicion that I am darker than I have been painted, and in the minds of the latter the suspicion that I am not a whited sepulcher but a blackened altar.

In 1909 I projected, vaguely it is true, a cycle of four novels, each to be independent of the others in plot and character, but all carrying forward a definite view of life. As, however, the announcement of a cycle is the surest means of alienating readers, not to mention publishers, I held my tongue about the general

plan and concerned myself, in public, only with its separate parts. These were "The House of Bondage," "The Sentence of Silence," "Running Sands" and "The Spider's Web."

Privately, the first question demanding answer was that of method. In what I had to say I believed burningly, as I still believe deeply, and the great thing with me was not to say it in the manner that most people would call Art, but to say it in the manner that would convert as many readers as possible to my way of thinking. I did not want to produce the effect of a work of Art; I wanted to produce conviction of truth. On the one hand, I must avoid even the appearance of a personal interest in my characters, because that would divert my readers into the charge of sentimentality; and on the other, I must not hesitate to marshal my events in their largest force, even though the reviewers called this melodrama.

Here is a choice that is sure to come sooner or later to every writer of fiction: the choice between what he has considered Art for Art's sake and what he considers art for Man's sake. He has kept in mind the day when his books will be judged solely by their own merits, when the causes with which he sympathizes have been defeated and forgotten or established and beyond the need of sympathy; when new evils demand new remedies and old wounds are healed. He knows, as few of his contemporary readers can know, that then he will be heavily handicapped by all that is immediate or local in what he writes; that by nothing save adherence to the eternal standards of Art can he endure. He may be certain, in his own mind, that any true art is the expression, in the manner best calculated to secure a desired effect, of the ideas essential to the effect, but he will be equally sure that the world will not so consider. If he sets any propaganda above Art, the future will forget his work, the present meet it with prejudice, probably with opposition; and against all this he has to set only his own faith in the righteousness of the thing he has to say.

I made my choice and began my cycle with that one of my four novels which I knew would receive the readiest hearing. In "The House of Bondage" I wanted to put before my readers the theory that the superimposing of one human being's will, or the will of any group of human beings, upon any other's is the Great Crime. For the purposes of illustration, I chose for attack the chief present means of such imposition or compulsion, the pressure of our economic system, and depicted its effects in forcing women into prostitution. The result was amazing: the book sold and, they tell me, is still selling in my own and several other countries and tongues; it either originated or promoted a series of sociological crusades and legislative investigations concerning themselves with the symptoms and neglecting the disease, and by no persons was it so heartily welcomed as by those who are themselves the instruments of compulsion. I began to think that the instruments were becoming conscious and that I might not

be so unpopular after all.

I was never more mistaken. In "The Sentence of Silence" I proceeded to show other effects of the same evil compulsion: the effects of our failure to instruct our children in sex-hygiene; of imposing upon our heirs the moral code that our economic system has imposed upon us, and of imposing upon our daughters an abstinence from which we absolve our sons. In its circulation, this book left its publishers nothing to complain of; but its reception was of a sort vastly different from that of its predecessor. Parents that were loath to see other people's daughters forced into prostitution were shocked at a proposal to educate their own sons against the practice of seduction; husbands that lived in secret polygamy were aghast at the idea of instructing their wives in any code save that which they preached, but did not follow; and men that took any woman's body they could get were horrified at the notion of any woman sharing their liberty.

The remarkable book-reviewer of the generally sane Philadelphia "Inquirer" upbraided me because, after I had dragged my central character, Dan Barnes, through the sewers of debauchery and venereal disease, I did not "save" him by marrying him to a "pure" woman!

Came the third novel, "Running Sands," and came a louder protest. I had here tried to take a step further my argument against compulsion and to show that, if I had been right before, then compulsion by matrimony—the marriage of the old to the young and the knowing to the ignorant, rape within wedlock and forcing of wives to become mothers against their will—was wrong. Here again the people read and the instruments of compulsion condemned me. Those persons who, without a wry face among them, swallow the funny but futile jokes of another type of fiction were so whole-hearted in their curses of my book that I was inclined to believe their present bitterness enhanced by their recollection of how they had once praised me.

Now I have written "The Spider's Web," the last of my four, and I have read that it is expected to be to its predecessors what Landor said the fourth George was to his. For a good pair of eyes at the conventional point of view, it is all this and more; but then there are no good eyes at the conventional point of view, and so I fear that, without help, the condemners of "The Sentence of Silence" and "Running Sands" may find this novel innocent: there is only one "bad" woman among its speaking-roles, and she appears but three brief times. In order that my condemners may not miss what they want to find in me, I shall tell them in a simpler form than the dramatic what I have done.

I have made Luke Huber a man that comes to see the sin of compulsion exerting itself against humanity in all the powers that conduct modern society; in the ownership of men and things; in our entire system of production and distri-

bution, and in the creatures and ministers of that system: Government, Politics, Law, and what passes by the name of Religion.

Such a mind as Huber's comes to Dora Marsden's conclusion: "Life is no two days the same: the same measure never fits twice exactly; hence the futility of state-making, law-making, moral-making, when all that is of importance is life-augmenting, and that is the individual's affair." He sees that only Labor creates wealth, and that nothing should be robbed of a fraction of what it creates. He sees that actually government is "not the president, congress and the courts, not any body or power created by the Constitution, but always a combination of important business interests,"[#] not even any individual, and that even if it were completely constitutional it would still be compulsion—that to "consent" to be governed is to consent to be compelled.

[#] Charles Edward Russell.

He would argue of politics:

"We Americans pretend to hate kings, and so we devise a republic; finding the rule of one man bad, we believe we can better it by multiplying it by ninety millions; finding an ounce has evil effects, we take a ton. We simply change the tyranny of one for the tyranny of many. Even if the will of our fifteen million voters ruled us as they tell us it does, then each one of the fifteen million would be giving all the 14,999,999 others the right to interfere with him in return for his one fifteen-millionth right to take a hand in interfering with them. For that fraction of power over others, he would be giving away all his power over himself."

Huber would say of religion and law:

"Both are tools in the hands of compulsion. Both try to belittle divine humanity, the first making Man a pygmy before God and the second making Man a pygmy before a few men. There can be no crime against God, since God, or the force that created the world, is omnipotent; no crime against law, since law is an instrument of the great crime. The law a deterrent? It isn't. The statistics prove that, so far as statistics can prove anything. But you prove it yourself. Why do you try to refrain from conscious wrong? Not because you're afraid of the law in heaven or on earth—you're not a coward. You simply want to do the decent thing because it *is* the decent thing. The desire to do the decent thing: that's all the religion and law there is to-day among even the people that make laws and religions for the purpose of ruling other people by them. The rulers sin only because their system has dimmed their judgment of the decent thing, and so they go on maintaining their law and their religion. The ruled will want to do

the decent thing just as soon as they become responsible creatures through the abolition of these compulsions, exactly as the rulers, though dulled by keeping up their system, wanted to do it as soon as they became responsible creatures by growing above the dictates of these compulsions."

Other men, other religions. For some faith; for some denial. Huber's religion was the Gospel of Negation.

He came to this by conversion, which means the sudden revelation by the sub-conscious self to the conscious self of the meanings that the sub-conscious self has long been drawing from the conscious self's experiences. The outward phenomena of such conversions—"being saved," "receiving grace," "being regenerated," "experiencing religion"—are perfectly familiar to all persons that have attended evangelical churches, know the work of the Salvation Army, or have read Harold Begbie's "Broken Earthenware." The psychology of the force causing them has been elaborately, but not always scientifically, treated in William James's stimulating volume, "Some Varieties of Religious Experience." The force itself can, and often does, change the entire life of a man from evil to good. The men so changed that we most hear of are changed by an affirmation of faith, because they are men whose only spiritual experience has been in connection with accepted religions and because their change is generally first exhibited in the public meeting-place of the followers of some such religion; but there are other men similarly changed by a denial of faith, because they have had spiritual experiences distinct from any accepted religion, and of them we hear little, because their change is generally wrought in the solitude in which they have had those spiritual experiences which are unconnected with accepted religion.

Huber was a man of the latter sort. Being of that sort, he says the last word that follows logically from an acceptance of "The House of Bondage."

About the manner of this last word I should, perhaps, say something more. I have not, I confess with shame, read M. Fabre's book on the habits of the spider, but I have read other books and studied the spider in my own garden; and the more I learned of web and spider the more I realize how Huber would see their simulacra in our civilization and learn at last that there the web outlived many spiders. That is how I got my title, and that is why I have tried to construct my chapters with a certain rough resemblance to the female diadem-spider's web. At the end, both the web and Huber win: the former because it catches its fly and goes on catching other and larger flies; the latter because his soul has found itself.

The method of procuring data requires a fuller explanation. The writer who endeavors to present actual conditions in fictional form has constantly to choose between truth and facts, and if his readers accept his facts, they are inclined to doubt his imagination. In all of these four books, I have been careful to present

only types, but I have tried to endow each type with character, and each character has assumed a living personality in my own mind. I have used no person and no event that was isolated; but, having individualized my types and chosen my typical events, I have felt free to employ the latter in whatever way seemed to me best fitted to enforce my argument, and at liberty to imagine what the former would think and do under the stress of the latter. I have heard of a dozen women in real life designated as the originals of Mary Denbigh, three wives selected as Muriel Stainton, and one man—myself—named as Dan Barnes. The discoverers of these prototypes only flattered my powers of detection and portraiture at the expense of my imagination and good taste.

I intended to present, and I have presented, simply certain types produced by our civilization and working in the media of our economic system. I spent considerable time in New York last winter to procure certain data; I found the data, selected what was typical as I saw it, and made my story. "The Spider's Web," whether well done or ill, has been done by my own imagination.

Help I have had and eagerly sought. An historian always cites his authorities and acknowledges his assistants; I could never see why a novelist should be less honest or less courteous, since every realist must delegate some of his research-work, and even the writer of that fiction farthest from life must take something from the fancy of his acquaintances. I know, and I shall not soon forget, how much "The House of Bondage" owes to the encouragement given my work by its publishers. During the latter part of the actual writing of "The Spider's Web," it was impossible for either my wife or me to be in New York, and I taxed the generous patience of many a friend by inquiries. I exacted tribute from Max Eastman's editorials in "The Masses," Walter Lippmann's papers in "The Forum," and C. P. Connolly's in "Everybody's Magazine" as expressing three current phases of American opinion; I even seized a picture from Mary Macdonald Brown's accounts of New York and secured from an editorial in "The Nation" my reference to the past of the Astor House. Molière took his own where he found it; I have taken other men's at my need. To all of these my score is long; to those few and fine newspaper and magazine critics and reviewers who have seen my purpose and helped it—who, when they have differed or blamed, blamed or differed honestly—to them, from whom I have learned so much, my obligation is still greater.

No opinions that are worth while are unalterable; only the insincere have fixed convictions: my cycle of four books expresses an attitude toward life that I may some day very well change. This series completed, I am left with my conscience free and my brain at liberty to turn toward work that I may try to design only by the more lasting standards of Art, but no change of belief or work will make me regret having expressed what I believed. I am thoroughly aware of how,

if they understood it, the condemners of "The Sentence of Silence" and "Running Sands" would condemn this book. I am equally aware of how many persons that are my comrades, friends, and well-wishers will alter their relations toward me when they have read "The Spider's Web"; but, though I shall be sorry to lose these, I shall not be sorry for the reason of their loss. Horace Traubel, who puts most things well, has put this well:

> "I have tried to stay in the house of comfort,
> to sleep in my bed of ease,
> But something not outside of me, something inside of me says:
> This will not do....
> I have tried the easy way: it was hard:
> Now I will try the hard way: I guess it will be easier."

REGINALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN.
POSCHIAVO, SWITZERLAND,
8th September, 1913.

CHARACTERS

A MAN,

the head of a group of men virtually controlling industrial, financial, and political America.

GEORGE J. HALLETT, one of his associates.
L. BERGEN RIVINGTON, another.

Politicians.

THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK.
THE MAYOR OF NEW YORK CITY.

HON. G. W. HUBER,	U. S. Congressman, from Doncaster County, Pennsylvania,
HON. JESSE KINZER,	his successor.
SENATOR SCUDDER,	the MAN'S lieutenant in the Albany legislature,
HON. JARED SPARKS,	his lieutenant in the Connecticut legislature.
BRINLEY,	commander of his lobby at Washington.
KILGOUR,	City Chamberlain of New York.
TIM HENEY,	Leader of Tammany Hall.
SEELEY,	an anti-Tammany Democratic leader.
ELLISON,	another.
THE POLICE-COMMISSIONER OF NEW YORK CITY.	
GEORGE KAINDIAC,	a U. S. Post-Office Inspector.
VENABLE,)	leaders of the Municipal
NELSON,)	Reform League.
YEATES,)	
JARVIE,	a Municipal Reform League "worker."

Lawyers.

BROUWER LEIGHTON,	District-Attorney of New York. A Republican.
LARRY O'MARA,	a member of his staff,
UHLER,	another member of Leighton's staff.
EX-JUDGE MARCUS F. STEIN,	of the firm of Stein, Falconridge, Falconridge & Perry, corporation-lawyers.
IRWIN,	a member of Stein's staff.
ANSON QUIRK,	an underworld lawyer.
LUKE HUBER,	a young lawyer.

Businessmen.

ROBERT M. DOHAN,	president of the M. & N. R. R.
HENRY G. McKAY,	his successor.
B. FRANK OSSERMAN,	president of the East County National Bank.
WALLACE K. FORBES,	head of the firm of R. H. Forbes & Son, manufacturers of ready-made clothing,
ALEXANDER TITUS,	financial-inquiry agent.
JAMES T. ROLLINS,	the MAN'S secretary.
ATWOOD,	his chief broker.
SIMPSON,	his almoner.
CONOVER,	one of his confidential clerks.
HERBERT CROY,	manager of the Ruysdael estate.
WHITAKER,	superintendent of the Forbes factory.
THE DESK-CLERK,	in the Arapahoe Apartment house.
CHARLEY,	a clerk in the M. R. L. offices,
REV. PINKNEY NICHOLSON,	rector of Church of St. Athanasius.

Miscellaneous Persons.

THE MAN'S NIECE.	
CORNELIUS RUYSDAEL,	a wealthy New Yorker of good family.
MRS. RUYSDAEL,	his wife.
TOMMY HALLETT,	son of George J.
JOHN JAY PORCELLIS,	a young man of leisure.
BETTY FORBES,	daughter of Wallace K. Forbes.
MRS. HUBER,	mother of Luke and wife of G. W. Huber.
JANE HUBER,	her daughter.
JAMES,	the Forbes chauffeur.
MISS WESTON,	a telephone operator.
BREIL,	a strike-breaker.

AN I.W.W. ORGANIZER.

Policeman.

HUGH DONOVAN,	a police-lieutenant
MITCHELL,)	
ANDERSON,)	patrolmen.
GUTH,)	

Militiamen.

CAPTAIN ANTONIO FACCIOLATI,	of the New York N. G.
TERRY,	first-lieutenant under Facciolati.
SCHMIDT,	a sergeant.

Citizens of the Underworld.

A BUM.	
GACE,	an assassin.
A DISORDERLY WOMAN.	
A WOMAN-RIOTER.	
A DRUNKEN WOMAN.	
REDDY RAWN,	leader of an East Side "gang."
REDDY'S "GIRL."	
THE KID,	one of his associates,
CRAB ROTELLO.	head of a rival gang.
ZANTZINGER,	a gunman.
BUTCH DELLITT,	another gunman.

Other Persons.

Women of the street, the brothel, the world.

Clothing-factory workers.
A mob.
Waiters in saloons.
Clerks and foremen in the Forbes factory.
Stenographers and typists.
Gamblers.
Other gangmen.
Other policemen.
Various minor Republican, Democratic, Reform, and Progressive
politicians.
Newspaper-reporters.
Some newspaper-editors.
A corps of strike-breakers.
Scabs.
Soldiers of the New York National Guard.

THE SPIDER'S WEB

CHAPTER I

§1. Early that morning, Luke Huber stood before the Pennsylvania Railroad Station at Americus and fancied himself a latter-day crusader setting out to reconquer from the infidels the modern Holy City of God. He had graduated from the Harvard Law-School in the previous June. Now the Republican brother-in-law of one of his classmates, having been elected District-Attorney of corruptly Democratic New York, offered a place on his staff to Luke as soon as Huber should meet successfully the necessary formalities. This new public-prosecutor was to "clean up" the largest city in the country, and Luke, as his assistant, was to aid in restoring to the metropolis the ideals of the framers of the Constitution.

A slim young man, with a smooth face too rugged to be handsome, and gray eyes too keen to be always dreaming, Huber stood erect, the wide collar of his woolen overcoat turned up, for the spring lingered that year in the valleys

of Virginia, and the brim of his Alpine hat pulled over his nose. He disregarded the group of boys waiting for the "up-train" that would bring the Philadelphia morning newspapers to his native Pennsylvania town, disregarded the grimy station-buildings, and looked toward the river, where the morning mists were lifting and the cold sunshine was creeping through to light the Susquehanna hills. He was one of those fortunate and few human beings who are born without the original sin of superstition, but what he saw seemed to him almost a favorable omen. He had come down early, because he disliked to prolong the good-bys of his mother and sister, and because he felt that even the walk to the station was an important advance in the quest which he was so eager to begin. When he arrived beside the railway tracks and allowed his father, the Congressman, to see to the checking of the baggage—a concession that Luke made to his parent's desire for some part in the great adventure—the entire river was hidden from view by a thick dun curtain: one could see nothing beyond the point by the shore where the black arms of a derrick, at the Americus Sand Company's works, were silhouetted against that curtain and stretched over a tremendous mound of sand, as if they were the arms of some gigantic skeleton pronouncing the benediction at a Black Mass. But now, though the fog really rose, it appeared to Luke to be torn from above, and as the sun mounted over distant Turkey Hill and gradually gilded the pines on the surrounding summits, it seemed to advance up the bed of the stream, slowly descending of its own force along the dark hillsides, until, all at once, the river was a rushing stream of gold. Luke found himself thinking of the veil of the Temple, and how it was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

His father, who was taller than Luke, but broad out of all proportion to his height, came puffing back from the baggage-room. He held the checks for Luke's luggage and a slip of pink paper.

"Here are your checks," he said, "and here's your pass. I forgot to give it to you. It came last night."

Luke took the proffered paper.

"I thought," he began, "that the Interstate Commerce Commission didn't—"

The Congressman interrupted with a deep chuckle.

"Oh, that's all right," he said. "Don't let your conscience worry you about that. This is for a continuous ride to a terminus of the road."

"I see," said Luke; but what he saw was that his father, whom he loved too much to hurt uselessly, had, out of kindness, strained a legal definition. His father, he reflected, was not a man to abuse privilege in large matters, and would be only hurt by a refusal in the present trivial affair. Luke put the pass in the cuff of his overcoat and silently decided to pay his fare to the conductor. The elder man, big as he was, stamped his feet on the concrete pavement and complained

of the chill in the April air; the younger was too happy to notice the cold.

"Train's five minutes late," remarked the Congressman as, through a cautiously unbuttoned overcoat, he drew and snapped open a heavy watch.

"Is your time correct?" asked Luke.

"Hasn't varied three seconds a week in ten years," his father assured him.

Neither was thinking of what was being said. The younger man was so full of the high work ahead of him that he had already forgotten his mother's ill-concealed tears at parting; the elder, granted political favors rather because of his personal popularity and pliant good-nature than for any ability at the game of vote-keeping, possessed at least the chief virtue of the politician: he was a man of few words, and the more truly he felt the less he spoke.

The "up-train" arrived (it was the "down-train" that Luke must take), and the Congressman was besieged by the newsboys, who knelt about him, striking their rolls of newspapers on the pavement the quicker to burst the wrappers in which the journals were closely confined.

"*Press*, Mr. Huber?"

"*North American* or *Record*?"

"*Ledger*?"

The boys bobbed up, flourishing their wares.

"Aw, I know what he wants," said an older lad, elbowing the rest. "Here's yer *Inquirer*, Mr. Congressman."

Luke's father smiled: he had never outgrown his liking for homage from whatever quarter; but he bought a paper from each boy, giving each a five-cent piece and telling him to keep the change.

"You might as well take the lot," he said to Luke. "You'll want something to read on the train." He was handing all the papers to Luke, when his eyes were caught by a large headline on the first page of one of them. "Hello!" he commented, his lips immediately pursing themselves as if to whistle. As Luke took its fellows, the Congressman folded this paper with the sudden skill of the confirmed newspaper-reader, who can handle a journal in the open air as neatly as a trained yachtsman can reef a top-sail before an undesirable wind. "I see the Big Man's been giving some more testimony to that committee of the legislature up at Albany."

For the past few weeks, Luke had been too busy preparing for his bar-examinations to keep track of current events.

"Who's the Big Man?" he asked.

The elder Huber raised his thick brows.

"You know," said he, and he mentioned the name of one of the richest men in America; not a man that had made his wealth even through the building of a great industry, but one that had, by "editing" money and combinations of money much

in that manner in which a news-desk copy-reader edits the reporters' "copy," made himself a member of the triumvirate—rumor said made the triumvirate and made himself its head—which had for years controlled alike the labor and capital of the country.

"What's he been saying?" asked Luke.

"He's been answering questions about campaign contributions."

"To the Democrats?"

"Well, no." The Congressman was reluctant. "It seems it was to the Republicans."

Luke colored.

"Of course," he said, "I always knew those fellows had no real political convictions, and of course any party is bound to have some bad lots among its small fry, but I do wish our National Committee would kick out of the ranks the men that take money from such people."

The father did not like this. Luke had been a great deal away from him, first at boarding-school and then at college and the law-school, so that the two had not seen much of each other for many years; but since the younger had come home this last time, he had given frequent expression to sentiments of the present sort, and the Congressman, although he disliked argument as keenly as most Congressmen, felt that now it was his duty to protest.

"My boy," he said, "you won't go far if you go about talking that way. This contribution went to the fund that elected your District-Attorney Leighton."

"I don't believe it!"

"That's the testimony."

"I don't believe it. This man's swearing to that so as to hurt the party in New York."

"This man?" Luke's father repeated the phrase interrogatively. His usual taciturnity fell from him. "Why do you say that? How do you know it? Why should he want to hurt the party? As a matter of fact, what do you know about 'this man,' anyhow? Nothing but a lot of unfounded gossip printed in papers that want him to come over to their side. Why shouldn't he help our party? I do know something about him. I've never met him, but I know the whole story of his career—know it intimately—and I tell you that his is the greatest intellect in America to-day, and he has used his intellect, and the wealth it got him, to help—not only once, but again and again—to help and to save—yes, save, the party and the prosperity of the nation. I tell you——"

He did not tell any more. The down-train had been rumbling over the last span of the river-bridge when he began talking; and now it rolled before the station.

Luke took his suitcase in one hand and extended the other in farewell. Un-

expectedly he felt a lump in his throat.

"Good-by," he said.

His father gripped the hand. His habitual inarticulateness redescended upon him. "You've—I know you're all right, Luke. Don't forget to write once a week: your mother worries."

"I won't forget."

They stood, hands clasped.

Close by, the "train-crier" was calling in a high, nasal voice:

"Train for Mountwille, Doncaster, Downington, Philadelphy, *and* Noo York! First stop Mountwille!"

"And, Luke——"

"Yes, father?"

"Don't make charges when you don't know facts."

"Perhaps I have a weakness that way," Luke smiled.

His smile conjured another.

"That's right; now you're showing the proper spirit." With his free hand, the elder man patted the younger's shoulder. "Stick to your books and stick to Leighton. Gratitude is the best virtue—and the rarest."

Luke nodded.

"Now, get aboard," concluded his counselor. "Got your pass?—and the checks?—I'll be running over occasionally, I dare say.—And let me know if I can do anything for you."

Luke clambered into the smoking-car. He took a seat on the side near the station and waved his hand to his father as the engine began to snort. He paid his fare to the conductor, and, when Americus was well behind him, he opened the window, tore the pink pass into a dozen small pieces and let the clean April breeze carry them away.

At Doncaster he changed to the Pullman car that was there attached to the train; he again carefully chose his seat, this time selecting one on the side from which he could the better enjoy his first view of New York. He had always liked this view when it came to him on his returns to Boston after his vacations; it wakened in him the dreams of the day which should light him into the city, there to work for its salvation and the nation's. His youthful dreams were still with him, and, since the moment when the sun had rent the Susquehanna mists, he was looking forward to that sight of the southernmost walls of New York towering like the ramparts of a mighty fortress above the crowded waters of the Jersey City ferry. Then, indeed, with the battle yet to be fought, he would feel as the crusaders must have felt at their first sight of Jerusalem.

But Luke's train was late, and by the time that it reached the point from which the city should have been visible, the mists had again descended. They

had deepened. All that Luke, with straining eyes, could see were a few spectral turrets, distorted and ugly in the thickened atmosphere, swaying overhead upon waves of yellow fog.

§2. Jack Porcellis, with his mother's motor, met Luke. They were driven to the apartment-house in Thirty-ninth Street where, upon Jack's advice, Huber had written to engage two small rooms and bath. It was Jack Porcellis (his real name was John Jay Porcellis) who had District-Attorney Leighton for a brother-in-law and had induced that official to give Luke a place on the staff of the public prosecutor.

Porcellis was considerably taller than Huber and very considerably thinner. He was a quiet member of an old Knickerbocker family, who was at home in every sort of society, had gone to law-school as an intellectual diversion and now spent most of his time traveling, always well within his income, through whatever lands chanced to attract his continually changing fancy.

"I hope you'll be comfortable here," he said, when they had been lifted to the fifth floor of the house, which was dry and hot from the steam radiators and smelled as all steam-heated houses smell. The elevator-boy was unlocking the door to Luke's apartments while Porcellis spoke. He stood aside as the two men entered.

"I think I'll make out very well," said Luke. He handed the boy a tip and dismissed him. "It's not so big as our rooms in Ware Hall, but then there were two of us there."

The quarters were indeed small. The parlor was almost diminutive, and the bedroom, which opened from it, was an alcove; the front window gave upon the busy street, with a bit of Broadway to the right, and the bathroom, in American fashion, was as large as the parlor.

"I did the best I could for you," Porcellis explained: he failed to account for his friend's tone by the fact that Luke was fresh from the spaciousness of a small town.

Huber softened.

"I didn't mean to criticise, Jack. I'm sure this will do splendidly. After all, I'm in New York for hard work."

"I know you are." Porcellis smiled faintly. "You were never anywhere for anything else. Well, you'll probably get over that before you've quite spoiled yourself for everything. It's a way New York has."

Huber was tolerant. "Is it? You see, I don't know the town very well."

"Who does? However, I'll show you what I can before I sail—I'm going to Russia next week, you know—and by way of a beginning I've brought you a

ready-made engagement for to-night. We'll dine at my club, and see the Follies, and after that—well, I've got you a card to Mrs. Ruysdael's dance."

"This doesn't sound like preparation for work," chuckled Luke; "but, thank you—and who is Mrs. Ruysdael?"

"Who is Mrs. Ruysdael?" Porcellis repeated. He was stroking the spot where his blond mustache had been a year ago, but where, because mustaches had since become unfashionable, it no longer grew. "Why, the Mrs. Ruysdael, of course: Mrs. Cornelius Ruysdael."

When he heard it in full, Luke remembered the name. Of Mrs. Ruysdael he knew only that she was a woman of fashion; but her husband was everywhere known as the worthy representative of a Dutch New York name long eminent in the country's history. The family had been rich for several generations, but they had proved themselves surprisingly able to wear the cloak of wealth with dignity.

"I remember now," said Luke. "They're said to be among the heaviest real-estate owners in New York, aren't they?"

Porcellis laughed.

"Well, yes, they are," he conceded: "but none of us ever think of that. I doubt if even they do. They leave their estate to their agents to manage, and we leave the story of it to the yellow press to talk about."

"I never knew there was any story connected with it."

"No? Well, for my part, I don't believe there is. Some labor-agitator searched the records and tried to prove they made their first fortune buying condemned muskets from the British garrisons just before the Revolution and selling them as good arms to the Continental Congress. He said they invested the profits in New York land as soon as prices fell after the Declaration of Independence was signed."

"Was it true?" asked Luke.

Porcellis shrugged.

"It was all a long time ago, at any rate," he said, "and the Ruysdaels are very nice people now: you would never guess they were worth more than a million. Besides, Charley—that's my Wall Street cousin—says they've somehow funded their landholdings with one of Old Nap's concerns. I don't know. I don't pretend to understand finance."

Luke felt extremely ignorant.

"Old Nap?" he wondered. "Who's he?"

In reply, Porcellis mentioned the name of the man of whom Luke's father had spoken so highly that morning at the railway station in Americus.

Huber pushed forward a chair.

"Sit down," he said, "and have a cigarette. I want to ask you one question

more. You've been all over the map. You've got the cosmopolitan point of view. What do you think of this man?"

"I think," said Porcellis, accepting both the chair and the cigarette, "that it doesn't make any difference what I think of him." He lit the cigarette. "But I'm quite sure," he presently added, "he is the sort of man nobody can help thinking *something*, about. Why do you ask?"

"Because——" Luke was not certain why he did ask. He could not politely inquire of Porcellis whether he believed that his brother-in-law had accepted, to aid his election, money from a power that could not but be interested in the official actions of a District-Attorney of New York. "Because," he compromised, "my father was speaking to me about him only this morning."

"So were a lot of other fathers. So are a lot of other fathers every morning. That's greatness. What I think is that Old Napoleon is the greatest man this country has ever produced."

"You think so well of him as that!" Luke was amazed.

"I didn't say I thought he was good," Porcellis defined; "I said I thought he was great. Greatness hasn't anything to do with good or bad, or only accidentally. The greatest national figure a country produces is the figure that most intensely and—well, and powerfully—expresses that country. That's why Shakespeare was the greatest man produced by Elizabethan England."

"Oh—Shakespeare!" laughed Luke.

"Why not?" asked Porcellis. "Shakespeare lived in a country and time of expanding intellectual conceptions, and he expressed them the way I've said. We live in a country and time of tremendous financial combination and expansion; we're not working in the material of intellectual conceptions, except as we conceive finance intellectually; we're working with figures and dollar-marks and differentials and compound interest and dividends as complicated as an astronomer's calculations. Well, this little old man in Wall Street can see those figures before they happen; he can make them come to life out of nothing—make them happen, give them life just the way Shakespeare gave life to another sort of ideas. These ideas are the ideas of our country; they are our country. Here is a genius that most fully and powerfully, most intensely and perfectly expresses them, and so I say he is the American Shakespeare."

Luke writhed in his chair opposite Porcellis. He could withhold the question no longer.

"Then"—he almost blurted it out at last—"those campaign contributions——"

But Porcellis was scandal-proof.

"Those!" he said lightly. "You'll have to ask Brouwer Leighton about them."

§3. After they left the theater, the two young men were driven, again in the motor belonging to Mrs. Porcellis, up the noisy river of yellow light that was Broadway, where their vehicle joined a long procession, until they reached a cross-street in the early Fifties. Then their car darted from the parade and plunged through a dark thoroughfare to Fifth Avenue. They drew up before a house where Luke could at first see little save that from its doorway, high above the pavement, a long and narrow tent of white canvas striped with red ran to the curb. Several other motors were ahead of theirs, so theirs had to wait its turn.

"Is this the place?" asked Luke.

Porcellis nodded.

"It does look rather like a barn from the outside," he said, guessing his companion's thought and agreeing with it. "That's a Ruysdael way: they maintain the old tradition of severe exteriors; they don't believe in flaunting their wealth in the face of the public; they believe in keeping the best for their friends."

Luke leaned shamelessly forward. Whenever he had gone to dances heretofore, the houses of his hostesses had shown lights in every window and dispensed a glow of festivity to the streets; but this house, essentially forbidding, stood dark and silent, its windows masked. Except for the faint illumination of a street-lamp that sputtered bluely at the corner, the only scintillations visible were two thin lines of radiance, one along the pavement, at the bottom of the entrance-tent, and a corresponding one above, between the walls of the tent and the loose overhang of its roof: these and a glowing spot at the end of the tent upon the curb where, between rows of ragged night figures watching the scene, dismounting guests appeared and disappeared—white shirt-fronts, and opera-cloaks, and the glint of jewels—like pictures in dissolving views.

With each arrival, motors swung away from the entrance, turned to the other side of the street, and proceeded to the farther corner there to await their recall, while their drivers gossiped in the darkness or drank beer at a convenient bar. Thus, with starts and stops like those of an American railway train leaving a station, the Porcellis car slowly approached the canvas mouth.

When that mouth yawned directly before them, Luke and Porcellis, the door of their automobile held open by a servant in livery, descended into the tent. A string of incandescent lamps had been hung in this corridor—it was the light from these lamps which crept from above and below the walls—and a thick carpet covered the pavement. Along it they walked to the house-steps, where two turbaned East Indians stood ready to relieve them of their hats and top-coats and show them to a room prepared for incoming men-guests.

"Now," said Porcellis, "you see what I was talking about."

A greater contrast between the outside and the inside of the Ruysdael house it would, indeed, have been hard to find. The reception hall was of white mar-

ble and of a height generally seen only in public buildings. Pillars held the distant ceiling; the staircase rose in a pentagonal tower, a copy, Porcellis explained, of that in the Francis First wing of the Château of Blois; the light, although its sources were hidden, was almost blinding to eyes fresh from the darkness of the street; there was music heard lightly from a distance, and the air was faint with the scent of American Beauty roses.

Porcellis and Luke went up the carved staircase in the tower, which was open at each landing so as to command a view of the hall, and were directed to the men's room, where three valets were in attendance. Against the walls of this room were several dressing-tables, each with a strong lamp before it and each covered with toilet articles.

"I'm not sure," said Luke, in a whisper that was both amazed and amused, "whether I'm in a belle's boudoir or a musical comedy star's dressing-room."

"It's a judicious combination," said Porcellis in a conversational tone that disregarded the fluttering attendants. He picked up a gold-backed buffer and polished his always coruscating finger-nails.

Luke contented himself with a touch to his hair, which had a way of standing upright, and a tug at his tie, which was forever straining toward independence.

"What's this?" he asked as he lifted a glass case. He removed its lid and sniffed at the contents. "It looks like rouge," he added.

"It is," said Porcellis.

"But I thought this room was for men," said Luke.

Porcellis drew down the corners of his sensitive mouth.

"It is," he said again.

They went toward the ballroom.

A man-servant with those brief side-whiskers which, twenty years before, were used to proclaim the millionaire, stood splendidly against the crush about the doorway. He bent to each newcomer and secured a name, which, turning his head, but not moving his body, he then shouted, from an impassive face, into the ballroom.

Porcellis nodded to him familiarly

"Good-evening, James," he said.

"Good-evening, Mr. Porcellis. And the other gentleman, sir?"

"Mr. Huber," said Porcellis with careful distinctness.

The servant turned his head toward the crowd in the room behind him.

"Mr. Porcellis!" he cried, and then, as if it were an afterthought: "Mr. Urer!"

"It's all right," Porcellis hurriedly reassured Luke. "Nobody pays the slightest attention to him, anyhow."

Nobody did. As they shouldered their way forward, the huge apartment

that they now entered was like what Luke thought the rooms of state at Versailles must be, and the great hall in the Brussels Palace of Justice. All about the walls, and especially about the large entrance, was a press of men and women, standing still, or moving slowly from group to group through an invisible, but palpable, cloud formed by a mixture of the odor of withering flowers, Parisian scents, and human sweat. A band of music, concealed in a far-away balcony, blared rag-time, but distinct from its impudence, there rose from all these people the noise of shoe-leather dragged over parquette flooring, the composite of laughter in many keys and the perplexed buzz of small-talk. The moving figures of the women, over whom countless aigrettes quivered, had a kaleidoscopic effect, curiously unreal: an effect of flashing colors—crimson, ivory, blues, greens, and pinks—splashing against white breasts and backs, falling away from dazzling shoulders, the waves mounting in oily satin, feline velvet, or clinging peau de cygnes, and breaking in the foam of lace and the flying spray of diamonds. Here even the ordinary black-and-white of the men became black-and-gray or black-and-lavender, with gems for waistcoat buttons. On the dancing-floor many couples, hugging each other so tightly that their bodies touched from chest to center, swayed to the sensuous music of a one-step, the leaders' high collars wilting, the fingers of their right hands spread wide along the women's upper vertebras, their partners looking into their intent faces from narrowed eyes.

The picture was too bright, too varied, for the unaccustomed mind to seize it: Luke turned to Porcellis:

"And Mrs. Ruysdael?"

He was expecting his hostess to meet her guests at the door of the ballroom.

Porcellis, however, did not wholly understand.

"Oh, she's about somewhere, I dare say," he responded—"though she doesn't care for late hours and sometimes leaves after the third dance. Come on. I'll introduce you to some worth-while people."

He introduced Luke to a great many people, for he seemed to know them all. There was the British Ambassador and a German baron, a string of dowagers with marriageable daughters (Luke danced with each daughter and liked her), an artist, a scientist, and a bibliophile, and several debutantes that were not marriageable at all, but were quite frankly determined to marry.

As is the way when a name runs in one's brain, three out of five of the people that Luke talked to sooner or later mentioned the man that the elder Huber had spoken of that morning and that Porcellis had later so highly extolled. The Ambassador said that this man had, by lending or withholding tremendous sums, preserved the peace of nations; the artist praised him as the only true patron of art in America; the scientist told how the same man had established and equipped a now world-famous institution for the study and cure of a world-plague; the

bibliophile envied his first editions and medieval manuscripts.

Leading his prettiest partner across the floor, Luke's glance, in spite of his will, rested on a diamond pendant that hung from a thread of gold about her neck and fell above her beautiful bust. She was a girl with the face of one of those Italian peasant girls that the early painters loved to paint as Madonnas, and Huber felt that his regard must be an insult.

The girl, however, took the pendant between a white thumb and forefinger and looked from it to him with pleased eyes.

"You like it?" she asked.

"I think it's wonderful," said he.

"It is pretty," she replied. "My uncle gave it to me on my last birthday. It used to be in a heathen god's crown in some Chinese or Hindu temple or other."

"The god ought to be pleased to lose it to you," said Luke, "even if it didn't come to you directly."

"Oh, but it did come to me directly," she laughed prettily. "That's half the charm of it. Uncle sent right over there and got it for me."

When Luke found Porcellis again, he asked him about this.

"Who's that girl with the broad, low forehead," he inquired, "and the expression of a stained-glass saint?"

"You're aiming high," said Porcellis; "that's one of the richest girls in New York."

"Who's her uncle?"

"Ah, she's been talking of him, has she? Well, I don't blame her. Her uncle is the man I call the American Shakespeare. She'll get a lot of his money, too, for he has no children of his own."

"Is he here himself?"

"Not he. He doesn't care for this sort of thing. That football-playerish sort of fellow that the niece introduced you to—that's young Hallett she's dancing with now—he's the son of George J. And there's George J. himself!"

Luke remembered that George J. Hallett was one of the financiers whose name was most frequently associated with the donor of diamonds and benefactor of medical research.

"And," continued Porcellis, "do you see that stoutish, nervous pale man over there talking to the British Ambassador? Oh, don't be alarmed: they're probably not talking about anything more important than how they hate dances. Well, that's the third member of the triumvirate: that's L. Bergen Rivington."

Luke went home in the early dawn, feeling that these were pleasant people, however they came by their money, and that he had certainly judged the one that was not there long before he knew much about him.

§4. Leighton was out of town—he, too, was before the legislature's investigating committee at Albany—and the bar-examination was not to be held for a week or more, so that Luke had the next few days to devote to himself. The use that he put them to was an endeavor to learn what he could of the city of which he had seen so little before he came to live there. He saw what, considered of itself, was a great deal, but what, considered as a part of New York, was minute; and at many turns, the number of which surprised him—for long as he had known of the man's power, he never before looked for its effects—he came across traces of that financier who more and more seemed to him to be the controlling force in America.

He was shown a great college, handsomely housed, splendidly equipped, in which the higher education was provided free to every graduate of the public schools that chose to take advantage of it, and this, he was told, had been given to New York by the great "money editor." He was taken through a cancer hospital, where mesothorium, which cost about $52,000 a grain, and radium at $64,000, had been bought and were kept and used without charge in the treatment of poor patients—where physicians and surgeons of international repute were engaged to spend all their time searching for a true cure and final prevention—and this institution had been largely endowed by the same man, whose first wife, it appeared, had died of cancer. There were homes for destitute widows, pure-milk depots, orphan asylums, all assisted by this man or his associates.

"Do you know him?" Luke asked Porcellis one evening as they sat at dinner in the latter's club. They had been talking of many things, but Luke found this one conspicuously interesting.

"No," said Porcellis. "He doesn't go out much. I saw him once. I was being shown through his library—it's a marvelous place, full of treasure-trove that would make a scholar think he was in heaven—and the librarian pointed him out to me: he was sitting in the alcove that held the First Folios, and he was reading the current 'World Almanac.'"

They both laughed.

"Still," protested Luke, "he seems more Jovian than ever to me. I don't know whether he's a good Jove or a bad one, but I don't see how he can really be bad when he does so much good."

Porcellis was still intolerant of the ethical question. He pointed out that nobody of weight ever knew or cared whether Shakespeare's life was moral or whether the effect of his work was immoral. What had happened in regard to the American was that, because he had at last been secured to come to a public hearing, people were beginning to realize that he was a living man and not a force of nature. For a quarter of a century he had been the greatest individual power in the United States, and for all that time he had remained hidden. He had

been doing daily tremendous things, things that were epic in their sweep and yet affected every man, woman, and child included in the census—and nobody knew of them, no paper printed a word about them, until he had passed them out of his own hands and into those of his lieutenants, not until, indeed, his lieutenants had sent them so far from hand to hand that none could tell precisely when and where they had started.

"The man's a genius," said Porcellis, "and like all geniuses he's just what we all are when his genius isn't at work. What he feels is just what we'd feel if we were in his place."

"Still," argued Luke, "the influence of such a man is too great; it's dangerous. It oughtn't to be allowed in politics."

"There you go again!" sighed Porcellis. "Allow? How are you going to allow or disallow a force? It simply is. This man can give the big politicians certain large advantages if they pass laws that suit him. The big politicians can give the little politicians certain lesser advantages if they furnish the votes. The lesser politicians can get the votes if they let the police charge the criminals for protection in crime. Each man seizes his opportunity, and that's all there is about it."

"You think so?" said Luke. "I can't believe it. I can't believe it would be necessary if the right laws were passed and enforced. Wait till your brother-in-law gets the District-Attorney's office cleaned out and in working order. Then you'll see I'm right."

§5. At ten o'clock on the following Sunday night, Luke, on a lonely walk through the East Side, noticed that, whereas the front rooms of the saloons were darkened, the back rooms were all alight. The doors to these back rooms were forever swinging to the entrance and exit of unmistakable customers, many of whom came out bearing foaming jugs of beer under the indifferent noses of policemen at the corners. Luke chose a saloon in Essex Street and entered it.

The room was small, but crowded. The walls, which were papered in green, bore a few framed prints in high colors, advertisements of various brands of beer and whisky. All about were small tables at which blowsy women and men in stained clothes were drinking.

Luke hesitated. Nobody had questioned his entrance, there was no guard and no password: the door hung free; but now his startled eye could not see a vacant table, and he knew that he must appear an alien to this place.

Presently a nearby woman smiled at him. She looked to be about fifty years old. There was a mangy peacock feather in her straw hat, which was set a-slant of dank black hair touched with gray.

"Hello, sweetheart," she said. "Come over here a minute." Her smile was toothless.

"Shut up, Mame," somebody else commanded. "You're drunk."

Luke looked at the man that had spoken. He was sitting alone at a table the length of the room away. He had a puffed face, red from liquor and blue from an unshaven beard; his coat, once black, had turned green; he wore no collar, and a part of the rim of his greasy derby-hat was torn away.

"Shut up," he repeated. "You're drunk."

"Thank Gawd," the woman assented. Her acknowledgment of the accusation was fervent; she returned her attention to the glass of whisky that stood on the table before her.

"You can sit here, if you want to," said the man, addressing Luke, and nodding at a chair beside him.

Luke crossed the room and took the chair. The other people in the room were indifferent to his entrance with the same indifference that the guests of Mrs. Ruysdael had shown. The woman that had invited him did not look his way; even the man that had invited him remained for some time silent. Luke ordered a glass of beer from an aproned waiter, who came with a tray full of whisky glasses in one hand, and five foaming beer-mugs in the fingers and thumb of the other.

"Will you have a drink with me?" Luke inquired of the derelict beside him.

"Sure," said he, and Luke noticed that, though he did not cough, his voice was hoarse.

They gave their orders.

"And perhaps your friend would have one?" Luke suggested.

The man raised his rheumy eyes.

"What friend?"

"The—the one that spoke to me when I came in."

"Who? That skirt? I never saw her before in my life."

Their drinks came, and the men drank for a while in silence.

"What's *your* graft?" asked the man presently.

"I'm a lawyer," said Luke. He was first proud of the answer and then ashamed of himself for being proud of it.

The man looked at him dreamily through watering eyes.

"Quit yer kiddin'," he presently remarked.

"I'm not kidding."

"You're a lawyer?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm a bum," said the man. He tilted up his bristled chin; his seamed throat swelled; sounds that, because they were not speech, Luke took to be song, came from his throat. He sang:

"The Spring has came, I'm just out o' jail;

I haven't any money an' I haven't any bail!
*Hall*eyloolyah, I'm a bum—bum!
Halleyloolyah, bum again!
Halleyloolyah, give——"

He stopped abruptly. "I'm sorry for *you*," he said.

"Why?" asked Luke. He thought the sentiment of that song as horrible as the creature that sang it.

"Because you're all tied up with everything. But me—there ain't nothin' *can* tie me. You fellers is in jail all the time an' don't know it; I'm only in jail when you fellers can ketch me and put me there."

Luke realized that he had found a philosopher who, however mistaken in his deductions, had seen quite as much of the world as Jack Porcellis. He attempted the vernacular.

"Is this a bums' joint?" he inquired.

The philosopher sneered.

"Naw," he said. "It's a bum joint, but it ain't a bums' joint. Too much class for me. This bunch"—he included the entire company with a wide gesture—"is all in the same jail with you. If they wasn't here, you'd be where I am."

"I suppose they do give us lawyers cases," Luke granted; "but they seem to get around the laws pretty frequently: they're wide open to-night."

"Sure they are. See that?" The other man indicated the waiter, who was disappearing into the dark vestibule with two drinks on his tray. "Them's for the cop on this beat, an' a vice-squad cop 'at's with him. I'm wise. I seen Tony (that's the boss o' this joint) slip them a fifty-dollar bill last Sunday—protection money."

"But some day," urged Luke, who was trying to plumb the dark pool that was this man's mind, "the Mayor or the District-Attorney will get proof of that sort of thing—some day when the Mayor and the District-Attorney are honest men——"

"Don't make me laugh," the derelict interrupted: "me lip's cracked. The Mayor and the District-Attorney's got to get elected, whoever they are, don't they?"

Luke supposed so.

"Well, then. Tony an' his kind gets the votes. They can't elect without the Tony kind says so. It's a fair trade. An' the Mayors an' the District-Attorneys ain't got no easy thing of it, neither. Votes costs money. They've got to get the money from the money-guys, the candidates do, an' then they've got to let the money-guys kill as many people as they wants to on their railroads without sendin' them to jail for it.—Have another?"

Luke consented to another drink.

"This one's on me," said the other man, and he paid for the order. "No, sir," he went on, as they were finishing their second drink together, "there's only two sorts o' men that ain't tied up. One sort's me that knows things an' ain't afraid to starve (there's lots of me); the other sort's the guys at the top that does the tyin', an' there's only a few of them, with the King as the boss-knotter."

"The King?" repeated Luke. "Who's he?"

But he had guessed the answer before the derelict gave it: the answer was the man that Porcellis considered the greatest American.....

All the way to his apartments in Thirty-ninth Street that night, Luke's feet were pounding to the wretched derelict's wretched hymn:

"*Hall*eyloolyah, I'm a bum—bum!
Halleyloolyah, bum again!"

CHAPTER II

On a morning of that same April in a large rear room on the twentieth floor of a Wall Street skyscraper, three men were seated around a large mahogany table. They were talking business. Each man had his own offices and his own businesses, but they frequently and quietly met in this, the inner office of one, because most of the businesses of each were closely connected, at several points, with the business interests of all.

There was nothing unusual about the outward appearance of the public actions of this trio; they were apparently but three units of the legion that makes this portion of New York a city by day and a desert by night. Each had come downtown in his own motor that morning, defying speed laws and traffic regulations, just as scores of his business neighbors had done. Each had descended at his own offices, passed through a half-dozen doors guarded by six bowing attendants, and proceeded to his own desk in his own private room, precisely as a small army of other business men were doing at the same time within a radius of half a mile. Each looked like the rest of that army. All three were men of about the average in height, not noticeably either above or below it, and inclined to bulkiness. They had pale faces and close mouths and quiet eyes, which looked out upon the world from under bushy brows with glances that gave the lie to

the lethargic indications of the little pouches of loose skin below their lower lids. Each man wore a flower in the lapel of his dark coat; one wore a white waistcoat; the cropped mustache of one was black; that of another was touched with gray; the man at the head of the table was clean-shaven.

The man at the head of the table was, for the most of the time, even less remarkable than his companions. He was somewhat shorter and heavier; his abdomen swelled so that his shoulders were somewhat farther from the table than were those of his associates; his bushy eyebrows were somewhat more bushy; his pale face somewhat paler; his calm eyes somewhat sharper, yet more calm;—and his lips, in addition to closing tightly, were so heavy that the compression of the mouth must have resulted from a habit acquired only by a strong and long effort of the will. He sat with his great hands flat upon the surface of the table, his thick fingers extended, his elbows raised at right angles to his torso and pointing ceilingward. His chest heaved visibly, but his breathing was inaudible. His eyes were everywhere. He spoke rarely, but when he did speak it was as if he darted over the table, seized something, and returned: he was startlingly brief and sudden, and was instantly back again in his quiet watchfulness, apparently heavy, unruffled, slow.

He had come to work that morning with his usual promptness—the moment of his coming never changed—and in his usual temper. He had threaded the maze of corridors with a springing step. In the mahogany-paneled room with its heavy table and arm-chairs, and its one decoration, a rare engraving of George Washington, hung between the two windows that gave the place its only chance for sunlight, he found on his desk, in a corner, a clean blotter, a fresh pen, a small pad of cheap paper for memoranda, and nothing else. He pressed one of a row of worn buttons in the side of the desk. He was ringing for his private secretary.

The secretary, who patently tried to look as much like his master as possible, and succeeded, entered, a sheaf of open letters in his hand, and noiselessly closed the door behind him.

"Good-morning," said his master. His voice was quite low; it was thin and cool, but his words fell quickly.

"Good-morning," said the secretary.

"What's in the mail?"

"Not much, sir. Only about twenty things that need your personal attention."

"*About* twenty!" The master's words seemed to leap from him and assault the secretary, but his face was set like a plaster-cast of calm and his tone was even. "Do you mean nineteen or twenty-one?"

The secretary was too used to this manner of speech to be alarmed by it.

"Twenty-two," he said. He handed the letters to his master.

That one ran them over with a quick hand and a quicker eye. In terse, sharp sentences, he directed his secretary how to reply to them, the latter taking rapid stenographic notes of the commands.

"You have turned the begging communications over to Simpson to investigate?" the employer inquired.

"Yes, sir."

"And the requests for contributions?"

"Yes, sir. There was one for a new hospital at Akron. The rubber people have given five thousand, and——"

"Tell Simpson to write that I'll give ten thousand if the town raises ten thousand more."

"Very well, sir."

"Has Mr. Brinley telephoned from Washington?"

"Yes, sir. He says he is to take breakfast at the White House to-morrow."

"What's that? He was told to arrange it for to-day."

"He was; but he said he'd got word from the——"

"Never mind. To-morrow will do, if he only keeps his word this time. Wire him: 'Right; but positively no more postponements.' Use the code signature and send from somewhere uptown,—Anything from Albany?"

"Yes. Senator Scudder says to tell you that bill will be reported to-day and rushed through before evening."

"Have Conover go up to the Astor and get Scudder on the 'phone and say that the bill must be passed before noon recess. The Governor will sign it immediately."

"Yes, sir."

"And Conover is not to mention names."

"Of course not, sir."

"Anything else?"

"No—except somebody has been trying to get you on the long-distance wire from Hartford."

"That's Sparks.—Run over to the corner pay-station and call up the legislative building at Hartford. Get Sparks on the 'phone. Be sure it's the right man you're talking to. Tell him that the New York gentleman he wanted to speak to—just that: the New York gentleman he wanted to speak to—is out of town, but has telegraphed you to say to him it is all right for him to go ahead. Got that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Read it."

The secretary read from his notes.

"Now," said the business man, "get Mr. Rivington and Mr. Hallett on your own 'phone and ask them if they can find it convenient to come around here to

see me for a half-hour. Tell me what they say, and then give me Atwood and the other brokers in the regular order."

"Yes, sir."

"And, Rollins——"

"Yes, sir?"

"When Mr. Hallett and Mr. Rivington arrive, we are not to be disturbed."

The secretary went; the brokers were given their orders, and then came L. Bergen Rivington and George J. Hallett, the two men with whom this third man was now consulting.

"About the Manhattan and Niagara——" began Rivington. He had a way of moving his hands nervously when he spoke, and he rarely completed a sentence.

Hallett, who was the man in a white waistcoat, stopped chewing his cigar to ask:

"What are they kickin' about? We own seventy-five per cent. of the preferred and sixty of the common."

"And it is too much, I think," said Rivington. "We need it only to keep from unsettling the N. Y. & N. J. interests, because—— Fifty-five of the preferred and fifty-two of the common, perhaps, but seventy-five and sixty——"

"And, now," chimed Hallett, "this little fellow—what's his name?—the president. Oh, yes: Dohan, that's it—starts out to launch a new stock-issue to bridge the river five miles from town and come into New York, an' all without as much as sayin' 'If you please' to us! We ought to wreck his damned picayune road for him; that's what we ought to do."

The two continued their indignant comments. Every little while they paused to give the crouching man at the head of the table a chance to speak, and more often they looked at him to see whether he wanted to speak; but, though his eyes were always alert to meet theirs, he did not, for some time, utter a word.

"Of course," said Rivington, "we are not directors of the road, but still——"

"Oh, hell!" grunted Hallett disgustedly. "Didn't you just say between us we owned all the stock worth ownin'? We ought to unload and smash 'em."

"You may be right. I am inclined to think——"

"Right? Of course I'm right. I'm not goin' to be bullied by a handful of dummies when I can sell them up as if I was a sheriff closing down on a crossroads grocery store!"

"They certainly are impudent and——"

"They're beggars on horseback! Wastin' our money like this!"

"They have—— We should tell the legislature——"

"Gentlemen,"—it was the clear, crisp voice of the man at the head of the table that interrupted; he spoke in a tone somewhat different from that in which he habitually addressed his clerks and his brokers, but he spoke as suddenly and

with all the authority that he used toward them—"if the M. & N. comes into New York, it will not take one-half of one per cent. of the profits away from our other roads. For all but its last thirty-two miles, the new line taps territory new to us, and the new stock will have paid for itself, and have paid a profit too, in five years."

Rivington and Hallett looked at each other. The latter took his cigar between his fingers and folded his arms.

"What do we care?" he asked, but his tone had lost the assertiveness that had marked it a moment earlier. The man at the head of the table did not answer this question directly. He proceeded:

"Except for ourselves, most of the old stockholders are poor people. They need the money, and the old holders are to have the first chance at the new issue. In five years, then, the minor stockholders will have realized a profit on their investment; so shall we. At that time we could unload without hurting anybody but the officials that have defied us. Always supposing," he added, "that the management observe a proper economy."

Hallett's eyes burned.

"You're right," he said. "We can win both ways if we do that. The road will be bankrupt, and we can buy it in."

The man at the head of the table did not smile. He only said:

"You have always been very naïve, Hallett; but I did think you would have seen this point sooner."

Rivington at length cut in:

"But the cost of getting the bill through the legislature——"

"The bill will pass this morning," said the man at the head of the table. "The Governor will sign it immediately."

His certainty silenced them for a moment; but Rivington, whom the outside world pictured as a pirate, was still timid.

"Yes," he said, "but the expense of the city ordinance——"

"Oh, we'll take care of that," grinned Hallett.

"And the cost of construction——"

"I said," repeated the man at the head of the table: "'Always supposing the management observe a proper economy.'"

He settled back in his chair. He seemed to consider the subject closed, and so, presently, did his companions. Within five minutes they had left him, and he was ringing for Rollins.

"Rollins," he said, "take this letter."

The secretary seated himself at the far end of the table.

His employer walked to a window and looked out. His hands were clasped behind him now, and he did not turn his head as he rapidly dictated:

"Robert M. Dohan. (Send it to his house address, Rollins, and mark it 'Confidential.') I understand that the bill of which you have spoken to me will be passed and become a law to-day. I have just seen Messrs. Hallett and Rivington and have secured their agreement to the plan outlined in my personal conversation with you last week. In view of the favors that you have done me in the past, I think it fair to tell you, for your own use only, (Underline that, Rollins), that my friends have decided that they and I ought to do what you thought they might decide, viz.: unload at the end of five years. Considering your contemplated resignation next year, this will not affect you, except favorably in case you care to manipulate your own holdings in accordance with this news.

"(Paragraph) I note what you say about the estimate submitted by the construction-department; also the letter of the steel-rail manufacturers which you inclosed, in which they say that the grade I suggested might not wear well. I think their use of the word 'dangerous' is absurdly exaggerated. We have used this grade on several of our roads and feel sure from long experience that, with proper repair-gangs, it will wear for five years as well as the best.

"(Paragraph) My desire, and the desire of my associates, is to protect the interests of the stockholders. With that in mind, I should state, what you have probably already gathered, that we feel that the new line must be built and operated with all possible economy. —— Very truly yours."

The secretary closed his book.

"Is that all?" he asked.

Without turning, his employer nodded, and Rollins left the room.

In the corner by the desk, a stock-ticker was clicking out yards of tape into a high wicker basket. The man that had just given the M. &. N. Railway permission to enter New York started to walk to the ticker; but he paused again, at the second window, to look down on the thoroughfare and buildings below him. From that height the streets of the city seemed to be threads leading in every direction; they seemed to radiate from the building in which the watcher stood. On the threads black dots that were hurrying men and women seemed to quiver like entangled flies.

CHAPTER III

§1. The legislature's committee made its report—the legislature was heavily Republican that year—declaring that no wrong had been done, and Luke accepted this verdict as a proof and triumph of right. He passed his examinations and,

shortly after Porcellis sailed for Russia, became a member of the staff of the District-Attorney, who was to "clean up" New York.

District-Attorney Leighton was a pleasant man, still young at forty, who had a plausible and engaging manner supported by that bluff and downright good-humor which passes current as the legal tender of honesty. He had been in politics, and on the losing side, since his twenty-first year, and during all that time he was fighting toward the office which he had ultimately attained. Even his relatives, who were people of so high a position that they regarded voting as something beneath their caste and would rather be pillaged than lay hands upon the pillagers, had kept him at a distance and were a little ashamed of their pride in his success now that he had secured it. With a few other men, all his elders, he had found his party a ruined fortress and rebuilt it, stone by stone, now seeing the work of months plundered in a day, now resisting his assailants by their own sort of arms, until the stronghold, still far from impregnable or potent to command the entire city, could at least dominate that spot beneath its guns on which he had been able to take up his present position.

Under him Luke went cheerfully to work. He was at first disappointed because his tasks were minor tasks and seemed to possess only the most distant connection with the great crusade; but he was, in those times, as modest as he was ardent, and he realized that he was still in his novitiate. He tried petty offenders whose crimes were so insignificant that he frequently found it hard to consider them crimes at all, and he was often too sorry for the accused to be glad when he convicted them. The first time he won a sentence, which was by no means the first time he tried a case, he passed a sleepless night, because he feared that the defendant's plea might have been the true one. It was long thereafter before he could exult in a conviction that carried with it a term in prison, even when he was certain of the condemned man's guilt.

The other members of the staff, more experienced in criminal practice, showed no compunctions. They were a rather jolly lot of men, ranging in age from twenty-five to thirty, with a cynical tolerance of life and a tendency to regard their work as a game that everybody played solely for the sake of winning it, with the opposing lawyers as the rival players and with the accused as insensate pawns. Luke forgave them only because of their unanimous and unbounded loyalty to their high-purposing chief.

"I got that case," declared one of these young men, a Larry O'Mara, when he came through Luke's little office one afternoon after the court had risen.

"What case?" Luke inquired.

"That one I had against Burroughs—and old Laurie was sitting, too. The jury was only out ten minutes."

O'Mara was pink with triumph.

"What was the charge?" asked Luke.

"Larceny. It was hard work to make out; but the fellow's past record did for him. I got that in while Burroughs was asleep at the switch. When he did object, Laurie ruled against me, but the jury'd heard it all right. Laurie's the strictest man on the bench, and Burroughs is about the cleverest criminal lawyer in town."

Luke blushed for this victor:

"Was the man guilty?"

O'Mara's eyes were first wondering and then amused.

"They all are," he said. "If he didn't do this he did something else we didn't know about—lots else. They're all guilty."

Luke supposed they were, but he could not understand his associates' desire to secure convictions for the convictions' sake.

The innocent did not always suffer, nor yet the guilty. Luke was not directly attached to the homicide bureau, the name applied to that branch of the staff regularly employed to investigate and try cases of suspected murder. Nevertheless, Leighton believed in giving his men some chance at many branches of practice, because he wanted them to be what he called "all-round criminal practitioners" when the time should come for them to leave his service, and so Luke was once or twice called into a capital trial. On one such occasion he was helping young Uhler. Leighton himself had tried a striker named Gace on the charge of shooting and killing a detective during a strike-riot, and Gace, greatly to the District-Attorney's chagrin, was acquitted. Some slight evidence adduced at the Gace trial seemed to point to another striker, Reardon, and, though there was small hope of convicting Reardon, popular clamor forced Leighton to plead for a true bill against him and bring him to trial.

"I won't touch it any more, though," laughed Leighton. "Uhler, you'll have to take it, and you might as well have Huber with you. We're bound to lose, and so I'm going to give my assistants a chance to bear the discredit. That's what you boys are here for."

Smarting under his chief's prophecy, Uhler, one of the youngest of the staff, went into court and fought hard, which was doubtless the intention behind Leighton's words. His enthusiasm was strong and contagious. He convinced himself of Reardon's guilt, and he ended by convincing Luke. The proceedings, indeed, went largely in the State's favor until, shortly after the defense had opened its case, the man Gace, who had previously been acquitted, was called to the stand to testify to some minor detail. His examination was about to be completed when he quite calmly volunteered the statement that it was he who had done the killing.

"Cross-examine," said the defending lawyer and, covering amazement, sat down.

Uhler looked helplessly at Luke. Luke, now enough of a lawyer to believe that this was no more than a clever ruse to secure an unjust acquittal, sprang to his feet and shook an angry finger under the nose of the witness murderer, whose confession, had it been expected, would have been prevented.

"So," he cried, "not satisfied with cheating justice in your own case, you come back here to taunt it, do you?"

"Oh, I don't know as I'm taunting anything," replied the witness. He was a big man with the frame of a blacksmith and the eyes of a ruminating cow.

"Then," thundered Luke, "you really mean to tell this court that you actually killed that man?"

The faintest shadow of a smile brushed the murderer's lips.

"They buried him, didn't they?" he inquired.

That answer lost Luke's case.

§2. Luke's enthusiasm long resisted these miscarriages of justice and the undeniably slow progress of his chief to secure indictments against the Democratic politicians whose drastic punishment Leighton had promised in his ante-election speeches. It resisted even the callousness of the participants in the legal game, and the discovery that the best minds at the Bar, of course seeking the most lucrative field for their practice, were in the position of advisers to the great financiers, their incomes, which far exceeded those of their more active fellows, being composed almost entirely of the annual retaining fees and "tips" for speculation. It required more and more resistance, but Luke continued to hug tightly the faith that the wrongs of the world could be set right through honest laws administered by honest men.

As he loved his work, so also he came to love the scene of it. The vortex of the city fascinated him. Broadway, one color by day and another by night, one spot of color uptown, a second at its middle, and a third below the street that lies across New York like a gorged but devouring anaconda; the dark passages full of tenements; the quiet pavements bordered by prosperous dwellings; the roar of every sort of business and the crackle of all sorts of pleasure; the joy and suffering eternally intermingled, yet so intermingled that he could not tell which caused the other, or whether they were independent; the whole tremendous whirlpool whirled him, a straw among uncounted straws, now on its surface and now sucked below beyond all plummets' soundings, and intoxicated him by its dizzy revolutions.

He knew Fifth Avenue, Riverside Drive, and Central Park. Because he felt it his duty, he learned the outsides of the houses in the Italian quarter, the French quarter, the Syrian quarter. He walked the Bowery and thought that he under-

stood it. From that artery of America, he turned a corner and found himself in China, in crooked streets heavy with the smells of the East, among shops whose signs bore Oriental characters, among crowds of impassive yellow faces—men and only men—where there was no sound of English speech. Once, passing the door of a slum mission, he saw a crowd of half-human things, their heads sunk upon their chests, listlessly droning a popular hymn around a puffing harmonium: on one side of the mission was a saloon and on the other a shop that displayed the legend:

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+----------------+
|   BLACK EYES   |
|  PAINTED HERE  |
+----------------+
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With some of his friends—for he made many friends both in the office and out of it, and Mrs. Ruysdael and her husband, whom he finally met, were exceedingly kind to him—he went on a tour of those cafés that called themselves Bohemian. That night he descended from restaurants where one drank champagne and heard songs by vaudeville performers who thus earned more money than at the theaters which they had deserted, to seats in shoddy beer-halls where there was dancing by women too old or too unskilled to continue upon the stage; and on the way home from "Little Hungary," a place in which a dull company drank strange wines to the music of a good band, the motor that conveyed his party crept under smoking naphtha lamps through a jumble of push-carts converted into bargain counters, and past the overcrowded squalor of the quarter of the Russian Jews.

Poverty hurt him, or the sight of poverty. Somewhere he read that one per cent. of the families in the United States owned more than the other ninety-nine per cent., but he explained this by the theory that the one per cent. had created the wealth that they owned. He was told that there were four million paupers in the country; but he ascribed their condition to their failure to take advantage of a republic's free opportunities. Somebody said that, during the past winter, seventy thousand New York children had gone hungry to the public schools; Luke was sure that the schools would soon supply their pupils with free meals. From a report of the New Jersey Department of Charities that came into his hands, he learned that, in New Jersey, one person in every two hundred and

six of the population was a ward of the State; but his reflection was only that New Jersey must be badly governed. His heart ached over what he saw; but his intellect satisfactorily explained all hearsay evidence. He could go out to Ellis Island and, listening to its thousands of immigrants prattle their hopes in forty-three languages and dialects, could share their hopes. Evil administrators had hurt the country by overturning the purpose of its founders; the remedy lay in a return to first principles.

Already in men of the Leighton type and in their works, he saw signs of the revival. He had more than one occasion to visit the Children's Court. Its quarters near Third Avenue were cramped, but it was soon to be fittingly housed, and already here especially adapted magistrates, acting as judge, jury, and parent, conducted in kindly, quiet, and colloquial fashion the cases of fourteen thousand children in one year. These, all of them under the age of sixteen, were no longer herded with mature criminals that completed their education in vice, though their offenses ranged from mere waywardness to burglary. Their judges were patient and sympathetic men. One was the president of a society called the Big Brothers, the duty of whose members was to act in fraternally helpful fashion to boys less fortunate than they themselves had been; and some of the women probation officers of this court belonged to a similar organization known as the Big Sisters. There were twenty-six probation officers, some men and some women, and into their care were given all the little offenders for whom the court entertained any hope of reformation.

Luke concluded that the public schools, because of bettered conditions, were turning out fewer candidates for the Children's Court than ever before. He saw with high hope the Washington Irving High School for Girls, the result of an agitation begun by pupils. Here was a building eight stories high, and Luke, with the American love for size and numbers, wrote enthusiastically home to his sister that it was the largest school in the world.

"It cost half a million dollars," he told her; "it has a hundred and sixty rooms and it holds six thousand pupils. Think of that! Six thousand,—not your pasty-faced, moping diggers either, but all noisy, laughing, healthy girls. The equipment is wonderful—just wonderful: you girls from the old Americus High School would think you were in Heaven if you came here. There are two big restaurants, chemical and physical laboratories, a conservatory, a zoological garden and a roof-garden, and laundries. There's a regular theater—stage, scenery, and all that—a store, a bank, a housekeeping department, and an employment bureau. They have an orchestra, and they dance. There are nurseries with real babies in them—babies that can cry—and there is a five-room model house, a hospital, and a section where they train nurses. They use all these things really to *teach*, and this is in addition to languages and the usual unpractical stuff. They teach

librarians' work, shorthand, typewriting, bookbinding, costume-designing, and dressmaking. Why, Jane, the girls are taught to make their own clothes. Every girl is expected to make her own graduation dress, and only a few of the dresses cost more than a dollar apiece. I'll bet you wouldn't like that part of it!"

Even his social life served subtly to confirm him, during this period, in the opinions he had brought to it. He mistrusted combinations of capital, because he thought they tended to restrain honest trade, but he believed such combinations could properly and effectively be curbed by legislation, and he had a fine respect for such of his acquaintances as had made their own money by building up their own industries. He doubted certain men in whose hands lay the administration of government, but he was sure that the cure for this was the election of honorable men. He brought to New York, and long retained, what he called a muscular Christianity (he had read Kingsley), and, under its control, he sought a remedy for the world's evils that he could synthesize with, a respect for authority and an acceptance of the dogma that the individual man is nothing and the omnipotent Deity everything.

He used often to be invited to dinners at the Ruysdaels' when there was no other guest, because Ruysdael liked this earnest lad and enjoyed long evening talks with him. On one such occasion, his host, little, sallow, with almond eyes that gave him a strangely Japanese appearance, fell to talking of these questions while the two men sat over a glass of port—for Ruysdael liked the old-fashioned English custom of after-dinner port—in the candle-lit, oak-paneled dining-room.

"I can't understand," said Ruysdael, "the shortsightedness of these really honest men who call property a crime."

"They call it that," said Luke, "because it's the result of profit."

"Yes, but what's profit?"

"Selling dear what you buy cheap, I suppose."

"Yes, that's one way of putting it, but it's really wages. It's the wages that the employer draws for his executive ability: he must be paid for his work if his employees are paid for theirs. It's the fair return that he gets for the risk he's run in starting his business, and it's his reward for his years of saving up his money till he had enough to start that business."

Luke agreed.

"Of course," said he, "we don't want the man that's done these things to use his power so as to prevent other men from doing them, but we haven't any right to take from him what he's earned or to stop him from going on earning it."

In much Ruysdael's manner, Luke's father, during Luke's visits to his home in Americus, would talk of government. Government, by which he meant the particular form of government adopted by the United States, was one of the few topics that could move the Congressman from his characteristic reticence.

He scorned the tyranny of Russia and the English make-shift of a constitutional monarchy. In the United States the people could rule; the means were provided; if they failed now and then, it was for a brief time only. To Mr. Huber the majority was as infallible in matters of government as, in matters of faith, the Pope is to a devout Catholic, and the hope of the majority lay in that party which had freed the negro from slavery and saved the country from disruption.

To these ideals Luke was true. He saw the rottenness of Tammany rule in New York and knew it for a symptom of the disease that made a national danger of the entire rank and file of the Democrats; he saw the integrity of Leighton, and accepted it as a true token of Republican virtue. He wanted the government restored to its pristine simplicity, wealth curbed of its newly developed predatory instincts, religion restored to its place in the daily thought and conduct of man.

§3. Leighton's announced intention to "clean up" New York was proving, nevertheless, a slow process. He had great difficulty in obtaining evidence against the Democratic politicians whose scalps he had promised to hang to the belt of the public. Grand Juries had a way of including enough partisans of these politicians to prevent the finding of true bills. When true bills were found, petty juries generally contained enough Democrats to persuade the other jurors to acquit or to hold out for a disagreement. Even when convictions were secured, the appeals had to be argued before appellate courts composed of men that owed their positions to friends of the appellants.

"It's rotten luck," said Leighton, "but I believe they've got us scotched. We've tried seven cases, four of them twice and two three times; we've had our hands full with appeals, and the only one of the lot that we've sent to jail is a peanut politician from Second Avenue who doesn't control ten votes."

"Yes," said O'Mara, "and they let *him* go because they believed he was getting ready to go back on them next election."

"We've got to begin lower down," concluded Leighton, "and work up."

He began immediately. He found that, in violation of the law, cocaine was sold at scores of places on the East Side, and that the use of the drug was spreading alarmingly. Against these retailers he proceeded with all the vigor he had shown in his larger and less productive efforts. Evidence to convict the sources of supply was hard to get, since those sources were high in Tammany politics, but small sellers and street peddlers were rushed to jail with such commendable speed that the trade soon seemed abolished.

Luke appeared in some of these cases, and won most that he appeared in. He had been feeling the chill of disappointment, but this gave him fresh courage. One day, when Uhler was on vacation and Luke was taking the work of the absent

man, he thought he saw the chance to approach "the people higher up," which they had all been waiting for.

A gang-leader named Zantzinger had been dancing with his wife at a ball on the second floor of a house in Avenue A. As he waltzed past the door leading to the back stairs, a friend looked in and called Zantzinger aside.

"Excuse me a minute," said the gangster to his wife.

He left her and went to his friend.

"Well?" he demanded.

"Butch Dellitt's down there," warned his friend, nodding toward the door. "His crowd's after you 'cause they say you piped off Dutch's brother-in-law's poolroom to the fly cops. He says he's goin' to croak you."

"Where is he?"

"He'll be 'round front when you come out."

"Where is he now?"

"Down back."

"Down these stairs?"

The friend nodded.

Zantzinger walked to his wife.

"I've got a little business below," he explained. "Wait here: I'll be right back."

He opened the door and descended the stairs. As he went, he drew his revolver. Dellitt was standing in the doorway, with his back to the stairs, smoking a cigarette. Without warning, Zantzinger shot him through the head. Then he returned to the ballroom, apologized to his wife for leaving her so hurriedly, and resumed his interrupted dance.

This was the story that came to the homicide bureau. Luke took it at once to Leighton.

"And this man Zantzinger," he reminded the District-Attorney, "is the right-hand man of the Tammany leader in that ward."

"Who saw him?" asked Leighton.

"Three men on the street."

"Got their names?"

"We can get them."

"Is the coroner on the case?"

Luke thought he was.

Leighton shrugged.

"Then that'll be the end of it," he said.

Luke could not credit this.

"Oh, yes," said Leighton wearily, "I mean it. By the time he's done with the case, he'll see to it nobody knows anything. Why, man alive, that coroner's the

cousin of the ward leader."

"But you'll try?" urged Luke. "You'll fight?"

Leighton swung back in his swivel-chair. He put his feet on his desk and clasped his hands behind his head.

"No," he said, "I won't. What's the use? I'm getting tired of trying to do things with all the people taking no interest and a Democratic Mayor and Police Commissioner fighting against me." He spoke like a man at last driven to declare something he has long striven to conceal. "If ever I want to be re-elected," he continued, "this office has got to be more careful about taking up cases that are lost to begin with."

§4. Luke fought hard with the ugly doubt this incident raised. He tried to convince himself that Leighton had spoken only in a moment of passing weariness and discouragement; but he daily found this endeavor more difficult. What suddenly turned his mind to other things was the news that an aunt, his father's widowed sister who lived in Philadelphia, had died, leaving him a hundred thousand dollars.

CHAPTER IV

§1. Luke had never expected to be possessed of so much money. His father's income was comfortable, but it was well understood that the family lived somewhat beyond it, and that what might be left at the Congressman's death would go to his widow for life and, after that, to Luke's sister Jane. The Philadelphia aunt had inherited her fortune from her husband, and her affection for her relatives was generally supposed to be slight. Luke, consequently, found himself in a position for which he was totally unprepared.

"I suppose," he said to Ruysdael, to whom he went for advice, "that I ought to invest it."

"You ought to lose no time," counseled Ruysdael. "A hundred thousand dollars is too much for a young man to have at his call in New York. It's not enough to spend, and it's too much to gamble with in the bucket-shops."

Ruysdael thought he knew a safe investment.

"There's a man named Forbes," he said—"Wallace K. Forbes, who came to

the offices of our estate the other day when I happened to be there. He wanted to borrow just the amount you name, and my agent says it's a good thing; but we happened to have a bigger one on hand. His concern's an old one, one of the oldest American firms in its line; this man's the third generation of his family to be in it, so it's well-established and has the good old-fashioned element of family pride behind it. Nowadays, you don't find many men regard their businesses the way an English landed gentleman used to regard his estates and his family honor; but Forbes seems to be an exception."

"What is the business?" asked Luke.

"Ready-made clothing, and well made, too, I'm told."

"Still, he does need money."

"Yes, but you couldn't get in if he didn't need it. He only wants it to complete some improvements he's begun. He's perfectly well-grounded, but I suppose he has to keep up with the progress of the trade. Of course, that very element of family pride might disincline him to give an outsider any hold on the business, but if you want me to, I'll have Croy—that's the man that runs our estate for us—look into the situation and sound Forbes."

Luke, after some satisfactory inquiries in other quarters, acquiesced in this proposal. All the reports were good, and that of Herbert Croy, the shriveled Ruysdael lawyer, was especially rosy. Forbes expressed his willingness to meet Luke, and Luke called at the offices of the R. H. Forbes & Son's factory in Brooklyn.

The present head of the firm was a grave man with a direct and unassuming manner. His aquiline nose gave his face the air of strength, and his mustache and the hair about his temples being slightly touched with gray, he seemed sober and conservative. He sat at a plain roll-top desk, in a room simply furnished, and he lost no time in coming at once to business.

"Would you like to walk through the place?" he inquired, when he had told Luke much of what Ruysdael had already said.

"I suppose I ought to," smiled Luke; "though of course I don't know enough about the business to appreciate what you show me."

Forbes smiled sadly.

"You are no different, then," he said, "from most modern investors, or, for the matter of that, most owners of businesses either. In these times the average president of a company thinks he earns his salary by manipulating its stock; he seldom knows anything about the work that makes the stock marketable. Our firm isn't like that."

Under Forbes's care, Luke was accordingly taken through the factory, with which, he noted, the office of the chief administrative was in close touch. He was shown the room where the cloth manufacturers brought their products; the scales to weigh the material; the windmill-like machine that spread the offered fabric on

its wide arms and, turning at the will of the expert buyers, displayed its burden before the examiners in a strong north light; the long boards on which, having been re-rolled, the cloth, once its quality had been thus determined, was again uncoiled, an ingenious contrivance attached to the uncoiling-wheel stamping its measurements at every fifth revolution.

"We have to be careful," Forbes explained. "Business isn't so honest as it once was, and if the cloth-makers could gain an inch in ten yards, they'd do it."

The factory, which closed the end of a street, was built about four sides of a small square, and the center of this square was occupied by a large room with overhead ventilation and lighting, the glass fluted and sloping as the ribs of a Venetian blind may be made to slope, so that, in summer, the sun's rays would be tempered to the workers under it. Here, at the tables nearest the entrance, men were employed at designing patterns of cardboard and working, amid busy calculations, with rulers and T-squares, like so many architects' draughtsmen. From them the completed patterns were taken to other tables at which they met the cloth accepted in the first room, other workmen tracing the designs in chalk upon pieces of the cloth. The problem of these second workers, Forbes explained, was to arrange the designs in such a way that almost no shred of cloth was wasted. Luke observed that they solved it with astonishing skill; and, as each piece was completed, a ticket was roughly sewn on it with written directions for its further progress and blanks to be filled in by the signature of each worker responsible for its future steps.

Then came what to Luke was the most wonderful part of the work. Nineteen pieces of unmarked cloth to be made into suits of the same style as that on which the chalk pattern had been outlined, were laid under that piece and the whole bundle given to a man at a large table. Through a slit in the center of this table, a knife of incredible strength and keenness plunged rapidly up and down. The man in charge forced the bundle against the knife, deftly pushing it forward, so that the blade followed the lines drawn upon the top piece, and in three minutes a score of suits of clothes were cut into their various parts and were being sorted and ticketed and signed for waiting boys to carry them to the sewing-machines.

"Those patterns look like the parts of a jig-saw puzzle," said Luke, "and that knife looks like a cross between a jig-saw and the guillotine."

"It cuts twenty suits at a time," said Forbes gravely, "and the bottom one doesn't vary the thirtieth of an inch from the one on top."

"Twenty suits!" Luke wanted to rub his eyes.

"Yes; but the inventor is still at work on the knife. We hope soon to get one that will do three dozen."

At each corner of the building was an elevator and a stairway, the latter

walled in so to serve as a fire-escape. Forbes took Luke up one of these stairways, a broad and easy flight of which the corners at each landing were protected by curved wainscoting to prevent jamming in case of panic.

The three floors above ground contained the rooms in which the sewing was done and one room known as the matching-room. All seemed well lighted and well aired and well protected by the overhead pipes of an automatic sprinkling-plant.

In the matching-room girls especially trained to the task selected, from vast quantities of samples, the fitting shades of thread and buttons best adapted to the different bundles of cut fabric brought by elevators from the cutting department below. Beside them were four other girls, who worked at a contrivance in which, when covered buttons were required, an uncovered button, a piece of tin and a bit of cloth were inserted, a lever pulled and the three factors withdrawn ready clamped together and complete for use. From here, after the tickets had been signed, and the necessary further directions added to them, the cloth was sent on to the sewing-rooms.

Luke found those sewing-rooms crowded with machines of possibilities that he had heretofore never dreamed machines could realize; machines horrible because they seemed half-human, and diabolically intelligent; machines that not only moved up and down in the manner of the old foot-pumped sewing-machine in the second floor back of his home in Americus, but twirled and danced over the cloth pressed under them by women feeding them as a frightened keeper in a menagerie might feed an angry beast. They were all of them run by steam or gasoline, and Forbes told Luke that they were all made by one trust, which owned all the patents. There were different machines for every kind of sewing, for every loop that could be required of the thread: machines for hemming; machines for the cord-stitch, the lock-stitch, the chain-stitch, and the damask-stitch; machines for sewing the cloth together, for sewing the lining, for sewing the trouser-seams; and there was one machine, the needle of which moved in dizzy zigzag, for sewing, on a sort of herring-bone design, the stiffening material into coats.

Next Luke was shown a room in which, on benches a foot from the floor, beside tables six inches high, sat rows of intent little girls, their arms flying like flails as they stitched the shoulders into the coats, and still another row in which still other girls, their arms flying in a similar manner, sewed buttons on coats, waistcoats, and trousers—the only two processes that invention was as yet unable wholly to deliver over to machinery. Lastly, there was a half-floor given to what at first looked like linotype machines, and at these sat brawny women who passed over the coat-shoulders long flat-irons, each heated by flexible tubes attached to it and reminiscent, for Luke, of those terrible instruments that, immediately

revolving, grind the heart and lungs out of a patient's teeth.

Forbes exhibited it all with a quiet pride. He said there was no work sent out of the factory, and so no "sweating"; the factory was a union shop; there had never been but one strike, and that one was speedily adjusted by arbitration.

Luke was impressed. He secured favorable reports from a financial agency and from a firm of expert accountants. Then he invested his fortune in R. H. Forbes & Son.

§2. About this time, the United States Senate happened to be investigating itself and unavoidably stumbled upon a witness whose testimony filled all the newspapers for several weeks and remained a matter of public comment for quite two months. Perhaps because he had fallen out with his employers, this witness insisted upon telling how he had for ten years been hired by a combination of the ruling corporations to influence national legislation. Five hundred letters and telegrams substantiated his assertions; he gave dates and mentioned places; the names of popular idols fell from his lips with infinite carelessness, and the idols broke as their names fell.

Speaking in unimpassioned detail, the informer showed how his activities had covered the entire country and included the chiefs of both the large parties with a splendid catholicity. He had bought the services of labor leaders to end strikes, had broken up unions by purchasing information from their members, and had ended one dispute by having himself appointed a member of its arbitration board. He had operated in congressional campaigns throughout the Union, and he told how he had bought the defeat at the polls of members of Congress that sought re-election after having opposed the corporate interests at Washington, and how he had spent thousands of the trusts' dollars in electing candidates who, personally or through their bosses, promised that they would support a high tariff and prevent the passage of laws too kindly to the working class. He had hired congressional clerks and pages, the former to betray what advance information came to them, the latter to pick up valuable gossip. He had the secretaries of Congressmen on his salary-roll when he could not buy or defeat their masters or when, having bought those masters, he feared treachery. He had secured the appointment of those legislators in his pay to important committees, and he had, he said, planned and secured the establishment of a national tariff commission for the benefit of the powers he served. Those powers were headed by the man that Jack Porcellis likened to Shakespeare and that the derelict in the Essex Street saloon called the King.

Luke, who of course had nothing to do with the management of the Forbes company, nevertheless occasionally passed an evening at the quiet Brooklyn

home of its president, who was a widower living alone with his only child, Betty, a pretty, high-colored, brown-eyed girl, as yet unformed and only twenty-two years old. As a rule, these two men sat in the parlor, a room that retained the character of Forbes's grandfather, and talked of everything and nothing, the girl rarely intruding upon them. It was inevitable that they should, during the flood-tide of the Washington scandal, speak of its revelations.

"I don't know what to make of them," sighed Luke. "It seems as if the fellows at the head of our party were no better than the fellows at the head of the other."

"They are not," said Forbes with conviction. "Here they all are blackmailing the tariff, a system the country owes all its prosperity to."

"We shall have to pick honest leaders in the future," Luke reflected. He still believed in the power of a party's individual members. "We've simply been too easy-going in the past."

Forbes thought this would avail nothing.

"The parties themselves are rotten," he declared, "and the deeper a man gets into them, no matter how well he starts out, the more certain he is to be infected. You see how even the good measures are fraudulently put through. Then here's our own state with a Governor we all believed in—a Democrat, to be sure, but an anti-Tammany man. He comes out for a fine thing like direct primaries. Well, the other day an Assemblyman I know went to him and asked him to sign a bill this Assemblyman wanted passed. What happened? The Governor said: 'Will you vote for the direct primary law?' The Assemblyman happens to be a fool and against that law. He said he'd vote against it, and he tells me the Governor told him in that case the other bill wouldn't be signed. No, the thing we need in this country is a brand-new party run by honest business men on sound business principles."

Luke could not yet consider such a revolution; but the next day the papers contained further news of the senatorial investigation, which lent weight to Forbes's opinion. A witness, after testimony further entangling that great financier whose power seemed to pervade the country's entire industrial system, described an alleged forgery in the books of a railway known to be controlled by Porcellis's hero and eager to evade the anti-trust laws. According to this witness, a "double entry" of $2,000,000, representing securities that the road assumed in taking over two other roads, was carried in the "Consolidated balance sheet" for some time, then erased from one side of the ledger, and left as a credit balance on the other side.

"They took all the securities of the acquired roads," he swore, "and used them as securities for a bond-issue. They got that money and used it to finance two other outside transactions that they sold out at a tremendous profit."

He named as participants in this three Senators high in the councils of

Luke's party.

"Of course they're a bad lot," Leighton cheerfully admitted when the District-Attorney's staff gossiped about the latest revelation, "and the party is no better right here in New York than it is in any other state. But you can't repair an organization by smashing it. What we need is reform within the party. The party must reform itself. And that's what I'm trying to bring about."

He did, indeed, give out interviews to this effect, and gathered a considerable following. A little convention was called at Saratoga where, fired by fresh faith, Luke made his first political speech, holding up Leighton as the Erasmus of Republicanism. It was an unfortunate simile, for the opposition press lost no time in lampooning the District-Attorney as Erasmus at his weakest; but the movement grew, and Luke, in common with his fellow-believers, began to see light in the political darkness.

He still possessed the beautiful power of dreaming, and when, by night, coming from a theater or leaving the house of Mrs. Ruysdael or one of her friends, he turned into Broadway and saw the myriad lights of its cafés mount heavenward and mix with and illuminate the pillars of smoke and steam rising from its chimneys, he could detect in their wreaths the faces of grinning devils raised by the pestilential life below, laughing at it, dipping enormous white claws to stir it, and then hissing skyward as if to proclaim, because of what New York was, their defiance of God. Once or twice, to escape from them, he walked as far downtown as Wall Street and loitered through the silent night, where the three churches stood on the modern battleground of mad finance to remind of its history the city with the shortest memory in Christendom. Mentally, he converted that portion of the town to what it once had been. He saw it the home of a modest aristocracy in simple houses along shaded streets, a center of good taste, of culture, of social well-being.

The old Astor House, now fallen into shabby desuetude, he pictured as it was when state banquets were given there, and when it was the one place in which the distinguished visitor would stop. Close by the spot where the Woolworth Building to-day houses eighteen thousand persons, the Astor House had moved Horace Greeley to admiration because six hundred and forty-seven persons slept under its roof. There Clay had received the news of his nomination in 1844, and Webster the word of his defeat at the hands of the Whig convention in 1852. That hotel had been familiar to Pierce, Van Buren, Buchanan, and Taylor, to Seward, Choate, and Douglas. Edward, Prince of Wales, had given it an almost royal atmosphere, and recollections of Lincoln still hung about its tarnished walls.

Would the old spirit come back again? Could it return? Luke was sure that it could and would. He was sure that Leighton, and the honest men associated

with him, had begun a movement that must end by restoring the nation's lost ideals. Government would govern, honest property would be protected, religion would again open man's eyes to his own littleness and the omnipotence of the Deity. There would be legislation that would be the end of industrial combinations, of the crushing of the small manufacturer and the grinding of the faces of the poor. No more national banks would be merged, none would engage in promoting or underwriting; interlocking directorates would cease, and the concentration of credit, the Money Trust, would forever after be an impossibility. It was so easy. It needed but an awakened conscience in the majority of the voters and a few conscientious men to lead.

§3. Luke's father died within three years after the young man entered upon his duties under Brouwer Leighton. The elder Huber had embarked his small fortune in an adventure that, as events soon proved, was opposed to one of the interests of the great financier whom he had once so much admired: those interests ruined the adventure and, more from grief because of this than from any specific malady, the Congressman fell in the fight. He died proud of his son—a pride that Mrs. Huber and Jane zealously shared—and he left the family in Luke's care.

The young man, who had loved his father in spite of all the differences between them, and long felt the loss, met this situation without complaint. Neither the mother nor the sister wanted to go to New York, and, as Luke managed to live within his meager salary, he was able to continue for them the home in Americus upon the income from his now well-paying investment in R. H. Forbes & Son. Jane, indeed, soon engaged herself and was married to a Doncaster lawyer who secured an election to the late Mr. Huber's seat in Congress, so that Luke's expenses in Americus were light.

He began to fall in love with Betty Forbes. The women of the Ruysdael set did not fail to attract him, but he never considered them as within his means, and so speedily placed them outside of his desires. Forbes's daughter, on the other hand, was the feminine counterpart of her father, and, as she grew, she developed many of his qualities, being quiet, determined, unobtrusive, and womanly in the sense in which men like Forbes used that word before Woman began to give it a new significance. Accepting the world in the garb in which Forbes thought it well to present it to her, she owned only the finest standards of her type, and there was no meanness in her. Physically, she had that rarity in young women: height combined with grace. Her hair, as Luke saw it, was like so much sunshine, her eyes were clear and brown, and the radiance of her coloring not even a man that was not her lover could deny. Luke, for his part, thought her far too good for him. He told himself she was all that the people of the Ruysdael set should be

and were not: she made important and shameful the casual relations he had had with women of the half-world and that in their occurrence—less frequent than is usual in the lives of young men—had seemed trivial and matter-of-fact; and therefore he determined to win her, so soon as he could make a place for himself through the pursuit of his ideals.

§4. That pursuit grew daily more difficult. The candle of his faith in Leighton, though it continued to burn steadily, burned less fiercely than of old. The movement for reform within the party spread, but it spread almost too rapidly; it came to include certain politicians who were now for the first time in their careers evincing a desire for the organization's betterment, and that only after the organization had failed to re-elect them to office. These men, in one or two instances, came into control, and it was soon necessary to reform the reformers. Sometimes Leighton appeared disheartened, and Luke began to acquire a weary and well-nigh uninterested manner in dealing with his part of the crusade.

"Look here," he once said to his chief, "that fellow you got a pardon for last week has been in to see me."

"Yes?" said Leighton. His feet were cocked on his desk and, in his favorite attitude, he was leaning back in his chair with his fingers clasped in his crisp, black hair. His face was not the face that Luke had known when he first came to New York.

"Well," continued the assistant, "he came in just after I got back from the Ludlow Street Jail. That place is full of nobody but husbands who won't pay alimony, but the keepers act as valets and barbers and do light housekeeping for the prisoners."

"It's the civil prison. We can't help it."

"Couldn't you swing things so a Grand Jury would report on it?"

"What's the use? And what has Ludlow Street got to do with Auburn, where our pardoned friend has been?"

"Only this: the rich men in Ludlow Street are living as if they were in a hotel, but at Auburn, this fellow says, they've got a cell with pointed nails in the floor so a prisoner sent to it for bad behavior can't sit down or sleep. They've—— Oh, I can't go into it all now; but the women are treated as bad as the men; the thing must be worse than the Black Hole of Calcutta, and all the while the State's paying for the warden's horses and carriages."

Leighton showed some interest, but later, when Luke returned to the subject, he said there was nothing to be done: the political situation would not just then permit it.

Came the unmasking of one of the new partisans of reform. This man, a

Simon Kaindiac, was an inspector in the New York post-office. Federal detectives arrested him and showed him to have made a fortune by extortion from swindling concerns that were using the United States mails to entrap their victims.

"I know, I know!" cried Leighton peevishly when Uhler brought him the news in Luke's presence. "But how am I to blame for that? All the papers will be at me for it. As if I were responsible for the business morals of every man that happened to think as I do about the political ethics of the party!" He turned to Luke. "What's on *your* mind, Huber?"

Luke said that what was on his mind was this: the office had that morning received the report of investigators who pointed out that, since the success of the cocaine raids, heroin had taken the place of the proscribed drug.

"Well," said Leighton, "I'm sorry, but the laws governing the sale of heroin aren't the same as those governing the sale of cocaine, and, until they are, you'll find you can't successfully prosecute under them."

"We might get at the thing another way," Luke protested. His growing love for Betty had given him new views on some old subjects. "They say the girls in the houses——"

Leighton swung his feet to the floor. His tired face worked irritably.

"Now, don't begin on them," he commanded. "They're the police's affair, anyhow. They've always existed and always will. They simply adapt themselves to whatever form of society happens to exist. No really effective method of regulation, let alone suppression, has ever been devised or ever will be. Gee whiz, young man, do you know what you'll get up against if you tackle this subject? For four thousand years the high-brows have been trying to make it unpopular, and they haven't succeeded yet."

It was much the same when Luke and O'Mara came across the trail of corruption among the police. They found one man who would make affidavit to the fact that patrolmen had paid him to instigate burglaries in order that the patrolmen might make arrests and win promotion. This man had friends among the keepers of illegal resorts who would swear to paying tribute to police captains. He introduced the two lawyers to a collector who said that $2,400,000 were yearly paid in this way, that he himself was the go-between for a police lieutenant, securing from fifty to five hundred dollars a month each from those who bought protection. No discretion seemed to be used, and he showed checks to corroborate his story.

"Do you think you could do anything on such evidence?" sneered Leighton. "You couldn't send a yellow dog to jail on it. This fellow confesses he's a crook himself. Start an agitation to force the Police Commissioner to resign as unfit? Not much! If he resigned, 'unfit' would mean 'guilty.' His crowd's in the saddle, and if you want to unhorse him, you've got to unhorse them."

He walked up and down the floor.

"The trouble with us is we don't fight the devil with fire," he said; "and the trouble with the whole system is too many laws. There are too many lawyers at Albany and Washington; they know all about law and nothing about Man, so when the public conscience turns over and whines in its sleep, these fellows think they can cure it of what ails it by passing a few more laws. They pass a law against dance-halls, and they breed brothels. That's the way it goes all down the line. They pass a lot of such laws and then say: 'Now, let the District-Attorney do the rest.' I wish they had my job for one day! People have got to understand that other people don't indulge their tastes out of mere love of law-breaking."

He took another turn of the room.

"And if we're going to whip political gangs," he said, "we must have a political gang of our own, and one better than the one we happen to be fighting. There's Tim Heney over on the East Side. He may be as crooked as God makes them, but when people give him votes, he gives them coal in winter and picnics in summer. He goes to their funerals and their weddings, and he knows more about what the people of this country want than Thomas Jefferson would have known if he'd lived to be a hundred. And what's more, he can do what none of your statesmen ever can do: he can keep them quiet. Do you wonder? Think what he does for them. Do you wonder they stick to him?"

§5. Luke began to believe that Forbes was right: There was need of a new party. Daily his lethargy increased; daily he lived more in his love for Betty and in the dreams that emerged less and less upon the plane of his actual life.

His contact with the bar did not raise either it or the bench in his estimation. In a file of documents at his office, the legacy of a former administration, he came across vouchers for sums aggregating $3,000 paid by a local railway to witnesses who had sworn against a lawyer indicted for subornation of perjury in pressing a damage-case against the company, and among these was one for $500 paid to the referee that signed the report. He heard of a rural courthouse that by night became a gambling-house conducted by court officers; there was a judge on the Pacific Slope who sold a patent, the idea for which he stole from the plaintiff in a patent case in his own court; the District-Attorney of Doncaster County, in Pennsylvania, told Luke that only the statute of limitations saved from jail three associate judges of that county who had accepted bribes in the granting of liquor licenses, and that a judge in a nearby county had accepted $3,500 toward his campaign fund from brewing companies whose retailers must apply to him for licenses. It seemed that of two of the most prominent judges of the higher court in New York, one was chosen directly through the efforts of Tim Heney,

and the other was the brother of the principal member of a trust which had cases in his court. A judge of a Federal Court was forced from the bench because of his financial interests in a company with which he had to deal in his judicial capacity, and a New Jersey judge, a friend of Leighton, was said to be hearing suits to which a certain railway was a party and then, during vacations, appearing in a neighboring county court as a lawyer retained by the same company.

The follies of the law appeared to be more numerous than its faults. One judicial decision enjoined members of a labor union from the peaceable persuasion from work of individuals not under agreement to work for the corporation in the mills of which a strike was in progress. A Philadelphia jurist denied the right of free speech to aliens. In Illinois, Smith appealed from a conviction for swindling Brown, and the Supreme Court upheld him because the indictment, which read that Smith "did unlawfully and feloniously obtain from Brown his money," was indefinite and misleading: the learned court held that the pronoun "his" might refer to either party, and that the Grand Jury might simply have been indicating its belief that Brown obtained his own money unlawfully.

Worse miscarriages of justice were, of course, common, even in Leighton's office, and sentences were often out of all proportion to the crimes that incurred them. The editor of a radical paper in Paterson was given an indeterminate term in prison of not less than one year and not more than fifteen years for criticising the Paterson police. The larger the scope of a swindler's transactions, the better his chances of immunity. One minor case long remained in Luke's memory. A clerk in a trust company disappeared with $25,000, and a fugitive bill of indictment was returned against him; the runaway opened negotiations with his former employers by means of advertisements in the Paris newspapers and then used his wife as an intermediary until the trust company promised to have the District-Attorney submit the indictment for a verdict of not guilty if the clerk would return with the $15,000 still in his hands; the careful fugitive hid $7,500 in Germany, and returned with the rest; he refused to tell the hiding-place until he was safe; the company found the District-Attorney willing to follow its suggestion; the verdict of Not Guilty was accordingly recorded, and the clerk, free from further harm, made over to the company the remaining $7,500 that he had left in Europe as an anchor to windward.

There was probably no more laxity among lawyers than among men of other professions, but to Luke's mind it seemed imperative that traders in justice should be especially just. He came across countless cases of pettifogging among shyster practitioners, and nearly as many suspicious actions in the ranks of their cleverer and, therefore, more successful and eminent brethren.

Ever seeking remedies, he once drew up a list of such as he found. He wanted more publicity and freedom of criticism; measures to curb the bench's

power to declare laws unconstitutional, to force it to give fuller reasons in support of its decisions; he wanted devices to end "the law's delays," simplified procedure and judges who were closer to the people and farther from the corporations; he thought the courts of appeal ought to be forced to decide every question in every case appealed to them; and he advocated but one appeal in civil actions together with the right of recall both in regard to judges and to their decisions.

§6. He had come to a point where he doubted, not it is true Leighton's intentions, but his ability to achieve them. Those were the days when the Progressive Party was being formed, and Luke for some time considered it as a hopeful sign. Forbes enlisted in the ranks of the new organization and championed it wherever he went, not least among the workers in his factory. Luke had joined a club of young men who had for the most part inherited their money and were unanimous for the new movement; it was time, they said, that politics should be taken out of the hands of the muckers, and they came near to convincing Luke until, in a moment of enthusiasm, he happened upon secrets which showed him that the men in power in this party were not different from the men that had spoiled Leighton's plan for the purification of the Republican Party from within. From a source he could not doubt, he heard that even George Hallett had talked of offering his support "because these old crowds are too greedy; they're chargin' us too much; it's got to be highway robbery that big business has to submit to, and I'm tired of it."

For some time Luke lost faith in the possibility of any cure. There was talk of a movement to fuse the reform voters of all parties, but it left him cold. He had been a successful prosecutor, and his name was familiar to newspaper readers; his advocacy of Leighton had won him a prominence, even a certain following, among the public; but the irony of life was too much for him; he had, at this period, an eye too appreciative of the odds against him. He saw Betty two or three times a week, took her motoring and to the theaters, but he refrained from showing her that he loved her, because he saw no chance of offering her himself as a man worth while. The lethargy of his manner became more marked. He began to bear the outward tokens of one that does not care. To this he had come after four years in New York.

CHAPTER V

§1. The hideous North Bridge disaster occurred on a spring morning during the last year of Leighton's first term in office. The District-Attorney, whose habitual disparagement of his post did not dull his desire to retain it, was busy planning for re-election, and the work of his staff, labor how they would, was congested. The assistants were straining to make a record of convictions with which their chief might go before the electors in the autumn, and were giving to participation in political councils every half-hour that they dared spare from their legal tasks; they were hard driven and worn to the nerves; yet the news of the wreck of the Manhattan & Niagara Railway, immediately within the city's limits, burst through doors that had been opened only to men with power or appointments and swept, even from the collective mind of the corps, the bulking thought of jury lists and ballots.

The Manhattan and Niagara had entered New York only a few years before, with a line that tapped fresh territory. Along this line real-estate operators forthwith plotted ten or a dozen towns, and white-and-yellow suburbs leaped up like mushrooms. They were peopled by clerks and small businessmen that came into the city over the M. & N. every morning and returned home by the same route each evening.

From the opening of the new line, complaints had been common: it was said that the service was inadequate, that the cars and other rolling-stock were largely second-hand material purchased from the older New York & New Jersey Railroad; that the rails were the cheapest obtainable, the ties bought from an abandoned branch line near Buffalo. One serious wreck had preceded that at the North Bridge, but had not been followed by the improvements the company had promised. The patrons had protested with all the vigor Americans exhibit when they feel that a public-service corporation is cheating them, and had stopped as far on the discreet side of action as protesting Americans usually stop: the M. & N.'s parsimony became grist for the mill of the humorous weeklies and produced no further reaction. This morning, a train crowded with men going to their offices plunged through a bridge crossing an uptown street: a hundred passengers were wounded and twenty-five killed.

The earliest editions of the evening papers shrieked the news, and special editions rushed from the presses. In most of them the M. & N. had taken care to be a heavy advertiser, but here was an event so clearly due to the railway's known policy that no paper could belittle the culpability of the management: the bridge had been recently examined and pronounced safe by state inspectors, yet all reports agreed that it was constructed of the very lightest material, and the earliest evidence showed that a rail had flattened and thrown the train. To persons having a fair knowledge of current finance, it was known that the M. & N. was controlled by the group of capitalists who were actively at the management

of the nominally rival N. Y. & N. J.

Luke sent his office-boy to buy him the first edition that he heard called beneath his window. It placed the dead at a hundred and the injured at thrice that figure, and when Huber's eyes caught the obscure paragraph that hinted at the real ownership of the road, his cheeks, now so generally pale, reddened, and the hand that held the paper trembled. Something of his old indignation and purpose woke in him. He ordered the boy to bring him a copy of each fresh edition as it appeared on the street, and though the lists of victims shrank to their true number, the outstanding fact of the owners' guilt remained.

Leighton passed through Luke's room on his return from luncheon. His face was drawn with the long worry of his campaign; he had been eating with two politicians and shaping plans while he bolted food.

"Begins to look as if we can get the indorsement of the anti-Tammany Democrats," he said as he hurried by. "I've just had a talk with Seeley and Ellison. They're coming here at three o'clock."

Luke held up his paper.

"This is an awful thing," he said.

"What?" asked Leighton. He passed beside Luke's desk. "Oh, the North Bridge wreck? Yes, isn't it? When Ellison and Seeley come, don't let anybody butt in on me."

"You know who are really the responsible crowd in the M. & N.?" Luke persisted. His manner was the sleepy manner that had grown upon him for the past twelvemonth, but his eyes were keen.

"Yes," said Leighton absently. He ran his fingers through his always disordered hair. "Yes I know, but we couldn't prove it." He looked at his watch. "Don't forget," he concluded, "you're to head off anybody that comes after three o'clock, and if you're busy, then turn them over to one of the other fellows."

§2. At half-past four Luke's office-boy announced James T. Rollins.

Luke looked up heavily from the latest edition of the *Evening World*.

"Who's James T. Rollins?" he inquired.

The boy did not know. "But he looks like he owned the Stock Exchange," he said. "Wanted the Boss: I told him he was busy."

Luke wearily laid aside his paper.

"Very well, bring him in."

The boy went out and straightway reopened the door to admit the visitor.

Dressed in a russet brown, Rollins was short and stout; his eyebrows were bushy, and he made an effort to keep his thick lips drawn in a firm line. He so much resembled the pictures of the man just then predominant in Luke's mind that the assistant District-Attorney was startled.

"Mr. Rollins?"

The visitor tried to speak, but seemed to be unable to accomplish articulation. He nodded. He stood erect in the attitude of one accustomed to receive orders, and his right hand tapped his stiff hat against his thigh.

Luke indicated a chair beside his desk.

"Sit down."

Rollins complied. He sat far forward in the chair, as if expecting to be ordered out of it at the next moment. Both hands now clutched the brim of his hat, which he held between his fat, outspread knees.

"You wanted to see Mr. Leighton?" inquired Luke.

Rollins coughed.

"Yes, sir."

"I'm sorry." Luke was accustomed to callers of the hesitant sort: he wished that this one would go and leave him alone with the new idea that was growing in his brain; but Leighton, like the good politician that he was, had always given strict orders that every caller should be well received. "I'm afraid Mr. Leighton's very busy now. He has some most important business in hand."

Rollins made an effort toward dignity; his words succeeded, but his manner of uttering them failed:

"My business is important, too."

"And immediate?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then perhaps I can attend to it for you."

Rollins shook his head.

"I've got to see the District-Attorney."

"But I am his assistant."

"Yes, sir, I know. But this is confidential."

Luke began to lose patience.

"Well," he said, "as I told you, I'm sorry, but you can't see him."

In spite of Leighton's orders and his own customary obedience to them, Luke's voice had become sharp. It was just then only the sharpness of an underling; but, because Rollins himself was an underling, the visitor resented it, and this resentment gave him the courage he wanted. He stood up, and he bore himself with an erectness which had a fresh character.

"It's him that will be sorry," he said. "I came here to give him information that'd re-elect him."

Notwithstanding the man's new attitude, Luke thought he scented the crank. All sorts of cranks infested the District-Attorney's office, and every sort was certain it could purge the city or re-elect Leighton. Luke lost his temper. He spoke with the drawl with which he commonly spoke, but his tone was bitter. His tongue laid hold of the uppermost thought in his head.

"I suppose," he said, "you've come here to place the blame for the North Bridge wreck?"

The breath caught in Rollins's throat.

"How did you know?" he demanded.

It was not a crank that asked that question: it was a sane man badly startled. Luke recognized the distinction and instantly resolved to push the advantage he had fortuitously gained. He rose, smiling slowly.

"You've told me you knew I was one of the assistant district-attorneys of New York," he drawled. "I would advise you to act on the knowledge, Mr. Rollins, and not to lose any time about it."

"I——" began Rollins; but bluster came to the aid of his timidity. "No," he said, "I've got to see Mr. Leighton."

Luke had no idea who his visitor was or what information he might possess, but he was now certain that worth-while information was in Rollins's possession. Without further fencing, the lawyer, therefore, resorted to an old stratagem that he had learned when he first entered the District-Attorney's office: on the bare chance that the evidence might be documentary and within reach, he took a quick stride towards Rollins, raising his right hand as if to seize him. At once the right hand of Rollins shot upward and stopped protectingly over his breast.

"Now then," said Luke, "hand me those papers that you've got in your breast-pocket."

"No," said Rollins; "no; they're for Mr. Leighton."

"Hand them over.'"

"They're mine."

"If you don't hand them over," said Luke lazily, "I shall take them."

"You've got no right to!"

"You'd better save yourself trouble, Mr. Rollins."

"I won't!"

From under his lazy lids, Luke saw that the man was only frightened. With a flash of inspiration, the lawyer guessed something of the truth. This fellow was probably a clerk in the M. & N. offices.

"You won't be arrested for robbing the office-files, if that's what you're scared about," he said; "and you won't be told on and discharged."

Rollins was visibly relieved.

"You give me your word, Mr. Huber?"

"I do. Come on now: let's see what you've got."

"And—I'm not a rich man, Mr. Huber."

Luke's face showed his disgust.

"I shan't pay you a cent," he said; "but I daresay Leighton won't mind paying. Only even he won't buy a pig in a poke. Give me those papers. If they're

worth anything, I'll take you into the District-Attorney's room right away—or, if there's somebody in there, I'll have him out here."

Rollins realized that Luke meant what he said. He believed, moreover, that his inquisitor was merely cautious.

"All right," he agreed, though with some reluctance. "This is a letter from my employer to a man that always had to return such letters after he's read them. The other letter is the letter from the rail manufacturers that's referred to in the first one. I got them both by——"

"I can guess how," said Luke.

He put out his hand and into it Rollins placed two sheets of paper, that were headed on top simply by an embossed Wall Street address and dated almost five years before.

Luke read:

"***Confidential***. "**MR. ROBERT M. DOHAN**, "**Delaware Avenue**, "Buffalo, N. Y.

"DEAR MR. DOHAN:

"I understand that the bill of which you have spoken to me will be passed and become a law to-day. I have just seen Messrs. Hallett and Rivington and have secured their agreement to the plan outlined in my personal conversation with you last week. In view of the favors that you have done me in the past, I think it fair to tell you, *for your own use only*, that my friends have decided that they and I ought to do what you thought they might decide, viz.: unload at the end of five years. Considering your contemplated resignation next year, this will not affect you, except favorably in case you care to manipulate your own holdings in accordance with this news.

"I note what you say about the estimate submitted by the construction-department; also the letter of the steel-rail manufacturers which you inclosed, in which they say that the grade I suggested might not wear well. I think their use of the word 'dangerous' is absurdly exaggerated. We have used this grade on several of our roads and feel sure from long experience that, with proper repair-gangs, it will wear for five years as well as the best.

"My desire and the desire of my associates is to protect the interests of the stockholders. With that in mind, I should state, what you have probably already gathered, that we feel that the new line must be built and operated with all possible economy."

The signature was the signature that Luke expected.

"Those rails," said Rollins, "weren't replaced. Dohan resigned, and these letters have been in our office ever since. The crowd was planning to unload in November."

"Yes," said Luke dryly. His face was immobile and his voice calm, but his heart seemed to beat against his ribs, demanding freedom. "Come on in here to Mr. Leighton's office."

§3. He had forgotten Seeley and Ellison, but they were already gone, and Leighton was alone. Apparently the conference had been satisfactory, for the District-Attorney's face was a little less careworn.

"Mr. Leighton," said Luke, closing the door, "this man"—he indicated Rollins by a lazy movement of his hand—"is a secretary in the employ of the person to whom these letters belong—or belonged." He held out the letters that Rollins had given him.

Leighton's face clouded.

"Office business? I thought I told you I had some personal matters to think over."

Luke choked an impulse of resentment.

"If you'll look at these letters," he said, "I believe you'll find they apply to—both sorts of duties."

Leighton took the papers with a gesture of annoyance, but when he saw the signature to the more important of them, his eyes shone, and he looked up quickly.

"Where did you get these?" He flung the question at Rollins.

The informer had been standing behind Luke, as if seeking his shelter. His breath came heavily.

"I found them in the office-files," he mumbled.

"He stole them," said Luke quietly.

"Oh, Mr. Huber, if you're going to talk like that——"

"He stole them," Luke pursued—"or so he says. The only question in my mind is: are they genuine?"

Rollins showed signs of resenting this suggestion more keenly than the declaration that he was a thief. Leighton, however, interrupted: he was squinting at the letter that Luke had read in full.

"No," he said, "this is real enough. I know the signature."

"You know it?" Luke was surprised.

"Yes, yes." Leighton read the letter through; then turned upon Rollins with a resumption of his cross-examining manner. "How much d'you want for these?"

Rollins beat his hat upon his thigh.

"Well," he said, "they ought to be worth a good deal to you, Mr. Leighton."

"I'll give you five hundred dollars."

"Mr. Leighton!" Rollins was deprecating. "Five hundred dollars!"

"What do you want, then? Speak up."

"Five thousand would be nearer value, Mr. Leighton."

Luke turned away. This was the part of the business that he loathed.

"I'll give you two thousand and not a cent more," said Leighton.

Rollins thought himself now in a commanding position.

"I can't consider that," he said with the nearest approach to firmness he had yet shown.

"All right," said Leighton. "Huber!" He handed the letters to Luke. "Put these in your safe while I telephone this fellow's employer."

"Mr. Leighton!" Rollins bounded forward. His fat face worked with rage, disappointment, and fear. "You wouldn't do that. This is robbery. It's blackmail! For God's sake, Mr. Leighton——"

"Two thousand dollars," said Leighton.

"But think a minute, Mr. Leighton! I've been in my job for seven years—worked up to it from office-boy. I could any time have sold tips along the street for twice that money, and yet this is the first time I've ever—ever——"

"Ever double-crossed your boss. Well, why'd you do it?"

"I don't know. It was because this wreck is so awful."

"And what else?"

"Nothing else."

Leighton thrust a forefinger into the informer's face.

"*What else?*"

Rollins jumped back.

"Well, he—he didn't raise my pay. I've got a big family, and there's a mortgage on my little house in Roseville, and a man in my position has to live well, or people'd talk."

Leighton relaxed. He swung back in his chair and cocked his feet on the desk.

"I'll make it two thousand five hundred for your family's sake. That's my last word."

Luke, who had again turned his back on the hagglers, the letters safely buttoned in an inside pocket of his coat, wondered how his chief could afford such an outlay.

"Is that really the best you can do?" whined Rollins.

"It is the best I *will* do," said Leighton. Without lowering his feet, he pulled toward him the telephone, which was attached to his desk by an arm that could be lengthened or shortened at the user's will. "Now, then, your boss has gone home long ago; but I can get him at his house; do you want to lose your job or make this money?"

Rollins surrendered.

"I guess I'll have to take your price," he said. "But it's almost a charity I'm doing."

"Right!" Leighton released the telephone, quickly swung his legs from the desk and sat straight.

"And you'll promise nobody'll ever know where you got these letters?"

"Certainly."

Rollins looked toward Luke's significant back.

"And Mr. Huber, too?"

Luke turned.

"I've already promised you that," he said.

Leighton smiled faintly as he said to Luke:

"I guess you don't happen to have two thousand five hundred in loose change about you, do you, Huber?"

"No," said Luke. He saw nothing humorous anywhere in the situation.

"Well, this is no affair for checks, and my bank's uptown," Leighton continued. "I don't suppose," he said to Rollins, "you would care to give credit, my dear sir?"

Rollins could smile, if Luke could not. He shook his head.

"My bank," said Luke, anxious to end the scene, "is just around the corner. It's closed, but the clerks will still be there. They know me. I can get them to let me in the side door, and I know they'll do me a favor. I've got just about that much on deposit." He looked at Leighton. "Shall I take Rollins along?"

"Rollins? Yes." Leighton's good-humor seemed to have returned to stay. "Then hurry back here—alone. I'll want to talk this thing over with you."

§4. Luke paid and dismissed Rollins. Returning, he found Leighton walking rapidly up and down his office.

"Shut the door," said the District-Attorney. His face was flushed; he spoke quickly.

Luke shut the door.

Leighton came forward and brought his hand down on Luke's shoulder with a resounding smack.

"Do you know what this means?" he cried. His mouth was wide with laughter; the whole man exulted. "This re-elects me! Nothing can keep us out now, Huber—not a thing on God's green footstool. All we've got to do is use these letters and then sit back and fold our arms and attend to office business. Politics? These two pieces of paper will play all the politics we need, and more besides. I could shout, Huber; I could sing a regular Song of Deborah. What about Mr. Timothy Heney, *now*? And his Tammany? Gone the way of Sisera, my boy. Tim

Heney! 'At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down; at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead!'"

Luke's old enthusiasm was rekindled. He thought that he had been misjudging Leighton. Of course the man had been discouraged: he had never before been able to seize an efficient weapon with which to shatter the forces of wrong; even at this time it was only reasonable that his first thought should be of his immediate political opponents; but the weapon was put into his hand at last, the blow would be given against both Tammany and Wall Street; it would be the blow that Luke had hoped for when he read the first accounts of the North Bridge wreck.

"There must be a special Grand Jury to investigate the disaster," said Luke, his words falling over one another much as Leighton's had done. "We must keep the letters dark till it's in session, and then produce them. We can give them to the papers right afterward. It will be jail for the lot of them. Big as they are, it'll be that. It'll be the end of the whole crowd!"

Leighton drew away. His face changed. His entire attitude altered.

"What are you talking about?" he asked dryly.

"Why"—Luke was amazed—"about these letters, of course."

"Well, do you think I'm green enough to waste them on a jury? Not much!"

Luke began to comprehend. He felt unsteady. He was standing close to Leighton's desk, and he put out a hand and gripped the edge of its top shelf.

"Not give them to the jury?" But perhaps he was wrong. Of course he was wrong. "Oh, I see," he said; "maybe it's better not to risk any more lives by waiting. You're going to force this crowd to put down a decent road-bed? Only if you do that—— Well, it's fine of you, but you'll not be any better off politically."

Leighton turned his swivel-chair and sat down in it. His manner became that of an employer trying to be calm and to instill reason into an annoying employee.

"Young man," said he, "just you listen to me for about two minutes. Those fellows do control this road, but they didn't operate it. In spite of Rollins's blessed letters, you can't absolutely say they operate it. But what they do operate, when they want to, are the politics of this city, and if they tell Tammany, yes, or me, to hold off and let an election go the way they want it, why, hold off Tammany or anybody else has to. Nobody could win if they said 'No.' Now, then"—Leighton punctuated his words with the rise and fall of an index finger—"they're not actually morally responsible for the conduct of the M. & N., but they'll know the publication of these letters would make the public think they were. They'll know the publication would wreck the road they're still interested in, smash all their other stocks and depreciate all their other interests, start a panic that might swamp even them, and maybe begin a public row that would send them close to jail,

on general principles, legal evidence or no legal evidence. To stop that, they'd be willing to have me elected, which they weren't yet quite certain about being to-day. I'll go to them quietly, and then I'll surrender these letters, when they've kept their part of the bargain I'll make. And don't you worry about loss of life. That engineer was probably green or drunk, or the signal man got rattled. You'll see the coroner's jury says so. But, anyhow, once I'm safely re-elected, I'll take care the M. & N. is better regulated than it has been. There's no use in a row: a little moral suasion will do the trick."

He tossed back, and clasped his hands behind his head.

The explanation had been too long: it was long enough to allow Luke to master the shock of what it implied. He saw his last illusions concerning Leighton fall under the impact of Leighton's own words. He was aghast. He was ashamed of his master; he was ashamed of himself for ever having served such a master. But he was not crushed. As his chief proceeded, Luke's soul rose through indignation to red revolt. By the time that Leighton ceased speaking, Luke, except for two spots of crimson on his cheeks, was captain of his rage. He leaned against the desk-side indolently, his eyelids lowered, and when he replied it was with an indifferent drawl.

"It doesn't much matter whether the engineer was drunk or the signal man rattled," he said: "the rail flattened, and the bridge fell. The rail was drunk and the bridge was rattled."

Leighton shook himself peevishly.

"You're trying to be humorous," he said.

"No; oh, no," said Luke gently. "What I'm getting at is, it seems to me the men who directly controlled this road were directly responsible for its operation. I mean that the men who authorized that letter, and insisted on the policy it lays down, are guilty. It strikes me they ought to be either reformed or punished."

"Oh, hell!" said Leighton. Heretofore, Luke had always appeared to be on his side, so that the District-Attorney did not know the meaning of his assistant's outward calm. "Those letters aren't legal evidence enough."

"I think they are, Leighton. Besides, I think there are times when moral evidence goes ahead of legal evidence, and ought to—and I think this is one of those times."

"Well," said Leighton, "I don't. So that ends it."

"Of course," Luke calmly pursued, "if you could make these fellows re-lay the road, it might be worth while to do no more than scare them, at least if you don't consider the political ethics and consider only the immediate protection of life."

"I told you I'd take care of the regulation of the road as soon as I was re-elected."

"Ye-es. But could you?"

"Certainly I could."

"I should say that once they'd got their letters back, *you'd* be in *their* power."

Leighton got to his feet. He was angry. He faced Luke, who did not shift his lazy pose.

"Look here," he said, "we've been friends, and you've done good work for me, especially this afternoon——"

"Thanks," said Luke.

"But it looks as if the time had come when you'd better understand who's the head of this office."

"You are," Luke assured his chief; and then added: "I'm glad to say."

"Well, then, Huber, I've got to tell you that if you don't act accordingly, we must part company."

Luke raised his listless eyes.

"You've quite made up your mind to do this thing, Leighton?"

"Let you go? Not if you'll only be reasonable."

"I mean this thing about the letters."

"Yes."

"You're going to make use of these fellows' money-power in politics?"

"It's already in politics. It always has been."

"But you are going to try to use it for yourself?"

"Yes, I am. It's my own business."

"Is it? That money is blood-money, Leighton."

"You're a fool!"

"I know I am. But it's you that I'm worried about. You're quite determined?"

"*Absolutely.*"

Luke shrugged his shoulders. He began to move slowly toward the door.

"Here!" said Leighton sharply. "Where're you going?"

Luke scarcely looked at him.

"I'm going to write my resignation."

Leighton was startled, but he tried not to show it.

"Very well," he said, "write it. But don't be too fast: you may hand over those letters first."

"Letters?" Luke seemed never to have heard the word before. "What letters?"

"Why do you try so hard to be an ass, Huber?" The District-Attorney extended his hand for the papers that he had given Luke during the interview with Rollins. "Drop all this resignation rot—*My* letters, of course."

Luke's face met Leighton's fairly.

"The only letters I have about me," he said with quiet distinctness, "are two that are my property. I bought them with the last two thousand five hundred dollars of my own money."

As the words came home to him, Leighton's face grew purple. His brows met in a knot. At his temples two veins pulsed visibly.

"What's that?" he cried with a straining throat. "What's that? You—— Give them here this minute; they're mine! They're mine. They're mine! You know damned well they're mine!"

He had not counted on this. The unexpected disappointment tossed him from the summit of the hopes to which, that afternoon, he had been so unexpectedly lifted. He made a blind dash at Huber.

Luke's two hands caught both of Leighton's wrists. By the exertion of a superior strength that scarcely showed itself, the assistant forced down the master's arms and held them at his flanks.

"They are my letters," said Luke.

"Let go!" Leighton wrenched at the imprisoning grip; but he wrenched without effect. "Let me go!"

"Certainly," said Luke. He freed the panting man. "I merely wanted to protect myself and show you it wouldn't help you to use force."

Leighton, his face still contorted, tried another tone.

"It isn't fair of you, Huber. I'm sorry I went at you that way; but you know well enough those letters belong to me."

"They belong," said Luke, "to the man that can make the better use of them."

"What use can *you* make?"

"A better one than you say you will."

"They were brought here for me."

"By a thief."

"Well, you're not going to restore them to their owner, are you?"

"Perhaps."

"What?" Leighton laughed cynically. "So *that's* what your moral tone's for, is it?"

"Perhaps."

"Oh, come on, Huber, I didn't mean that. Anyhow, you know, I only asked you to lend me the money."

"The letters," said Luke again, "belong to the man that can make the better use of them."

"I'll do the right thing by you, Huber, if you give them back to me."

"Thank you. The real owner of the letters can do more—when I'm for sale."

Leighton bent forward and began to whisper.

"I'll tell you what I'll do for you politically," he began. "I'll——"

"No thank you," said Luke.

"Well, then,"—Leighton, his face now white from fear of loss, appeared to capitulate-"give them back and I'll use them the way you want them used."

The two men's eyes probed one another.

"I don't believe you," said Luke.

It was final, and it drove Leighton back to his purple rage.

"I'll ruin you!" he threatened. "And they'll ruin you. Go ahead and resign. Resign? You can't. You're fired! Do you hear that? You're fired! Now go and try to do something. You can't do a thing but sell those letters to the people they were stolen from. If you try that, I'll show you up, and if you try anything else with those people, they'll bury you so deep nobody ever can dig down far enough to find you. Do you know who you're up against when you buck that crowd? They won't let you walk the same earth with them! Go on. You'll be killed, and I'll be damned glad of it. Fight them, will you? You might as well draw a gun on God Almighty! Now, then, get out of here. Get out, or I'll have you kicked out!"

CHAPTER VI

To his office on the twentieth floor of a Wall Street skyscraper—that office with the mahogany table at its center and the engraving of George Washington between two windows—the master came at his usual time on the morning of the day following the North Bridge wreck. He was dressed neatly, as always, in a suit of russet brown. Breathing visibly, but noiselessly, he passed the resting ticker and walked to one of the windows overlooking the labyrinth. His near-sighted, beady eyes peered toward the web of streets below, on the cross-threads of which the black dots that were hurrying men and women bobbed like struggling flies.

The master rang for his secretary.

"Rollins," he said, "what's in the——" He stopped. He had not looked up, yet he asked: "What's the matter with you this morning?"

"Nothing," said Rollins. "I——" He coughed behind his hand. "I didn't sleep well last night."

"Take more exercise," said his master. "What's in the mail?"

"Thirty letters that need your personal attention, sir."

Nimbly the master ran them through his short and stumpy fingers, the tips of which were delicately rounded. He dictated his terse instructions. With the

daily routine again in motion, Rollins recaught his employer's calm.

"Simpson has the begging letters?"

"Yes, sir."

"I guess," said the master in his most commonplace tone, "there were more than the usual number of anonymous threats."

"Only ten or twelve more."

"Burn them."

"Yes, sir. I always do."

"And, Rollins, draw up a letter to the cancer hospital and tell the management I have decided to give them a special ward for fibroid tumor cases. Their lawyers may consult with Judge Stein; I gave him the details last evening. Bring me the letter for revision."

"Yes, sir."

The master proceeded through his customary schedule.

"Rollins," he said, when it was at last completed and the secretary had been recalled. "Mr. Hallett and Mr. Rivington will be here"—he consulted his watch—"in five minutes. We are on no account to be disturbed."

Hallett and Rivington came in, five minutes later. Hallett looked angry, and Rivington frightened. Though the hour was early, Hallett's white waistcoat, fresh every morning, showed wrinkles, and its wearer chewed hard at an unlighted cigar; there was a deep perpendicular line over his short, thick nose. Rivington, immaculate, pulled at his slightly gray mustache.

"Good-morning," said their host. His voice was as nearly cheerful as it was ever. "Sit down."

They took their places at the table, where there was a pad of scribbling paper and a freshly sharpened pencil before each. Their host sat at the head of the table, his hands flat upon the table-top, their fingers extended, his elbows pointing ceilingward.

Rivington began at the midst of what worried him.

"It's a terrible thing!" he groaned. "Think of it; twenty-five people—and the women too!"

Hallett's comment was almost a bark.

"As soon as the coroner's jury lets 'em down easy," he said, "we've got to see that everybody's fired, from the division-superintendent to the president of the road; that's what we've got to do. There's one kind of carelessness that's not much better than murder."

"Twenty-five people!" repeated Rivington. The numbers seemed to hypnotize him; he made a futile gesture. "And the morning papers—— Their tone—— I don't like it."

The man at the head of the table watched them both, but said nothing.

"Oh, the newspapers never worry me," said Hallett. "We can stop all but one or two, and nobody cares what they say, anyhow. They've been talkin' for years. They've got to fill their columns."

"Then there's the Board meeting," said Rivington. "Next Thursday—— I don't see—— Really I don't."

"The Board of Directors of the M. & N.'s all right," Hallett reassured him.

"Perhaps. But then, too, there is this new reform element in town. Talk of a fusion movement: a fourth candidate for District-Attorney—— They will be only too eager to get hold of something, and this terrible accident—— It will give them just what they want."

"They can't elect."

"I am not so sure. The people—they aren't what they used to be. Something—I don't know what—has taken possession of them."

Hallett bobbed assent to that.

"Yes," he said, "nowadays as soon as a man gets a vote he stops minding his own business. But we've still got our grip on the wires."

"They may break." Rivington's fingers returned to their tugging at his mustache. "The wires, I mean. It's ugly. Twenty-five dead and a hundred hurt——"

"*We* didn't hurt 'em."

Rivington looked toward the man at the head of the table, but he sat crouched and silent.

"No," said Rivington; "but——" His sentence ended in a helpless waving of the hand.

"Then what are you worryin' about?" Hallett challenged. "We were only tryin' to keep up dividends. We had to choose between a little risk and protecting the stockholders. Lots of the stockholders are widows and orphans. Besides, it wasn't a real risk; it was a recognized, legitimate business risk. Lots of other roads do it right along. Our own roads do."

"That bridge——" said Rivington.

"The state inspectors passed it a month ago. And they passed the rails, too. It's all up to them."

In his turn, Hallett glanced at the man at the head of the table. He saw the man's hairy hands, fat and white against the mahogany, begin to move as they always began to move before he made a verbal attack upon conversation; but the man did not speak.

"I know," Rivington was saying, "but with the four candidates for the district-attorneyship all looking for vote-getting material——"

"Buy 'em," said Hallett.

"Four?"

"Who's the fourth?"

"They haven't chosen him yet; but——"

"Buy 'em," repeated Hallett.

"Out of the four there might be one we couldn't——"

"Anybody can buy anybody. There are more ways than one. Anyhow, we're not even directors."

"We own the road. Practically——"

"Nobody knows that."

"It seems to me——"

"They don't!" Hallett spat to the floor a bit of tobacco that, bitten from the end of his cigar, had clung to his lips. "They only think they do. It'd be the hardest thing in the world to prove that was ever tried."

"Would it?" Rivington questioned. "I really believe——"

The quick, cold voice of the third man flashed across their talk. It was as if he leaped at them.

"We may own the road," he said; "but we don't operate it. Not one of us has officially any administrative power in the matter of its operation. You gentlemen have forgotten that." He smiled: his teeth were pointed.

"Still," said Rivington, "if the fusion movement——"

He stopped there, not because of his habit of speaking in tangents, but because the door opened, and an old man timidly paused at its threshold.

The master of the office turned his head slowly.

"Simpson?" he said.

"Yes, sir," said the man at the door.

"What does this mean? Where's Rollins?"

"He was using my room to compose that letter about the hospital, and so I took his place."

"Didn't he tell you we were not to be disturbed?"

"Yes, sir; but this man"—Simpson held out an envelope—"got by everybody. He told me you would see him at once if you only received his message."

The man at the head of the table reached for the envelope. He read a card that it had contained.

"Show him in," he said.

He waited until Simpson had left to obey. Then, without wasting a glance on his associates, he explained:

"This is the card of a man called Luke Huber, Assistant District-Attorney. He's written on it: 'Five minutes in regard to the North Bridge wreck and your letters about it.'"

"Letters?" said Hallett. "What letters?"

As he replied, the strong jaw of the man at the head of the table worked as if he were chewing.

"That's what I mean to find out."

"Here? Now?" Rivington gasped.

The man addressed nodded. When a nod could save words, he saved words.

"Is that the careful thing?" asked Hallett.

"I'll bet his card's a bluff and he never expected to get in at all."

"That is precisely why I am having him in."

"Mr. Huber," announced Simpson.

Huber was still a young man. He was so young, and his youth was so ostentatious, that he immediately courted the rebuke once administered to Pitt. Moreover, he seemed to lack energy. He was thin; his face, though pleasant, was white. The lids dropped wearily over eyes that were at first veiled from the three men who looked up, but did not rise at his entrance. His mouth, the lips of which were only a pale pink, might have appeared firm, but would certainly have given the impression of being tired of firmness, and, when he bowed gravely to his host, his bristling head inclined itself so slowly and so slightly that the effort of the inclination, whether mental or physical, was insultingly apparent.

There was no form of presentation. Instead, there was a pause that only Huber seemed not to notice. Rivington drummed on the table with his long fingers. Hallett chewed his cigar. The other man smiled so enigmatically that it was impossible to say whether he intended to welcome or was amused by his friends' discomfiture.

"Bring a chair for Mr. Huber."

Simpson did as he was bid.

Luke deposited a carefully brushed hat on the table. Then he sank into the proffered chair opposite the leader of the trio and extended his long legs under the mahogany. His feet touched Rivington's, and Rivington jumped.

"Well?" asked the man at the head of the table.

Huber did not raise his heavy lids.

"I am glad I found you three together," he said slowly in a low and extremely gentle voice, "because you are the three men that control the railroad."

Hallett grinned a broad grin. This young fellow talked as if there were but one railroad in which the group was interested.

"What railroad?" he asked.

Luke slowly drew in his legs. He regarded the figure of the Persian rug that happened to be between the points of his patent-leather boots.

"The railroad," said he, "that I suppose you have been talking most about this morning."

"The Manhattan & Niagara?" blurted Rivington.

"We're not directors of that road," said Hallett hurriedly.

"No," agreed Rivington.

"No," said Luke, quite as heartily, "you aren't directors, but you direct it."

"We don't," snapped Rivington.

The man at the head of the table raised a soothing hand. He was still smiling.

"Come, come," he said, with an air of good-nature that his friends had seldom seen him assume during business hours. "We're all gentlemen, I'm sure. Anything that Mr. Huber wants to say to us in confidence——"

Huber interrupted.

"I never talk in confidence," said he; "and I don't want anybody to say anything to me that he would be ashamed to say in public."

His eyes were still hidden, and he still spoke slowly and gently; but the mere import of his words brought up short even the leader of the trio before him. That one's manner changed. He was curt.

"We are busy men, Mr. Huber," he said. "There are not many people in New York that we would have allowed to take up our time this morning. What do you want?"

Luke studied the figure on the rug.

"I want you three," he said in a tone not to be quickened, "to tear up every mile of rails on the M. & N. and replace those pieces of scrap-iron with rails of a grade fit to bear the traffic they have to carry."

Rivington's drumming fingers closed into his palms. Hallett let out an ugly laugh. Only the man at the head of the table, again changing his manner, equaled Luke in tranquillity.

"Really, Mr. Huber," he said pleasantly, "without admitting for a moment that we have the power to do what you suggest, don't you think your request is a rather large one?" He had the air of indulgently correcting a mistaken child.

The young man, gazing at the rug, shook his round head.

"No," he said, "not so large for you as its alternative."

"And that? It is——"

Rivington had put the question, but it was toward the man at the head of the table that Luke as he shot out his sudden reply, raised his eyes.

"Jail," said Luke.

"Do you mean to threaten us?" cried Rivington angrily.

Hallett laughed.

The man at the head of the table only smiled.

"Not at all," said Luke. "I am merely stating a fact. In coming here, the only thing I hesitated about was whether it would be better for the people to have safe transportation immediately guaranteed or to have you three in jail."

"You seem to forget, young man," said Hallett, "who it was elected the man that made you assistant district-attorney."

Luke gave him the briefest of glances.

"It was because I found out who elected him that I resigned the job," he answered. "I have just been offered the Municipal League's nomination for District-Attorney. When *I* am elected, it will be by the people."

"That will be about 2000 A.D.," sneered Hallett.

Luke shrugged his thin shoulders and returned his gaze toward the leader of the trio.

"A bridge falls on one of your roads in this county," he said. "It kills twenty-five people and wounds a hundred—all passengers in one of your trains. You will say the state inspectors declared the bridge O.K. Maybe they did, though they ought to go to the electric chair for it. That doesn't matter. What I can prove by thirty witnesses is that the train left the bridge before the bridge fell. A rail flattened and threw the train. Instead of sending you men to jail—and only because I think this is better for the safety of the public—I will give you one month to begin laying decent rails on this road—actually get *bona fide* work under way. If you don't do that, I'll make public the whole truth, get you indicted, go into court as a witness and produce two letters, one forwarded to you and the other signed by you. The first of these is a letter to the president of the road written by the steel manufacturers; it warns him that the cheap rails he's ordered are dangerous: that letter he sent to you. The second is a letter from you to the president of the road in which you say you want the poor-grade rails used because you don't want to increase the running expenses, and you order a general keeping-down of the road's expenses because of a plan for you three to unload your stock along about this December."

Luke rose. He relapsed into the weary young man of ten minutes before.

"You have one month," he said.

He picked up his hat, rubbed it with a caressing hand, and left the room.

The three that he left stared at one another. Then both Hallett and Rivington looked at their leader.

"It's an infamous—it must be an infamous lie!" cried Rivington. "Letters like that—men don't write them!"

Without moving a muscle of his face, the man at the head of the table looked at Rivington.

"All men say they don't," he corrected, "and all men do."

"What?" asked Hallett. "You're joking, and this fellow can't ever make it good. It's a bluff."

"Gentlemen," said the man at the head of the table, "it's the truth."

CHAPTER VII

§1. When Luke, on the afternoon preceding his Wall Street interview, had walked out of Leighton's office and the city's employ, it was with no certain plan for further action. His years of experience as an assistant prosecutor had demonstrated to him that something was drastically wrong with the modern administration of justice and practice of the law; his life in New York had shown him the evil influence of the money-power that seemed to be set in motion by the author of the Rollins letter and certainly corrupted the entire body of the nation, and his political work had discovered to him what he came to consider the inherent rottenness of the organized political parties. The effect of all this was made acute by the horror at the North Bridge wreck and the culmination of his mistrust in Leighton. Luke's sole immediate sensation was that of a man who finds himself in a bog: he did not think of draining the bog for the benefit of future pedestrians; he thought only of extricating himself from the mire.

That night at his club, however, he began to consider the larger aspects of the case. He was in the writing-room, intent on composing for the next evening's papers a statement of his reasons for parting company with Leighton. In formulating these, he found his charges to be precisely the charges recently formulated by the group of municipal reformers who were clamoring for a fusion of the best elements of all parties to elect, by honest methods, honest men that would purge New York of its civic shame. He recalled how this Municipal Reform League, growing steadily, had worried Leighton, and how its promoters prophesied that, if successful in the place of its origin, it might well spread throughout the country. When he first heard of it, Luke had been too deep in the affairs of his chief to be warmed by it; but to-night his vision was cleared.

He telephoned to two of the League's leaders. They came to his club and talked with him until long past midnight, themselves telephoning inquiries and instructions to friends and lieutenants, and summoning other leaders to join them.

Luke told them much. He betrayed no secrets of his recent employer, but he could honorably tell enough to make it clear to them that their belief in the necessity of reform was correct, enough to have weight with the voters should

he speak to them in the new cause. His public record, it appeared, had long impressed the reformers; the firmness underlying his slow habit of talk, and the determination imperfectly covered by his lazy manner, impressed them now. He moved and fired them.

The Rollins letter he did not mention. He was more than once tempted, but he had resolved upon provisional silence before ever he sent for these leaders. He weighed carefully the merits of the courses open to him and decided that, large as would be the benefit of a public airing of his charges, and excellent as might prove the salutary example of a prison term for America's chief financiers, the airing might be lessened by those financiers' subtle influences upon popular opinion, the prison term might be escaped through similar influences, and all good results would in any case be long delayed. On the other hand, it was evident to him, in his present frame of mind, that the immediate safety of the M. & N.'s patrons was paramount, and that this safety could probably be secured by threatening those morally responsible for it. Such a threat, with a rigid time-limit, he therefore elected to administer.

The first result of his conference with the reformers was unexpected. At eight o'clock next morning, three of their most prominent men, who had not been with him on the night before, came to his apartments at the Arapahoe in Thirty-ninth Street. They had been in all-night consultation, and they told him that their organization had determined to put a full ticket in the field at the coming municipal election, but to center efforts in a struggle for the district-attorneyship: they had chosen him for their candidate.

Luke, in dressing-gown and pajamas, his unbrushed hair more than ever erect, looked from one of his callers to the other. There was Venable, a man of small but independent means, who had grown gray in the long war for civic betterment, meeting defeat at the polls and, what is harder to bear, disappointment in elected candidates, and again and again emerging to hope and fight on; Nelson, a successful wholesale druggist, whose business seemed divorced from politics, and whose hobby was the improvement of political conditions; and Yeates, a young man of family and fortune who belonged to Luke's club. Luke was flattered and confident, but did not show it.

"Do you really think I can do it?" he asked slowly. "Do you think I am the best man for the job?"

Each of the committee assured him he was. They said he had given a good account of himself as assistant district-attorney, won influential friends in his daily life, and secured, through his political speech-making for Leighton, a strong following among the voters.

"Of course," persisted Luke, "it's unnecessary to ask men of your standing that there shan't be anything but clean politics in our campaign."

Venable tossed his head proudly.

"My record is a guarantee of that," he said.

"No undue influence?" asked Luke. "No outside interests coming in to boss us or affect us in any way?"

"Rot!" said Yeates.

"And I am to have an absolutely free hand?"

They assured him of that.

Luke's lowered lids hid his eyes, but his eyes gleamed. Here, at last, was his Great Chance. Here was what he had lived and hoped for. He wanted to shout his war-cry, to go out and fight at once. Would he be worthy? The wing of that doubt brushed the farthest edges of his conscience, but he was young, and he did not heed it. He thought of all that he could do with this opportunity; and he thought, too, of Betty Forbes.

He had not seen much of Betty for some weeks. The lethargy that the slow process of his recent disillusionment flung over him, had left him despairing of her, kept her beyond his reach. But now he saw the way—saw that the way to win his ideals of honorable victory was also the way to win her.

He asked again a hundred questions, some that he had asked of his other counselors the night before and more that he had not: questions about purpose, ways-and-means, finances, organization, headquarters, district leaders, probable support, the temper of the public mind. To all of them he received sanguine answers.

"And your other candidates?" asked Luke. "The Mayor? Comptroller? President of the Board of Aldermen and the Borough Presidents?"

They gave him the names of known and honest men.

Luke stood up, but his air was the languid air that had become part of him.

"Good," he said, "of course, I'm pleased that you think of me as you do, and I accept."

§2. He would be a busy man now, but he must have that morning and afternoon to himself. However much he might want to start his campaign, he must make that visit to Wall Street, and after luncheon he intended to go to Betty.

The Wall Street interview seemed to him as successful as he could have expected. He was unterrified by the strength of the fortress to be attacked, but he had not looked forward to speedy surrender, so he was satisfied with the conviction that he affected the three financiers more than they cared to show. If they did not obey him, he would make the Rollins letters a part of his appeal to the electors; but he felt that, in the end, he would be offered obedience.

He lunched leisurely in the café attached to his apartment house, and then

went to his own room to change his clothes before seeking Betty. He had completed the change and was about to leave when the telephone rang and the voice of the clerk below stairs announced a visitor:

"Judge Marcus F. Stein."

It had begun already. Luke knew who Stein was, though the two had never met. The man's title had been earned by a political appointment to fill the unexpired term of a judge that died while on the bench. Stein had begun his career as a young lawyer who specialized in damage suits against the N. Y. & N. J. railway. He was once charged, before the Bar Association—though the charges were never proved—with being a "hospital runner": that is, with employing men to hurry to the hospital, or the scenes of accidents, and induce victims to retain Stein to press their claims for damages against the railroad on which they had been injured. By devoting his best efforts against the N. Y. & N. J., he tried to make the corporation realize that it would be cheaper to employ him than to fight him, and he was, indeed, at last given a place on the legal staff of the company's claim department. There was an ugly story to the effect that, for a brief time before this charge was openly announced, he received a salary from the road while apparently acting for claimants against it and inducing them to compromise their claims for trivial sums.

It was a subject of common rumor at the New York Bar. Stein soon worked his way to the head of the claim department and thoroughly reorganized it. He used old tactics for his new employers: he had the news of all accidents immediately communicated to him, whereupon he would despatch his agents, with no loss of time, to the hospital, there to persuade the wounded, half stupefied by pain or drugs, to sign releases in return for pittances in ready money. It was said he built up a secret service, composed of men and women from private detective agencies, whose duty it was to discover discreditable secrets in the lives of such claimants as refused to compromise, or, failing in discovery, to manufacture or invent such incidents. One married woman from Syracuse, who had been injured in a wreck in New York and came there to press her suit, was inveigled into a friendship with a woman detective commissioned to engage a neighboring room in the house where the plaintiff took temporary lodgings. The detective succeeded in getting the claimant drunk and brought her, in this condition, with two of the road's employees, to a house in which, when the four were partially unclothed, another detective took a flashlight photograph of them. Then when the victim's case was called for trial, she was told that, unless she dropped her suit, the picture would be shown to her husband. By methods of this sort, Stein was said to have reduced his road's expenses for damages by two-thirds in three years.

Directly from his desk in the offices of the N. Y. & N. J., Stein was appointed

to the bench, where he did not cease his usefulness to his employers. When his brief judicial term had ended, he took offices of his own, and cultivated the higher branches of corporation law. The men controlling the N. Y. & N. J. controlled many other corporations and saw to it that Stein received a regular annual retainer as a consulting lawyer from each of these. His business was not to win cases, but so to aid in directing his clients' plans that they would avoid litigation; he, therefore, rarely nowadays appeared in court and, though not one of the most learned men so engaged by his principals, he was one of the most serviceable, because to his merely crafty skill in the law he added a deep knowledge of practical politics and a wide intimacy with politicians.

Luke's first impulse was to deny himself to this caller, for he wanted to hurry to Betty and he thought there might be a strategic value in refusing to negotiate with any emissary. Curiosity, however, proved strong, and he reflected that the emissary might just possibly come with a word of complete capitulation.

"Show him up," said Luke into the telephone.

The ex-Judge was an imposing figure. He was big and broad and frock-coated, and he moved with befitting gravity. His hair was plentiful and white, his face clean-shaven. He had a strong nose and a wide, firm mouth, and his eyes were large and benevolent. His air was that of a man who has dealt with great interests for so many years that they have become the weighty commonplaces of his existence.

Luke had resolved not to shake hands with his visitor, but the Judge gave him no opportunity for refusal. He bowed courteously, smiled politely, and settled into the most comfortable of Luke's chairs, which he deliberately turned so that the light from the windows fell full on his own face, thus leaving Luke to front him from the shadow.

Luke, who had been prepared for the contrary move, managed to show no surprise. He sat down, extended his legs, and lowered his eyes. He made no inquiry concerning the reason of the Judge's call: he wanted the Judge to begin the talk.

Stein required no urging.

"I have never had the pleasure of meeting you before, Mr. Huber," he said, speaking with what was evidently no more than characteristic deliberation, "but I have watched your career with a great deal of interest—a very great deal. It reminded me so much of my own early struggles." He was looking steadily at Luke, whose eyes remained lowered. "You will forgive an old man who is a scarred veteran of the law for speaking frankly with you and for taking such an interest, I'm sure."

"Very kind of you, indeed," Luke murmured.

"I thought," said the Judge, "that you handled that Maretti case excellently,

and the Dow trial, too; you showed an original cleverness there. More than that, Mr. Huber, you showed promise. There has been a great deal of promise in your professional work, and I thought I detected the same promise in the reports of your political speeches. With influential friends—for, of course, everybody needs influential friends in these days: people of real and solid standing—you ought to go far."

"Thank you," said Luke.

"Now," the Judge pursued, "I see by the early evening papers you may be offered the candidacy for District-Attorney on the Municipal League ticket."

"I believe there is some talk of that, Judge."

"Well, we need such a movement as this reform movement: we need it badly. With proper backing, you ought to win. With proper backing, of course."

Luke gave no sign of hearing this. Quite out of the air he drawled:

"I suppose you came about those letters, Judge Stein?"

For all the disturbance that he produced, he might as well have said that it was a pleasant day, or that he expected rain. When his eyes at this question were raised to meet the Judge's, the benevolent eyes of the Judge did not quiver: like his voice, they were steady and deliberate.

"Yes," said the Judge, "and I had them in mind when I spoke of your career. Now, Mr. Huber, my friends think, and I think, that you have been a little hasty and unreasonable because—and remember, it is an old man who tells you so—you are still rather young. But because I know you are an able young man, I have told them I was sure you would see your haste and unreasonableness when you came to consider the matter. As their friend and as a lawyer who has watched your career and remembers his own start in life, I undertook to say so to you and to offer my advice."

Luke's eyelids were again lowered. His hands were clasped in his lap. To a less astute man than Stein, he might have seemed asleep.

"I shall be glad," continued Stein, "if I can help you out of your embarrassing position."

"Who are your friends, Judge?" asked Luke.

The Judge smiled tolerantly.

"Come, come, Mr. Huber," he said; "you don't expect me to mention names, I know. All I will say on that point—all you can justly ask me to say—is that I don't come from them in my professional capacity. They haven't retained me to do this. They haven't even asked me to do it. I am acting entirely of my own volition, and on my own initiative, out of good will for all the parties concerned and not least of all for you."

"Yet you seem prepared to plead their case."

"I am—on my own initiative, I am, because their case is the right one, as I

am sure you will end by seeing. In the first place, these letters are their property."

"I doubt," said Luke, "whether they would go into court to prove property."

"I do not think," said the unruffled Judge, "that they will go into court for any purpose—unless their burden of good nature is rendered intolerable. They can afford to appeal to their own conscience, because they are morally clear."

"Of the North Bridge wreck?"

"Of the North Bridge wreck, Mr. Huber. Granting that those letters are admissible evidence—which I shouldn't grant, if I were in the case—the one is not an expert declaration; it is merely an expression of opinion from persons with many grades of rails to sell and naturally anxious to sell their most expensive and most profitable grade. As for the other letter, it is informed by the knowledge of what prompted the rail-makers' opinion, and in itself offers only a counter-opinion based on the writer's long and successful experience with the cheaper rails."

"Yes—but the accident happened."

"Exactly: it merely happened and it was an accident. In other words, it was something unforeseen and contrary to the experience of the writer of the second letter."

The Judge waited a moment for a reply but, as Luke gave none, presently continued:

"Now, the course I propose—quite personally, you will understand—is honorable, harmless, and in the best interests of all concerned: you, us, and even the public."

"What is it?" asked Luke.

"All that I would grant my friends is the return of those letters, which are their own property, and are not admissible evidence in a court of law. That is all I would grant them. On their part, I should exact a pledge from them to have better rails laid throughout the suspected sections of the M. & N. road."

Luke's eyes opened.

"That's all *I* asked them to do," he said.

"Ah, yes; but to do it at once would be taken as a public confession of guilt—and my friends are not guilty. You will see that the coroner's jury says so."

Luke relapsed.

"It will," he said. "I'm sure of it."

"Therefore, the thing must be done slowly and discreetly, and meanwhile we must protect the public by an increase of track-walkers and road-inspectors."

"Would your friends," inquired Luke, "instruct the road not to fight the damage claims growing out of the wreck?"

"Of course not," chuckled Stein. "You are too good a lawyer to expect that, Mr. Huber, and too good a lawyer not to know how the sorrow or wounds

of the claimants—yes, and the big appetites of their attorneys, too, I'm afraid—exaggerate their losses on the one hand and the riches of the company on the other. No, no; the most we could get for them would be liberal settlements. We mustn't bankrupt the road. There are more widows owning stock in it than there are widows caused by this wreck."

"Well," said Luke, "I'm afraid you don't convince me, Judge."

"Not if I could promise all this?"

"No. You see, there was a smaller wreck some months ago, and the additional track-walkers and inspectors were promised the public then."

Undisturbed, the Judge repeated all his arguments. "I really think you must see this as I do," he concluded. "And all we want is the letters——. By the way, Mr. Huber, I congratulate you on getting hold of them. That was a clever piece of work. How did you manage it?"

Luke grinned.

"I found them growing on an apple tree in Madison Square," he said.

The Judge nodded a smiling approval.

"At any rate," he submitted, "you will not mind telling me if any other person knows of their existence?"

"No, I don't mind. Except you and your friends and me and the apple tree, there is only one other person that knows as yet, and he's in no position to mention them." Luke rose as if to end the interview. "I've told nobody because I keep my bargains, Judge. But I do keep my bargains to the letter. You haven't convinced me, and you can't. I've given your clients——"

"My friends," Stein suavely corrected.

"Your friends, then; I've given them one month. If they don't do as I've suggested——"

The judge raised a hand gravely.

"I think you mean 'ordered,' Mr. Huber," said he.

"Thank you. Yes, of course, I meant 'ordered.' If they don't begin to do as I've ordered by one month from to-day, and do it in a way that convinces everybody of their intention to finish the job—yes, and their consciousness of guilt—I'll make those letters public."

The Judge remained seated. He looked at Luke sadly, and his voice rang true as he said:

"I wonder if you have fully considered, I shall not say the dangers, but the difficulties and annoyances your course may expose you to—may very well expose you to?"

"No," said Luke shortly. "I'm too busy."

"A great many men have tried what you are trying," the Judge went on, "and they have all failed. I tried it once myself. None has succeeded; not one.

Some of them, of course, entirely through their own faults, were ruined by it, Mr. Huber."

"I dare say," said Luke, unmoved.

"And you," warned the Judge, "have the success of a new and valuable political movement in your hands. You are responsible for it and to it. This might end by losing you the nomination."

"I can stand that."

"It might even hurt the men in the movement that have trusted you."

"I sha'n't blame myself for it, if it does."

"And if it did not do these things, it would surely wreck the faction at the polls—a faction that you believe in and that, if successful, could do such a wide public good."

Luke was standing above his caller, his hands deep in his pockets.

"Look here, Judge," he drawled, "are you by any chance threatening me?"

The Judge was not at all threatening him. "I am only telling you," he frankly explained, "what a long life in New York has shown me. I like you, Mr. Huber; I believe you could make a great success in life if you were less hot-headed; but I believe your hot-headedness can ruin you at the bar, can ruin you socially and financially, and can put a stop to your political career forever. I knew one man that attempted something such as you are attempting and never had another client afterward. I knew another that people heard a nasty story about and shut all their doors against. I knew a dozen that became political corpses, and I knew more that went bankrupt."

Luke smiled.

"And some," he suggested, "disappeared altogether, I dare say?"

The Judge looked him full in the eyes.

"I have heard so," said he. Then he brightened somewhat. "But you will not defy the lightning," he continued. "You are too practical. I am quite sure you must see how very right I am and how very well disposed my friends are toward you, Mr. Huber. Think what they could do for you, socially, financially, politically. Think what they could do for you personally and for this reform movement."

Luke's smile broke into a laugh.

"Help the reform?" he exploded. "Oh, Lord!" Then, as quickly, the laugh ended. "In plain terms," he said, "what have you been telling me?" His languor had disappeared, and a sharp rage succeeded it. His words cracked like a whip. "You've been telling me that if I handed the safety of the M. & N. patrons over to the men that hire you, and let those men go free on the strength of a promise already broken, they would make me rich, elect me District-Attorney to do their work for them, advance me in their own social set and maybe, if I kept on doing all they asked, turn me into a Judge or a Governor or a millionaire! And you've

been saying if I don't do it, they'll have me forced out of politics, out of the practice of the law, out of decent people's houses—and maybe knocked over the head or shot in the back at a dark corner. Well, here's my answer: I don't believe they would help me, I don't believe they can hurt me, and I don't care a damn, one way or the other!"

The Judge bowed. He rose. He knew the world too well to give way to anger: he never lost his temper; he only sometimes advisedly loosed it.

"Is this," he asked, "your final decision, Mr. Huber?"

"Yes," raged Luke; "and you may bet your last cent on that. It's my final decision, and it's a plain 'No.' If these fellows don't do what I've ordered, I'll show them up—the whole bunch of them. I'll do it—why, I'd do it if they were the seraphim and cherubim, and all the Thrones, Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, and Archangels rolled into one!"

CHAPTER VIII

§1. Ex-Judge Marcus Stein had mastered, in common with most truly dignified men, the art of acting quickly without hurrying. Upon leaving Luke's apartments, he exercised this art.

His motor-car was waiting for him at the door. He climbed into it with a judicial deliberation and gave his order to the chauffeur. The car started noiselessly. By proceeding with an even speed that avoided blind dashes into the backwaters of the traffic-stream, it made better time than its more impetuous peers and, without jolt or pause, bore its occupant quickly to the building in which the firm of Stein, Falconridge, Falconridge & Perry had their offices.

As Judge Stein passed through the outer room of the suite, he spoke to the girl who was seated at the firm's telephone switchboard:

"Good-afternoon, Miss Weston."

The girl's neurasthenic face lighted with pleasure: Marcus Stein was liked and respected by his office-force.

"Good-afternoon, Judge Stein," she said.

"I think," said the Judge, "that you might see if you can get Mr. Hallett on his private wire, and connect him with my telephone. Will you, please?"

Miss Weston always felt that the Judge conferred a favor when he asked one. Consequently, she made a practice of giving his calls precedence over those

of anybody else connected with the firm.

"Right away," she said. "And if he's left his office, shall I try his house or his club?"

"Both, please, Miss Weston. But I have an idea that he will be at his office."

The Judge passed on to his own handsome room overlooking the turmoil of lower Broadway. He had scarcely reached his desk, and was just bending to smell of the two Abel Chatney roses that stood in a vase there, when the soft bell of his telephone tinkled.

"Stein?" asked Hallett's voice through the black receiver that the Judge placed to his ear.

"Yes. This is Mr. Hallett?"

"Yes."

"I was about to telephone you, and I have just been to see our young friend."

"Well—well?"

"It is no use, Mr. Hallett."

Hallett's voice was incredulous: "The fool won't give up?"

"Not yet."

"How much does he want?"

"Nothing."

"Well, but didn't you throw the fear of God into him?"

"We can't purchase and we can't coerce—at least not by mere threats."

"Then, we've got to frighten him by something else, Stein. How'd he get those things that he's got?"

"He wouldn't say. I scarcely expected that he would."

"Did you put on the political screws?"

"I put on all, as far as was wise. He is a clever young man, and he knows we can't hurt him so long as he has certain things in his possession."

The situation apparently passed Hallett's comprehension: it was outside of his experience.

"But what does he want? He must want something."

"I'm afraid not," the Judge sighed.

"Hell! Of course, he must. Everybody does."

"If he does, I couldn't find it out."

"Well, then," asked Hallett, "what's he goin' to do?"

"Nothing—for a month."

"You don't think he'll keep his word?"

"I'm sure of it."

"Wait a minute," said Hallett.

The Judge waited fifteen minutes. At the end of that time, Hallett's voice, regretful, but firm, sounded again in the telephone:

"Well," he said, "we've got to get those things he's got. We're all agreed on that. Understand?"

"Yes?"

"Yes—and it's up to you, Judge."

"Have you any course to suggest?"

"No, we haven't, and we don't want to know anything about courses. That's your job."

As if Hallett were in the room, Stein bowed his white head to him.

"Very well," he said, and hung up the receiver.

He bent to the pink roses again, and again inhaled their cultivated fragrance. His face was not perplexed, but it was sad.

"I am sorry," he seemed to be saying. "A nice young man. I am very sorry, indeed."

He returned the telephone-receiver to his ear.

"Miss Weston?"

"Yes, Judge Stein?"

"Thank you for getting that call so promptly. Now, will you please get me Mr. Titus?"

"Mr. William Titus, or Titus & Titherington, the mercantile agency?"

"Mr. Alexander Titus, of Titus & Titherington: the one that I was speaking to before I went out to luncheon."

"Yes, Judge Stein. Just a minute."

There was no long wait before Titus, who owed half of his business as a financial-agent to Stein and Stein's chief employer, was in conversation with the Judge.

"Have you secured that report yet?" asked Stein.

"Which one, Judge?"

"The one I asked you for at lunch-time."

"It's being typed now. I'll send it over as soon as it's finished."

"I wish you would. Meantime, get the chief points from the man that looked into the matter and 'phone them to me."

"All right, Judge."

"Call me up. I have somebody to talk to while I'm waiting."

The Judge rang off and then another time spoke to Miss Weston.

"Is Mr. Irwin in his office?"

Miss Weston said he was.

"Then, please ask him to step in to see me for a moment."

Mr. Irwin was a member of the Judge's firm whose name did not appear upon its letter-heads, although he had been attached to it for more years than Mr. Perry or even the younger Mr. Falconridge. He was a little man with a gray

Vandyck beard, pink cheeks, and twinkling blue eyes.

In the fewest possible words, Stein gave him a description of the letters that were in Luke Huber's possession. He did not say who wanted these letters, or why they were wanted, but he left no doubt about the urgency of the commission he was delivering.

"It is rather a difficult assignment," he concluded, "but it must be done. There are great interests at stake."

"I think I can manage it," said Irwin cheerfully.

"I am afraid you will have to manage it," said the Judge.

"I'll simply tell my friend——"

The Judge raised his hand and smiled.

"No details, please," said he.

"Very well," Irwin, still cheerful, agreed.

"All that I need add," said the Judge, "is this: we must take only one step at a time. If we can succeed by persuasion, there is no need to use other measures. I do not want to use other measures unless he forces us to use them. Remember that. The first thing to do is to convince him that we are too strong for him. For instance, he has this reform nomination for the district-attorneyship. If he could be made to see that we could take that nomination away from him, he might listen to reason."

"I see."

"You will report results to me. Not methods, Irwin: only the results, but please report the results step by step. And understand that whoever undertakes this matter must not know too much to be dangerous, but must know enough to make no error."

"How soon do you want the letters, Judge?"

"As soon as I can get them."

"And the outside limit?"

"The first step must be immediate. We must not run so fast that we stumble; but for the completion it will be impossible to wait long. Say twenty-eight days from date."

"Right," said Irwin, and walked briskly from the room.

Irwin had a manner of telephoning that was more hurried than the Judge's, and Miss Weston treated him with greater deliberation. However, he had soon called up the office of Anson Quirk and learned that Quirk was there.

"Then, stay there for twenty minutes, will you?" asked Irwin. "I'm coming right around to see you."

Anson Quirk was a lawyer who had a small office and a large reputation on the East Side. His round, smiling face shone in every important case where was endangered the liberty or life of minor politicians or major thugs; the number of

acquittals to his credit was surpassed only by the number of clients whom he had saved from ever appearing in court. He called every patrolman, magistrate, and tipstaff in the City and County of New York by his first name. He was successful before a judge, but he was magnificent before a magistrate, and with a police-officer he was a worker of miracles. In his own world, Quirk, whom Stein would have refused to shake hands with, was what Stein was upon a somewhat higher plane.

He talked with the bright-eyed Irwin for less than half an hour. Then he showed his visitor from his dusty office full of law-books that were never consulted.

"Easy?" he chuckled as he bowed Irwin out. "It's a hundred-to-one shot. I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll——"

"No, you won't tell me," laughed Irwin. "The less I know, the better for me. All I want to be sure of is that I can count on you."

"Sure, you can."

"And don't do everything at once."

"Not me. The frame-up comes first."

"Let me know as soon as it's tried. Then we'll talk about the next move—if one's needed."

"I understand. And whatever's needed, I'll deliver the goods inside of three weeks."

Irwin said he hoped nothing more would be needed and that a few days would suffice, and Quirk, screwing a derby-hat on one side of his head, walked around the corner to the police-station to see his friend, the red-faced, genial Hugh Donovan, lieutenant of police.

§2. Ex-Judge Stein, in the handsome room overlooking Broadway, had been having another telephone-conversation with the head of the Titus & Titherington Mercantile Agency while Mr. Irwin was consulting with Mr. Quirk.

"That man has saved a bit," Alexander Titus was reporting; "but outside of his salary he has really only a hundred thousand dollars, and it's all invested in the R. H. Forbes & Son clothing firm over in Brooklyn."

The Judge made a note of this on a desk-pad.

"I see," he said. "Who is the head of that firm, now?"

"Wallace K. Forbes; I think he's a grandson of old R. H."

The Judge made another note.

"How do they stand? Oddly enough, I have a client interested in their affairs, too."

"The Forbes people? Pretty well. I had to get a report on them last week."

"Have they any heavy loans?"

"Only one that might hurt them: two hundred and fifty thousand dollars at call with the East County National."

The Judge's pencil was still busy.

"I want to be quite clear about this," he said—"quite clear: my client in this Forbes matter is considering an investment. Am I to understand that if the East County National should call this loan, if it could not be renewed elsewhere, the firm would become insolvent?"

"Oh, there's no doubt about that. But then, there's no doubt about its not being called, either. The company's quite sound, Judge."

"Thank you," said Stein. "You will have that other full report sent over?"

"It's on its way now."

"Thank you again. You had better follow it with a copy of the Forbes report. If that bears out all you say, I shall instruct my client to go ahead."

"He'll be safe if he does, Judge."

"Very well. Good-afternoon," said Stein.

He called Miss Weston again.

"Miss Weston," he said, "please get me City Chamberlain Kilgour, and, while I am speaking to him, call up the East County National and ask where you can find president Osserman. He will have left the bank, but I should like to reach him before I go home to-day."

Miss Weston obeyed with her usual readiness to serve this one of her employers.

§3. Police Lieutenant Donovan had not listened to half a dozen of Quirk's words before he rose quickly and closed the door of his private room. His was one of those voices that cannot whisper, but it descended now to a hoarse muttering.

"How much is there in this for me?" he demanded.

"Nothin'," grinned Quirk.

Donovan's broad palm banged the table at which he sat.

"Then good-*night*," said he.

Quirk was undisturbed.

"Could you do the trick?" he inquired.

"You mean if it was worth my while?"

"I mean what I say: could you do it?"

"Could I do it? Of course, I could. It'd be like takin' pennies from a blind man."

"Then," said Quirk, rattling some coins in a pocket beneath his round abdomen, "I guess you'd better get busy."

Donovan's eyes narrowed.

"What's your game, Quirk?" he asked.

"It's not *my* game, Hughie," smiled the lawyer.

"Well, you're not in it for your health, I know that damn well. If it ain't your game, whose is it?"

"I don't know for sure," said Quirk.

"Oh, come on. You know me: you've got to cough up if you want me to help."

Quirk did know the police-lieutenant. He had expected all along to be forced into an admission; but he was aware that by letting Donovan suspect reluctance he could the more speedily gain his point.

"Well," he said, "it didn't come to me straight, but I'll tell you how it did."

He embarked upon a narrative brief and abounding in gaps that Donovan's imagination was not, however, slow to fill as Quirk intended it should.

The officer nodded comprehendingly. "Then who's at the back of it?" he asked.

Quirk walked quietly to the door. He opened it suddenly: nobody had been listening at the keyhole; so he turned to Donovan and said a certain name.

The police-lieutenant's red face grew redder. He opened and shut his mouth twice before he spoke.

"Again?" he muttered.

Quirk nodded.

"That's all I know about it," he said.

"Well, why in hell didn't you tell me this right off at first?" asked the querulous Donovan.

"Because I didn't think I'd have to," pleaded Quirk.

"Have to? Looks to me like the have-to business all came on to me! How long've I got to put this across?"

Quirk appeared to consider.

"You'd have to begin with the first thing right away," he said, "and let me know about that. If it didn't work, I'd get my party to give me fuller instructions, and then I guess you'd have eighteen days."

"I'm gettin' sick of the whole game," said Donovan.

"So am I," said the lawyer blithely. "But what are we going to do about it? We've got to make a living, don't we?"

"I ain't so sure of that."

"Anyhow, we've got to buy shoes for our kids, Hughie."

"Oh, come on," muttered Donovan, "let's talk business."

They talked business until Quirk remembered another appointment and had to leave. When the lawyer had gone, Donovan put his head into the large

room next his own and called to a sleepy officer seated at a desk.

"Anderson," he asked, "where's Patrolman Guth?"

Anderson yawned.

"Just come in, Lieutenant," he vouchsafed: "him and Mitchell. He's in the locker-room."

"Send him in here."

Donovan closed the door and sat at his table, frowning at its surface, until Guth entered.

"Hello, Bill," said the Lieutenant.

Guth was as big as the Lieutenant and more powerful. He would have been handsome, but his mouth had been torn in some obscure street-fight, and the scar from this wound carried the line of his lips to the left corner of his jaw-bone.

"*How're* you, Lieutenant?" he replied.

Donovan resumed his study of the table.

"What's Reddy Rawn doin' these days?" he presently continued.

Guth shifted his weight from one leg to the other. As much as that scar would permit, he smiled, the right corner of his mouth shooting upward and the left turning down.

"Well," he said, "you know how it is. I warned him he'd got to keep in the quiet ever since that night him and the Kid shot-up Crab Rotello for tryin' to steal Reddy's girl."

"Rotello's still in Bellevue, ain't he?"

"Won't be out for near a month yet."

"He hasn't squealed?"

"Naw. You know these here guys: wouldn't tell if they was dyin'—rather leave it to their own gang to square things. Crab'll wait till he gets well, an' then he'll fix Reddy's feet for himself."

"Still, you told Reddy what I said you should?"

"Tol' him we was on."

"Find him to-night."

"All right, Lieutenant."

"Tell him Rotello's squealed: he'll believe it because he hates him. Tell him the Dago's goin' to croak an's give me an ante-mortem statement—see?"

The patrolman stolidly bowed assent.

"Tell him the only way for him to square me's to do me a good turn," continued Donovan.

Guth nodded again.

"Same's we worked on the Crab himself ten or twelve weeks ago," he said. "I got you."

"That's it. Remember, I don't know much, an' you know a lot less, an' this

guy's got to know less than you do. He's got to pull it off inside of two weeks. Now, sit down here, an' I'll tell you what he's got to do. There maybe'll be more later, but this is the start."

§4. The last talk that Judge Stein had that day was one with a brisk, bald-headed man, whose close-cropped mustache only accentuated the heavy mouth below it. This man called in person at the offices of Stein, Falconridge, Falconridge & Perry; he seemed to have come in a hurry, and he handed Miss Weston a card bearing the legend:

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+----------------------------+
|     B. FRANK OSSERMAN      |
|        *PRESIDENT*         |
|  EAST COUNTY NATIONAL BANK |
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With him the Judge began by being as deliberate as he had been with Luke Huber. He mentioned the names of the three men upon whom Huber had that morning paid so unusual a visit to Wall Street; but this time Stein frankly declared that these three men empowered him to speak.

At the mention of their names, Osserman's fingers played with a thin gold watch-chain that ran taut through a buttonhole of his waistcoat, from one pocket to another.

"I dare say that you will remember," pursued the Judge, "that I have acted with you for these gentlemen on one or two previous occasions."

Osserman cleared his throat. "I hope there is no trouble," he said.

"No. Oh, no; there need be no trouble," said the Judge. Then he sat and watched Osserman move uneasily in his chair.

The bank-president by saying nothing tried to force Stein to explain; Stein, by the same means, tried to force Osserman to make a confession of weakness. At last Stein won.

"Of course," said Osserman, "I know the favors they've done us."

"Exactly," said the Judge; but he said only that.

"And so," continued Osserman, as one who cannot turn back, "our bank will be glad to do anything we can for them." He paused and looked at Stein; but

Stein only looked pityingly at him. "Indeed," the banker ruefully resumed, "their connection with our investments and securities is such that we would have to."

"Exactly," repeated the Judge, bending his face toward the pink roses at his elbow. But he was a little sorry for Osserman, and so he added: "Not that the East County is in a position very different, in that respect, from most of the other banks."

Osserman took a deep breath.

"Well," he said, "what is it?"

"You are carrying," said the Judge, "a call-loan at two hundred and fifty thousand to R. H. Forbes & Son."

The banker showed his relief. It was clear that he had expected something more important.

"Are we?" he asked. "I dare say we are."

"Mr. Osserman," said the Judge, "the finances of the R. H. Forbes company are not long going to be what they should be. In the interest of your depositors, I should advise you to stand ready to call that loan when I give you the word."

The banker looked at the Judge and knew that, before this loan would be called, the Judge's clients would see to it that no other bank would take it up. That, however, was no affair of Osserman's: he considered that he was escaping by means of a small service.

"If there's any danger of the Forbes people failing," he said, "it would be only good business to do as you say."

"Yes," the Judge assented. "The fact of the matter is this, Mr. Osserman: that young man named Huber, who has been backing Leighton, is leaving Leighton and will be the candidate for the reform people to succeed him."

"I saw something about it in the afternoon papers."

"Yes. Now, my clients have no objection to those reformers; we see that they may do a great deal of good, if they put a temperate man at the head of their ticket. But we happen to know that this Huber is a young, hot-headed demagogue. He is the kind of man that attracts the crowd. He might be elected. If he was not, he would hurt credit by his wild speeches; if he was, he would undoubtedly upset it by trying to put his impossible promises into action. The safest thing for Business is to take the nomination away from him before he gets started: then nobody is hurt. What money he has (it is not much) is invested in this Forbes concern. My advice to you is to see Mr. Forbes to-morrow; make him appreciate how your bank feels about the unsettling nature of this candidacy, and tell him that you will have to call his loan if the candidacy continues."

§5. That was a busy night for the president and cashier of more than one bank

in New York City, and for certain gentlemen whose business it is to negotiate for loans from banks in other cities. Judge Stein's telephonic talk with City Chamberlain Kilgour was as effective as the conversation with president Osserman. It is in the chamberlain's official province to deposit municipal funds with almost whatsoever institution he chooses, and to withdraw such funds as he may elect: the thin, energetic figure of Kilgour, long familiar to the tents of Tammany, was this evening hurrying from private houses to Madison Square Clubs and from clubs to Broadway cafés. The swift, quiet motor-car of ex-Judge Stein was busy, too.

§6. Somebody else was busy: Patrolman Guth. Patrolman Guth, in citizen's garb, was standing almost invisible in the shadowy alley behind a saloon near Forty-third Street and Third Avenue, and was muttering to the darkness. And at last the darkness answered.

"I'm on," said the darkness.

CHAPTER IX

§1. "No, sir; she's gone out," said the servant that answered Luke's ring at the door of the Forbes house and his inquiry for Betty on the afternoon of his interview with Judge Stein.

"To town?" asked Luke.

"Yes, sir; I think so. I think she's gone over to Mr. Nicholson's Hester Street mission."

Luke had frequently met the Rev. Pinkney Nicholson; he liked him. The young clergyman was a friend of both Forbes and Forbes's daughter. The latter often helped in Nicholson's slum-missionary work; an attendance at Nicholson's church of St. Athanasius was the only occupation that brought Forbes and Betty even slightly into touch with the world of the Ruysdaels. With Betty, Luke often went to the Sunday morning services. Indeed, he had recently become a consistent member of the congregation, partly because Betty liked the church and partly because Luke himself admired Nicholson's simple and forcible eloquence and believed enough in Nicholson's philanthropy to forgive a ritualism that in itself had only a superficial appeal for him.

"She didn't say when she would be back?" Luke inquired. Until this moment he had not known how badly he wanted to see her.

"No, sir. By dinner-time, I guess. Would you like to leave any message, Mr. Huber?"

"Only that if she isn't going out this evening, I'll call."

"Very well, sir."

Luke had hurried to the Forbes house in Brooklyn as soon as Stein left him, for he knew that Betty was usually at home from three o'clock in the afternoon until five; but the Judge had consumed some time; there was a block in the subway and another block on the surface-line at the subway's end: Luke had missed Betty. There was nothing to be done but to return to town, where he should have remained in order to be in touch with the new friends that were announcing him as their certain chance for the district-attorneyship.

He considered himself ready for the fight. He knew that Stein, although checked in the engagement at the Thirty-ninth Street apartments, would not be defeated and would resume the offensive from some other quarter at some later date; but Luke looked for no serious oppilation by these secret enemies before the end of the month that he had given them in which to come to terms. He underestimated, in short, both the power and the unencumbered license of his foes. He would not realize the handicap that his grant of a four weeks' armistice placed on his own movements, he would not believe that his antagonists might violate the truce, and he refused to credit them with the vast influence and free conscience which were at their command.

The open war, the war that the reformers and the public saw, was, however, waging. The Municipal Reform League had taken city headquarters in an office-building in Broadway below Madison Square weeks ago, before they began their search for a candidate. At that time divisional headquarters were opened in every ward in New York, and the remnants of an older reform organization, left from a defeat ten years old, were gathered and cemented for present use. Nelson, Venable, and Yeates were working day and night with their lieutenants, and when Luke returned to his apartments, the loneliness that he was beginning to feel because of the sudden end of his duties under Leighton, was banished by the news that the League headquarters had been telephoning madly for him.

He bought a newspaper on his way downtown and discovered what was one of the things that his associates wanted to see him about: Leighton had issued a statement saying that he had forced Luke's resignation from the District-Attorney's staff because of Luke's inefficiency.

"You must nail that lie immediately!" cried Venable as soon as Luke entered the offices of the League. The old man was standing at a desk with Yeates and Nelson beside him.

"Why did he fire you, anyway?" asked Yeates. "I always thought Leighton was a rather decent kind of fellow."

"Jealousy," suggested Nelson. "He was afraid of him."

Luke sat on a table and dangled his long legs. He did not like the necessity that Leighton had put upon him.

"Of course, he didn't discharge you at all," said Venable. "We all know that. But we have called the committee for the day after to-morrow, and you must make the public see the matter as we do."

"I'm not so sure that he didn't fire me," said Luke. He chose to be blind to his hearers' astonishment. "It was a race to see whether he'd chuck me or me him, and I think it ended in a dead-heat."

"Oh, come off!" said Yeates.

Venable stroked his white hair.

"But the reason?" he commanded. "You must give the full story to the public. We stand for absolute honesty in politics, and we can't begin with any suppression of facts in public office."

"Well," said Luke, "I think I gave Leighton, in a general way, to understand I believed he was willing to use the Money Power in politics, if he could get it to use." He smiled at them. "Does sound rather vague, doesn't it?"

Nelson puffed out his cheeks. "Men don't break up a partnership for such things," said he.

"Leighton and I did."

"Perhaps you did, but people won't think so."

Venable cut in:

"We don't want to pry into your private affairs, and, of course, we don't expect you to violate any personal confidences that you naturally had with Mr. Leighton; but a broad statement of the basic facts has to go to the papers at once. The charge wouldn't be so serious if it was specific and vulgar, because then you would have no trouble in disproving it; but Mr. Leighton is a thorough politician; he knows the value of vagueness, and he gives the impression that he could tell a great deal if he wasn't so much of a gentleman as to want to spare your feelings."

Luke slowly got down from the table.

"I will say this much," he replied; "I will answer Leighton in his own language: I will say he tried to get hold of some documents that would make trouble for a group of unscrupulous and influential men, and he wasn't going to use those documents in court or out of it to stop those men in a wrong they were doing, but only as a means to force them to give him their political support."

Venable reflected.

"I think it would suit if you published that," he said.

"Did he get the documents?" asked Nelson.

"No," said Luke, "he didn't. Now, send me in a stenographer, and I'll dictate a statement along those lines."

§2. The headquarters of the Municipal Reform League occupied a half of the second floor. They were accessible by either the stairs, or any of the three elevators that all day long shot down and up narrow shafts from the roof to the hall opening on Broadway. Entering the offices, one came first to a reception-room; beyond that, one passed along the cleared side of a railing in the large apartment, behind which sat the company of stenographers and typewriters, and so came to a series of offices with ground-glass doors and windows giving upon the street. It was one of these offices which was permanently assigned to Luke.

Here, pacing the floor between the roll-top desk at one side and the small safe for private papers on the other, Luke dictated his public letter. He tried to word it in such a way that its facts would not sound incredible to the uninitiated reader, would not seem so vague as to excite suspicion, and would yet convey to both Leighton and Stein the threat of complete publicity to be fulfilled if the writer were pushed too far. It was a hard task, but Luke, after several revisions, was satisfied with it.

"Yes," said Venable, "I think that will do. The reporters are waiting outside; I sent for them. I have only one addition to suggest."

"What's that?" asked Luke.

"You deal exclusively with your resignation, and yet you are issuing this statement from the League's headquarters. Don't you think you had better say something about your candidacy?

"Hadn't I better wait till I get it?"

"You will have it as soon as the committee meets. Everybody knows that. I don't propose that you should anticipate all the good points of your letter of acceptance, but merely that you should state what you will stand for. You could say that your name has been mentioned for the nomination and that, if nominated, you will make your campaign on such and such issues."

"All right." Luke shrugged his lean shoulders. He turned to the waiting stenographer. "Take this," he said:

"In conclusion, I wish to say that my recent experience in the service of the city has convinced me of the crying need of a new movement for civic improvement: a non-partisan movement in which the one object shall be the purification of municipal government and the fearless administration of the law, all of its supporters working together not for any man or party, but for the good of New York. Such a movement is that now started by the conscientious men who compose the Municipal Reform League.

"My name has been mentioned as a candidate for office on the ticket of this league, and I shall feel honored, indeed, if I receive my nomination under such happy auspices. In that event, I shall go before the people with a frank appeal to them to drive the money-changers out of the Temple of Justice, the grafters out of the police-force, vice and crime from the streets; and, if elected, I should attempt to do these things, as the will of the people who placed me in power, with favor to no persons, or combination of persons, in Greater New York. But whether I am nominated or not, I shall take my coat off and roll up my sleeves and go to work for the Municipal Reform League as for the only present hope of this city's moral regeneration."

Luke turned to Venable.

"How's that?" he inquired.

Venable agreed that it ought to do.

"*I* think it's stodgy enough," said Luke.

Venable visibly winced, but passed the comment by.

"I am not quite sure," he said, "about that expression concerning taking off your coat and so on. Our first appeal has to be made to the cultivated voters, you see, and we don't want to sound too—well, too agricultural."

Luke smiled his weary smile. No doubt Venable was right.

"Change that," said Luke to the stenographer—"change it to: 'I shall put on my armor and take up my broadsword to go into this battle.'"

§3. "Miss Forbes got back?" Luke asked that evening when he again rang the bell at the Forbes house.

"Yes, sir," said the servant, "she's in the parlor. Mr. Forbes is in the library. Shall I——"

"I think I can make out with only Miss Forbes—for a while," Luke interrupted. He started to walk past the servant.

"Mr. Nicholson is there, too," the careful servant warned him. "He stayed to dinner."

"Oh, that's good," said Luke. "Well, I'll be glad to see him." But his tone was not so enthusiastic as it had been, and his step hesitated half-way to the parlor door.

The door was open. Through it Betty heard him, and through it she now hurried into the hall to meet him, her hands outstretched.

"How splendid of you!" she was saying. "We've just been reading your letter in the paper, The papers are full of you, and you don't know how proud we are to know you, and how proud that you come here to see us at such a busy time."

Her cheeks were flushed, her brown eyes shone. Luke noted a little curl that escaped from the mass of golden hair, so like a saint's glory to her head, and seemed to caress one coral ear.

"It's all nothing but my good luck," he said as he took both her hands in his and thought not half so much of her words as of the woman that uttered them. "But I didn't expect your father's approval."

"You have it, anyway," she assured him. "Of course, he's a Progressive, and he thinks you would have done better to come into his party; but he does admire your courage, and so does Mr. Nicholson."

"Does he?" said Luke dryly. "I hope not: it might go to my head." He remembered that Nicholson believed in celibacy for the clergy, and he was glad of it.

The young priest rose as his hostess and her new guest came into the Eighteen-Sixty parlor. He was a handsome man and his eyes were kindly, yet he had the face of an ascetic.

"Miss Forbes is right," he said. "New York needs men with high convictions and the courage of them."

"So does the Church," replied Luke heartily—"and she is getting them now."

They sat down.

"The Church," said Nicholson, "has always had them. What she lacked was the co-operation of such men in the practical world. If all of our millionaires were like some few of them, our work would be easy; but now we scarcely know which is more dangerous: the evil tyrant or the evil demagogue."

He talked for some time in this strain, not to weariness, but with the completeness of the zealot. Nicholson regarded wealth as a sacred trust, a gift from God given to the great intellects of the world only that it might be administered for the benefit of the lesser of God's creatures. He mentioned no specific instance, but he saw in many of the country's rich men souls that were proving worthy of their trust and others that were using their money selfishly and even cruelly. For the former he had the highest regard, for the latter the severest condemnation; the spiritual and physical welfare of the poor he considered as the especial care of the more fortunate, and charity was not only the right of penury: it was the salvation of the rich.

Betty listened to him with a rapt face; Luke honored him, but sincerely hoped that he would go. Fearing that this desire was becoming too patent, Luke said:

"The Manhattan and Niagara people don't seem to share your views."

"Ah," said Nicholson, "there you touch a vexed problem, because there you have to do with a corporation, and it is almost a fact that corporations have no souls."

"If that corporation ever had any, it is damned," said Luke; "but what I'm driving at is that the individuals composing a corporation have moral responsibilities."

The clergyman agreed, but in corporations, he thought, responsibility was so intricately subdivided and so sinuously delegated that no one man had much left to him or could incur much guilt for his individual errors. In connection with most such accidents as a railway wreck, there was really an ethical basis for the legal phrase "an act of God."

"Not in the North Bridge wreck," said Luke. "It's been shown that the company used cheap material, didn't have any proper system for checking its work-reports so as to tell whether ordered repairs were made, and didn't hire competent men. The company can't get out of this mess by saying its experts were forced on it by the unions: it hasn't any legal right to delegate its choice of experts to a union. It's a common carrier and, if it can't do its work properly, then it ought to stop work."

Nicholson saw this much as Luke did, and said so at a good deal of length. It was some time before his part of the conversation lagged and he rose to go.

§4. Luke waited only until he heard the door close upon the departing clergyman. Then he turned to Betty with a relieved sigh.

"Phew!" he said. "I'm glad that's over."

She was sitting opposite him in the full glare of light from an old-fashioned, crystal-hung chandelier. Betty could bear strong lights.

"Why?" she asked. Her brow was puckered, but her lips smiled. "I like him. He's very good, and he's doing a really great work. I like him ever so much."

"Oh, yes," said Luke. "Nicholson's all right. He has what he admires in other men: high convictions and the courage of them. Most of us always admire in others what we don't have ourselves; but not Nicholson. He is doing a big work, too. But I'm glad he's gone, just the same."

"Why?" repeated Betty.

Luke rose. He came over to Betty and stood looking down at her, his arms folded across his chest.

"Because," he said, "I wanted to talk to you."

"It didn't look so. It looked as if you wanted to talk to Mr. Nicholson."

"I wanted to talk to you and about you."

She stopped fencing. She gave him her full, frank gaze.

"Well?" she asked.

"You know what I want to say, Betty," he answered. "You've seen for a long time what I was coming to. I held off. I held off because I hadn't anything to

offer you. Even now I haven't much. I haven't half enough. If I win this fight I'm in, it won't give me anything that would make me deserve you. I've not been a bit better than I should be." His voice grew tense. "When I come down to brass tacks, when I—I beg your pardon; but what I mean is that when I get to the point of telling you I love you, I see how far I've been from being what I should be. I—— Oh, hang it all, Betty!" He put out his hands. "I love you. I've never really loved anybody else and never can. If I win this confounded—blessed fight, will you marry me?"

She got slowly to her feet: it seemed to Luke minutes before she had stood up and begun her answer. Then she took both his hands.

"You don't have to win the fight to win me, Luke," she said.

The realization swept over him. He took her in his arms. He looked in her upturned face—the eyes wide, the sweet, fresh cheeks hot, the lips parted, breathing quickly—and then he felt the blood rush to his head, felt it hammer at his temples. It got into his eyes and blinded him. He ground his lips upon hers.

The dull despair of his last months under Leighton commanded a reaction. The rushing changes of the last two days had set his nerves to a speed that would not now cease in whatever physical activities he engaged himself. These things flung him along a new road; they raced him down a way of which he had known but little. As he felt the warmth of her gracious young body next his, he was hurled with such violence down a course so unfamiliar to him that only the thought of losing his race by running it too swiftly could serve to lessen his straining speed. Like a quarter-mile runner stopping himself short in the last hundred yards before the tape, he almost fell as he forced himself to release her.

"Your father," he panted. He looked away from her: "I must see him now."

Betty did not understand. She was only exalted by this new thing; she was only happy.

"Now?" she whispered.

"Yes." He looked back at her and, with a white face, smiled. "He has a right to know." He caught her hand, pressed it only as tightly as he dared. "I'll go to him in the library. Wait for me."

§5. Forbes was seated at a round table, engaged in his regular nightly task of reading the editorial-page of the *Evening Star*, nodding his head when he agreed with its generalities and muttering maledictions upon it when it specifically ridiculed the Progressive Party. As Luke came in, Forbes was in the midst of one of the paper's attacks on progressivism, and his frown seemed to drive his beaked nose into his mustache.

"Oh, Huber," he said, without at once relaxing his scowl; "I didn't know you

were here. Come in. Been here long?"

Luke could not have guessed how long he had been in the house.

"Not very," he ventured.

"Sit down," said Forbes. He had not risen. He indicated an easy-chair near his own.

"Thanks," said Luke; but he did not sit down.

Forbes at last noticed his visitor's nervousness.

"I suppose you've had a hard day," he said. "Pardon me for not congratulating you sooner on your success. This sheet"—he brandished the *Evening Star*—"doesn't want anything but to be against everything. It upsets me every evening. But you've done a big thing. I think you should have come clear over to our side, but I dare say you will do that in time. Meanwhile, I'm sincerely glad for your good fortune. You deserve it."

"You're very good," said Luke. His eyes twinkled a little. "I wonder if you know about it—all."

"Only what this mealy-mouthed sheet says. It's absolutely inexplicable to me, Huber, how a paper written by such able men can be so narrow-minded on broad subjects. However, I think they're going to support *your* party, if they may be said ever to support anything."

"I'm afraid they *are* rather reticent about the real news," said Luke.

"They never tell anything that weighs against their theories."

"They haven't had a chance to tell this."

Forbes looked puzzled.

"What do you mean?"

"It's only just happened." Luke breathed deeply. "I'm engaged to be married," he said. He spoke with an unusual rapidity. "Engaged to be married, and I'd like it to come off—the wedding, I mean—right after the election."

Forbes scrambled up. He wrung Luke's hand.

"Well, well," he said, "you are to be congratulated!"

"I am glad you think so," said Luke, "for you know the girl better than I do."

"The girl? I know her better——" Forbes's voice rose. "You don't mean—— You don't mean to say——"

"Yes," Luke nodded. "It *is* luck, isn't it? It's Betty."

"Bless my soul!" Forbes brought his left hand down on Luke's right shoulder. "Bless my soul! My little girl! Huber, you—you rather knock the wind out of me."

He said all the conventional things; his manner showed all the proper surprise; and both men understood that he had been expecting this news for a long time and wanting it.

"Huber," he said, "of course this is sudden, and of course I'm an old fool not

to have got over considering Betty a child—a mere baby—but, now you're here with the announcement, I'm quite certain that, out of all the men who've been tagging after her, you're the one that I'd want for a son-in-law."

Luke again mumbled his thanks.

"You're not standing still," pursued Forbes: "you're going ahead. You have a great deal to you, and Betty's the very girl to make you make the best of yourself"—Forbes's voice abandoned the commonplace note and fell to the note of genuine feeling—"then there's your interest in the Business. Huber, I've always regretted that I didn't have a son to leave the Business to, as my father left it to me and his father to him. If you'd married somebody else, and Betty had married some chap that had no interest in it, the Business might have gone over to you eventually, and so on to children of another stock than mine; whereas, now"—he looked around Luke to the doorway—"Betty!" he said.

She had not obeyed Luke; she was standing at the door.

"I couldn't wait," she confessed; but she said it with an allegiance that was now all for Luke.

"Come here," her father ordered.

He released Luke's hand and shoulder. The girl ran to him and put her arms about his neck.

"Please be nice, daddy," she whispered. "Please be nice."

Forbes managed to draw a handkerchief and blow his nose.

"I *am* a fool," he said. "I—Betty, you're looking so much to-night the way your mother—By George, I *am* a fool! I think I must be getting old, Huber."

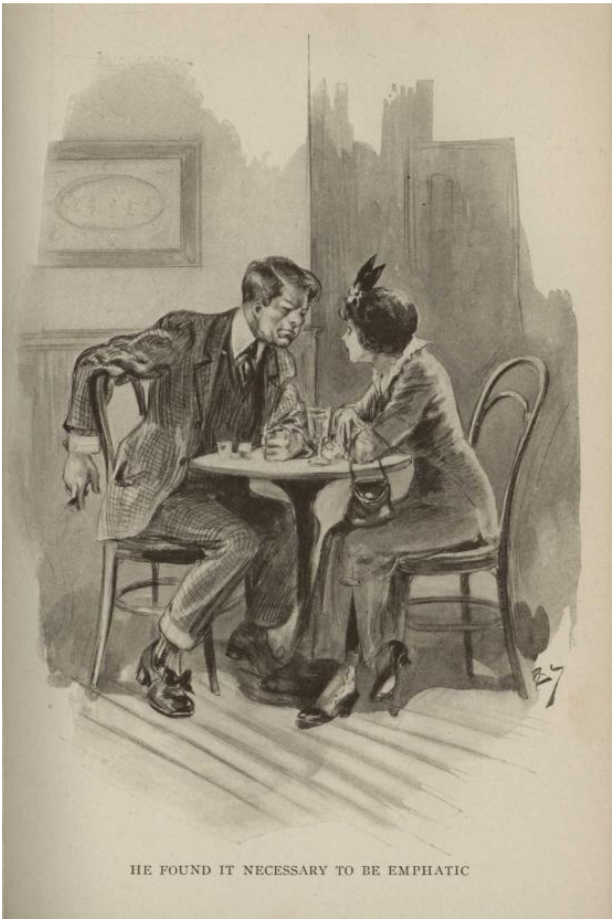
§6. In the room at the end of the hall marked "Family Entrance" to a saloon in Fifty-second Street, near Eighth Avenue, a red-headed man dressed in cheap clothes of fashionable cut, was leaning across a table at which he was drinking raw whisky with a girl who, had she not been too heavily painted, would have had a face like that popularly ascribed to Joan of Arc.

"I've got him showed to me," the man was saying. "He lives at the Arapahoe on Thirty-ninth Street. I'll play lighthouse. All you gotta do's put on them glad clothes an' get him into Pearl's Six' Av'nue place. He's in wrong, anyhow. Then I'll tip off Charley Guth, an' he'll put Donovan wise an' pinch the joint. See?"

The girl that looked like Joan of Arc nodded comprehendingly.

"But the clothes has got to be real swell," she said.

CHAPTER X



HE FOUND IT NECESSARY TO BE EMPHATIC

§1. As Luke left the Forbes house that night, his step kept time with the beat of his pulses, and he walked fast. At last he thought that he saw happiness within reach.

He was not yet happy; he was quite clear about this. One half of him, perhaps the nobler half, was engaged in a political battle with the forces of corruption, but it was so engaged that those forces affected it; they invaded his individuality and, therefore, curtailed his freedom and curtailed completeness. Happiness, if it was to be found at all, was to be found only in the perfect development of self, and such a development was impossible so long as self, seeking expression in politics, found expression thwarted by an evil opposition in the political field.

Nevertheless, this opposition, Luke was sure, could be crushed and swept away; his ideal for the good of the city, which had become his own good, could be attained; and then, he told himself, that other part of him, the part that loved Betty and that Betty loved, could enjoy Betty as the reward of the whole man. It was as if he were one of two runners. Betty he saw not as the goal, but as the prize to be given him for leading at the goal; not a prize that any other runner could win by worsting him in the race, but a prize that he himself could deserve only if he were to lead at the finish.

He was thinking of this when he left the Subway station and walked toward the Arapahoe, but under his conscious thoughts the subconscious self was still tingling with the emotions that had flamed up in him when he took Betty in his arms and felt her lips on his. He quivered with the physical recollection, and though the flame had burned, his flesh found the pain of it sweet.

At the corner nearest the apartment house in which he lived, he became aware of a woman. The street was nearly empty, but until she was close beside him he did not notice her. How she came to be at his elbow he did not appreciate, nor did he at first realize whether she were young or old, beautiful or ugly.

"Will you tell me the time, please?" she asked.

Luke's experience in Leighton's office had long ago taught him that such a request was the commonest form of watch-stealing, but he was not afraid of losing his watch. He stopped under a lamp-post.

"Certainly," he said.

"I know it's late," pursued the woman, "but I don't know how late."

The words were thick. The voice was the voice of all the phantoms of the street, low in pitch and hoarse, but luring because of all that it connoted: because of the mystery, the adventure which, after all knowledge of her sordidness and all understanding of her frigidity, the woman who most reveals her body has maintained by that revelation's forced screening of her soul.

Luke consulted his watch.

"It's a quarter to eleven," he said.

He looked at her, and he was glad to look. That she was well-dressed, but overdressed and wore her clothes with the defiance of one unhabituated to them, did not impress him. What impressed him was the face that, in spite of its tokens of much evil done and more evil suffered, retained the fragile beauty which men associate with innocence. The calm, broad brow, the gray eyes wide and steady, the underlip timidly drawn back, the delicate chin upturned above a slim white throat, reminded him of the pictures of Joan of Arc on trial and foredoomed by her English accusers.

"It *is* late, isn't it?" she said.

"Yes," said Luke. He had forgotten about his watch; he was holding it loosely in his hand.

"I wonder," said the woman, "if it's too late for you to take a little walk with me."

Her eyes had narrowed coldly; a smile that was a trade grimace distorted her mouth.

The change in her wakened Luke. He restored his watch to his pocket. He felt a slight chill at his heart and a self-accusation.

"No," he said brusquely; and started to walk away.

The woman followed.

"Aw, come on," she urged. Her tone coarsened under his refusal.

"No," said Luke.

"Please?" her voice whined. She put her hand on his arm.

Luke shook off the hand. He was too angry with himself to have pity for her.

"Stop this," he ordered.

"But won't you listen?" The woman's hand returned persistently; it clutched. "I got somethin' to——"

Luke saw that they were at the door of the Arapahoe.

"I'm sorry," he said, "but I can't stop to listen to you."

He went into the apartment house.

§2. He really was sorry. Once inside the door of the Arapahoe, he said to himself that the woman had only been plying her trade, and that what he had visited upon her was a portion of the wrath against his own momentary weakness. He could never have given way to her, because he was so firm in his resolve to live worthily for Betty that he could not enough want to give way to offset the efficacy of his resolve; only the portion of him subject to his will without being a part of his will had momentarily weakened; it could not have rebelled victoriously, and although

it merited punishment, the exterior cause of its weakness did not deserve censure. Altogether, Luke concluded, he had behaved in a rather contemptible fashion.

His mind was immediately diverted. As he passed the clerk's desk in the hall, the clerk beckoned darkly to him.

"There are some reporters looking for you here," he whispered. "I sent them into the waiting-room so's you could get by them when you came in, if you wanted to. Do you?"

Luke almost laughed as he reflected upon the figure he would have presented to the representatives of the press, had they been waiting for him at the door.

"Yes, I'll see them," he said.

They came to him in a body, seven of them. They worked for the morning papers and, because the evening papers had printed Luke's letter about his resignation from the District-Attorney's staff, they wanted a fresh sensation for their journals.

Luke leaned against a pillar in the lobby and talked to them. Most of them he had met while in Leighton's office. Personally, he was popular with them, and he liked them.

"I'll say anything you want," he agreed. "But what is there to say?"

The spokesman was a keen man with curling black hair.

"You might develop the last part of your letter," he suggested: "the part about the big financiers that you're going gunning for."

"I haven't got the gun yet," objected Luke. "Better wait and see if I'm nominated, boys."

"Oh, you'll be nominated, all right. Come on, Mr. Huber."

"You're going to support the League, anyhow," said a stout little fellow, whose paper opposed all reformers. "You can tell us how the League will go for the men at the top."

To this Luke agreed. He began to speak and, as he saw the busy pencils noting his best phrases upon sheets of roughly-folded copy-paper, he fell into stride with his subject. He declared that the League meant to put an end to the influence of Big Business in municipal politics, and, although he mentioned no names, it was evident what big business men he had in mind.

The reporters tried to make him mention names, but their efforts only seemed to restore his caution. They urged him to be specific in his charges against the present administration of the District-Attorney's office; but here again they encountered the impassive side of Luke with which they were more familiar.

"No, no," said Luke; "there may be a time for all that, but this isn't the time. Just wind up by saying we mean, once and for all, to put Wall Street out of politics and graft out of the administration of justice in New York City and to keep them

out, if we have to send every financier and every policeman to jail."

§3. The reporters made all that they could of what Luke gave them, and the next morning's papers were full of it. Leighton, on his way downtown, read them with anger against Luke and annoyance with himself for losing a man that might have been so valuable to him.

He began to be afraid of the effect of Huber's implications regarding the District-Attorney's office. Remembering that his party was in no position to risk putting up a weak candidate, he telephoned to George J. Hallett and was granted an interview: he said he knew of the letters in Luke's possession and knew how Luke came by them.

Hallett, whose office was almost the counterpart of that in which he consulted with his master and Rivington, sprawled in a deeply upholstered chair. He smoked steadily at a cigar, and when the letters were mentioned, he accepted the mention with complete composure.

"Who else knows about 'em?" he frankly inquired.

"Nobody," said Leighton—"unless Huber's been talking."

"He's got 'em, hasn't he?"

"Had them the last time I saw him."

"Anyway, you haven't 'em?"

"No, of course, I haven't."

Hallett took his cigar from his mouth; he looked at the cigar, and from it to Leighton.

"I don't see what use *you* are to us, then," he said.

Leighton understood that the only satisfactory way to deal with this man was the direct way.

"I can't be any use to you except to tell you where the leak is these letters came through."

"What do you want us to do for you?"

"I want your support at election time."

"Can't promise it. The other side has just as good a claim on us."

"Heney?"

"An' the whole Democratic organization, yes."

"Would you promise not to interfere on either side?"

"Can't do it. You see, you haven't got much to sell."

Leighton ran his fingers through his black hair.

"Look here, Mr. Hallett," he began again, "we don't know each other personally——"

"That's all right," said Hallett.

"Well, then, if I can't count on your influence for the election, may I count on it for the nomination?"

"Who stole those letters?" said Hallett.

"I can count on you people in the matter of the nomination?"

"Yes."

"A man named Rollins."

Late that afternoon it was found that Rollins had made an overcharge for postage-stamps in the course of his secretarial work. He was arrested and "railroaded" to jail.

§4. It was somewhat later when the Republicans nominated Leighton and then, to the amazement of the public, the Democrats and Progressives each opposed him with candidates so weak that every politician understood this as a surrender to Leighton in order to defeat the candidate of the Municipal Reform League. In advance of their occurrence, however, all these things were gossiped about by the leaders of every faction and so confidently expected that plans were shaped in accordance with them. Somehow, they sent word ahead to the Reform headquarters even on the day of the happening that set them in motion, and Venable and Nelson, together with the other executives of the M. R. L. bestirred themselves.

"Where's Yeates?" asked Nelson, as he came into Luke's room, where Venable and Luke were busy. "That young fellow's never around when he's wanted."

"He sent in word he had some other engagements," said Venable.

"Had to play golf with Hallett's son, I guess, if it wasn't L. Bergen Rivington," Nelson sneered. "There's too much society in that boy for any political usefulness."

Luke looked up from the notes he was preparing for his formal letter accepting the nomination that the League was next day to offer him:

"Is Yeates a friend of those people?" he asked. "I knew he knew some of them, but is he a friend?"

"Only socially," he said. "Yeates was born to it, but politically he is all right. He has high ideals and a really fine enthusiasm."

"Hum," said Luke. "What do you think of this paragraph, Nelson?"

He read from his notes:

"During the past few years, those persons in a position to observe the inner workings of our politics, both in national and municipal affairs, have been alarmed to see the steady encroachment made upon them by High Finance. There is no longer any room left for doubt. The purpose of this invading power is clear: its purpose is conquest. Unless the free voters act, and act quickly, the true government of the United States in general, and of New York in particular, will not rest in the President or Congress,

in Mayors and Boards of Aldermen, in the Constitution, the charter, or the courts: it will rest in a combination of Big Business interests that will control the men elected as representatives of the people."

Nelson slapped his thigh.

"That's it!" he said. "That's the talk. We ought to have had some of that kind of medicine long ago. Look at all this recent drug-legislation, for instance. You can't imagine what my firm's been up against. They're getting an appetite for the wholesale drug-trade now, these big fellows are, and they're paving their way by lobbies at Washington and Albany and half a dozen state capitals!"

The three worked over the letter for the rest of that day, having a scanty luncheon brought into the office from a nearby restaurant, and talking plans while they ate. All the time callers were sending in their names with requests for interviews, workers were reporting, men at the telephone were ringing up to ask instructions, and clerks and stenographers were running in and out to deliver telegrams and special-delivery letters and to receive replies.

Luke's only appreciable pause was to read two notes of congratulation from his mother and Jane, the former commending him for adopting a course that the writer was sure her husband would have adopted had he lived, the latter full of pride in his approaching success, but ending with the postscript: "Jesse [Jesse Kinzer was Jane's husband, the new Congressman] says that conditions in New York are 'purely local,' whatever that means." Altogether, Luke had a busy day. He was a tired man when, at nine o'clock, he again rang the bell of the Forbes house in Brooklyn.

§5. To Luke's surprise, it was Forbes himself that opened the door.

"I've been looking for you," he said seriously. "Can you come into the library? I want to see you for a few minutes. It's important."

The concluding words were unnecessary. The tone of the words that preceded them would alone have been sufficient to warn Luke of trouble: Forbes's voice was husky, tense, uncertain.

"Of course," Luke assented.

He followed Forbes into the library, and there, as the host closed the door, Luke saw in the face that confronted him an expression which conformed with the tone and import of Forbes's first words. The elder man's face was haggard.

"I shall have to tell you something," he was saying—"something that I ought to have told you long ago, or as much of it as had happened then. But, you see, I had no idea it could be so important—ever be so important." He broke off with

a remembrance of his accustomed courtesy: "I beg your pardon. Won't you sit down, Huber? I quite forgot to ask you. For my part, I couldn't sit still if my life depended on it."

Luke stood by the center-table.

"No, no," he said. "Don't bother—and don't worry." He thought that Forbes looked as if death were in the house. "Is anything wrong with Betty?" he suddenly asked.

"No, it's not that. It's what I say. Of course I never supposed your going in for the Municipal Reform League movement could have any business significance——"

Luke, relieved about Betty, was unable to follow Forbes's disjointed sentences.

"It hasn't," he said. "It hasn't any business significance whatever."

"Ah"—Forbes shook his head—"that's what I thought, too. But it has. Huber, this may mean the end of R. H. Forbes & Son. Think of it: it may mean the end of the Business—a business that has been honorably conducted by my family for three generations."

What such a catastrophe would mean to Forbes nobody knew better than Luke, but how the Municipal Reform League could be concerned in it was beyond guessing.

"Won't you try to begin at the beginning?" said Luke. He was used to getting coherent stories in preliminary interviews with incoherent witnesses, and he fell into his professional manner.

"It's this way." Forbes turned his gray eyes away and fumbled with an ornament on the mantel-tree. "When you came into the Business, I had several loans outstanding—the Business had. They were all well secured, and you know how solid the concern's always been. With the money you put in and the earnings, I was able to take up some of them, but there were the improvements and extensions made necessary by fresh competition and the new inventions and the machine-trust's raise of prices. Well, I had to leave a loan outstanding at the East County National."

"Yes," said Luke encouragingly. "How much was it?"

"Two hundred and fifty thousand. It was a good deal, I know, but, you see, when I negotiated it——"

"Never mind the reasons now. What were its terms?"

"It was a call-loan," said Forbes in a shaken voice.

Luke's amazement conquered his reserve.

"What? And for two hundred and fifty thousand?"

"Yes. There was the competition. It was growing hot. The Business——"

"How did you ever arrange it?"

"I was surprised myself at the time to find it so easy, but I was too glad to get it to ask questions. Now, I wish I had. I believe the bank was influenced by some people that wanted to get us into trouble—want to form a ready-made clothing trust."

"It's incredible!" cried Luke. "Not one of the agents that I had look into your business for me mentioned this."

"I didn't know that, Huber." Forbes looked his appeal. "I ask you to believe me."

"All right. It was my own fault. I should have asked you more questions. What puzzles me is how this loan was concealed."

"It was at the request of the bank. They said it was so unusual that they didn't want it more widely known than was absolutely necessary, and I agreed because of the credit of the Business. Now I believe it was all a trap set by the men that want to form the trust."

Luke did not pause to waste reproaches over either his own stupid blindness or Forbes's culpable rashness. He pressed forward:

"And now they're going to call the loan?"

Forbes bowed his head.

"And we can't meet it?"

"If—if we tried, we could do it only by wrecking the Business."

"But we can go somewhere else. The East County isn't the only bank in New York."

"That is what I thought. It's what I said."

Forbes was swallowing a sob. "I said it to Osserman—that's the president—I said it to him himself."

"Well?" persisted Luke.

"Well"—Forbes's eyes met Huber's—"it wasn't any use."

"Now, look here," said Luke. He put into his voice a calm that he did not feel. "Try to tell me just what happened. I can't advise you till I know that, even if I'm not the business-fool I seem to have proved myself to be. First of all, Osserman sent you some sort of word, didn't he?"

"Yes, of course."

"What was it?"

"It was a letter—just a personal letter."

"When did you get it?"

"About eleven this morning."

"So then you went over to the bank?"

"Yes."

"And asked to see this man Osserman?"

"Yes."

"And what did he say?"

"Well," he said—"I can't tell you exactly; he was careful not to use definite words; but careful to make his meaning clear."

"What was his meaning, then?"

"He said in effect that he understood you were interested in our Business."

"What of it? That's what I want to know, Forbes. What's my interest in your firm got to do with your standing at the East County National?"

"Oh, he didn't say at first. At first he said he understood we were not sound."

"So you told him he was mistaken and offered to show the books?"

"Of course I did." Forbes's chin shot upward. "I told him that the Forbes firm was one of the oldest and——"

"Yes, yes. And then he mentioned me. How did I hurt the firm's standing?"

"He was really very plausible about that. I must say, Huber, that he rather opened my eyes to a phase of your political activities I hadn't before thought of."

"What phase?"

"To be quite frank, he called your public utterances wild. He said they attacked credit and might shake it. He even intimated that if you were elected, you'd go in for a course of action—you had pledged yourself to go in for one that would upset credit altogether. And that's true, Huber." Forbes gained a certain confidence. "When you come to think of it, the business interests of the city—I mean the sound conservative business interests—ought not to be made to suffer for the sins of the big financiers."

Luke recaptured his composure. His face relaxed; he looked lazy and uninterested.

"So I suppose," he said, "that this banker asked you to tell me to get out of the fight."

"Yes, but of course——"

"Really, that's the highest testimony to the League's strength that we've had yet."

"Yes, but, of course, I told him I couldn't do that."

"What did he say then?"

"He said he was afraid the City Chamberlain would withdraw all the city funds on deposit at the East County if the bank kept on carrying a loan you were interested in."

"And you took all this like a child?"

"I didn't. You ought to know me better than that."

"What did you do?"

"I was indignant. I told you I was. I said I would not have a loan from a concern that interfered with the political convictions of its creditors. I said I

would go somewhere else."

"Did you go?"

The sob returned to Forbes's throat.

"Yes, I did," he said; "and it was the most humiliating experience of my career. When I thought of the firm of R. H. Forbes & Son begging credit, I could hardly bear it. But I went to the Lexington National."

"They turned you down?"

"They listened very politely and said they would consider the proposition."

"Well, then," said Luke, "you're crossing a bridge before you come to it."

"No, I am not; for presently they sent over a messenger with a note that was no more than an insulting refusal."

"You gave up then?"

"No, I tried again. I tried Clement & Co." Forbes seemed unable to conclude.

"And they?" urged Luke.

"They wouldn't consider it for a moment, Huber."

Luke did not like to look at Forbes's suffering, but he had to hear the end.

"Well?" he said.

Forbes flung out his hands.

"What more could I do?" he demanded. "If it became known that the firm was going begging—yes, begging—from bank to bank, what would happen to our credit? I didn't dare to go anywhere else. I—Huber, I went back to Osserman and asked him for time."

Luke sat down. He picked up a paper and made a transparent pretense of glancing at it.

"Did he give you time?"

"He said he'd give me a week."

"A whole week?" Luke tried to appear encouraged. "That's six good working days. You can get the money together in that time."

"Huber"—Forbes came over to Luke and stood above the newspaper—"I've told you what it would do to our credit to try. But I've come to the conclusion that we could not get this money from any bank in America."

"What do you mean? Not if we have security?"

"Not if we could offer the Metropolitan Life Building for security. Not from any bank in America."

Luke put down the paper.

"But that——" He stopped a moment, and then went on: "But there's only one group of men in the country that could put up such a wall."

"That," said Forbes simply, "is the group I mean."

Luke's eyes were veiled. He rose and walked across the room. Presently, over his shoulder, he inquired sharply:

"What makes you think this?"

Forbes was frank:

"I don't know. I can't tell you. A hundred little things. But I am sure."

"I thought you said something about a clothing trust."

"I did. It was the same crowd. Now they have some additional reason. Oh, I couldn't doubt it. It was behind every word Osserman said. It was standing back of his words, but it was on tiptoe, looking over them."

Luke turned and came up to Forbes. He was quite calm again.

"I know what you want me to do," he said.

"Yes," said Forbes: it was his way of saying: "You have read my meaning, and I will stand by it."

"Well, I can't do it."

Luke spoke quietly. It hurt him to have to say this thing.

"I was afraid that was the way you'd take it," said Forbes.

"How else could I take it?"

"You know what it means to me, Huber?"

"Yes. I know what the firm means to you, but I can't do what you ask. You want me to give up what I think is right for the sake of saving your firm. I can't do it."

"It's your firm, too, Huber."

"Then I've got a right to hurt it."

"I'm not asking you to do anything wrong; I'm only asking you to wait."

"That's just what I can't do," said Luke.

Forbes would hear no more. He twitched with a spasm of weak rage. His voice rang high.

"You're a fool!" he cried. "You talk as if I were trying to compound a felony with you. What am I asking? I'm only asking you to hold off for this campaign. I'm only asking you to stand by the man that took you into his business—my Business, the one that my grandfather founded and my father handed down to me. Haven't *I* stood by *you*? Didn't I trust you? I've kept out of all these big combinations, but I know how they work—nobody can help knowing these days—and when I took you in, how was I to be sure you weren't a dummy representing somebody else, and so on, higher and higher up, till the trail ended with just these same men? But no, I trusted you. I trusted you, and now—— You've no right to humiliate me! You've no right to wreck my Business! Do you know what you're doing? You're making a beggar out of my daughter—out of the girl you told me last night you wanted to be your wife!"

Luke had been expecting this. The muscles about his mouth tightened, but all that he said was:

"I suppose you have spoken to her?"

"Yes, I have. Of course I have!" cried Forbes.

"And what does she say?"

Forbes tried to take Luke's hand.

"Why do you act this way?" he pleaded. "Why can't you wait? They haven't nominated you yet. Withdraw your name. That won't hurt the League, and it will only make you all the stronger for the next time; and by the next time we'll be ready to meet all opposition. This time you can't be elected even if you are nominated. Why do you want to jump into the fire?"

"What," insisted Luke, "does Betty say?"

She was at the door. She came in as he asked the question. She looked from her lover to her father, and then she ran to her father and put her head on his shoulder.

§6. Luke took a short breath. He wanted to leave them. He felt that he could not face much more. He wondered what Forbes had said to her and how much she had heard of what Forbes and he were saying.

"Betty!" said her father. He patted her head. Luke thought that the caressing hand looked old. "Betty!"

She spoke with her face hidden:

"Oh, Luke, you wouldn't hurt father?"

"It isn't that, Betty." Luke was angry. The girl was behaving as he thought that a girl placed as she was ought to behave, and he loved her no less for that, but he was angry at her father's weakness in putting her in such a position, "It isn't that, Betty, I've got to do it. You don't understand these things. You can't understand them."

"She knows that *I* understand them," Forbes interposed.

"What of it?" challenged Luke. "Betty, I've got to do what I think's right. You wouldn't have me go against everything I believe, would you? You wouldn't have me do something I thought was wrong?"

Betty half raised her head:

"But it can't be wrong not to ruin us!"

Luke turned his words on Forbes.

"I'll withdraw from the company," he said.

"I couldn't buy you out," Forbes answered. He bit his lip; shame colored his cheeks. "And if you sold to anybody else it would be sure to be letting in our enemies. Even the mere report that you wanted to sell would wreck us, coming on top of those bank interviews."

Luke knew Forbes was right.

"Betty," he said, "a lot of men that believe in me are going to offer me this

nomination. It's a nomination to a place that makes its holder an officer of the court, an officer of justice, yet the plain truth is your father wants me to let these other men's money, or the power of their money, buy me off from doing justice to them."

"Nonsense!" Forbes was strengthened by his daughter's meed of comfort. "You won't be elected if you are nominated."

"They seem to think I will," said Luke.

"And somebody else," urged Betty, "could do just as well against them, Luke."

"That's not the point, Betty. It's a personal question, a question of personal morals; it's a matter of my own conscience."

She turned until she stood no longer between the two men. She stood at her father's side. Her cheeks were damp from weeping, but her eyes shone.

"But think, Luke," she said. "You *are* young. Father's twice as old, and he *must* know more. He must be right. He wouldn't ask you to do anything that was wrong, would you, father?"

Forbes shook his head.

"I know it's a lot for you to have to give up," she went on; "but you ought to be willing to give up a lot if—if you——"

"If I love you?" asked Luke.

She met him.

"Yes," she said.

"She's right, Luke," nodded her father.

"Then," pursued Luke—the tone was his laziest—"what about her love for me? Isn't it to——"

Betty interrupted. She had taken Forbes's hand:

"You're not going to make me choose between you and father, are you?" she pleaded.

"I tell you," said Luke, "it isn't anything of that sort, Betty. I've got to do what I'm going to do. You haven't any choice, and neither have I. You might almost say it's a religious question. It's like saving my soul. I've got to do it; I've just got to; just because it's the one right thing, I've got to do it. Why"—his manner grew tense—"you don't know; even your father doesn't know. This North Bridge wreck, with all those people killed and wounded: that's what these men did, these men that are trying to keep me out of the district-attorneyship."

"The North Bridge wreck?" snapped Forbes. "That was on the M. & N. What are you talking about, Huber?"

Luke realized that he had gone further than the limits of his promise of temporary silence concerning the letters, but he was too bitterly tried not to go still further.

"Yes," he said, "I mean just that. Everybody knows the N. Y. & N. J. crowd own the majority of the stock in the M. & N., and you know it, too. What's more, this wreck was their direct fault. I can prove that and I mean to. That's why they're after me: I mean to prove it if they don't square things. And so they're afraid of me."

"Ridiculous!" said Forbes. "That's just the trouble with you, Huber: you're going about making wild, unfounded statements like this."

"I ought not to tell even you two," Luke answered; "but the fact is, I have letters written by one of these men that will substantiate every word I say."

"You mean they'll show these people owned the road?"

"Practically, and ordered the poor rails that caused that wreck."

"Absurd: they couldn't do that. They didn't operate the road. This sort of thing is what is upsetting legitimate business: a few men going on the way you are. I don't think these people at the top are any better than they should be—I've often said so to you—but you can't go around calling them murderers. That's ridiculous."

Before Luke could reply, Betty again shifted the issue.

"Luke, you won't do it?" she appealed. "You'll give it up—for father's sake?"

He started to speak, but she dropped her father's hand and came to him with hers upraised.

"No," she said; "don't tell me now. Don't say anything now. Don't speak. You'll only be sorry. You're hurt and angry. Of course, you are. Go away. Wait. Go away just for to-night and think it over, and come back to-morrow." Her hand crept into his. "I know it's awfully hard for you to give it all up, even for a few years. I know what it means to you. Don't think I don't know, Luke. But——" She looked into his face. "Please, dear?"

His face was set.

"Good-by," he said.

"You'll be back to-morrow?"

He freed himself.

"Yes," he said. "Good-night."

§7. It was simply that he could not stay any longer. He left the house with his mind made up; he would not withdraw from the fight for the district-attorneyship. To keep his word, he would go back to see her next day, but he would go back only to end what he had not the heart to end to-night.

The thing had ended itself. This was the conclusion of all his chances for Betty. They were over.

He loved her. He went away from her with the certainty that nothing which

life might henceforth rob him of could be the equal of this loss.

Yet he did not blame her. Brought up as he had been, he believed that her attitude was the inevitable one and the right. He had ventured that single question about the test of her love for him, but he felt that it was an unfair question. Until a girl married, her first duty was toward her parents. His own duty and Betty's duty clashed. There was no possibility of compromise. Forbes was a weakling, but, in cleaving to Forbes, Betty, Luke felt, did the only thing that she rightly could do.

He wondered what would come of that side of his life which she had gone out of. As much as might be, he would crowd its borders with the activities of his professional and political work, but something of the space would remain: it belonged. He was still black with the despair of his loss when he turned into Thirty-ninth Street and saw, standing there as if waiting for him, the girl that looked like Joan of Arc.

"I've been waitin' for you," she said.

Her cheeks and mouth were not painted to-night, and their lines were softer; they spoke only of what she had suffered and not of what she had inflicted. Her eyes were wet with tears; her underlip quivered.

"I thought I told you last night," began Luke.

"I know," she said. "An' then I wanted what you thought. But not now, not to-night." She spoke rapidly as if determined that he should hear her out before he could escape. "Don't mind the way I talk. I just kind of talk that way because it gets like a habit. What I want's help. I'm in trouble. Honest to God I am."

She was surely in trouble, and she was beautiful.

"You mean——" His hand went to his pocket.

"No, not money," she said. "It ain't that. It's about my sister. They've got her; my fellow has. Listen." She seized his wrist. "Will you listen a minute, please? Here, if you don't want no one to see you in this here apartment house, come on over here toward Six' Av'nue. They've got her: my kid sister!"

Luke looked at the woman. He could see nothing but sincerity. He was not afraid of an attempt at robbery, and he could think of no other reason for her request except the one she gave.

"Yes, I'll go with you," he said.

She hurried him into the darker street.

"Listen," she said: "I'm in the business. You know that. I don't let on to be nothin' much. But I've got a kid sister that lives home; an' she's straight, Jenny is. Well, I was talkin' to her to-night when my fellow came up, an' he sent me on an errand—we was all standin' right over on that corner—an' when I come back, they was gone, both of them—an' I know he's got her in here in Pearl's Six' Av'nue place."

"How do you know that?"

"I guessed it, an' then I rang the bell an' one o' the girls told me I was on, an' then Pearl came down an' yelled for the bouncer an' they throwed me out."

In the lamplight of the street her face looked like the face of an innocent girl.

"Why didn't you call a policeman?" asked Luke.

"Aw, you know them. Pearl stands in."

"But they'd have got your sister, anyhow."

"Not the cop on this beat. I wouldn't give up to him the other night, and he run me in."

They stopped at a narrow door. There was a shop on one side of it and a saloon on the other.

"This is the place," said the girl. "Pearl's joint's over the store."

"You want me," asked Luke, "to go in and bring your sister out?"

The girl assented. "She's only a kid. I know what I am all right; but she's only a kid, an' she's straight; she's always been straight. You won't have no trouble. They're always scared of anybody like you. You'll do it, won't you?" She leaned toward him. "You ain't afraid?"

The infamy burned him.

"Afraid?" he said slowly. "No, I'm not afraid." He rang the bell.

The girl wrung her hands.

"You're good. You're awful good. Mamie'll owe just everything to you."

"Who will?" asked Luke.

"Mamie. That's my sister's name. She'll——"

"I see," said Luke.

The door opened. A negro servant stood in the darkened hallway before them. Luke and the girl stepped inside.

"Wait a minute," said Luke quietly.

He brushed the servant's hand from the knob. He saw the two women standing open-mouthed, but before words came to them, he stepped back into the street, closing the door behind him. The girl's slip about her sister's name had saved him.

§8. He was glad to be in the light. He hurried across the street with no purpose but that of getting as quickly and as far from the house as possible. He was escaping.

For a minute or more he did not know what it was that he was escaping from. Then he glanced back toward the doorway.

Three policemen were entering the doorway. As Luke reached the corner,

a gong clanged and a patrol-wagon turned into Sixth Avenue.

A messenger-boy, who had been standing on the corner, began to trot after the wagon. Luke stopped him.

"What's the matter?" asked Luke.

The boy turned to him a leering face:

"It's a raid, I guess. I knowed there was somethin' doin' when I seen that patrol standin' over on Thirty-nint' Street."

CHAPTER XI

§1. Luke wanted to dismiss the episode of the raid as a coincidence. He tried to argue that the girl had been a stool-pigeon employed to get him into the Sixth Avenue house solely for the purpose of robbery by confederates waiting for her there. Schemes of that sort were common enough in New York and succeeded in spite of their clumsiness; the more often one was reported in the papers and brought to the attention of the papers, the readier a certain portion of the public was to succumb to the next attempts. Luke wanted to believe that the appearance of the police might have proved welcome enough for him.

It was the news Forbes had given him that weighed against any such supposition. If his enemies were at work to ruin him financially, they might well be at work to break him and bring him to terms by means of a scandal in the police courts. It was all very well to say that the attack on the Forbes company ought to suffice them: Luke began to feel that these foes were the kind who want certainty enough to use more than one method of securing it. He had heard of a rebellious city official thus captured in a raid on a gambling-house. That man, he had been told, was released from the police station only upon signing a compromising paper, which was thereafter held by his political superiors as a bond to assure his future obedience to their wishes. Luke saw how a similar course could have been followed in regard to himself.

What worried him most, however, was, of course, the break with Betty and the difficulties in which he had innocently entangled her father. He was sincerely sorry for Forbes, whose shortcomings were forgivable because of worship of tradition, and the loss of Betty meant a descent into the pit of despair.

It was early morning before a sudden hope came to Luke. He had lain sleepless for hours, not trying to solve his financial riddle, but only contemplating its

apparent impossibility of solution, and he had turned from that to the machinations of his enemies with genuine relief. This time the change must have rested his resourcefulness, for, in the midst of tearing at the sticky strands in which Stein and the men behind Stein had enmeshed him, the name of Ruysdael shot into his mind as the name of one who could and might advance the money to save Forbes and bring back Betty. He would go to Ruysdael at the earliest possible moment.

With that thought, he could dismiss all memory of the raid in Sixth Avenue. Almost immediately he fell asleep.

§2. The next day was not without its fresh warnings from the powers that opposed him, and the first of these came from the headquarters of the Municipal Reform League itself. Luke thought it better taste for him to remain away from the headquarters while the formalities of the nomination were gone through with by the committee that was then to make its ticket regular by means of petition. But it was too early in the day to call on Ruysdael, so he remained in his rooms at the Arapahoe, and here, at eleven o'clock, Venable telephoned him.

"The meeting is over," said Venable.

"Good," said Luke. "The ticket is the one agreed on?"

"Yes. You have my congratulations, Mr. Huber."

"Thank you." Luke thought that the tone of his supporter was somewhat strained. "I hope everything went off smoothly," he added.

"Well, no," said Venable, "it didn't. It is all right now, but I am bound to tell you that a little opposition had developed against you. We overcame it, but it was there and from some men that we had every reason to believe would support you. I don't understand it, Mr. Huber; it was mysterious."

"I'm coming right down," said Luke.

At headquarters he learned little more. The committee had met with no indication of approaching trouble. Save for two or three persons whose means of livelihood were the practical organization of reform political movements, nearly all the members were business men, in small but sound industries, each of unquestioned probity. The candidates slated for every other post were accepted as a matter of course; but when Luke's name was brought up by Venable for the district-attorneyship, one of the politicians and several of the business men opposed acceptance. They were dogged, but vague. The politician at last spoke of Luke as having courted too much animosity from the upper regions of finance.

"He has talked too wild," said this one. "He oughtn't to have threatened till after election. Of course, I know what he's got to do if he's elected, but he needn't have begun it beforehand. I haven't got anything against him, but he's shown his hand too soon, and so he won't make a good candidate."

The business men spoke much as Forbes had spoken. The Municipal Reform League was a radical organization, but it ought to be radical within reason. Huber's public utterances had been too sweepingly radical. They feared him; they thought him too hot-headed. He was still too young. In pursuing Big Business, he was sure to trample smaller, legitimate business; he would upset credit.

The majority of the committee was loyal to Luke and had its way. Luke received the nomination, but such dissenters as were converted came to him half-heartedly, and two of the timorous business men withdrew from the organization.

"Then, there is Yeates, too," said Venable. "He wasn't at the meeting, but he telephoned he was coming here to see you about this time, and I gathered that he isn't in a particularly pleasant frame of mind."

Luke thought of Venable's long years of battle for reform.

"You know what's at the back of all this?" he said.

"I think I do," said Venable.

"I mean: you know *who's* back of it?"

"I can guess. Your published attack was rather clear, Mr. Huber."

"Then, are you and the League prepared to go right ahead?"

"Yes, we are."

"You, too? You individually?"

Venable's old eyes glittered.

"I always suspected these people," he said. "I always felt sure they were against us. They were never so strongly against us as they are now, but their being so much more against us now only makes me the more certain that what we are doing is right."

"They have a good deal of power, Mr. Venable."

"I know that better than you do, my boy; but they can't hurt me personally, if that is what you mean. What little money I have comes from the rents of an uptown apartment house. It's in a good neighborhood and full of steady people. Nobody can take that away from me. It isn't as if I drew my income from bonds, but if I did, and if these people could ruin me"—he took Luke's hand—"I should go right ahead."

They had been talking in Luke's office. Shortly after Venable left it, Yeates was shown in. The young man was excited.

"Look here, Huber," he said. "A little bit's good, but you're going pretty damned far."

He dragged a chair toward Luke's desk, turned it about, and sat down astride of it with his arms folded across its back.

A smile twitched at Luke's mouth.

"What way-station do you want to get off at?" he inquired.

"I don't want you to make a monkey out of the League," said Yeates. "I've

been reading over your letters and interviews and things, and I think you ought to realize that this is a reform organization and not a bunch of Anarchists."

"You're a slow reader, Yeates. Haven't you been hearing these things talked over, too?"

Yeates blushed, but he did not flinch.

"Well, what if I have? The people I've heard talking are the people you've been slamming, and I want to tell you that those people are the backbone of this country."

"I haven't mentioned any names."

"Oh, don't think I'm a fool, Huber, and don't think these people are fools, either. Everybody knows. What do you do it for? It won't catch any votes, if that's what you want."

"I rather wanted to do some good."

"Good? Good?" Yeates laughed angrily. "What are you talking about? You're talking as if these men were pirates. You're talking like one of those fellows that make speeches on a soap-box on the corner. It's all right to fight police-graft, and it's all right to run the crooks out of town—that's what the League's for and why I'm for the League—but I'm not going to keep on with an organization that's mixing up the biggest men in America with that sort of cattle. I won't stand for having my personal friends called thieves. I can't stand for it, and I won't!"

Luke looked at his watch. He rose.

"I have to be uptown in half a hour," he said.

"But see here——" Yeates's chair clattered to the floor as Yeates sprang up.

"When this nomination was offered to me," said Luke, "you were present. Do you remember something you said—something about outside influences and so on?"

"Oh, rot! Who's talking about outside influences?"

"I am. The nomination was given me along with certain promises. I've accepted it. I mean to act on the strength of those promises."

"You mean you're going crazy."

"Then, the League's going crazy, too. As the only sane man in it, I'm afraid you won't find yourself in congenial company, Yeates. You'd better get out."

"Get out?" Yeates could scarcely credit his ears.

"Get out," Luke repeated.

"I like that!" shouted Yeates. "This is a nice reform party, this is! Anti-boss! Why, you're more of a boss than Tim Heney ever dreamed of being."

Luke had not looked at the matter that way. He saw now that he was indeed using boss-methods, but he also saw that boss-methods were unavoidable.

"This League," he said, "is pledged to a course of action you don't agree with, so you can't consistently remain in it."

"I will!—I *will* get out!" cried Yeates. "I'd like to know who had more to do with this League: you or me. Why, you only came in the other day, and it was me and my friends got you in. But I'll get out all right: you needn't worry about that. I'm through."

He left the room. It was a few weeks later when Luke heard of Yeates's engagement to the girl whose diamond pendant Luke had admired the first time that he went to the Ruysdaels' house. That, Huber knew, was indeed coincidence, but the previous connection of Yeates with the Municipal Reform League served the more to shake Luke's confidence in the radicalism of some of its remaining members.

§3. His mission to Ruysdael was far more satisfactory than his talk with Yeates. Luke did not tell the millionaire the circumstances that made it necessary for R. H. Forbes & Son to borrow money, nor, as things fell out, did he have to explain why the Ruysdael estate, and not a bank, was wanted as a creditor. He went into details only concerning the nature of the securities that Forbes could offer; he was honest about the chances of the business, which he believed to be good, and he was no more pressing in his request than he thought it wise to be.

"So," said Ruysdael, smiling, "you find some use for predatory wealth, after all?"

Luke remembered Jack Porcellis's assertion that the Ruysdaels were in some way connected with the forces now opposed to the loan, but the connection, if it existed, must be slight. The Ruysdael money was not in a form that could well be hurt by Luke's enemies; and Ruysdael, though subsequent pressure might well stop him from further aid, was the sort of man who, having gone into such a venture as the present one, would not undo anything he had already done.

"I don't consider you one of the pirates," said Luke.

"No? Well, I'm not active, perhaps," Ruysdael reassured him. "I was just thinking you rather strong in some of your public utterances. There's no use in attacks unless they can win, you know."

The swarthy man was interested in Huber's request, though solely on Huber's own account. Ruysdael felt that he had been in a measure responsible for Luke's investment, and he was anxious to protect that investment so long as the protection was real and not a mere tossing of good money after bad. He took Luke at once to the offices of the Ruysdael estate.

There it was clear that, whatever influence Luke's enemies might have, they had issued no orders against him. Perhaps they had not thought of the possibility of his turning in this direction, perhaps they had meant to do no more

than frighten him by their show of power with the banks. In any case, old Herbert Croy, the manager of the estate, was amiable and suggested that Forbes be sent for without delay.

It was a moment of triumph for Luke. He met Forbes in one of the outer offices of the suite used for the administration of the Ruysdael estate, and he was not entirely sorry to find Forbes contrite.

"Is it—it's really true?" asked Forbes.

He had been having a bad time. His face was drawn, and the feverish hand that grasped Luke's was trembling.

"Yes," said Luke. "I think I've induced Ruysdael to advance the money."

Forbes looked away.

"I'm sorry—very sorry for my attitude last night, Huber; and yet, you must have seen——"

"That's all right. Forget it."

"I know. You're good. But I do want you to understand. And you have turned out to be the real business man of the pair of us, after all!"

"So it seems," said Luke dryly.

Forbes missed the reflection on his own ability.

"Oh, but you have! Huber, you've—you've saved the Business!"

"No; that's up to you. I've only made it possible for you to get the money. You have to finish convincing these people; so buck up."

"I will, I will."

"And they'll probably turn in and fight us in the market."

"We'll see about that." All of Forbes's courage had come back to him. "Let them try. Huber, I can't thank you enough. I never can."

"Then don't try to." Luke took Forbes by the arm and led him to the door behind which Ruysdael and Croy were waiting.

But Forbes felt that there was more to be said. "It was splendid of you," he continued, as Luke drew him forward.

"Was it? You overlook the fact that I stood to lose a little money of my own—if nothing else!"

"I did. I actually did! By Jove, I don't see how you can forgive me, Huber."

Luke's answer was to push open the door. Within half an hour the interview was concluded. Forbes had deposited his securities and received a certified check. It was all so simple that, while Luke was wondering why he had not thought of it twelve hours before, Forbes was saying to himself:

"How was it *I* didn't think of it last night?"

§4. Luke intended to go from the Ruysdael offices to those of the League, but as

he parted from Forbes on the street after the loan had been secured, something happened that changed his plans. At the foot of the elevator-shaft of the building, he noticed a little man leaning against the marble-paneled wall: the man was an unostentatious fellow, commonplace as to both face and clothes, but Luke thought he had seen the figure before.

He passed with Forbes through the revolving doors of the office-building and walked to the curb. He glanced back and saw the commonplace man coming through the doorway behind him. Then he remembered: when he left the Arapahoe that morning, he saw this man walking down the other side of Thirty-ninth Street. He had thought nothing of it at the time, but now his experience of detectives told him that this man bore the marks of the detective.

Luke called a taxicab. The man, he saw, prepared to call another.

"I'll try to keep my promise to see Betty to-night," said Luke to Forbes.

"You must," said Forbes. His gratitude, though not so hot as it had been, was still warm.

"I'll try. There's a lot to be done—politically, you know. But I'll try-"

They shook hands. Forbes started away. Luke gave his chauffeur that address in Wall Street at which he had issued his orders to the men who were now fighting him.

He was disappointed; the person whom he sought was not there. Luke doubted the statement of the doorkeeper, but could get no other. He went to the offices of Hallett and to those of Rivington, but with no better luck. At each descent from his taxi, he caught sight of the detective and knew that the detective meant to be seen. Then he sought the quarters of Stein, Falconridge, Falconridge & Perry, and was immediately admitted to the presence of the head of that firm.

The Judge sat at his handsome desk, a telephone at one elbow and a vase of Abel Chatney roses at the other. His plentiful white hair and his smooth frock-coat still potent, still spread around him the aura of dignity. He rose slowly as Luke came in and bowed with magisterial calm.

"How do you do, Mr. Huber?" he said pleasantly. "I am glad to see you—very glad, indeed."

He resumed his chair. Luke took a chair close by.

"The papers," pursued the Judge, "tell me that you are open to congratulations. You have mine."

"Thank you," said Luke. He stretched his legs. "Yes, I got the nomination. There was a little opposition, but I got it."

"Opposition?" The Judge raised his white eyebrows. "Hum! Well, of course, Mr. Huber, you had to expect that in the circumstances."

"What were the circumstances, Judge?"

Stein shook his head and smiled benignantly.

"There you go," he said. "You will insist on flattering me with your assumptions of my omniscience."

"But not of your omnipotence, Judge; for I did get the nomination. What were the circumstances?"

The Judge still smiled:

"You can't expect to hurt the more important business interests without hurting the lesser ones; and the lesser dislike being hurt even more than the greater, Mr. Huber."

"I gathered that you might think so."

This time the Judge's smile was a song without words.

"Very well," said the younger man. "As I say, I overcame the opposition inside the League. I believe I can overcome the same opposition at the polls."

"I hope so," Stein answered. "But it is a pity that you have not more powerful backing."

"I have a very active following at any rate."

"It will require a great deal of activity to overcome the prejudices of the majority."

"Yes, but I'm not talking about the activity of the voters. I am talking about the active following I am having from my apartments to my office, and from my office wherever else I go."

Judge Stein leaned over to smell the roses on his desk. When he looked up, his firm mouth seemed innocent. He offered the vase to Luke.

"Aren't they beautiful?" he asked.

"Quite."

"I often think it is such a pity that they haven't more perfume. What they have is good, but it is not a great deal. What we gain in form, we lose in scent. The law of compensation, I suppose."

"I know this detective had orders to let me see he was following me."

The Judge put down the vase.

"I am sorry you don't care for roses," he said. "Yes, Mr. Huber, I dare say you are followed. You are fighting the Democratic police force and the Republican District-Attorney's office; they both have detectives attached to them, and I have heard that they frequently use their detectives to watch their political rivals. You are fighting the Progressive organization, too, and they could use private detectives. I quite agree with you that it isn't pleasant."

"This fellow isn't on the job to watch me. He's only used to frighten me. I'm not easily frightened, Judge."

"No?"

"No. If I had been, I'd have turned tail when your friends tried to ruin a business I am interested in, or when they tried to have me caught in a police-

raid." Luke spoke as if he were mentioning incidents in the lives of people dead these thousand years. "The raiders didn't find me, as you, of course, know. What you don't know is that the business move has failed just as badly."

If he had not known it, the Judge's face betrayed no surprise.

"Really, Mr. Huber, I told you at our last interview that I had no professional interest in this matter."

"You admitted that the people back of all this were your friends."

"I *said* that I was a friend of certain persons."

"Then, you might as well say now that your friends intend to prevent my election and that they'll use any means to do it."

"Don't get excited, Mr. Huber." The Judge's right hand waved a deliberate protest against Luke's violent language. "Of course, I say nothing of the sort. What I do say is that you must understand that your own plan of action is bound to alienate the voters. There are more people interested in this election than you and me—more even than my friends. A great many people don't want to see you elected District-Attorney. There are the business men, there are the police, and there are the people of the underworld. You have been reckless enough to make no ethical distinctions. You lump the good with the bad, and attack everybody. Well, you must not be surprised at the result."

Luke kept to his low key.

"I only came here to tell you that I couldn't be scared."

"Why to me?"

"Perhaps just because I like to talk to you, Judge."

The Judge bowed a sincere acknowledgment.

"I have already told you," he said, "that I think you could go far if you were cooler. Now you are confusing possible legitimate influence—I say possible, not certain—with physical attack."

"They've both seemed probable, Judge."

"The former may be. As to the latter—well, like most young enthusiasts, you have forgotten that elections go by majorities, and that the majorities are controlled by the lower forces of society. That is the one flaw in our republican system, and nothing but social evolution, generations of free education, will cure it. You have not only very wrongly assailed legitimate business; you have quite properly threatened to close to the criminal classes their chief sources of revenue. It is their livelihood against yours. My friends can have nothing in common with these people. We cannot control them. You must know that."

Luke shrugged his shoulders. Stein continued:

"As a politician and a lawyer, you must have counted on the opposition of the criminal classes when you began your campaign. If you did not" the Judge bent his head to the roses—"well, I don't want to alarm you, but if I were in your

place, I should leave the fight."

Luke got up.

"The alternative?" he inquired.

The Judge did not answer. He merely looked at Luke.

"I won't take it," said Luke.

"I tell you again, that we have nothing to do with the forces that seem to worry you most."

"I know you say so. Well, we haven't got much further than at our last talk, have we?"

"At that talk, Mr. Huber, I said to you that you could help yourself, your party, the public good——"

"If I'd do what you wanted? I won't. I merely thought that if I told you you'd failed so far, you might do what *I* asked."

The Judge sadly shook his head.

"If you would only listen to reason!"

"I'll wait for the month and not a day longer. Meanwhile, I'm not the kind that's easy scared. Nothing you can do—you, and your friends, or anybody hired by your friends—will stop me."

The Judge stood up.

"I am afraid you will be stopped," he said.

"Try it," said Luke. "Good-by."

"Good-day, Mr. Huber," Stein replied. "I shall always be glad to have a call from you. I am interested in your career—more genuinely interested than you suppose."

§5. That night it was Betty who came to the door when Luke rang the bell. She ran to it.

"Luke," she cried, "father told me! I knew you would find a way out. And, oh, Luke, I don't believe, in the end, I could have given you up, even if you hadn't found one!"

CHAPTER XII

Luke had been lied to at the offices of Hallett and at those of Rivington, but at

the first office at which he had called, he was told the truth: the stout man, with the bright, short-sighted eyes and the pointed teeth was not at work that day. He was not at work for several days, and breaths of rumors, tremulous, expectant, began to shake the threads which centered at his working-place.

The business of that place proceeded with its usual regularity and speed. Conover, promoted to the post of confidential clerk, went back and forth from Wall Street to his master's house in one of his master's motor-cars. Atwood and the other brokers telephoned hourly for orders to the house uptown. Simpson saw callers. But in the inner room, Washington wasted his stupid solemnity on emptiness, the ticker spun its yards and yards of tape for none to see, and nobody looked from the high windows down the maze of streets on which the people buzzed like flies.

All this had been thus before, and more frequently thus during the past few years; the man with the hairy hands and crooked arms often suffered attacks from some malady that the newspapers did not name. His world, therefore, should not have taken the present seizure too seriously; but it always leaped to the belief that each seizure was the last. Rumor never learned from precedence, and on each occasion expected the worst. Now official bulletins and authorized announcements of a slight cold and a catarrhal affection of the mucous membrane of the throat did not check rumor. The doctors said no more than that, the papers printed no more; but news of another sort spread with a stronger conviction than the doctors could secure and a wider circulation than the circulation of all the newspapers combined.

Rumor said that the sick man had always been a glutton, and that now, at last, his digestion had given way. Rumor said that he had been in the habit of rising early and working late, in the dawn and through the night, planning the crowded actions of the too brief business day; and rumor added that the price of these exertions must, at last, be paid. Rumor said that the man overworked his brain and nerves, and that, at last, the brain was working no more and the nerves strained to breaking-point. Rumor whispered of a projected sea-voyage and a change of scene to Biskra or the Riviera, and rumor sagely shook its many heads.

The luxurious house in which the sick man lived among the best things that his money had bought him, and from which he used to dart out each morning to his office in the maze, was closed to the reporters and to most of the acquaintances who called there. L. Bergen Rivington went in and came out, worried and elliptical. George J. Hallett went and came out with loud, but brief, denials. The newspaper men, from the steps of a house directly across the street, watched in relays and, every hour, rang the muffled bell of the sick man's house and asked the same questions, and were given the same answers, from the servant who

came to the door.

Then, one morning, at its old-accustomed hour, the motor-car that the sick man had most affected purred up to the house. The door opened. The sick man, apparently no longer a sick man, came out, neat and trim in a suit of russet brown, stepped into the car and was started for his office before the quickest reporter could get a word with him.

"He has quite recovered," said the doctors, when the newspaper men overhauled them, and, although they swathed the answer in long phrases, they would say no more than that.

"He's quite well again and will not leave New York," said Simpson to the representatives of the press when they reached his Wall Street offices; and Simpson would add nothing save that his employer was too busy with accumulated work to have time for press interviewers.

Simpson, however, and Conover too, and all the office-force and all the brokers, knew something more. They knew that, whereas their master was generally not quick of temper, he had returned to work in an ugly mood.

There was, indeed, a great deal of work for him to do: enough to ruffle the temper of any man. He did it all grimly, speedily, with no waste of words. He attended to each detail with as much energy and care as he gave to every other detail, and one detail that he dealt with in a necessarily long talk with Hallett he dealt with thus:

"What about that Huber matter?" he asked.

Rivington was not in the room, but the master of the room was seated at the head of the table just as he always seated himself when both Hallett and Rivington were there. He crouched with his large hands on the mahogany surface, the thick fingers extended, his elbows raised at right angles to his torso and pointing ceilingward.

Hallett was as near to nervousness as he could be brought.

"Nothin' yet," he said.

"Hasn't any action been taken?" snapped the man at the head of the table.

"A lot of action's been taken, but nothin's come of it yet."

"He hasn't been bought?"

"Stein says——"

"I know that. He hasn't been stopped?"

"No."

"Stop him. He's got to be stopped. Don't you know that he really might hurt us? Stop him."

"All right," said Hallett.

"And now what about this Memphis & New Orleans deal?" the man in russet brown went on. His beady eyes glittered, and the tips of his stumpy fingers

caressed the shining surface of the table.

CHAPTER XIII

§1. Luke was no longer inclined to doubt the wide extent and the unscrupulous power of the influences opposing him. When he had first come to acknowledge their evil, he thought it latent rather than active. Disillusioned in this respect, he then minimized its activity, maintaining that there was a vast difference between merely questionable moves in the game of business and the hiring of criminal violence. He assumed a tolerant skepticism toward the vague stories of how his enemies, long before they became his personal enemies, employed the basest tactics to crush rivals or gain ends, and even when he narrowly escaped arrest in the raid on the house in Sixth Avenue, he tried to tell himself that these enemies were only endeavoring to frighten him. Now his second interview with Stein convinced him of the truth.

Notwithstanding this, he stubbornly persevered. He no more belittled the puissance of the wrong against which he had arrayed himself, but he believed too firmly in the strength of his own right. Had he accurately perceived relative values, he might have broken his promise and tried to make the Rollins letters public; but he was sure that he could evade harm until the month was past, and so he kept his word and went about his hurrying and harrowing political work with the letters scornfully bestowed in an inside pocket among a collection of trivial memoranda.

Events moved rapidly. The Ruysdael loan served its turn, but its turn soon gave evidence of being brief. As if from plans matured at least a year before, the ready-made clothing trust that Forbes had feared sprang into full being. It issued from the offices of Hallett, but it originated, almost as frankly, from the brain of the man whose lieutenant Hallett was. It threatened the life of the Forbes firm. Controlling nearly all the other large firms of the country, it could dictate to the retail trade, and secure favors from the railways. It so combined its mills as to reduce running-expenses as a whole while lowering prices on the one hand and, on the other, raising wages in its consolidated factories.

Luke had no doubt that this trust had been long prepared; he also had no doubt that its birth had been hurried as a new move in the war against him. He knew that the combination was contrary to the most rudimentary business ethics,

and he hastened to inquire into its charter and organization, in the hope of finding some chink in its armor through which the blade of the Sherman anti-trust law might be thrust. He overhauled the law-reports in the libraries, he consulted the most eminent corporation authorities in his profession; but he discovered nothing to his liking. The trust was built upon the statute itself; the weakness of the latter was the firm rock on which the former was founded. Its strength lay in its iniquity.

"It is absurd for us to suppose," the greatest lawyer in New York told him, "that we can end the trust by passing laws. The trusts are a step in social evolution, and you can't successfully legislate against evolution. When the trusts can't hire the law's makers, they will still be able to hire better lawyers to build new trusts within the law than such lawyers as the voters can afford to elect to Congress to frame new anti-trust laws. The laws against the trusts are of no more practical use than the laws in favor of the unions."

Luke returned to Forbes with this dictum.

"Can't we get some of the outside firms to join us?" asked Luke.

Forbes did not approve the idea.

"I have had several offers of the kind," he said, "and I am suspicious of them. I think the firms that made them weren't really independent. I think it was a move to let the trust into our concern. Besides, this house has always been a Forbes house, and it must remain that or go down honorably."

"There'll be trouble," Luke prophesied.

"I think I know something about the trade," Forbes said: he had moments when he did not wholly like the superior ability shown by Luke in securing the Ruysdael loan. "This is my part of the Business."

Luke was too much occupied by the political campaign not to acknowledge that, weak or strong, Forbes must be left in control of the firm. The battle for votes was four-cornered without being square; it was hot and bitter. On the issue of the district-attorneyship, the Democrats and Progressives were helping Leighton and the Republicans by directing all their energies against Luke and the Municipal Reform League. They raised high the accusation of demagogism and appealed to business large and small to rescue credit from the hurts that Huber threatened. Leighton, supported by the full strength of his organization, was pretending that Luke's disaffection was that of a discharged servant; the District-Attorney pleaded for a safe and sane conduct of the office of the public prosecutor.

Although the League's lesser workers undertook the task of canvassing the city, treating with politicians and employers, advertising, arguing, pleading, promising, and threatening, doing all the mysterious multitude of things that are necessary to practical politics; although, too, the other candidates and the

volunteer and hired speakers performed heavy shares of the speech-making from cart-ends and stages, on street and in hall, Luke was constantly being called on to help his associates and had more than enough in his own department to keep him busy from the time when he got out of bed of a morning until, often the next morning, he got in again.

By telegraph, telephone, motor-car, and messenger, he had to be in perpetual touch with every election-precinct in the city and with every important Leaguer in every precinct. He had to answer hundreds of letters, see hundreds of callers, give out scores of interviews, compose and deliver from three to a dozen speeches a day to as many different sorts of audiences. There was nothing considered too small to merit his attention, nothing too large to be beyond his watchfulness. Once every day he was in each quarter of New York, and he was nowhere for more than half an hour at a time.

Only his elaborately acquired calm and his inherited strength of constitution saved him from nervous breakdown. Except for them, his burning sincerity, his zeal, and the endless calls made upon these characteristics, would have driven him to a hospital. Even so, his body grew leaner and his face deeply lined. He was fighting with every ounce of muscle and every particle of brain.

For now, as in every alley and at every turning, his political progress revealed some new though ever partial phase of the power he attacked, Luke saw all that he hated centered in one figure, originated by one mind. He individualized Evil. That entire meshwork of wrong which he was trying to tear into shreds, he traced directly to the plump, pale man in russet brown, the malignant thing with the hairy hands and beady eyes, the creature that he had once seen crouched at the end of a mahogany table in a Wall Street skyscraper, from the windows of which the maze of streets resembled the strands of a web with men and women struggling on them like entangled flies.

Of all the fine and fatal threads that were snaring alike the helpless and the strong, what threads were not spun by *him*? Of all the corruption that was poisoning the country and infecting the ideals of the Republic, what was there that did not proceed from his fangs? Luke seemed to see it all now—was certain that he saw it—with awful clarity. The Rollins letters, the interview in Wall Street, the action of the banks, and Osserman's hint from the City Chamberlain, the part played by the street-girl, the raid by the police, the talks with Stein and the daily partial liftings of the political curtain: these, reviewed in the lurid glow of the campaign, confirmed the accumulated gossip of years, corroborated every wild story that came to him on the teeming battlefield: of bribery and thieving, of perjury and murder, of all the crimes that men have known, each committed again and again and again—safely committed in the dark, cravenly done under the protection of bought-and-paid-for law.

What mattered now this power's culture? What mattered its benefactions, its colleges for the ignorant, its hospitals for the ill? As Luke saw them now, these were only dust for the eyes of the public, cheap peace-offerings for intricate wrongs. The good could be counted on the fingers of the hand, the evil was as the sands of the sea.

It was everywhere. It mocked religion, because It supported churches; It debauched Government, because It governed the governors; It destroyed Law, because It controlled the Law's administrators. It was master of the means of production and distribution; It owned the storehouses of wealth; the clothes upon the backs of the people, the houses that they lived in; the meat on the tables of the rich, the bread in the bellies of the poor. It secured Its own prices for them, and withheld them as It chose. Directly or indirectly, the whole nation took Its wages—such wages as It chose to pay.

At the great League meeting in Cooper Union, Luke, fronting a wilderness of faces, shouted his defiance of this Power. He said no name, but none that heard him could doubt whom he meant. For that night, Luke Huber's friends no longer knew the languid young lawyer in this shouting, quivering, torch-bearing evangel on the historic Cooper Union Stage. The boy had died that, bound for New York, thought himself as a Templar entering Jerusalem, but from his ashes there rose a new Peter the Hermit preaching a new crusade.

"If we had the eyes to see," he said, "we'd know that from this city, the center of our civilization, slender threads, so numerous as to be beyond our counting, run out to every corner of the land. Slender threads: the merest gossamer, but so tough that, once entangled in them, no man escapes. No man, no woman, and no child. The delicate filaments catch and hold us by the thousand every day. They catch us at our birth and they hold us till our death: life-prisoners even when we are unaware of it, more desperately prisoners when we are unaware of it. The good and the bad and the hopelessly neither-good-nor-bad; efficient and inefficient, every sort and condition, men and boys, women and girls—the net has use for us all: for the labor of the child, the body of the woman, the hand or the brain, the money or the muscles, of the man. It has uses for our virtues and more use for our vices. All are needed, none that is caught goes free. If we had the eyes to see, we should see it; but the strands are as fine as they are tough, and only when a victim has so much blood in him that his dying struggles ensanguine the thread that holds him do we, noting his blood, note what has received his blood—and even there, we rarely consider that thread in relation to its fellows, hardly ever realize that it is part of a plan, hardly ever trace it to its center."

Luke followed the Power along thread after thread through the labyrinth of American life, and he made it clear that the Power was one man. He pictured the stock-market, where the trade in traitors began and where the fortunes of spec-

ulators and the riches of the country were counters in the game of roulette that this Power conducted with a braced wheel. He passed on, across the map of the Union, through the wrecks of industries that this Power had razed. He showed how it had ruined numberless houses and spoiled countless lives. He pointed to the bloated bodies of the suicides it had flung into rivers it had never seen, the graves it had filled in the potters' fields of distant towns, the twisted limbs of children it had enslaved, the bodies of women it had forced into the arms of lust, the muscles of men it had condemned to lifelong servitude. He described its command over Congress, legislatures, and judges; its collar around the necks of the police, who brought to its service, in return for criminal immunity, gamblers, thieves, highwaymen, tramps, prostitutes, and pimps. He clutched its hairy hand in the ballot-box, and called upon his hearers to end this Power's practices as they loved their souls.

Luke pledged himself, if elected, to drive the thing out of every department of the city's life that the District-Attorney could in any way influence. He pledged himself to fear no man and to serve none.

"You have the eyes!" he shouted. "If you'll only use them, you have the eyes to see. Look about you, and what you see will give you the strength you need. This thing thwarts and perverts the purposes of Government, and you know it! The men that are pledged to the people, it buys with gold. These are its crimes, but not the worst of its crimes. The worst it does is not what it does to things material. The worst it does is what it does to things spiritual. The spoiling of high aims, the rape and ravage of honorable purposes: these are its sins against the Holy Ghost!"

§2. Betty had gone to the mass-meeting, and so had the Rev. Pinkney Nicholson. Even in the rush of his campaign, Luke had found time to see Betty every day, and, because the Ruysdael loan had resolved all her doubts, she was his most ardent supporter. He sent her two stage-tickets to the gathering at Cooper Union, one of which he hoped that her father would use; but Forbes was busy with plans to meet the competition of the clothing trust and to quiet the grumblings of his employees, who wanted a raise of wages to the sums paid by his rivals, and so was kept late at the offices of the firm. Betty, therefore, brought Nicholson with her, and Nicholson, thinking that it would not be wise for a clergyman to seem to give the sanction of the Church to any party in a political fight, had taken her not to the stage, but to the body of the auditorium.

The girl listened to Luke's speech with parted lips and flushed face. She was inspired by her lover's every word and proud for each interruption of applause. She was so inspired and so proud that she did not notice the increasing frigidity

of her companion.

"Isn't he wonderful?" she demanded of Nicholson as the meeting ended with the entire audience on its feet.

The band was playing "The Star-Spangled Banner," and it had been hoped that the crowd would sing that national anthem. Most of the people present did not, however, know the words, and those who did know them had voices of too slight a range to accede to the severe demands of the music.

"Isn't he just wonderful?" repeated Betty. She caught Nicholson's arm. "He reminds me of a French orator father and I once heard in the Chamber of Deputies in Paris. You must take me up to the stage to tell him so."

Nicholson had listened with mixed emotions. His attention, moreover, was loose because he had lately been much worried by the presence of a heavy debt on his church.

"I think he is an excellent speaker," said Nicholson, "but I'm afraid I don't approve of his tone."

"His tone?" Betty turned sharply. "What's the matter with his tone?"

Nicholson's ascetic face relaxed. He quoted:

"Too rash, too unadvis'd, too sudden;
Too like the lightning."

"He isn't rash; he's brave," said Betty. "And he isn't unadvised or sudden, for he has been thinking of all these things for a long time. But he is like the lightning, and these people he says are so wrong will find that out."

§3. Mr. Irwin was at the mass-meeting, too; he of the gray Vandyck beard and pink cheeks and twinkling eyes, the member of the law firm of Stein, Falconridge, Falconridge & Perry, whose name did not appear on the firm's letter-heads.

Irwin left Cooper Union directly the chief speech of the evening ended. He had been seated in an unostentatious corner high in air and close beneath the roof. The people about him must have thought him a warm admirer of the speaker, since he was so busy taking notes of what was said that he had leisure for only the most perfunctory applause. Irwin hurried down the Bowery. He went into the nearest public telephone booth, and from it he called up the hotel in which ex-Judge Stein made his home.

§4. Ex-Judge Stein had himself experienced a trying day, and Irwin was absent

from the office, or he would have known it. Somebody, it seemed, had asked embarrassing questions of George J. Hallett and issued exacting orders to Hallett, who had passed on the embarrassing questions and the exacting orders to Stein. The questions and the orders gained in intensity by transmission, and Stein was upset.

"Yes, yes, this is Judge Stein," he answered into the black transmitter of the telephone when Irwin called him. "Who's talking, please?"

"Irwin."

"Eh? Well, where have you been, Mr. Irwin? I have wanted you to-day on some important business.

"I think I have been attending to it, Judge."

"Where have you been?"

"Several places. To-night I've been to that mass-meeting in Cooper Union."

"Yes. Was there much enthusiasm?"

"A great deal."

"Spontaneous? Genuine?"

"Partly."

"And the tone of the speech?"

Mr. Irwin went at some length into that side of the subject. He read excerpts from his notes. It was evident that, since the afternoon when his senior partner had first discussed Huber with him, necessity, had forced a greater degree of confidence.

The present conversation continued for several minutes. No eavesdropper, unless previously acquainted with the facts of the case, could have gathered much from it, but it was intelligent and significant to the principals. At its end, Stein said:

"There is very little time left us, and this young man means us to understand that he will keep his word. The people for whom we are acting are rather importunate, Mr. Irwin. They are not satisfied; not at all satisfied; and I've already had to extend to you the time-limit I first gave you. I have received instructions to the effect that we must act at once."

"Yes, sir."

"You understand?"

"I understand."

"At once."

"All right, Judge."

"That had better mean to-night."

"I'll do my best."

"I think you had better, Mr. Irwin. I sha'n't be going to bed for two or three hours yet."

§5. Irwin left the telephone and hailed the first taxicab that passed. It was free, and he had himself driven to a political club with quarters not far from the office of Anson Quirk.

The quarters were over a saloon in Second Avenue. The entrance was a hallway and a stairway back of the saloon. Here Irwin rang a bell, which was immediately answered by a man in his shirt-sleeves.

"Mr. Quirk upstairs?"

"No," said the man. He eyed the questioner sullenly in the twilight of the hall. "I don't think he is," he added.

Irwin took a card from his pocket. He placed it in a blank envelope, sealed the envelope, and handed it to the doorkeeper.

"Give him this," he said, and stepped back into the street to wait.

The man closed the door upon him. It was presently reopened by Quirk, his round face smiling, his manner jovial.

"Hello," said Quirk. "It's time good little boys were in bed, but I'm glad to see you, anyhow. Come in and have a drink."

"No, thank you," Irwin replied. "I'll be back here in two hours. There's something you've got to do in the meantime."

"Me? Now?"

"You; right away. We've been too slow about that little business, Quirk. We can't stand them off much longer. There's not much more time for delay, and the people higher up want to be shown action."

"Want to see the goods, do they?" chuckled Quirk. He rattled some coins in the pocket under his round abdomen.

"Yes."

"Well, what do they want me to do?"

"Show the goods, I guess."

"Any suggestions?"

"No, that's up to you."

"I'm on," said Quirk. "Come back in two hours. I'll run right upstairs and get my hat. An' here, if you won't take a drink, have a cigar: it's a long wait. See you later."

§6. The great bulk of Police Lieutenant Donovan was hunched up in an upholstered armchair beside the table in his private office when Quirk entered. He looked as if his caller was not welcome.

"Nothin' doin' so far," he said.

Quirk, too, was serious.

"I know it," said he. "They fell down so hard in that raid scheme that they

must have had all the sense knocked out of them. Well, you've got to put some in."

Donovan's growl was wordless.

"You've got to," said Quirk. "To-night."

"To-night?" Donovan stood up. "What in hell do you think I am?"

The lawyer leaned across the table.

"I think you're a bluff," he said.

"Do you? Well, I'd just like you to have my job."

"Donovan," said Quirk, "if you don't put this thing across, an' do it soon, somebody'll have your job sooner than you think."

"What's that?" thundered the lieutenant. But before a reply was possible, his tone changed; his hands thrust deep in his pockets, he turned away, his shoulders drooping. "Oh, I know you've got the evidence to use for an excuse," he said: "I know you could do it, an' I know you would."

"I wouldn't do it if I didn't have to," said Quirk gently; "but you know how I'm fixed myself. Don't take it so hard, Hughie. You can pull this thing across, if you'll only try. I'm sorry, but if I haven't something to show pretty soon, I'll get it in the neck—hard, I will."

Donovan walked to the door of the rollroom. He opened it.

"Say, one o' you fellows," he called to a group of officers in plain clothes. "Go out an' find Guth an' tell him to come in here right away. I want him." Then he turned to Quirk: "It's got to be to-night?"

Quirk nodded:

"Make it an hour and a half if you can."

"Well, I can't."

"Then as near as you can."

"Gee," said Donovan, "I certainly am sick of this whole business! Well—come back in an hour an' forty-five minutes an' we'll see what's doin'."

§7. He greeted Guth with a roar.

"You're a hell of a cop, you are! What sort of a job do you think you've got, anyway? Rag-pickin'?"

Guth, who was used to these rages, stood at attention. The scar from his mouth to the corner of his jaw-bone twitched heavily.

"I done all I could, Lieutenant," he said.

"You're a liar!" said Donovan. "You've been on this job Gawd knows how long, an' your foot's slipped twice. All you've found is that he hasn't got any safety-deposit box. You know he must have the goods at his office, an' you're afraid to get 'em."

"They might be at his apartment house," said Guth. He shifted his feet uneasily.

"They might be, but they ain't. I had Anderson play that end of it. What d'you mean lettin' Reddy Rawn t'row you down this way?"

"He ain't t'rowed me down. He wouldn't dare."

"Wouldn't he? Well, then, he's stallin' you all right, all right, an' he's had a cinch doin' it. This thing's got to stop. I got to have them letters right off. To-night. Now. Get that?"

The giant subordinate gnawed his upper lip.

"That's goin' some, Lieutenant," he said.

"If you don't do it, you'll be goin' more: you'll be goin' off the force. Now then: you beat it. Get Reddy on the job. Tell him Mitchell knows the officer on that beat an' 'll see he an' his friends ain't interfered with. Nobody'll be in the offices to-night; they've all been over to Cooper Union an' 'll be tired out. Reddy'll be as safe as if he was at home in bed. He'd better have the Kid to help him." Donovan banged the table with his fist. "I want you back here in an hour with everything that's inside that fellow Huber's safe. See?"

§8. In that shadowy alley near Forty-third Street and Third Avenue, where he had talked to Reddy Rawn before, Patrolman Guth talked now with Reddy Rawn and the Kid.

"It ain't my fault," he said. "I've stood him off as long as I could. You gotta do it now, an' if you don't he'll have you two up for Crab Rotello's assault. I know it. He means business this time. You can crack a safe, Kid, can't you?"

§9. On the stage at Cooper Union, Luke was holding an impromptu reception. Hundreds of people were streaming by him and shaking his hand. His arm ached, but he was proud and glad.

At the end of the stream came Betty and Nicholson. Luke saw the girl long before she could reach him, and he smiled to her over the heads of the crowd.

"You dear!" she whispered when, at last, her hand caught his. "I'm proud of you. I'm so proud!"

He pressed her hand.

"That's the best praise of all," he said, and to her companion: "I'm glad you're here, Mr. Nicholson."

Nicholson shook hands.

"I was glad to be here. I admired your delivery even where I disapproved of your treatment."

"What?" laughed Luke. "Is the church going to make friends with the mammon of unrighteousness?" He was hoarse and hot and nervous, but he was too warmly aglow with his success to heed seriously the reply that Nicholson was beginning when one of his friends on the stage plucked his sleeve. He turned. "What is it?" he asked.

"Nelson wants to see you. I don't know what about, but he says it's very important."

"All right." Luke faced Betty and Nicholson again. "You'll forgive me for just a moment, won't you?" he said. "I'll be right back, and then, if you'll let me, I'll drive over to Brooklyn with you both. I have a note from your father, Betty, asking me to come to the house."

"I thought he was at the office," said Betty; "but I do hope you'll come with us."

"He's back at the house now. This note came by messenger."

"Then," said Nicholson, "I shan't interfere with business. I'll go home from here. Run along, Mr. Huber. I'll guard Miss Forbes while you're gone."

Luke followed the man that had sought him and found Nelson standing at the farthest corner of the stage.

The wholesale druggist was in evident distress. He was an honorable man and a practical, and these qualities spoke in the lines of his troubled face. As soon as they were left together, Nelson came to the point.

"Huber," he said, "I've got to get out."

"Out? What of?"

"The League. I've got to leave it."

Nelson was almost the last man that Luke would have expected to desert. Moreover, he had so long been prominent in the reform movement that his defection would be a serious blow to the League. Luke had to call loudly on his lethargic manner to conceal his anxiety and surprise.

"Why?" he inquired. "What's wrong?"

"This speech of yours to-night," explained Nelson. "You've been getting nearer and nearer that fellow all along, but I'd no idea you meant to go right at him."

"What was the matter with the speech? I didn't tell anything but the truth."

"No, I dare say you didn't, but I can't honorably stand by you, Huber, now that you've openly taken this line."

Nelson swallowed hard. It was plain that he did not like the dish prepared for him.

"I don't understand," said Luke. "If it was true, and if we're to make a real fight for real reform, we've got to begin at the cause of corruption."

"I know. I admit it was the truth, but it wasn't the whole truth. He does

lots of good."

"Good and bad are relative. Relatively he doesn't do any good."

"I'm not so sure of that."

"I am."

"Yes, but there's the League to think of."

"The League nominated me,"

"Of course it did, but you're not the whole ticket nor the whole movement."

This was a detail that Luke in his triumph had forgotten.

"Still," he said, "we can't dodge the facts. I won't dodge them, Nelson."

"I understand," Nelson said. "Perhaps you're right. Anyhow, right or wrong, you've done what you've done, and so I've got to go."

"But why?"

Nelson fidgeted.

"I may as well tell you," he at last said. "You know my business has always been one that didn't cross these fellows' trail. But lately they've been coming toward us. I think I mentioned that?"

Luke nodded.

"Well, I've been hard up. The other day I needed money badly. I had to have money or I'd have failed. I have a wife and family to think of, Huber. I tried everywhere to raise the wind, and there was only one place where I could raise it."

"You mean—" Luke wet his lips. "You mean that crowd?"

"Yes."

"It came from *him*?"

"It came direct from L. Bergen Rivington. But, of course, it really came from *him*."

Luke put out his hand. Nelson wrung it.

"I wasn't bought, Huber," he said. "You don't think that?"

"I know," said Luke kindly.

"I wish I'd told you sooner, Huber. I didn't expect you'd go so far."

"I'd have gone just as far, Nelson. I'm sorry."

"I'm sorry, too, Huber. Good-night."

§10. "Betty," said Luke, as the girl nestled against him in the darkness of the cab that drove them toward her home, "this is going to be a hard battle."

"Then you'll win because you're right."

"I'm not so sure."

Her arms went round his neck.

"I don't care whether you win or not," she whispered, "so long as you ought

to win."

§11. Forbes was waiting for them in the library. His rapidly-graying hair was disordered, and his face was even more worried than Nelson's had been.

"You'd better run to bed, dear," he said to Betty as he kissed her. "It's late, and I've some heavy business to talk about to Luke."

"I'm wide awake," protested Betty. "I couldn't sleep if I did go to bed. I'll sleep late to-morrow."

"But then there is the business we must talk about."

"I don't care. I'll like it. I won't interrupt." She looked at Luke. "May I stay?" she asked.

Luke smiled.

"I wish you would," he said.

Forbes made a gesture of surrender.

"All right," said he. He turned to Luke and, as Betty seated herself between the two men, who remained standing, he continued: "They're going to strike."

"At the factory?" Luke had feared this. "What do they want?"

"They want us to meet the hours and the wages that the trust is giving."

"We can meet them as to hours, can't we?"

"We might. It would hurt us, but we might."

"But not the wages?"

"Not in five years."

Luke lit a cigarette. He noted that his hand was steady, and its steadiness gratified him.

"They're well enough paid, aren't they?"

"You know the scale."

"Well, it's a fair one, isn't it?"

"What does that matter to them when they think they can get more?"

"But you say they can't, Forbes."

"I can't convince them of it. Their attitude is that if we can't pay them what they want, the Business had better go out of existence.'

"You saw the men's committee?"

"This evening. That's why I couldn't come to your meeting."

"And they won't compromise?"

"They might have, but things have gone too far. A lot of these I.W.W. organizers and agitators have been at work among them. I don't know what will happen to the Business now."

"We can get in strike-breakers and run the factory in spite of them."

"If we do, there'll be rioting. They might burn the building. These Indus-

trial Workers of the World—you don't know them."

"I don't see that we have any choice."

Forbes looked away.

"We have one," he muttered.

Luke caught his wrist.

"Look here," he demanded, "do you mean to say that this may have a political origin?"

"I believe it has. I believe those letters you told me about——"

"You want me to knuckle under?" asked Luke.

Forbes looked at him.

"Think what a strike might do to you politically," he said.

"I don't care about that."

"Your friends might."

"Not if they want to stay my friends. Besides, it can't be true. The writer of those letters hates the I.W.W. like poison. He can't have inspired them."

"Oh, not that. I know he can't. But if you'd be sensible about those letters, I believe he'd be willing to put down the trust's wages and join us in this fight."

"What did you tell the men's committee?"

"I didn't show them what I felt," said Forbes. "That would never do. You can't tell workmen what you really think. I just said if they wanted to strike, they would have to strike."

Luke flung aside Forbes's arm.

"Then stick to that," he said.

"But, Huber——"

Luke interrupted. He fronted Betty.

"Betty," he said, "do you understand what your father is asking me to do? You know how I am placed, and you heard my speech to-night. Now, your father wants me to go back on all that in order to save him from poverty and you from poverty and me from poverty and defeat. I won't do it. Whether you like it or not, I won't do it!"

The girl got up slowly and put a hand on his shoulder. Her eyes, as she looked from one man to the other, were very beautiful, but they were firm.

"Father," she said, "I've learned a lot lately. Luke's right and—and I'm with him."

Forbes turned toward her irritably.

"Oh, go to bed!" said he.

Luke laughed and, reaching up, patted the hand that was on his shoulder.

"No, no," he protested, "you mustn't intrigue with my allies, Forbes."

"Well," said Forbes, "you'll see that I'm right if you keep on antagonizing these people."

"We can starve them out."

"Not before there is violence."

"The law will defend us there. We'll have the police: they can't deny us adequate protection in such a matter—and if we have to, we'll get the Governor to call out the troops."

Forbes argued and pleaded for a long time, but to no avail. Luke would not go over to his enemies: the strike must proceed.

"I've got to leave you now," he said. "I'll have to have a statement ready about this for the papers first thing in the morning. Perhaps I'll get out of the Subway at Fourteenth Street and open up the League's headquarters and get it ready there."

It was Betty that stopped this plan.

"You'll do nothing of the sort," she ordered. "You're tired out. I won't let you kill yourself." She kissed him on the mouth. "You must promise me to go straight to the Arapahoe and to sleep."

At the touch of her lips, he softened.

"All right," he promised, "but I'm no more sleepy now than you said you were an hour ago."

§12. Luke would not have had to open the offices of the Municipal League; that was being attended to. While he was still in the Subway train returning from Brooklyn to Manhattan, two men, one of them carrying a small bundle, crossed Union Square and turned down Broadway. Before the entrance to the building in which the League was housed, they paused to speak to a policeman.

"That's all right," he told them. "I know. I got me orders ten minutes ago. That's why I'm standin' here. But get a move on, you fellows. I don't want to stick here all night."

The two men rounded a corner.

In the deserted street, the officer of the law walked up and down, twenty paces to the north, then twenty to the south. A party of strayed revelers came by and tried to talk with him; but he ordered them to move on if they didn't want him to arrest them. He resumed his walk when they had gone, his thumbs tucked in his belt, his lips pursed and whistling softly a popular tune. Once he heard the sound of a window opened overhead. A little later he saw a dim light pass from one window to another in the building above him. A dulled report sounded from behind the walls: the Elevated is not near Broadway at this spot, but in the night noises travel far, and this noise might have been the crash of a late train. The officer of the law did not raise his head....

Around the corner came two figures. Both of them carried bundles now.

The officer of the law strolled past them. He did not stop as he spoke.

"All right?" he asked.

"All right," said one of the figures.

The officer of the law walked on, whistling his popular tune.

§13. Somewhat nearer the hour of sunrise, Mr. Irwin, his merry eyes grown weary, stood in the sitting-room of the Hon. Marcus Stein's suite of hotel apartments. He was bending over a table on which lay an opened bundle.

Stein was bending over the table, too. His dignified demeanor was ruffled.

"This is nothing but a collection of junk," he was saying. "It is no use to anybody but its owners. Get it out of here at once, Mr. Irwin, and tell your friends to return it to the place they got it from."

CHAPTER XIV

§1. As every man has his day in court, so nearly every man has his day in the newspapers, and which is the more trying it is difficult to decide. The day following the night of the Cooper Union meeting was Luke's: the morning papers seemed to contain little news that did not refer to him; the editorial columns presented satiric paragraphs and serious leaders regarding his speech and his position before the public, and spread over the first pages were accounts of his address and stories of the strike in the factory, with which his connection was now loudly heralded.

Comment on the speech was about equally divided. Half of the press ridiculed it as the vaporing of a misinformed dreamer, and half denounced it as an anarchistic appeal to the violence of the mob. Some journals gave stenographic reports of the entire matter; most printed only those portions which, lifted from their context, were best suited to the policy of the paper using them. The extremes were shown by two headlines. One read:

NIGHTMARES OF A CANDIDATE
Br'er Huber Consults His Dream-Book
And Says Innocent New York Is
Being Tortured Without

And the other flung across eight columns, in letters of vermilion, the legend:

CANDIDATE PREACHES PRIVATE WAR
WITH FIRE AND SWORD!

In the treatment of the strike, Luke fared even worse. He was held up as a hypocrite that championed the People from the platform and sweated the poor in the shops. He was paraded as the real owner of R. H. Forbes & Son. The papers generally most bitter against labor movements published long accounts of the strike, denunciatory interviews with the strike-leaders, and tables showing how badly the wages paid by the Forbes firm compared with the wage-scale already in operation in the factories controlled by the clothing-trust. There was a hurriedly drawn cartoon that depicted Luke wearing a Liberty-cap and hurling a bomb at a figure labeled "Conservative Business": he was addressing a mob from a soap-box that was supported by the bowed shoulders of his oppressed employees. The most respectable newspaper in New York hinted that his political attack was made against his business rivals solely because they were his business rivals, and the least respectable declared that his quarrel with the workers stamped his election doctrines as the gospel of Murder for Profit.

As Luke entered the door of the Broadway building in which the Municipal Reform League had its headquarters, he came up with Venable also going in. The old man's hand trembled as he greeted the candidate.

"We seem to have raised a real thunderstorm," said Luke, smiling. "I hope it'll clear the atmosphere."

"Then you know?" asked Venable. "You've seen it in the papers?"

"How could I help it?" said Luke. "It's all over them."

"Oh, the speech?"

"That and this strike at the Forbes factory, yes."

"I didn't mean those things," said Venable. "I meant this."

He took from his coat-pocket a folded newspaper open at the financial and real estate page. He pointed a shaking finger at first one and then another obscure paragraph, both printed in small type and far separated.

Luke read the paragraphs. Each applied to the same block of an uptown street. The former said that a new branch of an elevated railroad would be run through this street, and the latter curtly announced that two of the apartment houses in the block were about to be converted into tenements for negroes.

"My apartment house," said Venable simply, "the one that all my money is invested in, will have those 'L'-tracks running in front of its second-floor windows. It is just between the two houses that are to to be made into tenements."

Luke swore softly.

"Who's back of this?" he demanded.

"You know what influences control that elevated road," said Venable.

"And the tenements?"

"They've just been bought by Hallett."

"It's ruin?"

"It will be very close to it."

Luke gripped Venable's shoulder.

"You get out of this," he commanded. "Leave the League and go to them; they'll change their plans: that's why they've made their plans the way they have."

"No," said Venable, "I won't do it. I can't. I'm pretty old to be poor, but I'm too old to change my opinions."

He was still talking in this manner when they entered the League's quarters and were greeted with the news that burglars had been there the night before.

"Nothin's been touched in any of the offices but yours, Mr. Huber," said the breathless clerk who poured out this story to them; "but there the safe's been blown open, and I don't know what's missin'. I sent for the police right away."

"The police?" said Luke. "Stop your joking, Charley."

"I'm not jokin', Mr. Huber. I did send for them. They've been here. They said they'd have a detective over from headquarters before long."

Luke hurried to his office. Bits of charred blanket and several match-ends lay about the floor. The door of the safe swung lamely upon a single hinge. Inside was a tumbled mass of papers. Otherwise the room seemed undisturbed.

Quickly, Luke ran over the papers in the yawning safe. He looked up at Venable.

"Everything's here," he said.

"Are you sure?" asked Venable.

"Quite." Luke went to his desk. Its lock had been forced. There had been a rude attempt to restore the contents to the order in which Luke had left them when he quitted the office the day before, but he saw at once that everything had been examined. "And they didn't get anything from here, either," he added.

"I wonder what they were after?" said Venable.

"So do I," said Luke acridly. "At any rate, they didn't get it." The telephone rang as he bent beside it. He took the receiver from its hook. "Yes?" he said. "Oh, Mr. Venable? Yes, he's here—right: he's here in my office, I say. Want to talk to him?" He held up the receiver. "It's that new worker, Jarvie," he explained. "He

wants to talk to you."

Rapidly as events had of late happened to Luke and the Municipal Reform League, they were happening this morning with a speed theretofore unequaled. Venable had not exchanged a dozen sentences over the telephone before he told Jarvie to wait a minute and, ringing off, faced Luke, with his cheeks gone gray.

"This—this is the worst thing yet!" he gasped.

Luke was leaning against the desk, his hands closed over its edge.

"What is?"

"This, that Jarvie says. It's—Oh!" Venable flung up his hands. "It's too much!"

Luke's grip tightened.

"Tell me what it is."

Venable crumpled into the chair before the telephone.

"A couple of the Progressives' detectives have caught Jarvie trying to buy one of Heney's lieutenants."

"What?" cried Luke. The veins stood out, big and blue, on his gripping hands.

"Of course the Heney man was really working with the detectives," moaned Venable; "but that won't help. They had a dictaphone in the hotel room——"

"In what hotel room?"

"The one that Jarvie was to meet the Heney man in. I thought he'd be more careful. I told him——"

Luke stood erect. He folded his arms. Venable's confession shook him, but he exerted all his strength of will to command himself.

"What are you telling me?" he asked. "Are you telling me that the League has been going in for rotten work of that sort? Are you telling me that you—you of all people—have been engineering it?"

Venable's terror gave quick place to amazement.

"You don't mean to say you didn't understand that?" he countered. "How do you suppose politics are run, anyway? Where have you been all these years under Leighton?" Anger came to his aid; his loose jaw wagged. "Don't try to get out of this trouble by pretending you didn't know about it. What we do, we do for the best ends, but I have always said—always—that the only way to beat the devil is to fight him with fire."

"Wait, please," said Luke. "I want to get this thing straight. You say that all your reform movements have had some of this element in them?"

"I say we have always fought the devil with fire."

"And this campaign. You've used your fire in it?"

"As little as possible. We never used more than we could help."

"Did the committee know it?"

Venable reached for the telephone.

"I can't waste time over such quibbles now," he said. "Jarvie's arrested and we must get him out and learn the details to prepare our defense."

"But the committee knew?"

"Oh, ask them yourself! They have a meeting this afternoon. Of course, they knew! They have been in these fights since long before you were sent to school, and they are not fools."

"You bet I *will* ask them!" said Luke.

He walked out of his office, out of the League headquarters and into the street.

§2. His tired brain demanded action. It presented one picture, a canvas as full of figures as a battlefield by Delacroix. There he saw all that he had done or caused to be done: Yeates turned back to the baser cause, Nelson forced to follow, Venable facing financial disaster and soiling his old hands with crime; burglary, prostitution, and fraud stimulated to defeat him; police, city officials, and bankers corrupted to ensnare him; his little fortune, on which hung his mother's living, imperiled; Betty imperiled, Forbes and the honorable business history of his firm imperiled; the factory's employees fronting starvation and threatening violence; the elder political parties dragged into a repetition of their former offenses, the reform organization sharing in the evils it sought to reform—these were the present results of his endeavors to civic righteousness. Could mankind be so closely linked? Was there no end to the lives and souls that must be wronged or made wrong by one man trying to do right? He could not contemplate the question.

To escape thought and find action, he went to Brooklyn. He took a taxi to the factory.

The huge brown building rose taciturn before him, ugly, dour. It ran the whole way across the end of the street and was flanked by rows of tumbledown dwellings. One tenuous column of smoke curled from the chimney of its engine-room, but, all about, the streets had an air to which Luke was wholly unaccustomed. The traffic that used to rattle through them had ceased; they seemed at first sight empty; yet at every corner were groups of men and women, idle with that idleness which sits like the outward tokens of a contagious disease upon workers who have ceased their work in anger.

Luke saw them glance up at him as his open taxicab whirled past them: uncouth, slouching figures, with stooped shoulders and sullen faces. He had not supposed that he could be known to a score of them, but the portraits of him distributed for campaign purposes had made him familiar: the first few groups

merely looked at him and sneered; then someone shouted an obscene epithet after him, and when the cab drew up before the office-door of the factory, a half-brick, tossed from the farther side of the street, shattered the glass windscreen at the chauffeur's back.

Luke's impulse was toward physical reprisal. He jumped from the taxi and darted around it.

On the other side of the street there was only a single figure in sight: a figure that leaned against a lamp-post. Once it had been a woman; now it was only misery. Red toes burst from its bulging shoes from which the stockings fell so far that, the filthy skirt held up by a claw-like hand, at least six inches of thin shank, a pale blue, were visible. The ragged jacket hung open over an open blouse that showed a flat chest. Tangled hair, hatless, fell about and almost hid a red and swollen face. Through the hair a loose mouth gaped, and a pair of eyes burned yellow. The right hand was extended, clenched.

"You go to hell, you hypocrite!" croaked the figure.

Luke turned toward the factory-door. To reach it, he had to press through a double line of men and women, silent, ominous: the strikers' picket-line. The woman's voice croaked from across the street:

"*Hall*eyloolyah, I'm a bum—bum!
*Hall*eyloolyah, bum again!"

Luke's memory saw a small, crowded room papered in green, with framed advertisements about the walls and many tables, at one of which sat an unshaven, uncollared man who wore a greasy derby hat....

Luke pushed open the office-door and hurried to Forbes's office.

§3. The office was crowded. Forbes, determined, sat at his desk; he faced a line of slouching men in shabby clothes, who held their hats in their hands and shuffled their uneasy feet, and were headed by one man, dressed as they were, but better fed and brawny, his large face hard, his hat upon his head. Luke knew that this was the workers' committee led by the organizer.

"I haven't another word to say," Forbes was declaring. A hint of relief came to his voice when he saw Luke. "Oh, Huber," he broke off: "Good-morning. Come over here and sit down. I am just telling these men for the last time that we will meet them in the matter of hours, but we can't and won't grant them the ruinous increase of wages they want." As Luke took a chair beside him, he continued, addressing his employees and carefully avoiding the organizer: "I have one gang

of men coming here in half an hour to take your jobs. There are more where they came from, and we'll be running full blast this time to-morrow. If you're not back at work by the time the first gang of men gets here, you'll never get back."

Luke expected a growl of anger: there was no sound from them.

The organizer coughed.

"Mr. Forbes——" he began.

Forbes smacked his hands together.

"I don't know you!" he snapped.

"You know who I am," said the organizer calmly. "I told you."

"I don't recognize your right to be here."

"I haven't any right, because it's against the principles of our organization to treat with employers, but I thought——"

Raging, Forbes stood up.

"Against *your* principles, is it?" he cried. "Well, it's against the principles of this firm to talk to *you*!"

"Mr. Forbes——"

"That's all I've got to say."

The organizer was unruffled. He maintained a rather terrifying dignity. He turned to the men.

"Come on, fellows," he said.

With a loud scraping of feet, the strikers and their leader passed out of the room.

Luke and Forbes remained quiet. Even for some time after the room was empty, they said nothing, and while they sat thus, a boyish voice rose from the street:

"Oh, I love my boss:
He's a good friend o' mine;
An' that's why I'm starving
Out in the bread-line!"

Somebody laughed, and several voices took up the chorus:

"*Hall*eyloolyah, I'm a bum—bum!..."

The boyish voice continued:

"Oh, why don't you work

Like other men do?
How in Hell can I work
When there's no work to do?"

"That's their logic," said Forbes fretfully. He nodded toward the street. "How can you argue with people of that sort?"

"It didn't strike me that you were arguing," said Luke. "What are you going to do?"

"What I said."

"You meant it, then?"

"Every word. I've taken your advice, after all: I've employed that strike-breaker: Breil, you know."

Luke had heard of him. Breil, he knew, owned several hundred fighting-men and took them to all parts of the country under the pretense that they were workers anxious to start the wheels of industries stopped by strikers. Wherever Breil went, trouble followed.

"Then you'd better employ the Pinkertons, too," said Luke.

"They're too expensive," Forbes said. "Besides," he added, "that sort of thing's un-American. We won't need detectives to protect the right of the worker to work. If we need any help, we'll call in the police. I thought you understood that. I'm afraid you will never learn the art of handling men, Huber."

Luke was anxious for a fight. The corruption that he had discovered in the League fired his primitive instincts. He was angry, and it was of small consequence to him upon whom he visited his anger. Here his own fortune, honestly come by, was threatened; his mother's support, Forbes's and Betty's. It was an excellent opportunity.

"I'm with you," he said. "When do you expect the first contingent of Breil's men?"

"When I said: in half an hour."

"Have you 'phoned police headquarters?"

"No. What's the use? I don't want to court a fight. The presence of the police before there was a fight might only start one. Headquarters sent me down two extra men this morning when I asked for them, and that's enough for the present."

Luke bent to the telephone.

"I don't agree with you," he said.

Forbes's protest was mild. Luke called police headquarters and stated his case. When he mentioned his name, he was told that the Police Commissioner was not to be found.

"Then find him," said Luke.

"I think he's gone out," came the answer.

"If you don't find him after what I've told you, I'll show up your action at the next meeting I speak at," said Luke.

The Commissioner was found.

"But what trouble have you had so far?" he demanded.

"We haven't had any so far," said Luke. "What we want is to avoid trouble."

"I think you're easy scared," laughed the Commissioner. "Have there been any threats?"

"No."

"Well, what's itching you, anyhow? My department's got three campaign parades and a dozen meetings on its hands to-day besides its regular business. I can't spare my men unless I know they're needed."

He rang off.

§4. Luke wanted to stay for the arrival of Breil's men; but there was something else that he had to do and could not postpone. He left the factory a few minutes before the hour at which the strike-breakers were to arrive. He passed into a street slowly filling with strikers, but he reassured himself by the reflection that what he had to do would be brief and that he would soon be free to return. He hurried to the League's headquarters, where he knew that the Committee would soon be in session.

For, under all his absorption in the affairs of the factory, and in spite of his desire to abjure thought for action, his brain had been busy. It was telling him something new about politics. It was receiving the truth about parties as, from his vantage-ground, he had seen it.

He did not stop in his own office. He went at once to the committee-room, which opened from that of the typists'. The Committee must have received a special summons and begun its work before the usual time. Business, as Luke entered, was already under weigh, and the room was filled. In the body of the narrow hall a crowd of men lounged upon rows of those collapsible chairs, clamped together, which undertakers hire out for funerals; most of the men had cigars in their mouths, and the smoky air smelled of tobacco and the fumes from the action of alcohol on the digestive juices. On a small platform at one end of the room sat Venable, who was chairman, and, among the several persons grouped about him, Luke was surprised to note both Yeates and Nelson. Nearly all of the company looked at the newcomer, and Venable, after looking, glanced quickly away. Several committeemen whispered together, and one laughed.

Luke sat in the first vacant chair that he could find.

"It is moved and seconded," Venable was saying, "that the order of business be suspended. All those in favor will signify their consent in the usual manner."

A droning assent answered him.

"So ordered," said Venable, and looked uneasily in Luke's direction.

There was an embarrassed pause. Finally Yeates got to his feet.

"Mr. Chairman," he said.

Venable bowed.

Yeates's hands were in his pockets; his glance was fixed on the floor.

"I propose this resolution," he said, his voice low, his words coming rapidly: "That it is the belief of the Executive Committee of the Municipal Reform League of New York that Mr. Luke Huber should be asked to withdraw from its ticket, on which he now appears as its candidate for District-Attorney, and that he is hereby so asked to do."

There was no hubbub; everybody but Luke appeared to have known what was coming. If there was any discomposure, it was plainly due to Luke's unexpectedly early appearance. Everybody looked at him again.

From a front seat, one man, evidently assigned to the task, rose abruptly.

"Second the motion," he mumbled, and sat down.

Luke was standing before Venable could ask:

"Any remarks?"

"Yes," said Luke.

"Question! Question!" called a dozen voices.

Luke's voice was raised above theirs.

"I want——" he began.

"Sit down!" yelled somebody behind him.

Luke turned, but the interrupter did not reveal himself.

"I want to say one word about this motion," Luke began. He swept the room with a steady gaze and then let his eyes rest on the chairman.

Perhaps because their candidate had never seemed more lazy or unconcerned, the Committee offered no immediate objection. It was Venable that, without meeting Luke's glance, interposed.

"Considering the topic under discussion," said he, "it would be more in accord with the usual procedure if Mr. Huber were not in the hall."

"Good for you!" cried a man in the back row of chairs.

"No! Give him a chance!" cried another.

Luke raised his hand to quiet them.

"Considering that this is supposed to be a meeting of the Executive Committee of the League," he said, "it would be more in accord with the usual procedure if any motions made to it were made by members of the Committee. Mr. Yeates is not even a member of the League."

"*Sit* down!" said the voice from the back row.

"Oh, sit *down*!" echoed a neighbor wearily.

"We can easy find somebody else if Yeates won't do!" cried another voice.

"I am well aware of that," said Luke, "and so I don't propose to quibble——"

"Ain't he obligin'?" called the back-row man.

"And besides," Luke continued, "if you would only listen to me for a minute, you'll find out that I came here with my mind made up to do just what you're now asking me to do."

He could feel their amazement at his words and so he no longer heeded the back-row man's comment:

"You mean you came here to sit down?"

"Have I the floor?" asked Luke of Venable.

The chairman writhed.

"In that case," Luke pursued, choosing to accept Venable's movement as a sign of assent, "I only want to say that I made up my mind this morning, *of my own free will*, to leave the ticket and the League."

He was interrupted by a roar of disapproval. The crowd had recovered its wits. Resignation would not suit its purpose. Dismissal alone would suit that. A turmoil of voices arose.

As if to climb above their noise, Luke stood on tiptoe.

"Because this morning," he shouted, "I discovered——"

Old Venable banged his desk with the gavel

"Out of order!" he bawled.

Luke waved him down.

"That this League," he yelled, "was as corrupt as——"

They were all on their feet. Some were standing on their chairs. The men next to Luke tugged at his coat. Other men rushed at him crying threats. They shook their fists and cursed him.

Luke was as mad as any of them now. His hands struck out at the twisting figures about him. The tendons of his throat swelled like knots as he screamed:

"——as corrupt as its enemies! Corrupt! Corrupt! Corrupt! And I leave you to your own rottenness!"

He fought his way through them to the door. He flung one man across a chair that crashed under its sudden burden. Another man who stood in his way, he struck with an upper-cut under the chin and sent him bouncing against the wall. Hooting, swearing, yelling, they crowded behind him, and he fought his way clear and almost ran through the outer room full of astonished stenographers.

A girl ran after him.

"Someone was wantin' you on the telephone, Mr. Huber," she panted. "I

think he said his name was Forbes and I know he said it was very important."

Luke paused, looked at her as if she were speaking an alien tongue and, unanswering, pressed on to the elevators.

§5. What now?

He thought about the newspapers, because his whole soul was still set upon self-justification. He went to the Union Square Hotel; found the public stenographer, dictated to her, and signed, copies of a statement briefly saying that he had left the ticket of the League because he had found the organization corrupt; posted these to the press, and then, already wondering why he had bothered to follow a course of publicity that was really directed solely by habit, turned again into the street.

The idea of party had been torn out of him, and he felt as if an arm or a leg had been torn out of him. He could not imagine a man being whole without being part of a party and thereby having a party as part of him. Even yet the lingering hope of the impossible made its claim.

But his reason fought that claim with the sword of remembered experiences. It recalled his faith in the party into which, almost literally, he had been born, and how that faith was shattered; his subsequent belief in the theory of reform within the party, or the party's ability to reform itself, and how that belief was broken; his intimate knowledge of corruption at the head of the other two parties; his discovery, that morning, of the same baseness in independent reform movements. Certain as he was of the rightness of his attitude toward those strikers at the Forbes mill, he was yet able to see that even the working-class, cheated by one political organization after the other, could not win its ultimate desires through any political organization, though they formed one of their own. Where was the entity? What was a party but the people that composed it? Could a party be a thing-in-itself? Could it have any existence save in and through its members? That mattered nothing. Whether the members imposed evil upon the organization that they created, or whether the thing that they created imposed evil on its creators, the evil was inherent in Party. The irrefutable fact was that the disease lay not in the form of a party and political system, but in the system itself: parties were wrong ab initio, politics were evil in their conception and being. Not this or that party was responsible, nor were these or those politics; parties were not diseased, politics were not diseased. Party in the abstract, Politics in themselves were the disease.

Nevertheless, he would hold those letters for a little while....

§6. That turn of his passing thought toward the position of Labor reminded him of the message that the stenographer had given him. He went to a telephone and called up the factory.

Over the wire, Forbes's voice came in a broken cry. Breil's men had arrived on time, and the strikers were waiting for them. There was a pitched battle in the street. The few policemen on duty disappeared. The strike-breakers fled into the factory, where two of them now lay dangerously wounded and a dozen others were badly cut and bruised.

"Why didn't you telephone sooner?" Forbes demanded. "It's awful! I sent for doctors and nurses. I've been trying everywhere to get you. There's one man—I couldn't find you anywhere—I don't know——"

Luke gritted his teeth.

"Haven't you 'phoned for more police?" he asked.

"Of course I have; but the Commissioner said it wasn't anything but a street-fight."

"Then I'll try the Mayor."

"I have done that, Huber."

"What did he say?"

"He said—you would hardly believe it—he said that these matters were the Commissioner's business."

§7. Luke went himself to the Commissioner and the Mayor, and was given the answers that Forbes had been given. The Commissioner said that he had the reports of his patrolmen, and that these spoke of the matter as trivial when it happened and described it as now ended. In the Mayor's office he was told:

"I have to depend on the word of my Commissioner."

Luke spent the remainder of the afternoon trying by long-distance telephone to reach the executive office at Albany. When he got an answer, it was from the Governor's secretary, and was to the effect that he now expected: no troops could be called out for service in any county of the State until the local civil authorities asked for them.

§8. That night, when there was a lull in the turmoil around the factory, Luke and Forbes sat late in the library of Forbes's house, trying to devise some plan to save the situation. It was two o'clock in the morning when Luke walked into the darkened hall; but there Betty's warm arms were around his neck, and Betty's voice was whispering in his ear:

"It will come out all right. I know it will come out all right, because *we're*

right."

He kissed her.

"I hope I do better at this than I did in politics," he said. "I haven't had time to tell you, but I lost there, dear."

"No, you didn't." He felt her hair brush his cheek as she shook her head in contradiction. "No, you didn't. You had your choice between doing what was right and what was wrong. The only way to win was the way they thought was losing. But you did what was right—and so it was they that lost, and it was my brave man that won!"

CHAPTER XV

Something had gone wrong again with the head of that office in the Wall Street skyscraper where George Washington watched the stock-ticker and where the windows looked down on filmy streets full of figures bobbing like entangled flies: the plump man in brown, the man with the pointed teeth and the beady eyes, was once more absent. The slight cold that the doctors mentioned, the catarrhal affection, had returned; the mucous membranes of the throat were re-inflamed; the malady that no newspaper gave a name to renewed its war.

As always, the office work proceeded with silent regularity. Simpson, the almoner, saw callers. Atwood, the chief broker, telephoned for orders uptown. Conover, the confidential clerk, traveled several times a day between his master's house and his master's place of business in one of his master's motor-cars. At the brown man's home, the famous physicians issued their non-committal bulletins; L. Bergen Rivington and George J. Hallett came in and went out, the former worried and elliptical, the latter loud in denial. And directly across the street the relays of reporters resumed their watching, asked hourly the same questions and received always the same replies. Rumor once more hinted dark things about a ruined digestion and an overworked brain.

Nevertheless, there was a difference between this occasion and its predecessors, and the delicate nerves of the financial world quivered with their subtle and sure appreciation of it. The interval of good health had been briefer than ever before. Simpson looked grave. Atwood received few orders. Conover more often than not failed to see whom he sought. The famous physicians called other famous physicians into consultation. Rivington and Hallett were sometimes denied

audience. The reporters sent their chiefs a word that made every newspaper-office in the country hunt up a certain long-prepared obituary, set it in type and keep it standing on the bank with a slug-line that read, "Hold for Orders." Rumor shook its thousand heads, and this time rumor was right: the thumbs of the gods were turned down.

No more rising early and working late for the man with the beady eyes and hairy hands. No more gluttony. No more scheming. All hours are alike in the sickroom; his only food was tepid broth, and about a brain too tired to scheme for itself, the only scheming was how to drag forward from minute to minute its life that was death-in-life.

In the street straw had one day been strewn to quiet the noise of traffic, and the next day commands from City Hall closed that street to traffic. Outside was silence, and silence was inside, behind the brownstone walls and shuttered windows, over the rich rugs, among the pictures by the great dead artists.

In a darkened room, in a big Louis XV. bed, bought from the poor descendant of a Provençal marquis for whose mistress it was made, the patient lay. His legs were beneath the covers, but an upholstered bed-rest propped him so that his trunk was almost upright, wrapped in a house-jacket of French flannel, russet brown. Freshly shaven and carefully brushed, he was as neat as if he were about to go to business; but his cheeks hung like folds of dough over his heavy jaw-bone; his short-sighted eyes were fixed on the tapestried canopy above him, which showed the rape of Europa; his lips, turned pale, were pulled back tightly over his yellow fangs. On the edge of the coverlet, high-drawn, his hairy hands gave the only sign of life in all his body: the rounded tips of their stumpy fingers moved constantly as if they were spinning ... spinning...

He would not go to business any more.

It was the day on which Luke's month of promised suppression was to expire. In the sick-room of the man in russet-brown two doctors stood at one side of the bed now, with a nurse between them. L. Bergen Rivington and George J. Hallett were admitted to the room, and Rivington stood at the foot of the bed with his trembling hand before his face, while Hallett, beside him, squared his jaw and looked at the dying man, who did not look at him. Some servants that had worked in the house for twenty years hovered in the shadows and sobbed, because they loved their master and had long cause to love him. A clergyman, in his vestments, knelt at the side of the bed opposite the doctors and read from a little book.

"O Almighty God," read the clergyman, his voice sounding loud in the quiet of the room—"with whom do live the spirits of just men made perfect, after they are delivered from their earthly prisons; we humbly commend the soul of thy servant, our dear brother, into thy hands..."

One doctor quietly reached out and placed a seeking finger on the dying man's wrist.

"... that it may be precious in thy sight..."

The doctor looked over his shoulder at his colleague. The colleague's eyes asked a question. The examining doctor nodded.

"... it may be presented pure and without spot before thee."

Then the man on the bed died. He died silently, speedily, grimly. The stumpy fingers stopped their weaving motion; they shot into the palms of the hands, and the hands clenched until only their hairy backs were visible. The lips tightened for a moment until the pointed fangs seemed to have bitten through them; the beady eyes protruded still farther from their sockets; the crooked arms curved stiffly toward the belly; the crooked knees shot toward the chest; the whole figure seemed to curl up; the mouth fell open.

The clergyman looked, hesitated and continued:

"... teach us who survive, in this and other like daily spectacles of mortality, to see how frail and uncertain our own condition is; and so to number our days, that we may seriously apply our hearts to that holy and heavenly wisdom, whilst we live here, which may in the end bring us to life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, thine only Son our Lord. Amen."

Far down in the offices on the twentieth floor of a Wall Street skyscraper, everything was going on as usual. Only one room of the suite was empty, and even in it, under the solemn Washington, the stock-ticker was weaving out its yards and yards of tape by the windows that looked to the web of streets on which the people buzzed always like entangled flies.

CHAPTER XVI

§1. Public opinion had been unanimous concerning Luke's break with the Municipal Reform League. Only in the terms of their condemnation did the newspapers differ: they were all agreed that Luke was anathema. His letters to the press served him to small purpose; the Executive Committee issued a statement declaring that his withdrawal had been requested "because of inflammatory utterances and practical policies contrary to the spirit and purpose of the organization." The

official statement was accepted and his individual version treated as a futile attempt to blacken a reputable, if mistaken, movement. It was everywhere believed that he had been forced to resign because of his Cooper Union speech, and it was in some quarters hinted that his former comrades held him responsible for the attempt to bribe the Heney lieutenant—a scandal made the most of during the subsequent period of the campaign and thereafter dropped before it reached the courts. In spite of the fact that the Committee had met in secret session, some of its members gave their own story of its turbulent dénouement to the reporters, and this was published in a form that made Luke appear as a cornered bully.

"Mr. Huber [said the most dignified editorial on the subject] was once doubtless a well-intentioned young man, but his first taste of popular applause seems to have intoxicated him, made him see visions of one real evil in every impossible quarter and caused a fit of that acute mania wherein one's best friends are mistaken for one's worst enemies. This is the only charitable explanation of the tragic end to a promising career, but on that end the Municipal Reform League is certainly to be congratulated."

Other editorials laughed at Luke's habit of hitting at vast conspiracies of which he never produced proof, and some charged him with flagrant dishonesty. He reverted for a time to his belief in publicity and bombarded the papers with letters of explanation; but the papers at first garbled and then forgot to print what he wrote. He sent for reporters to give them interviews, but, although the men still liked him, and politely took down his every word, they could never get their "copy" beyond the editorial desks. Within a few days, the former candidate was a newspaper joke.

He had, of course, written to his mother and sister about his engagement to Betty, since publicly announced, and they had replied with kindly letters, glad because of his planned marriage to the daughter of a man of good family supposed to be well-to-do, and hopeful for his continued happiness. Now, with the news of his political overthrow published broadcast, Jane wrote to ask him why he had been so foolish and to quote her husband the Congressman, to the effect that what Luke needed was an apprenticeship at practical politics; his mother's comment was one of love triumphant over the defects of the loved object and forgiveness for behavior inexplicable in his father's son.

The strike dragged on wearily. After the first outbreak of violence, the leaders were able, for a time, to prevail upon the strikers to use more peaceable methods; but the resulting days of siege were as trying for both sides as the active warfare had been. Forbes's boasts to the contrary notwithstanding, the firm, handicapped by the unskilled labor of the strike-breakers, found itself unable to fulfil its contracts; the new recruits were all raw men, whereas much of the

factory's work was intended for trained women: badly needed money was being forfeited. The dispossessed employees, on the other hand, rapidly exhausted their own supplies; because they had gone over to industrial unionism, the American Federation of Labor, to which their old "local" had been attached through the trade-union that it was a part of, refused help and forbade the union to give any; there had been a national reaction against the I.W.W., and it could furnish but little money. The strikers held angry meetings and faced starvation; Luke and Forbes met in long conferences and faced ruin.

In those days, only Luke's love for Betty sustained him, and Betty, being new to both love and disaster, remained loyal. She was confident that the politicians and the papers were conspiring against him, and, knowing her father's gentleness in his home, she was equally confident that the strikers were wrong.

Luke did not inquire as to the reasons of her steadfastness. In the first darkness of disaster, he was too glad for support to quarrel with its origin. She was warm and human, sympathetic and at hand; she loved him. With all his heart and soul, he returned her love. In the last analysis, he fought, he told himself, for an ideal that, if greater than them both or separately, was yet necessary to them. The ideal had an undeniable lien upon the best of his strength of body and mind; yet whatever of these the ideal could spare was not for him, but for Betty.

Then came the death of the man whom Luke had regarded as the personification of the evils from which the country was suffering. It came close enough upon the Cooper Union speech to make that speech appear in the worst possible taste; but it was an event considered of such tremendous importance in itself that Luke was forgotten and once for all swept from the columns of the newspapers.

Those papers, even the daring few that had once or twice had the temerity feebly to question the lesser schemes of the man who now pursued no more schemes, were crowded with reverential accounts of his illness, awed pictures of his last moments, laudatory descriptions of his Napoleonic career, and editorials that spoke only of his undeniable greatness and his outstanding benefactions. The country talked as if its king had died; the achievements of none of the three presidents killed while in office had received louder praise or more lengthy attention. He left two large fortunes to individuals: one to the niece to whom Yeates was engaged, and one to be divided among more distant relatives, with bequests to faithful servants in his house and businesses; but the bulk of his money went to the colleges and hospitals that he had so magnificently assisted during his life. Firmly, the entire press observed the Latin maxim: they let nothing but good be spoken of the dead.

Luke was by this time prepared for such an attitude on the part of the papers, but, on his own part, he permitted no illusions. The fact of death must always be solemn; but the force that ended wrong-doing did not palliate it. This

blow was like a judgment from Heaven. Luke did not think so much of how it would benefit him as of how it would benefit the country, but he was of too common clay not to spare some reflection to the influence of the event upon his own affairs: it would probably mean the dissolution of the antagonism to him in business; it would surely mean the cessation of the personal persecution that had already wrecked his political and professional career. Yet it was more for the triumph of the larger and broader good that he felt ready to chant a *Jubilate*.

Once the thoughts crossed his mind: If Heaven were just, and this death were indeed Heaven's judgment, why had Heaven's judgment been so long delayed? And, since Heaven had been tardy when the death of a single man could thus ease the world and make for social righteousness, how could he have held it wrong had some sufferer from that evil struck, in Heaven's default, this single blow for the freedom of society? But he was in no mood to front casuistry: the thing had happened, and that was happiness enough.

He was reading the news in his rooms at the Arapahoe. He had sat up late with Forbes the night before and had risen late this morning, breakfasting in the apartment house. He knew that he ought to go to the factory, but he could not go at once.

He began again to dream dreams as he used to dream them. His personal failure counted for nothing in what must happen now. Suppose he were discredited and unable to win back the public confidence: somebody, without party and without politics, a larger and better man than he had been, would assume a national leadership, where his had been small and local, and would now bring the whole country back to the simple political faith and the plain, honest financial and industrial policies of the nation's founders. The mercenaries of darkness that had served the evil mind could not now, with the evil mind in perdition, stand for one day against the Army of Light.

Himself? He would begin over again, with Betty and for her. In the new order, under the reign of equity, public opinion would soon clarify, and he could re-establish himself and perform some part, however small, of the mighty work of reconstruction. He had been too busy of late with love and politics and business to continue in the social life in which Jack Porcellis had launched him. Porcellis's sporadic returns to New York—the man was just now in India on the pretense of studying its religions—were, latterly, Luke's sole occasions of approaching that existence. Save to secure the loan, he now contritely recalled, he had neglected Ruysdael, whose agent as yet evinced no misgivings over the effect of the strike upon Forbes's securities, and on his last incursions into Mrs. Ruysdael's set, though Luke had found himself liked, he was made aware that the liking for his small-talk was severely tempered by scorn for his enthusiasms. He must overcome all that now. To be of use, to help Betty, he must regain.

When he was a small boy, his ambition in life had been carpentry. At some remote time or other, he must have seen and admired one of those journeymen joiners of the elder type that used to tramp the country roads from small town to town and keep alive by doing odd jobs at the houses on their endless way. He loved tools and he loved wandering; even yet he loved them, and this figure had once represented Romance to him as definitely as the dead man in russet brown, long afterward, represented Evil. This morning, while he smiled at the memory of those young imaginings, Luke felt a little of their charm: it seemed impossible for him to form, as he should, his new plans while he sat in an apartment house in the city in which his plans must eventually be applied; he wished that he could drop everything for the day and go somewhere far out into the country to tramp the dusty roads and dream at ease.

It was then that the telephone announced a caller: ex-Judge Stein.

§2. The Judge, as he entered, presented the same dignified figure that he had presented when Luke last talked with him. His strong face was solemn, but undisturbed by its solemnity. He arranged with care the tails of his frock-coat as he seated himself in the best chair, but on this occasion he came directly to the point of his visit.

"Mr. Huber," he said, "a great many things have happened since we met."

Luke shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll admit you've kept me pretty busy, Judge."

"I was not referring to the unnecessary trouble in which you involved yourself. I was referring to the fact that your month has elapsed and that the man you threatened is dead."

The news of the morning had temporarily annulled Luke's sense of time. Only yesterday he had wondered what use he should make of the Rollins letters, now carried in a safer place than his coat-pocket; to-day he had forgotten them.

"Yes," he said, gathering his thoughts behind his impassive face: "the month's over and the man's dead."

The Judge leaned impressively forward. He shook his white head gravely.

"Death," said the Judge, "wipes out all animosities. I know you would not use those letters now, Mr. Huber, because I know you would not strike a dead man. So I have come to ask you to deliver them to me." He held out his opened hand.

Luke blinked at it.

"I don't understand," said he. "I thought you always represented yourself as—well, as not professionally retained in this matter?"

"I am now," said the Judge.

"Oh! By the estate?"

"Not directly and not altogether." Stein chose his words. "I am retained by the company whose property those letters are."

"I thought you had left the railroad-claim business long ago. Perhaps you are specially retained for this one job?"

The Judge looked hurt. His firm mouth quivered.

"Mr. Huber," he said, "I am in no frame of mind for joking to-day. This man is dead, and he was my friend——"

"I'm sorry to have seemed to joke," Luke interrupted.

Stein bowed and went on:

"He is dead, and whatever his faults—we all have our faults, Mr. Huber—they died with him. I am here only to ask you to show a decent respect for the memory of a dead enemy. I am here to ask you to be magnanimous, Mr. Huber."

"Magnanimous? You talk as if I had won!"

"The living are always the winners," said the Judge.

Luke began to doubt that theory.

"And so you want me to surrender these letters?"

"Exactly. What use can they be to you now?"

"There were other people involved. Are they willing to accept my terms? I know they can't hurt me, because I know they haven't the courage or the power of the man you've been talking about. But that's neither here nor there: will they accept my terms?"

"They did not write either of the letters, Mr. Huber."

"They're inculpated by them."

"Not legally."

"Enough inculpated to serve my purpose."

"If you think that," said the Judge, "I can only repeat the offer I made you when I called here before."

Luke smiled.

"And I can only refuse it."

"Mr. Huber," the Judge began again, "the man is dead——"

Luke's nerves had been strained for many a day. He leaped to his feet.

"Of course the man's dead!" he cried. "He was dead this morning, and he's still dead. Why do you keep saying that over and over? I'm tired of hearing it." He saw the look of pain return. "I beg your pardon," he said; "but I might as well tell you first and last that I won't surrender those letters, no matter what you plead or threaten. I won't tell you what I intend to do with them, either. And the only reason I know that they must be of use to me is your coming here and saying they aren't any use."

The Judge rose also.

"Mr. Huber," said he, "I am very sorry to hear you speak this way. I can't tell you how sorry I am. You ought to know by this time——"

"I couldn't know anything," Luke cut in, "that would make me change my mind."

"But suppose," said the Judge heavily, "suppose my friends happen to know that the situation of the Forbes Company——"

Luke's face went very white.

He opened the door.

"Good-morning, Judge," he said.

§3. Stein's polite, but portentous adieux were not a quarter of an hour old before Luke sought the office of the newspaper that had been the last to refuse him space in its columns for his political explanations. The man that was dead had, it seemed, left a something of his influence behind him: Luke resolved to strike at it.

The office-boy was a long time returning, and, when he did, it was to announce:

"He says ter find out whatcher want."

"Give me my card," said Luke.

He scribbled on the card: "Non-political."

"Now," he said, "try him again."

§4. The editor was one of those men whom newspaper-work so affects that they look any age between thirty and fifty. His nervous face was full of tense lines, and every few minutes his mouth twitched.

Luke told his story and showed the letters. The editor read them.

"Why do you want to do this?" he asked.

"Why?" Luke was amazed. "Because I want to protect the public."

"Then you'd better go to the M. & N. railroad."

"But you know they wouldn't do anything. They've promised before."

"I can't believe that," said the editor.

"I know it," said Luke.

"I can't believe it. You have always been too sudden, Mr. Huber—if you'll pardon my saying so. At any rate, we can't print these things." He returned the letters. "After all, the man's dead, you know."

"What's that got to do with it?" Luke's voice rose in reply to the hated phrase. "I want to keep some other people from dying."

The editor picked up a proof-sheet and began to read it.

"It would be bad taste for us to print that, just now," he said. "Come around in a couple of weeks, and we may think about it. Why, the body's hardly cold yet."

§5. As Forbes had once gone from bank to bank, Luke went that morning from newspaper-office to newspaper-office. Yet there was this difference: that, whereas Forbes had only tried a few banks, Luke tried a dozen newspaper-offices. His search included the papers notoriously controlled by the money or the advertising of the power that opposed him; he even tried some of those journals of the city which are printed in foreign tongues, and he tried the radical press. He tried all in vain.

Most of the editors were men that had fought him when he was the candidate of the Municipal Reform League; some that he sought were of those who had tired of him when he pestered them with explanations of his political overthrow. Many refused to see him; one or two pronounced him mad. The radicals shared the view of the man with whom he first spoke: they would not be guilty of bad taste. Wherever he got word with a person in authority, the word was the same; he met with that all-sufficient argument:

"After all, the man's dead."

§6. When, finally, he acknowledged defeat, his wearied nerves manifested their condition through deep physical exhaustion. He could not front the thought of passing the remainder of the day at the factory; could not go at once from one losing fight to another. However much he might be needed, he could not do it. Until he had rested, he would be useless, and worse than useless.

He did not go back to the Arapahoe. Instead, with the open country calling him, he went to the Grand Central Station and took a train into Connecticut.

The day was Saturday, and the cars were filled with released workers, but Luke avoided them by going far and descending at the least important of the train's stops. Tired though he was, he walked beyond the little town. He cut across fields to a hill crowned by a clump of trees and there, in the shade, threw himself on the ground and lay for hours thinking of nothing and looking at white clouds sailing across a blue sky. He wished that he could lie here forever....

It was one o'clock in the morning before he returned to his rooms. It was far too late to reply to the score of telephone-calls that, he was told, Forbes had made on him.

Luke remembered that he had promised Betty to go with her to service at Nicholson's church.

§7. He was strengthened by his brief rest, and he went to Betty with a heart renewed.

"Father's still asleep," she said, as she met him in the hall of the Forbes house, her gloved fingers busied with her hair, preventing the escape of one of the yellow wire pins that held the few strands too short for her pins of tortoise-shell. "He wanted to be called, but he was so tired out, I told the maid not to disturb him. He sat up ever so late, waiting for you. Where were you, Luke?"

Luke had rarely seen her looking better. The Sunday calm had erased all the tokens of the recent trying days from her face: it was rosy and young; it was appealingly almost childish. The morning sun was in her hair; her brown eyes were wide and bright. He did not want to spoil her by the story of his yesterday's defeat, and so he passed it by with some facile excuses for his absence from the factory.

"We're late," he said, as he helped her into the Forbes motor-car.

The chauffeur ran close to the speed-laws all the way to Manhattan. They reached their journey's end immediately after the choir had taken its position in the chancel.

The ritualistic church of St. Athanasius is one of the handsomest in New York. It was built in close imitation of Beverley Minster, and so elaborate was the work done upon it that, in spite of its wealthy congregation's assistance, it still staggered under the load of a heavy debt. It has the Yorkshire building's two Early English transepts, Perpendicular towers, and a Late Decorated nave with flying and pinnacled buttresses. Inside, as Luke and Betty entered it, the warmly-colored light fell through many Lancet windows on the crowd of fashionable worshipers kneeling before narrow chairs. Nicholson's voice, coming from behind the choir-screen, sounded clear but far away.

Luke and Betty walked up the nearest aisle and took the seats assigned to the Forbes family, close to the carved pulpit and under the triforium. The high arches were carried on clustered pillars, and, down the perspective of the nave, Luke could see into the choir, to the Decorated reredos, where, as in Beverley, the piers increased in size by successive groups of shafts that projected like corbels. He knelt beside her and tried to give his mind to the service; but his eyes, familiar though they were with the church, wandered to the north aisle's windows and the ogee and foliated arcade under them, to the people in front of him, and so, inevitably, to the girl at his side.

The service proceeded. The people said the Lord's Prayer; Nicholson recited the collect, and then read the Ten Commandments of Moses, the congregation responding.

"Lord have mercy upon us and incline our hearts to keep this law."

After the creed, Nicholson walked to the pulpit. He climbed its steps, and

for a few moments only his clasped hands were visible as he knelt inside. Then rising, he took his stole from the pulpit rail, kissed the cross embroidered at the top of the stole, and put it on.

"In the Book of Ecclesiastes," he began, "in the ninth chapter and the second verse, it is written:

"'All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good, and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not.'"

Nicholson's face was earnest. It was at once stern and irradiated, the face of an ascetic turned seer.

"And in the General Epistle of St. James," he proceeded, "in the second chapter and the twenty-second verse:

"'Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?'"

Nicholson spoke without notes, but without hesitation.

"A great man," he said, "has just died. We have heard evil report of him, and good report. We have heard whispers against him, and we have seen good that he has done; but his greatness no man questioned. To-day he has passed to his last account. To-day the dead man stands before his Eternal Judge. One of those events that happen to the rich and poor alike has happened to him. With what he has done that is over, the Court of Heaven now alone, in all its boundless mercy, has to deal. We that remain here on earth may not judge of that. We that remain on earth must consider the things that he has done and are not over, the things he has left behind; we must concern ourselves only with what concerns us; it is our duty to remember him by the works that he has made his monument."

The preacher dwelt upon the dead man's rise from poverty to vast riches, a hopeful lesson in the reward of thrift and wisdom to every poor boy in a republic that grants equal opportunity to all. He spoke with an admiration of the genius that had carved its way to power until its will was felt in the uttermost corners of the earth.

As he proceeded, Nicholson seemed to forget his admonition against the judgment of things over and done with. He made direct reference to Luke's Cooper Union speech, and he looked full in Luke's face as he made it.

"Not long ago," he said, "while this man was tottering upon the brink of eternity, another man, a sincere, but misguided man, made terrible charges against him, charges that reflected, however veiled, upon the character and motives not only of the man now dead, but a whole group of people eminent in public and business life. And what was the result? Nothing that lent the least credit to the accuser's intelligence or appreciation of the value of evidence, for nothing at all was proven, nothing even corroborated."

Luke flushed. He felt Betty looking at him, but he would not return her gaze. He felt other people in the congregation turned toward him. He could not guess what had changed Nicholson.

The sermon was proceeding with praises of the dead man's benefactions. One by one they were described and extolled.

"His greatness," said Nicholson, "would have availed him nothing at this one event for the righteous and the wicked if he had not had charity, for we are told that though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, we are become as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. Charity, however, this man had. The institutions that he supported and has endowed have given and now forever will give learning to thousands who, but for them, would have lived in ignorance—healing to thousands who, but for them, would have died in agony.

"Charity: but charity alone will not suffice. Sounding brass itself, unless it is informed by faith! And this man's sublime faith even his worst enemy cannot deny. For his counsel and advice, for his painstaking and sagacious investment of its funds the Church is indebted to this man as it is to no other. Many a denomination outside our own fold can truly say the same of him and should say and does say how much we owe him, also, for the unceasing flow of his money into our treasuries. He did not speak of these things. He did not let his right hand know what his left hand did; but we of the Church remember that he gave millions of dollars to the faith.

"The faith of men of money is tested by their money; yet this man's faith had many another test and rose triumphant from them all. His attendance at the Church's services—not only on Sundays, but on fast-days and holidays, on saints'-days and work-days—never failed. His wisdom was free to our councils, and I have been told on reliable authority that he never rose in the morning, went to bed at night, or embarked on any business enterprise, however small, without first humbly and privately asking direction of the Most High. He knew in his every act that the greatest man is as nothing before God; and when he came to die, he died like a Christian, a priest of God by his side and the words of God's mercy sounding in his dulling ears. From first to last, his works and his faith were one: 'Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?' For us who are Christians, that is enough. It is enough to make us each pray to meet his end, each at his own station in life, as this great man met his. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum.*"

Only amazement had held Luke in his chair. At this phrase, he half rose.

Nicholson, however, was concluding:

"There is but one word more, a word personal to us of this congregation, to be said. I need not recall to you the heavy privations that this church in which

we now are has undergone. They were generously met and nobly borne, but, in spite of all your nobility and all your generosity, the time came, a week since, when it seemed indeed as if the forces of evil were about to conquer, and as if, unless Heaven intervened, this beautiful building must pass out of our hands.

"Three days before the death of the man I have been speaking of this morning, an impulse came to me, and I wrote him a letter. My friends, I do not believe that that impulse was of this world.

"I have since been told that when the letter reached him, his eyes were too dim to read it; yet, when he was informed of its purport, he asked that it be read to him. It was read, and then, with a hand already trembling at the touch of death, he took a pen and signed the last check of his career. That check was our emancipation; it was a check for the entire sum for which this Church of St. Athanasius—this beautiful church in which it is our privilege to worship God—stood indebted. I ask you to join in prayer for the soul of our dead benefactor and then to unite in the doxology for thanksgiving to God. 'Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?'"

§8. "Where are you going?" gasped Betty.

The people were kneeling, but Luke was on his feet.

"I'm going to get out of here," he answered. "I'm going to get into the open. I want fresh air."

He strode down the aisle under the clustered pillars of the triforium, and Betty hurried after. At the church door stood a table bearing a pile of leaflets, and unconsciously he took one as he passed.

§9. In the sunlit street, he felt a little ashamed of his impetuosity. Betty was indignant.

"Why did you make such a scene?" she asked.

"I'm sorry," said Luke. "I simply couldn't stand it. A priest talking like that! And Nicholson the priest!"

"He shouldn't have attacked you," Betty granted, "but you didn't put him in the wrong by behaving impolitely."

"Oh, I don't care about putting him in the wrong, and I don't care about his attacking me!" Luke helped her into the waiting motor, and the car started smoothly on its return journey. "What I couldn't stand was the Church making a hero out of such a man; the Church selling itself for a few thousand dollars."

"But the man did do good, Luke."

"How much—compared with the evil he did?"

"I can't know that. Who can?"

"You talk like Nicholson!"

"No, I don't." She put her hand on his. "But what good can come of abusing the man?"

"I don't want him abused: I only don't want God's Church to make a saint out of him."

"Nobody's doing that, Luke. They're simply being decent about him. After all, he *is* dead."

Luke shook her hand free. Then, suddenly, he tossed back his head and broke into a high laugh. He frightened her.

"Luke! What is it?"

He could not at once answer.

"Oh, what is the matter?" she pleaded.

"You!" he laughed. "You, too!" To control himself he unfolded and looked at the leaflet that he had picked up in the church doorway, and had been heedlessly folding and unfolding ever since. His mirth stopped. "Listen to this," he ordered. "By Jove, it's not Nicholson alone; it's the whole bunch, and speaking officially, too! Listen to this. It's a printed statement issued by the General Executive Committee of the whole church—not St. Athanasius alone, but the entire denomination—and it's worse than Nicholson's sermon." His eyes ran from line to line. "'We call upon the prayers of the faithful,'" he read as well as the motion of the car permitted.... "'He has not buried his talent nor hidden his candle under a bushel.... So far as a man's life can, his life exemplified Law and Order, realized the truth uttered by Richard Hooker: "Of Law there can be no less acknowledged, than that her seat is in the bosom of God, the harmony of the world."'"

Betty had been listening attentively.

"Well?" she asked.

"'Well?'" repeated Luke. "'Well?' Don't you see? The whole Church is standing up for him. And not our Church alone: all churches. He'd bought them—bought them!"

"Luke! How can you?"

"Yes, he has. One way or another. He or his kind: for I'm beginning to see at last he wasn't alone—never was and never will be. And seeing that, I'm not blaming him so much—any of the *hims*. I don't say, any more, he was worse than the rest of us; he was only stronger. Maybe he was only the average man in extraordinary circumstances. He didn't make them—I'm beginning to believe that, too,—they made him. But the Church! The churches! They've sinned against the light. They're liars. They're—why, they must be founded on a lie: their light must be darkness!"

The girl had edged away from him, her brown eyes big with horror at his

blasphemy. The motor was drawing up before the door of the Forbes house; it was drawing up in a quiet Brooklyn street. And there, in that Sunday stillness, and among those surroundings of commonplace respectability, suddenly the Marvel came to him.

It came to him, this denial of Religion, as a profound religious experience. It was Miracle, burning, blinding, transfiguring. Elemental, tremendous. It was a stroke that affected his entire being; suffused him; changed him, spiritually, in every atom. It hurled him from all his old bases and set him in a new relation to the universe. It was not reformation; it was revolution. Luke was another personality: this was the "new birth." He saw the glory of individuality, the divinity of his humanity. In the flash of revelation, he learned to walk and knew that for all his life he had been permitting himself to be carried. Without guessing it, he had been, he now knew, all these years, afraid, and now, with this new inspiration, he faced all things and feared none. Believing, he had been dead, but denying, was alive again; faithful, he had been lost, faithless, he was found, and not by any other help than his own: he had found himself. It was the thing that, in the twinkling of an eye, can make an honest man of a liar, an abstainer of a dipsomaniac, good out of evil. It was the same thing that happens to a penitent at the moment of "conversion," of "receiving grace," of "experiencing religion"; the same force operating with the same power and the same manner, but in an opposite direction.

As St. Paul rose from the earth after his vision near Damascus, so Luke staggered from the Forbes motor-car. His hands groped at the air.

"Betty!" he gasped; "tell your father I can't see him. Not now.—I'll be back later.—Perhaps in a little while.—Later."

She put out her arms to him.

"What is it, Luke?" she cried. "What's the matter?"

His eyes looked at her, but he did not see her. He turned from her to the street.

"I don't know," he said, "but I think—I think I'm Being Saved."

CHAPTER XVII

§1. For an hour, for two hours, he tried to adjust his mental and spiritual sight to the blazing illumination; but adjustment, he at length realized, must be a matter of

many days. The illumination was too sudden and too intense. He could no more assess moral values and determine ethical duties than a new-born baby can know the use of those objects most habitual to its elders—a new-born baby to whom the lamp on a table and the moon in the sky are one and the same. There must be false starts on wrong roads; there must be disappointment and stumbling; there must even be moments of relapse. The great thing for Luke was that, as the lives of some men are changed forever for the better by an affirmation of faith, his life had now forever been changed for the better by a rejection of faith. He had denied the superhuman in man's affairs, and the banishment of the superhuman raised the human; it left the man no longer a pigmy trembling before a giant, but himself a giant, limited and mortal, yet self-sufficient and divine. He had found what was for him the ultimate strength; for the knowledge of how to use that strength rightly he could wait.

Meanwhile, there was the patent obligation to Forbes. Forbes needed him; Luke returned to the Forbes house.

§2. Forbes was waiting in the library.

"Where were you yesterday? Are you going crazy, Huber? You knew I needed you."

The elder man had borne disaster hardly. He looked tired and ill.

"I'm sorry," said Luke. "I was busy."

"Busy? What could have kept you busy in town when you knew this strike was going on? And you went to church this morning instead of waking me! Betty says you're sick. Are you?"

"No. I'm only getting well."

Forbes's tone was more considerate:

"Anyhow, you might have come in to luncheon. Have you had anything to eat?"

"I'm all right," said Luke.

"But Betty says——"

"Where is she?"

"She's in her room. I told her to lie down. She's all upset. Really, Huber——"

Luke seated himself by the table covered with magazines and sprawling sections of the Sunday newspapers. Outwardly, he was as self-contained as during his days in Leighton's office.

"What was it you wanted to see me about?" he interrupted.

Forbes took a chair opposite. He assumed the voice of persuasion.

"I want to be perfectly frank with you, Huber," he began.

Luke thought: "I wonder what he is going to keep back." All that he said

was: "Yes?"

"Yes," resumed Forbes, "and I want you to be perfectly frank with me. You once told me you'd made enemies of the people who've since made such trouble for us, because you had some letters or other that belonged to them, didn't you?"

Luke bowed assent. He knew now what to expect.

"Well," Forbes went on, "the only use those letters were to you was political. Now that you can't use them politically, why don't you give them up?"

"You mean now that I've been chucked out of politics?"

"Well, you know you've ruined yourself there. You can never get back again. When you can't hurt your enemies, why not make them your friends?"

"No, thank you."

"But these letters are of no use to you."

"How do you know that?" asked Luke quietly.

Forbes blushed.

"Are they?" he countered.

"And why," persisted Luke, "didn't you suggest this to me days ago?" His eyes probed the man before him. "What else did Judge Stein say to you?" he demanded.

Forbes drew back in his chair. His flush deepened, but presently he made an impatient gesture.

"Oh, very well," he said defiantly, "the Judge did see me yesterday, and if you had been at the factory, as you should have been, you'd have seen him, too."

Luke thought it unnecessary to remark that he had been honored by a previous call from Stein.

"What else did he say?" Luke repeated.

"He said a great deal; but the upshot of it was that he would induce your enemies, who are the men that control the trust we're competing with, to lower wages and join the fight against the employees, if you would agree to surrender those letters."

"I won't do it," said Luke.

"Don't be hasty," Forbes implored. "Think of me. Think of Betty——"

Luke winced.

"Don't begin that," he commanded.

"But what have you to gain?" asked Forbes.

"Nothing. I've nothing to gain. I've only something to keep: my self-respect."

"Your self-conceit, you mean. Be reasonable, Huber. These people won't give in."

"So I must?"

"They won't give in, and you can't get back to politics and can't get any

paper to take up your case."

"Oh,"—Luke could have laughed—"so Stein told you that, too, did he?"

"Never mind what he told me. The point is: his people can help you if you'll only acknowledge defeat, now that you're defeated. They can give you back all you've lost, and nobody else can."

"And if I don't admit I'm whipped, they'll whip me some more?"

"They'll finish what they've begun, Huber; they will wipe out the Business, too."

"I'm sorry," said Luke—"very sorry for you, I mean. But there's no use arguing: I won't give in."

Forbes exhausted his every resource. He pleaded for the business, for Luke, for Betty. For an hour he sent the squadrons of his appeal against the impregnable wall of Luke's determination.

"What have you to gain?" he reiterated; and once he said: "The worst of the crowd is dead, anyhow."

Luke was not listening. He was saying to himself:

"What is it I am to do next? There is still a little money left to my account at the bank. It will keep me for a year and mother for a year—and then? I'm making Forbes hold out against the trust, and if he does hold out his mill is doomed. No hope there! Can I go back to the Law? I can't, because the Law is just what the Church is. The Law was made by the powerful, it is interpreted by their paid servants and administered by their slaves. It is a game devised by the crafty powerful to cheat the simple weak. The last five years have proved that to me, and I'm ashamed that it took me so long to learn. Betty——"

He did not dare to think of Betty. He thought rather of the open country, of the smell of the earth on which he had been lying twenty-four hours ago, and the coolness and freedom of the white clouds against that sky of blue....

Forbes was saying something about his grandfather and the Business. Luke got up.

"There's no use your wasting your breath," he declared. "Nothing that you could say would change me—no, nothing that even Betty could say! But I'll do this: I'll never be away from the factory again when I ought to be there; I'll stand by you till we've beaten these strikers or till they've ruined us."

He walked out of the room and closed the door before Forbes could answer him, and he walked into Betty's arms.

§3. "Luke," she whispered, "what was the matter this morning? Won't you tell me, dear?"

He felt the blood mount hotly to his head. Her hair was sweet to his nostrils.

"Don't," he said sharply.

"But, Luke——"

He drew her hands from his neck. He imprisoned her wrists in his grasp.

"I don't quite know what's the matter—yet," he said. "It's all come too suddenly. But, Betty—O, Betty, I don't believe I'm the man for you!"

She asked him what he meant, and he could not tell her. She pressed him, and he could only repeat his conviction.

"Do you mean"—she drew her hands away—"that you like some other girl better?"

He laughed rudely.

"No," he said, "not that."

"But you don't care for me?" She recovered all her dignity. "If you don't care for me, why aren't you brave enough to say so?"

The afternoon sun fell through the hall-window and showed her to him very fair.

"Betty," he said slowly, "there are only two kinds of marriages you understand: there is the Church, but I don't believe any more in any church; and there's the Law, but the Law can't make a marriage for me."

At least the immediate purport of the words she understood. Her face burned red and then became white and still.

"You mean——" she began. Her hands clenched. "Oh!" she cried.

She tried to pass him.

Passion left him, but a great sorrow took its place as his master. He wanted to justify himself; he even so wanted to repair the hurt done her that he would have shut his eyes to the new light. He seized her hand.

"Betty!"

She wrenched her hand.

"Let me go! I want to go to father! Let me go!"

"But, Betty, wait—listen——"

She freed her hand.

"I shan't tell him. Don't be afraid. He has enough to worry him. Only don't let me ever see you again!"

§4. All that night Luke walked the streets. It was breakfast-time when he returned to the Arapahoe. His letters and the morning papers were lying on the floor of his sitting-room where they had fallen when the bell-boy dropped them through the slit in the door.

He read the letters first. There were not many, for his correspondence had of late declined to almost nothing. The only things of interest were a note from

Porcellis, announcing that he would soon return to New York and a letter from Luke's mother, saying that she had written Betty to pay her a visit: "It is only right that your fiancée should do this," wrote Mrs. Huber, "and that I should have an early chance of knowing the girl that is to be my son's wife."

Luke wondered how Betty would reply to the invitation. As he was thinking of this, his eye caught the heaviest headlines on the first page of the newspaper: during the night, a body of strikers at the Forbes factory had marched to the main entrance and battered down the door in an endeavor to drag out the Breil men who slept there as guards by night and worked there by day; the Breil men resisted; there was a general battle with at least two deaths; the attacking party were repulsed, but the police, summoned by a riot-call, gained what appeared to be no more than a preliminary skirmish, for the entire neighborhood was in arms and more bloodshed was expected to-day.

Luke dropped the paper with an oath. He was more hungry than before for a part in this fight—in any fight. If Religion was a coward, he would make one more appeal to Government, to force. He called Albany on the long-distance telephone. He kept on calling until he had brought the Governor to the other end of the wire, and then he was astonished to hear that the proper civil authorities in New York had already asked for troops.

"It is always best," he was told, "not to drag local men into an affair of this sort, if it can be helped; so I'm having the Adjutant General send down a company from Poughkeepsie. That ought to be enough for the present, and they ought to get there by noon."

Luke muttered his thanks and rang off.

"I know why that was done," he said to himself: "They think they'll make more trouble for us with the militia here than without it. Well, we'll see."

He stripped off his clothes, went to the bathroom, and began to run the water for a cold plunge. He was talking to himself.

"The worst of the crowd's dead," he said. "That was Forbes's way of putting it. There he had a glimpse. Started down to rock-bottom. But he didn't arrive. I felt that way till only a little while ago. But I see I was wrong. I thought this was a one-man show; I believed in a sort of personal Devil. I wish I'd been right. It would have been all so simple, if I'd been right in that. But I wasn't. It isn't the men; it's the system. The man didn't make the system; the system made the man."

He was wonderfully clear about that now. All his fight against evil had been directed toward one man, and the man was dead and the evil remained. He could almost pity that man in russet brown. That man who had sat at the fountain of forces reaching up and down through all the life of the world, seemed to originate the forces and use them for his own malign purpose; but now—and herein lay one

of the reasons for Luke's present wonder at life—he perceived certainly that the man had been only a little better treated by the forces than the forces treated all the rest of mankind, was their creation and their slave just as wholly as the most obscure victim. Industrial evolution, working through the collective ignorance of the race, had devised the Great Evil. Here was a web that no spider wove, a web that killed spiders as well as flies, lived on with a life of its own, grew and spread of itself. So long as the web existed, there would always be a spider. The Web remained. It was the Web that must be broken.

Yet he wanted to fight. He would fight. The Gospel of Negation had given him its light; it had yet to teach him to see.

§5. Other forces vitally affecting Luke were at work that day, at first far distant from the factory. They were forces that had affected him imperfectly heretofore, but that now were set in motion in a manner no longer to be diverted.

Ex-Judge Stein was summoned from his office almost at the moment of his appearance there. His motor-car took him into Wall Street, to a certain skyscraper, into which he went and was taken as far as the twentieth floor.

He entered an unmarked door and passed an attendant who bowed to him respectfully. He passed another attendant. A third, at sight of him, got up and went through a second door, leaving the Judge to wait in dignified repose. Then the last attendant reappeared and nodded, and the Judge passed the second door.

He remained inside for an hour. When he came out his mien was undisturbed, but his strong and kindly face was even graver than usual. He almost forgot to return the farewells of the attendants as he left them. He rang twice for the elevator, although the elevator was not long delayed.

"The office," he said to his chauffeur as he climbed again into the car.

§6. Returned at his own quarters at half-past ten, he sent immediately for Irwin, to whom he talked for perhaps forty-five minutes. He spoke with a sad inevitability.

"No more excuses, no more extensions of time, no more delays," he concluded—"and no more failures."

The twinkle left Irwin's eyes.

"I understand," he said.

He could not fail to understand. His superior had been once and for all explicit. Judge Stein, during his service to the public on the bench, had never been called upon to pronounce a sentence of death, but, had he been so called upon, he would have spoken much as he now spoke to Irwin.

§7. "I hate to have to tell you this," said Irwin to Quirk at noon in the latter's shabby law-office, "but if that job isn't done before to-morrow morning, those affidavits charging you with jury-fixing are going to be turned over to the District-Attorney, and the people that have them are now in a position to make Leighton act on them, too."

Irwin also had become specific. The plump Mr. Quirk lost his habitual smile.

"It's a rotten business," he said.

"It is," Irwin agreed; "but your arrest would be a worse one—for you."

"We may have to go the limit," said Quirk.

"Then," said Irwin, "you'd better go it. That's no affair of mine."

§8. "This time," said Quirk, "you've got till to-night to make up your mind."

He was talking to Police-Lieutenant Donovan. It was just after lunch-time.

"What about?" asked Donovan.

"Whether you want to bluff us again or lose your job."

"We never did bluff you."

"Well, then: whether you want to get those letters or get fired. Not *try* to get them: *get* them. It's get them or get out." All the kindliness and good-fellowship was missing from Quirk's voice. "It's one thing or the other. We got evidence to fire you on. You knew we had, last time I talked to you. Well, they were easy on you then, Hughie. This time they mean business."

Donovan looked at Quirk.

"Suppose somebody gets hurt?" he said.

Quirk shrugged his shoulders.

§9. When Guth came in late in the afternoon, Donovan said:

"I got a warrant in my desk for you, Guth. A friend o' mine swore it out. If I don't stop him, it means a criminal trial where you won't have the chance of a goat. You know what it's for: that little girl up in Fifty-second Street. The only way I can get him to hold off's for you to get Reddy Rawn to do what you'd ought t' got him to do long ago. If somebody gets hurt, it ain't our fault."

§10. At eight p.m. in the shadowy alley near Forty-third Street and Third Avenue, Patrolman Guth's twisted mouth was menacing the darkness.

"He's down at the Forbes factory now," said Guth. "There's sure to be a fight there to-night, an' anybody can get in. It's a cinch."

The darkness did not reply.

"Anyhow, you got to," said Guth. "The old man's crazy mad. He says it's the chair for yours if you fall down this time. Crab Rotello's got worse. He can't live the night, an' the old man says he's goin' to have you railroaded soon as Crab cashes in, if you don't do what he says. He means it, too, Reddy."

Out of the darkness came the answer:

"I'll maybe have to croak this guy."

"That's up to you," said Guth. "It'll look like some strikers done it. It's his own fault for bein' a fool. What in hell do you care, anyway? We'll look out for you."

"All right," said the darkness.

"Mind you," Guth repeated, "no more stallin' this time. If you don't get the goods, an' get 'em to-night, you're a dead boy, Reddy."

There was an instant of silence. Then the darkness spoke again:

"It won't be me's the dead one."

CHAPTER XVIII

§1. The text of the newspaper article, which Luke read carefully while he dressed, added few facts to those marshaled in its headlines. To Luke it was evident that the past few days had brought the strikers to desperation. Their own funds were gone, and they had no help from outside. They were not strong in numbers, and many of them were women. The ranks of the men had, however, been swelled to a formidable figure by unsought additions from the hundreds of hooligans that, in every city, are attracted to seats of industrial war, and these provided an element which the leaders were unable to control. The affair had gone the usual way: a picket had jeered at a non-union worker; two policemen attacked the offending picket; the crowd ran to the rescue, and a general disturbance, with the assault on the mill, was the inevitable result. Now there was no telling to what extent the trouble might go.

Luke was savagely glad that physical action was imperative. He wanted something that would stop thought. He wanted rest from thought: from the spiritual strain, from the yearning for Betty. Again and again, as he hurried through a breakfast forced upon himself only by the knowledge of his need, he found his mind playing with the childish idea of the carpenter that he wanted to be,

tramping the country roads from casual job to job. He might well come to that. Meanwhile, it was good to have this chance for a fight.

§2. Luke drove to the factory in a taxicab that he insisted should be open. As he neared his destination through rows of grimy buildings and vacant lots in which goats grazed among ash-heaps and tin cans and "For Sale" signs, the streets began to look as if a heavy skirmish had been fought through them. Knots of idle sightseers already lined the uneven sidewalks and pointed to the relics of the conflict; at corners the former workers were gathered in low-speaking groups—shrunken figures; slouching forms in poor clothing, whose business was the making of better clothes for luckier beings; faces angry and sullen, faces savage, debased, hungry; women's faces as sexless as the men's—and everywhere, furtive and sinister, those other faces, the faces most to be feared, of the gathered condors of the underworld, the feeders on economic carrion, who had slunk here from the darkest corners of Manhattan, Brooklyn, Jersey City, rising from a hundred alleys and pot-houses, and circling toward the factory as birds of prey come from the four quarters of the compass toward a battlefield; he saw them crouched at the shadowy thresholds of tumble-down dwellings, leering from fetid passageways, peering from the swinging doors of stinking saloons, stealthy, determined.

Overhead the sky was clear sapphire. A strong breeze came in from the Sound, laden with health. It fanned the memories of yesterday out of his brain and for a moment made the present seem a picture from the remote past. It was unreal: he felt himself an unimportant spectator of some unconvincing play.

Then, rising above rows of rickety houses, the mill came into sight, blocking the street-end, and restored his appreciation of the imminent. A wrecked coal-wagon lay horseless in the middle of the street opposite a bent lamp-post, the coal heaped where it had fallen. Battered hats were in the gutter, and on the pavement was a coat, torn and muddy. No smoke curled to-day from the chimney of the mill's engine-room, and in front of its shattered main-door, rudely repaired by unpainted planks of fresh pine, two policemen lounged, facing a string of mute pickets.

Luke passed the door unmolested and entered the office. The superintendent, a whiskered man named Whitaker, was there, and one or two pasty and frightened clerks.

"Mr. Forbes down yet?" asked Luke briskly.

"No, sir," said Whitaker. "He just sent word he was sick."

"Sick? What's the matter with him?"

"I don't know exactly, Mr. Huber. It was Miss Forbes telephoned, and she said he'd had a kind of fainting fit right after breakfast."

Luke sat down at the desk and called up the Forbes house.

"Mr. Forbes there?" he asked of the maid that answered him.

"No, sir. Mr. Forbes is in bed."

"Ill?"

"Not very well."

"Ask Miss Forbes to come to the 'phone. This is Mr. Huber talking. I'm at the factory, and I must know something about Mr. Forbes' condition."

The maid assented, but, after he had waited, it was again she that spoke to him.

"Miss Forbes asks you please to excuse her. She's very busy. She says to tell you Mr. Forbes was a little dizzy and had to lie down. He thinks he can get to his office late in the day."

Luke felt the mortification that it was patently intended he should feel; but he lost no time over it. He turned at once to Whitaker and the clerks, and secured from them what verification he could of the newspaper's story. Then he sent for the brawny, flannel-shirted Breil and learned what remained for him to know.

"You think there'll be more trouble?" he asked, after he had sent Whitaker and his assistant from the room.

"Sure there will," said Breil cheerfully, "but not before to-night."

"When'll the soldiers get here?"

"'Long about noon, I guess."

"How many police have they given us?"

"Half a dozen. I couldn't beg more."

"Better send some of them out to have that coal cleared away."

"I tried to, but they said it wasn't their duty, an' I couldn't get any satisfaction at City Hall. You know how these cops are."

"Couldn't you have a detail of your own men do it?"

"I'd like to first-rate; but it'd mean a fight, an' we don't want to put ourselves in the position, to the public, of courtin' that. Mr. Forbes said Saturday——"

"He was right. How many men have you in good shape?"

"Seventy-two. I'd send for more, but they're on a job at Hazleton."

"Will City Hall send more police if there's trouble?"

"Not till they can't help doin' it."

The hours passed slowly. Luke made the rounds of the mill as the commander of a fortress inspects it before an attack. He saw that the strike-breakers, an anxious lot of men, were stationed at the vulnerable places, and he talked again with Breil.

Forbes did not appear, and Luke was too proud to try a second time to question Betty about him; but reporters came and sent in urgent requests for a statement from the company. Luke refused to see them. It was his turn to refuse

the newspapers.

"Better feed 'em a little pap," Breil advised.

"I won't so much as look at them," said Luke.

"They'll knock us if you don't."

"That can't hurt us. I won't see them and you're not to talk to them either, Breil."

He began to chafe under the delay. He made the rounds of the mill again and smoked incessantly at cigars that he found in a box in Forbes's desk. He bolted a cold lunch sent in at noon, and he wondered why the soldiers were late.

The soldiers came at two o'clock. Out in the street there were some derisive shouts, and then the regular tramp of marching feet. Luke hurried to an office above Forbes's, a room furnished with a small desk at one side, a large table in the center, and a few chairs, and there, from a window, saw the column of men in khaki, advancing four abreast, down the street.

"They're nothing but a lot of boys," he said as, when they drew nearer, he looked at their young faces. "It's a shame to send a lot of kids like that into—a mix-up of this kind."

He received the Captain and the first-lieutenant in the main office. The Captain had taken off his broad-brimmed service hat and was mopping his face with a blue bandana handkerchief.

"Phew!" he said. "This looks as if it was goin' to be the real thing!"

"It *is* the real thing," said Luke.

"You haven't got a drink handy, have you?" asked the Captain. He was an olive-complexioned young man of twenty-two or -three with a girlish mouth and bright black eyes.

Luke produced a bottle and glasses, and the Captain drank. He spoke in the high tone of excitement as he rattled on:

"Somebody threw a brick at us just up here. Did you see 'em? It near cracked Sergeant Schmidt's coco. Poor old Schmidt; he was scared yellow, wasn't he, Terry?"

Terry was the lieutenant, a raw Irish lad with the face of a fighter.

"You bet," said he.

Luke drew the Captain aside.

"You may as well understand at once," said he, "that this isn't any picnic. You've been sent here to protect our property, and you may have a hot time doing it. We have seventy-two strike-breakers here under Mr. Breil; the superintendent; one or two clerks; and five foremen who've remained loyal to the company. That, with me, makes up the inside force. There's half a dozen police, too. What I want you to do is to draw a cordon of your men along the front of the building. Stand them on the pavement. Breil's men'll watch the back. Half your people

had better go on duty now and be relieved by the other half at five o'clock. But from seven on, we'll need your whole company on the job."

The Captain looked serious and worried.

"You think there'll be real trouble to-night?"

"I shouldn't be a bit surprised, especially as I see the Governor's sent us just enough of you fellows to excite a mob and yet be powerless against it. What were your instructions from up top?"

"I was to use my own discretion."

Luke looked at the young man and smiled at the idea of intrusting men's lives to such discretion.

"Well, the main thing is not to lose your head," said Luke.

"They'll outnumber us?"

"If they attacked, yes—undoubtedly."

The Captain returned to the whiskey bottle.

"And we'd be powerless, unless——" He hesitated.

"Unless you fired," Luke concluded for him.

They looked at each other, the man and the boy.

"You mustn't fire," said Luke.

"No," said the boy.

"Unless you have to," said the man....

The afternoon dragged by. Luke gave up all hope of Forbes and spent most of the time in the upper office, looking at the soldiers stationed in front of the building and at the groups of men staring at the soldiers. It seemed to Luke that the numbers of the staring men were increasing....

§3. The night was dark. The purple arc-lamp that burned directly in front of the main entrance to the factory flared vividly upon a circle of the street beneath it, but beyond this circle, which was long empty, one could scarcely see, one could rather only feel, the presence of a slowly gathering, silent crowd. In the main office, Luke was again consulting with the Captain, Breil, and a policeman. The policeman, as if acting under instructions, had sneered at the idea of further trouble so long as the crowd was unmolested, and Luke would not ask again for aid from City Hall. His lieutenants were standing about the room in attitudes of uncertainty. All were agreed against precipitating a fight by attempts to disperse the enemy.

The Captain drew up his boyish form.

"My men——" he began.

"Your kids," corrected Breil.

"We're all right, anyhow," the Captain lamely concluded, his cheeks hot

under this indignity.

Raucous cries came now and then from the street.

"You've got enough to take care of with your own affairs," said Luke. He turned to the policeman.

"Are there many in that crowd out there?" he asked.

"Not many," said the policeman, "but I think there's more comin'!"

Still smarting under Breil's rebuke, the Captain felt some show of his bravery to be a duty to the organization to which he belonged.

"We can handle 'em all right," he said, "however many there are. They're mostly nothin' but foreigners, anyhow."

Luke wanted above all to preserve harmony in his ranks, but an imp of perversity whipped his tongue.

"What's your name?" he asked the Captain.

"Antonio Facciolati," said the Captain, "but I'm a naturalized American citizen."

Luke patted his shoulder.

"That's all right," he said reassuringly. "What have your men got in their guns, Captain? Blank cartridges?"

"Not much," said the Captain boldly: "ball."

"Good," Luke smiled. "But don't use it. Butts are best for this work."

He decided that Forbes, well or ill, ought to know how things were going. He bent to the telephone, placing the receiver to his ear.

There was no answer. He rattled the hook impatiently.

"What's the matter with this 'phone?" he growled.

He rattled the hook again, but could get no reply.

Breil left the room. Presently he returned.

"I've tried the one in the hall," he said, "and the one in the cloth-room. The wires are cut."

For a moment nobody spoke. Facciolati's hand crept to his sword-hilt, and the sword clattered. From somewhere far up the street came a choral murmur of voices:

"*Hall*eyloolyah, I'm a bum—bum!"

Breil stepped to the window.

"That's them. That's the others. They're comin'," he said.

§4. The men ran to their posts. Luke climbed to the upper office and went to its

window.

They were coming indeed. They were there, vividly from the circle of light beneath him, vaguely to the walls of the tumbledown dwellings across the street. At his feet was a line of khaki-clad militiamen, standing at ease beside their magazine-rifles, along the curb; beyond them a few yards of open street, and then what at first looked to Luke like a field of wheat under a high gale, gigantic wheat, black of stalk and white of head, tossing in the wind: the shoving, swaying bodies, the gesticulating arms, the threatening faces of the mob.

They had come to complete the work of the previous night. His startled eyes could pick out no one individual, his ears could select no single word; but he could see leaders, who had lost their leadership, making gestures of despair; men, who had seized license, waving fists and shaking sticks; could hear a turmoil of cries and curses. The whole impression was blurred and general; yet, as he looked, the wheatfield changed to a roaring sea, the black pitching and tossing of a terrible tide ever mounting nearer, nearer to the soldiers drawn up in front of the broken factory door.

The thought mastered him: this was his property which only that frail door separated from them—that frail door and those frightened boys in khaki. They were going to destroy his property—his!

A second street-lamp, farther up the way, lighted the rear of the crowd, and into the circle of its illumination Luke saw running a motor-car. He saw the mob scatter, the car stop, the crowd close around it. He heard more distant shouts above the shouts that were nearer.

The broken section of the crowd swayed, hesitated, attacked the car. For an instant, the arms of the chauffeur beat at the man that climbed to his seat, and then the chauffeur was pulled to the ground. Luke strained his eyes to see if the car were familiar to him. It was. There was a woman in it: its only occupant. It was the Forbes car, and the woman must be Betty.

§5. Luke circled the center table and ran down the steps three at a time. He nearly fell upon the huge form of Breil, coatless, a revolver in his hand, hurtling from one group of his forces to another. Luke pushed him away.

"Where are you going?" cried Breil.

Luke did not answer. He was tugging at the door.

Breil's heavy hand fell on Luke's arm.

"Here! Stop that!" he bellowed. "Where d'you think you're goin'?"

"Get away!" shouted Luke. "I'm going out."

The door leaped open. The howls of the mob beat upon the two men's faces.

Breil thrust his lips against Luke's ear.

"Are you crazy?" he yelled.

"Yes!" said Luke.

He slipped through the door.

Facciolati was there, white-faced, standing behind his soldiers.

Luke made an egress through the ranks by shoving away a soldier with either hand.

"You're not going out *there*?" cried the Captain. "They'll kill you!"

Luke jumped to the curb.

"I don't care!" he answered.

He was crazy, and he didn't care whether he was killed or not. Of these two things he was certain. He was mad from the torments of his conflict between logic and desire, and death would be an easy solution—perhaps it was the only one. It flashed upon him that such a solution might be cowardly; but the next instant he had but one impulse; he was going to save Betty, and that was enough. A new madness, the madness of what seemed an absolutely unselfish act, of an act that intoxicated him with its unselfishness, gave him the strength of ten and fired a berserker rage in his breast, hurled him forward like a rock from a ballista. He was going to save Betty, and he was a hundred yards away from her in the midst of a mob that hated him.

The ocean of raging men closed over his head; its pandemonium smashed his ear-drums; but he was deep in the crowd before any of its members realized whence he had come. He was clearing a way, striking, kicking, biting, shouting he knew not what—shrill oaths and guttural threats—thrusting their heavy bodies from side to side. He felt their hot breath, encountered their resisting arms and legs, smelled the sweat of them.

"Stop him!" yelled somebody. "He came out of the factory!"

He saw a host of faces about him, dark with anger; eyes big with hunger and hate. He felt blows that could not hurt him, felt his own fists sink into flabby bellies, crack upon stout skulls.

"The scab!"

A hand fell across his mouth, and he used his teeth like a were-wolf; he tasted the smooth salt blood before it began to trickle down his jowl. A second hand snatched at his collar, another grabbed his arm. He pulled frenziedly, he struck out blindly, he threw all his weight far forward. He knew that his coat ripped; he twisted his arm free, lowered his head and dodged forward, men sprawling before him. He had gained the motor-car.

Betty was standing up in the tonneau. Her hands were clasped before her breast, her face was set. She saw him falling toward her.

Luke jumped beside her, his coat gone, his shirt torn, his face bleeding from

a cut above the right eye, his hair matted over his forehead. She did not know him as he seized her roughly and picked her up in his arms; but, in the moment that he balanced on the edge of the car, with the light full in his face, the crowd knew him.

"That's him! That's Huber!" they shrieked.

He jumped with her directly back into the crowd.

While he was still in the air, he thought that was the worst thing to have done. Without him, she might have had some chance; with him she would have almost no chance at all. But it was too late now; he could only fight until he could fight no more, and then they must die together....

§6. They did not die. Somebody, as the mob laid hold of them, broke through its ranks—somebody with still some shred of authority left him.

"Get back, you fools! Get back! Do you want to kill the woman?"

It was that organizer of the strikers whom Luke had seen in Forbes's office when the employees made their last appeal to Forbes. It was the man Forbes had ignored.

With infinite slowness, against infinite opposition, the rescuer made way for them. Grumbling, growling, threatening, the crowd fell back. It menaced, it cursed, it hurled ribald jokes; but it fell back before the leader that it no longer obeyed in anything else, until he, followed by Luke with Betty in his arms, came to the line of soldiers at the battered factory door.

Luke swayed a little. Facciolati stepped up and tried to steady him, but he tossed Facciolati away. Luke turned to the organizer.

"Won't you come inside?" he panted.

The man shook his head.

"I'm—I can't tell you how much I owe you for this," said Luke.

"Oh, you go to Hell," said the man.

§7. Inside the factory, Luke would not waste a glance on the strike-breakers that gathered, open-mouthed, around him.

"Get away," he ordered. "I'm taking her to the upper office. Nobody is to disturb her there. You understand? Nobody."

§8. During all that frightful progress back through the mob, she had lain in his arms silent, her eyes closed. Only now, when he brought her to the upper office, banged the door behind them and put her in an arm-chair, which he kicked the

length of the room in order to place her as far as might be from the window, did she look at him.

"I didn't faint," she said. "I only pretended. I thought that was safest."

He had dropped to his knees beside her and had begun to chafe her hands. He was unconscious of the renewed din outside. Thus alone with her, he was thinking only how much he wanted her.

She was leaning far back in the chair. The rays of the street-lamp were the only light in the room, and they made her face seem as peaceful as the faces of the dead. When she opened her eyes, her eyes were luminous.

"You're safe," she continued. "You're safe, aren't you?"

He kissed her hand hotly.

"You!" he said. "I'm all right. But you?"

She stood up, smiling.

"Quite."

He rose also.

"The brutes! the beasts! I'd like to—I'll do it, too!"

He had stepped into the light. His shirt was torn, his hair dank. Blood caked over the cut on his forehead, and his jaws were red with the blood of the man whose hand he had bitten.

"Luke! You *are* hurt!"

She came toward him.

"No, I'm not," he persisted, but he let her fingers touch the wound on his head, and her fingers thrilled him.

"Luke," she said, when she had convinced herself that the cut was superficial, "I'm glad it was you."

"That came for you?"

"Yes."

"I didn't do much. I was nearly the death of you. For a minute I thought it was death. That other fellow's the one you have to thank."

"Anyhow, I thank you." She pressed his hand.

A shout came from the mob. It brought him back to material concerns.

"How did you come to this part of town?"

She had complete command of herself.

"Can't you guess?" she asked.

Her eyes were unafraid.

"Don't say you came on my account."

"But I did; I did. Father's too ill to ask questions. It was a slight heart attack, the doctor said: he's been so worried lately, Father has, and so overworked. But I wanted to know, and I tried to telephone here, but they said the connection was broken. Then I was sorry for not answering that call you made before, and when

they said you hadn't got back to the Arapahoe, I was afraid. So I told Father I was going to Mr. Nicholson's mission—he must have thought me dreadfully unkind to leave him for that—and I had James drive me—Oh!" she broke off: "I wonder if *he's* hurt?"

"The chauffeur?" Luke remembered. "I saw him just as I got to the car," he chuckled. "He'd reached the outskirts of the crowd and was running for dear life. I don't think they'll catch him."

The noise of the mob would grow from a hoarse mutter to a loud howl and then sink to a low murmur.

"Luke," she said, "it *was* you rescued me."

He listened to the noise.

"Then I've probably only rescued you from the frying-pan to dump you into the fire. I wish I'd had the sense to take you in the opposite direction. I don't know what I could have been thinking of. Of course, they'll simply have to send more police soon and attack these fellows from the rear: the soldiers haven't the right to drive away the crowd, and Breil's men daren't leave the building. But I do wish I hadn't brought you here!"

"You've brought me where *you* are," said Betty.

Her eyes were wide, her lips parted. Luke's breath caught in his throat.

"Betty," he said, "do you mean——"

She did not quail.

"I mean I love you."

"What?" He drew back, afraid of her, afraid of himself.

"I know you weren't yourself," she said. "I know how all this trouble has upset you. I know you didn't mean those things."

The reversal was too much for him. He leaned against the table and burst into laughter. An instant ago the roar of the crowd had seemed miles away, had seemed no more than any recurrent noise of city life. They two, Betty and he, had seemed to him set apart from it all, remote from it, together. Now——

"Luke!" she was crying.

A picture drifted into his mind. It was a picture of pine trees and the sun in a blue sky full of fleecy clouds and a long white road winding, dusty and carefree, to the end of the world.

"Luke——"

He could not hear her now. He saw terror in her face, but the noise from the street rose, rattled at the window-pane, and engulfed her words.

A new cry rang out from the mob—a cry so sharp and loud that both the persons in the room forgot themselves and ran to the window. They looked out upon the tossing faces below.

The crowd had turned. It was elbowing, straining necks, rising on tiptoe,

gazing backward.

Far back there something dark fluttered in the night air. It was seized and passed from hand to hand. It reached the circle of light and waved high above the center of the crowd, a banner of crimson, tossing like a beacon over the swarm of black heads, defiant, audacious: the Red Flag.

And then came a new sound. It began in the heart of the mob and spread outwards like circles in water broken by a dropped stone. It did not stop the other noises; it assimilated them. It was low, but strong; it seemed to contain all the history of past wrongs, all the arsenal of present determination; but it was touched with far hopes and freighted with tremendous dreams. It was a chant, a song, a hymn, and all the crowd was singing it with the strength of a thousand pair of lungs.

"What's that?" asked Luke, although he expected no answer.

But the girl gave him one.

"It's a thing called 'The International,'" she said, her voice trembling. "I heard it once in Paris. It's a terrible song."

Luke's eyes were caught by a movement at the window of one of the tumbledown dwellings across the street. He saw the window open and a frowsy woman lean out. She held something white in her hands. She raised it, then dashed its contents toward the nearest soldier. The shot fell short, and two men in the crowd were drenched.

The hymn ended in a shriek. The mob believed that the insult had come from the factory and instantly resolved itself into a fuming whirlpool. Luke saw tossed aside people who were evidently strike-leaders frantically trying to quiet their one-time followers, but he did not guess the purport of the new commotion in the seething mass. Then he saw something that made him jerk Betty away from the window and fling her against the wall at its side.

There was a crash—a pause—a tinkling. A gust of air, fresh and cool, invaded the room. A missile had broken the window. A whole volley followed, smashing more glass and battering at the factory walls. The mob was using the coals from the dismantled wagon that Luke had noticed in the street hours ago.

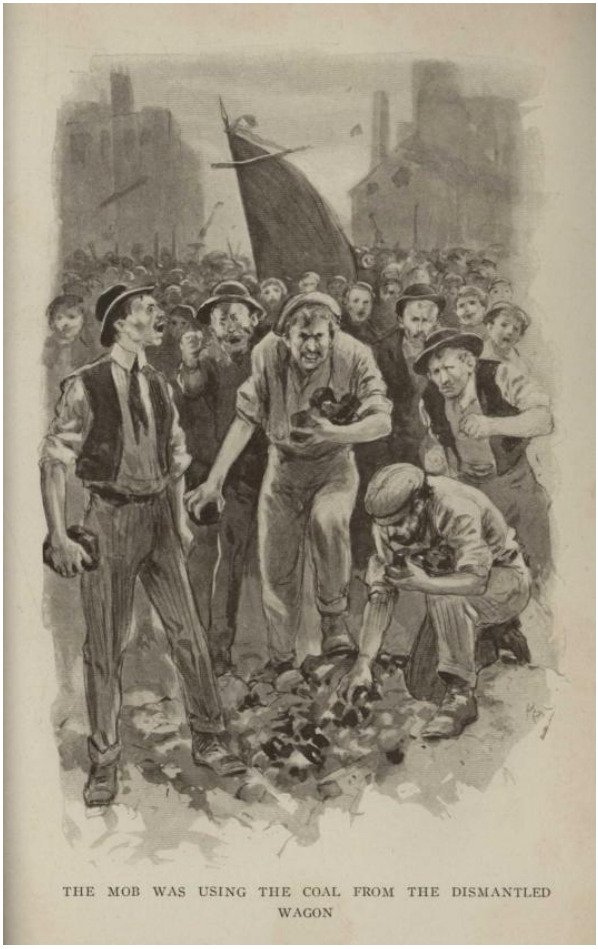
Somebody had been pounding unheard at the office-door. Luke saw the door bend and ran to it. He flung it wide.

Breil stood there, his revolver in his hand.

"I've got to disturb you——" he began, and, though he shouted, his voice did not reach to where Betty stood against the wall.

"That's all right," called Luke. "I've been a fool and a coward to stay here. Give me that gun."

He wrenched the weapon from Breil's resisting hand. He leaped to Betty and slipped the revolver to her.



THE MOB WAS USING THE COAL FROM THE DISMANTLED WAGON

THE MOB WAS USING THE COAL FROM THE DISMANTLED WAGON

"Got to go downstairs," he cried to her, for the broken window let in a roar that made ordinary speaking tones futile. "Bolt the door after us! You'll be safe! We'll fall back to the stairs, if we have to fall back. Good-bye!"

He would not look back. His last sight of her was of a woman standing erect, alert, comprehending, the revolver shining in her hand. Then, with the following Breil calling out that he must go to his own men at the rear, Luke ran down the stairs, opened the main door and, leaving it gaping behind him, plunged outside.

§9. Coherent purpose he had none. All that he realized was this: here was a struggle; here was a final endeavor to destroy his property, which, however endangered by the trust, was almost his sole means of support. There would be no more chance given him for delay; there would be no further help from the police—the half-dozen sent that morning had disappeared—until help was too late; there was only the boyish soldiery. He would go to them, and he would fight.

As he emerged upon the street, he saw the circle of light empty of the human mass that had lately swirled there. A resounding cacophony from the darkness, and dimly perceived objects moving a hundred yards and more away, told him that the rioters had withdrawn to the upturned coal wagon. At the moment of understanding this, he heard a rending staccato noise.

The frightened Facciolati heard it, too. He was standing on the pavement by the door and had drawn up his men in a closer column before him. His bared sword was in his right hand.

"What's that?" asked Luke.

"It's the tongue of that coal wagon," gasped the Captain, "they're rippin' it off."

"What? For a battering-ram? For this door?"

The Italian nodded.

"Yes. I heard someone yell for them to do it. Then they all ran over there."

A terrible stillness fell. Behind the curtain of the night, the mob only hummed and shuffled its feet.

"Well?" asked Luke.

His eyes pierced Facciolati's. His voice was pregnant with meaning.

"What had I better do?" faltered the Captain.

Before Luke could reply, a strident yell came from the invisible ranks of the mob:

"Now then: come on! Burn their damned shop!"

A thousand voices echoed:

"Burn it! Burn it down!"

The Captain turned to Luke.

"You've got to stop them," said Luke.

The din increased.

"O my God!" said Facciolati.

In Luke blazed up all the furnace of battle. He gripped the Captain's collar and shook the man as if he were a frightened, disobedient child.

"Give the order!" he commanded. He hated this boy.

In a shrill, hysterical voice that cut the rising noise of the mob, Facciolati gave the preliminary order, and the rows of lads in khaki, standing on the curb, raised their black-blue rifles to their shoulders.

"We won't shoot!" he called into Luke's ear. "We'll only frighten 'em!"

"Burn it——" From the street the cries were merged into a wordless roar. There was the wild rush of two thousand feet, and into the light burst the mob again: a long trotting column with the Red Flag swaying overhead, and in the midst five or six men bearing the wagon-tongue leveled like a lance.

A veil of crimson seemed to flutter before Luke's eyes—the eyes of the man that had counseled caution and the use of only the butts of rifles. He did not think, he could only feel—only feel that here at last was the chance, here the unavoidable need of action that had the splendid conclusiveness of brutality. This was man's work. This was no rescuing of a girl: it was war. The world had meshed him in a net of intellectual doubts and quibbles: here was his moment to cut the net, and to cut his way to freedom, to take vengeance on the world.

That and something more. Betty was in danger and the property that was partly his, that in part he owned and had bought. But above all this, riding it all, goading it, spurning it, mad with its mastery, the blood-lust, the Sense of Power, the dizzy knowledge that he could kill.

The mob was almost upon them. It was a tidal wave.

"Now!" shouted Luke to the Italian.

But the Captain caught his hand. He gabbled the nothings of panic. Luke threw the boy to the pavement. With all the breath in his body he vociferated:

"*Fire!*"

§10. Hell belched its flames: a thunder-clap, a thunder-cloud knifed by red flashes of lightning.

Luke felt his head bashed against the wall of the factory. He was choking in a cloud of smoke. He could see nothing, but once he thought he heard the crack of other shots from somewhere above.

Then he felt his knees clutched. He felt a pawing at his elbow; and presently

he heard the chattering voice of Facciolati screaming against his cheek:

"Why in Hell did you do that? How in Hell did you dare?—Don't you know what you might have done? Who's in command here?"

"Shut up," bellowed Luke, "or I'll show you who's in command." He tried vainly to see through the smoke. "Take your hands off me!"

It was as if he were in the crater of an erupting volcano. The reverberation split his head, and through it came shrieks, groans, curses, and then, as the smoke slowly lifted, the pound of two thousand feet on the paving-stones, while, with the Red Flag sagging to and fro like a wounded eagle above it, the mob fled pell-mell up the street.

But the Captain had not heeded Luke's warning.

"Now they'll be back!" he was wailing. "We'll all be goners now. Why did you give that order? Why didn't you let me change it?—I'd instructed the men to fire over their heads—An' you didn't let me change it—An' of course they *did* fire over their heads—an' nobody's hurt—Do you know what that means? They'll be back and kill all of us!"

It was impossible for Luke to believe. Then, not fear, but the rage of thwarted blood-lust sent out his clawing hands.

"You did that?"

He caught Facciolati under the arm-pits and raised him clear of the ground.

"You——"

A new sound interrupted him. At first he thought that the mob had wheeled a machine-gun into the street and turned it on the factory. Then the sound became a clatter and, looking through the ranks of soldiers, Luke saw, far ahead, a tangle of rearing horses and falling men: even City Hall had been unable longer to hold its hand; one of the patrolmen who had fled to the factory must have telephoned a final word to headquarters; the mounted police were charging the crowd; the riot was ended.

§11. Luke ran up the stairs to the upper office and found the door unbolted. He did not know what he went for. He was not glad that the riot was ended; he was raging like a man-eating tiger foiled of its quarry.

Betty stood at the window in the full light of the street-lamp. He scarcely knew her face. He had never seen her look like this. He had never dreamed that she could look like this. Her hat had fallen to the floor; her golden hair tossed above her head like licking tongues of flame; her eyes were bright coals; her cheeks were scarlet; her white upper teeth bit deep into the vermilion of her lower lip. As if to give freer play to a breast that panted, she had torn open her dress at the base of her splendid throat. The revolver was in her hand. It was

cocked and smoking. She looked like Bellona invoked and materialized from the fire and smoke of that roaring inferno of the street.

"How many?" she gasped. "How many have we killed?"

Luke stopped at the door. He knew now that he had indeed heard shots from overhead. He knew that the same primæval passion which had made him a tiger—and still maintained its sway—had worked this metamorphosis also, had changed this gentle girl into what he saw. At another time, in another mood, he would have loathed it; but in his present mood he gloried in it. He thought that he had never seen her so beautiful or imagined her so splendid; her madness matched his own.

He came toward her, circling the table that stood between them.

"None!" he cried. "That fool Captain told the men to shoot high."

He put out his arms. He wrenched her to him. His right arm clutched her about the supple shoulders, the fingers of his right hand sinking into her firm left breast. With his left hand he shoved her face upwards. Brown from the caked blood of the man he had bitten, his opened mouth closed upon hers.

He heard the revolver clatter to the floor. She writhed in his embrace. He had expected the perfect response. Meeting an abrupt refusal, he was taken off his guard, and she escaped from him.

She staggered into a corner. The devil that possessed him had lost its power over her. She had reverted to her natural being. She did not cry, but she stood there with her hands pressed tight against her breast, the fingers mechanically busied with repairing the opened blouse, her face all horror at the thing she had been.

"What must you think of me?" she was moaning—"I don't know what came over me!—What must you think of me?"

He thought nothing. He could think nothing. He could realize only that he was again to be robbed. Twice to-night the cheat that played with men at the game of life had given him the winning hand, only to sweep the stakes from the board just as Luke reached for what he had won. The blood-lust changed its form; it assumed an ungovernable fury. Something crackled in his brain as he had seen imperfect feed-wires at the touch of a trolley-wheel. The crimson veil fluttered again before his eyes.

He turned and bolted the door. He turned again and ran to her. His face was wet with sweat, black with powder, terrible.

She understood. She lowered her head and tried to dodge past him. She cried out.

His strong fingers caught her hair. The hair streamed down. Her forward lurch brought it taut. He jerked at it; she fell toward him. His free hand caught her throat and stopped her fall. He tossed her against the table; her feet brushed

the floor, but he pressed her shoulders tight to the table's top. He bent over her, one hand at her throat, the other raised to stop her mouth, his beating breath on her face.

She was wholly in his power now. The outside world was impotent because the outside world could not have heeded her appeal; the woman herself was helpless because her captor's was the strongest body. Again came to Luke the frightful sense of Power, again the dizzy knowledge that he could do whatever he chose.

At that instant the madness fell from him.

A physical motive there of course was, since the more intense the passion the briefer is its duration; but even if it originated in the physical, this reaction transcended things material and wheeled about to crush them. It was the second and fuller phase of that revelation which had come to him in the Sunday quiet of the Brooklyn streets. Burning, blinding, transfiguring, the Marvel and the Miracle, elemental and tremendous, returned, and what they had once done from the flesh to the spirit, they now did from the spirit to the flesh. They returned to remain. They completed the revolution, the new birth.

Luke saw yet more dazzlingly the glory of individuality, the holiness of his humanity; but it was as if scales fell from his eyes, for he saw entire. Here had been one of the false starts on a wrong road, one of the moments of relapse that he had expected. The individuality was divine; physical passion was a splendid thing; but when the individual's physical passion stooped to force or cunning, what had been splendid became foul, and what had been divine was bestial. Luke, in his denial of revealed Religion, was no longer a pygmy trembling before a giant; he was himself a giant; but what he was in actuality he must recognize as potential in his fellow creatures. His mental and spiritual sight was at last adjusted to the new illumination. He could assess moral values, could determine ethical duties now. It remained only to find their reason and decipher their credentials. On Sunday he had gained his strength; to-night he had gained the knowledge of how rightly to use it.

He ran to the door and tore back the bolt.

"Whitaker!" he called.

The superintendent came cringing from the main office, where he had cowered through all the riot.

"Get two policemen and have them see Miss Forbes safely home."

Betty was secure now, and the mill was safe. He borrowed a hat too large for him, and put over his ragged shirt the alpaca office-coat of some clerk, which he found in a locker. He walked out into the street. Far away he heard a woman's strident voice singing:

"Oh, why don't you save
All the money you earn?
If I did not eat
I'd have money to burn."

There was the sound of a distant shot.

Then silence.

CHAPTER XIX

§1. He could not stay in the factory while she was there. To go to the upper office where he had left her, to attempt to explain, to offer a shoddy apology—this would be to add the last insult to the wrong that he had done her. He thought that worse than to have completed the thing that he had begun.

He cut northwestward toward the more peopled part of the borough, not because he wanted to be among people, but because he did not even yet want to have to think. He tried to think, but he did not want to. He saw clearly his new duties and his new restrictions; but they presented themselves to him as isolated facts which, offending his reason, spurred his reason to demand their credentials, and these he could not yet read. Moreover, the memory of the scene with Betty would rise before his restless mind, burning all else away, and, to burn memory away, his heart drove him into the more crowded streets.

Women of the streets accosted him. He passed a house from a window on the ground-floor of which two girls with painted faces beckoned. He passed brightly lighted saloons that sent into the street inviting streams of light and the lure of clinking glasses and laughter. In a jostling thoroughfare he noticed that passersby were looking strangely at him and, recollecting what a queer picture his disordered clothes and bloody face must present, he blamed himself for not repairing the damages of the fight before setting out. He turned again into the less frequented quarters.

Here he looked at his watch, but his watch had stopped at half-past seven, the moment, probably, of his charge to Betty's rescue. Seeing the lighted window of a jeweler's shop near by, he went to it and looked at the clock displayed there. It was nine o'clock. As he could not have been walking for more than an hour,

and as the active rioting must have begun no later than seven-fifteen, all the events of the riot must have been massed within forty-five minutes. He turned back toward the factory. He hated these city thoroughfares. His boyish dreams of the open road and the tramping carpenter returned to him....

If he could only read his credentials....

§2. When Luke entered the office on the ground floor, the little militia captain was there. He had come for whiskey and finished the bottle. He was quite drunk, and evinced a thick but facile desire to describe the victory that his troops had won.

"Oh, go away!" said Luke.

He turned Facciolati out.

Breil came next, and some of the policemen, the former anxious to report the present condition of the mill, the latter that of the streets; but to these men Luke was scarcely more civil than he had been to the Italian. Whether he liked it or not, he must think things out.

"There's no reason for you to stay any longer, if you don't want to," said Breil.

Luke looked at him vacantly.

"I do want to," he said.

One of the policemen glanced significantly at the empty whiskey-bottle and smiled.

"I have some things to think about," said Luke. "I'll go up to the office over this. Tell the fellows I don't want anybody to butt in, Breil."

He decided that it would be well for him to do his thinking in the room in which he had so nearly done Betty what she must consider the ultimate wrong. He went there.

§3. He closed, but did not lock the door; he trusted to his orders against intrusion.

The street-lamp furnished the room with sufficient illumination. Luke saw that one of the chairs had been overturned and lay close beside the table. He must have overturned it while struggling with Betty, but, so far as he could recollect—and his mind for some time employed itself with such trifles—he had not remarked the fall at the moment of its occurrence.

He went to the broken window and lounged there, now looking out upon the scene of the street-battle, now back at the scene of the essentially similar combat that had been fought inside. It was astonishing how little he remembered of the details of either, but perhaps the reason for that was to be found in the size

of their results.

Something glittered in the lamplight on the floor at his feet. He stooped and picked it up; it was one of those yellow wire hairpins that Betty used to supplement the pins of tortoiseshell. Down in the street he saw a draggled necktie that had been torn from the throat of some striker. His gaze wandered from one object to the other and back again.

He stood there for a long time....

He was beginning to find out at last the logic that he had sought.

Betty was lost to him, and if she were not lost he must give her up. All that was vital in what he had all along felt for her was only one of the forces that go to make up complete love—right enough, he told himself, when combined with its fellow elements; right enough upon occasion when frankly acknowledged between a free woman and a free man; but, he determined, disastrously insufficient to be made the sole element of anything more than the briefest union between two individuals, and criminal when it was the only motive of but one of the individuals in any union. About what Betty had felt for him he was equally clear; it was another of the forces that compose real love; it was the element of Romance, just as insufficient and just as wrong, when it was alone, or when it existed on the one side only, as was the merely physical. Real love was the fusion of the physical, the romantic, the spiritual and the comradely, the fusion of two people for whom there was but one means of salvation. He knew now, beyond all questioning, that, however they had deceived themselves, Betty's thoughts and his, her hopes and his, her aims and his, her work and his, were and had always been divided beyond the possibility of junction. No marriage service that might have been performed between them could have married but the least of their outlying selves. Not Church and State together could have joined their true selves that, living where there was no church and no state, had yet no natural relationship to each other. Some day real love might come to him; some day it would surely come to Betty. To-day, though it tore his heart, though it was as if he were ripping the heart out of his breast, he must, for Betty's sake—since she was the weaker—even more than for his own, tear her out of his life. His desire for her would long remain; the moments would be full of her when he sank from waking into sleep, or climbed from sleep to waking; but though he might regain the power to enslave her soul and make a servant of the self of which he could not make a work-fellow, to use that power would be to sin against what was best in her. He must not see her again, even were she willing to see him, and he must leave her thinking the worst of him in order that she might the sooner want to forget him.

He tossed the gilt pin out of the window. Following its flight, his glance came again to the worker's necktie, lying in the street.

What right had he over the man who had worn that? What right that he did not have over Betty?

His reason answered: None.

There, he tremendously realized, was the key to his credentials. He leaned heavily against the window-sill. He understood. It was a bitter lesson, but he learned it, there and then.

What he had done to these men was what he had tried to do to Betty, not in the riot only, but in accepting the position that society had offered him in relation to them; it was what every employer, from the actual boss to the smallest shareholder, everywhere was doing. It was living upon the work of others, profiting by values for the creation of which the pay had to be low enough to permit of profit. It was compulsion. If he sold dear what he bought cheap, what was it that he bought cheap but their labor? If he wanted pay for executive ability, what executive ability did he, or any shareholder in any company, exercise? If he claimed a return for the risk of his investment, what return did these men get, who invested that labor-power which was their whole capital? If any stockbuyer talked of profits as the reward of previous years of saving, how could he explain the fact that his savings would secure no profit until they employed labor to produce it? He had been fighting against his own ideals. It was the workers that had been right and he that had been wrong. What the man in russet brown had been to him, that he and all who directly or indirectly employed labor for profit, had been and were to the employed.

So, quite as suddenly as he had come to see life in the new light, he came now, in the little office of the lonely factory, to see the reason from which the light proceeded; there was only one evil in the world and that was Compulsion; only one good, and that was power over one's self.

The awful thing, he said to himself as one who reads what is written, was not to have too little power over others; it was to have too much. To have the means of oppression was to go mad and use them; it was to confuse the means with the right. Too much power over others and too little over himself, both states a result of a system based upon compulsion, had made the man in russet brown all that the man in russet brown had been; it made Luke a potential murderer and ravisher. He saw all life as endlessly creating and no two hours the same. Seeing this, he understood why it was that, when authority was laid upon any one, that one rebelled in proportion to his vitality. He saw the present wrong and the future impotence of churches and laws, of politics, governments, and property. To believe in any one of them, to traffic with any of them, was now to exercise compulsion over his fellows and now to delegate to his fellows his power over himself.

He must give up everything that was easy and comfortable—the easy

thought and faith as freely as the easy food and lodging. He must join the oppressed.

He leaned through the battered window and filled his lungs with the pure night air. He looked up to the patch of heaven overhead where a yellow moon was riding.

"I haven't let their corruption destroy my purpose," he said to the moon. "I've simply put myself where they can't destroy *me*. I've put myself where they can't lie to me again. I'll fight them as one man against the world; I'll lose, but I won't be using their weapons; I won't be what they are, and I'll lose as a free man. So far as the world inside of me's concerned, they invaded it and bossed it. I've chucked them out of it, and *I've* destroyed *them*!"

It seemed wonderfully simple now and wonderfully peaceful. He would go to Forbes to-morrow and draw up a legal paper, the last legal paper he would ever put his name to, his last compromise, turning over his interest in this factory to his mother; and Forbes—poor old Forbes! He was sorry for Forbes, but he knew what would happen; left alone, Forbes would end by selling out, profitably, to the trust. And then for Luke the open road, the old open road that he had always loved, the learning of a manual trade, the sale of his labor-power no more than was necessary to keep him alive and free to go wherever slaves fought the system of corruption for their liberty, until sometime, when the soldiers would have Luke before them instead of behind them, and did not shoot over the heads of the mob. He was tasting of contentment for the first time in his life. He was glad that he had not died out there in the riot. There was so much to do. There was so much to do in this life that he did not see how he had ever had time to think of any other. And now he was about to do his part of it conscientiously, with open eyes and with all his soul, and to do it with complete power over himself, using no compulsion upon others and allowing no other to use compulsion upon him. Luke had conquered. For every soul there is, somewhere, a separate road to salvation. Luke had found his own....

Somewhere out in the city a clock struck eleven. He knew that he had been standing at the window for a long time, but he had no idea it was so long as this. If he had been so engrossed, what, he wondered, had finally roused him. He remembered: it was something about the door. He had not heard it move; he merely thought that it was moving. He turned to it, but it did not move. Perhaps a draught of air had deceived him.

The factory was very quiet....

§4. "Don't open your trap! I got you covered! If you let out one yip, I'll croak you."

The door had opened and closed, letting in a figure that quickly bolted it and then discreetly avoided the light from the window. Luke saw a dim form in the shadow. All that projected into the shaft of light was a fist tightly clenched about a leveled revolver.

"What do you want?" asked Luke.

He was not afraid to disregard this intruder's command to silence. He was curiously fearless. He supposed that this unseen man was some fanatic from the mob. Anybody could have slipped into the factory through the door that Luke had left open when the terror of the soldiers' fire swept the street and the smoke of it clouded the doorway. This was an avenger thus arrived. Luke felt the presence of a certain crude justice. He had deserved this.

"Don't worry; I'm not going to yell," he said.

He was expecting death now, expecting absolute extinction; but he faced it with a serenity that mildly surprised him. This was not the mad courage, too sudden to be fine, which had hurled him into the crater of the riot to rescue Betty. It was a courage that weighed results. He thought of the dusty, open road. He was rather sorry to have to miss that, but no doubt he would never have got it anyhow.

"Well," he said with a faint touch of impatience, "why don't you answer my question? What do you want?"

The barrel of the revolver wavered ever so slightly.

The intruder's voice came again out of the darkness; it was as if the darkness itself made answer:

"I want them letters."

Luke's teeth came together with a snap. He had been carrying the letters in a money-belt about his middle, next his body. It was hours since he had thought of them. He had just now been feeling that perhaps he ought to be shot, but this feeling had no origin in the affair of the letters. They were a different matter. For the letters he had fought so much and so fairly that he was ready and willing to fight for them once more. He tried to gain time.

"What letters?" he asked.

"I dunno," said the darkness. "But you do. Come on, now; don't try to flimflam me: them letters you got in your coat."

Luke glanced at the alpaca coat that he had put on when he last left the factory.

"If you want anything that was in my coat, you'll have to look in the street for it: I left it there."

The intruder did not at once reply. Luke saw the revolver advance toward him in the light. It was followed by a thick, short arm, and the arm was followed by a short thick man. He wore a velours Alpine hat. It was pushed to one side of

his head, and Luke saw that the hair below it was red.

That was almost the last thing he did see before the shot was fired. Luke made a flying leap at the red-headed man and tried to knock the revolver into the air. As he did so, the revolver spat at him.

A loud report. A darting arrow of flame.

Luke lay on the office floor. The red-headed man's skilled fingers ran deftly through his clothes. Then the killer raised the shattered window and dropped into the street.

§5. One of Breil's strike-breakers, making his round of the factory, heard the shot and came running toward the noise. He ran to the upper office and burst into the room.

A curling cloud of lazy smoke was weaving graceful figures in the shaft of light from the street-lamp outside; it embraced an overturned chair, and circled the top of the center table. Above it the strike-breaker saw the upper half of a disheveled figure, the figure of Luke Huber, leaning out of the window and shaking its fist at all the city round about. In a high, cracked voice, Luke was yelling curses at the world.

"God damn your system and your politics!" yelled he. "God damn your law and your government! God damn your god!"

He turned toward the noise behind him and showed himself with matted hair and staring eyes, with a cut in his forehead and a white face that had brown stains about its lolling mouth, with a slowly broadening patch of blood in his torn shirt.

"Mr. Huber!" gasped the strike-breaker. He ran forward.

As he did so, Huber's voice howled into shattered song:

"Hallelujah, I'm a bum—bum!
Hallelujah, I'm a——"

He lurched forward into the strike-breaker's arms. Before those arms closed about him, he was dead.

CHAPTER XX

On the twentieth floor of a Wall Street skyscraper, in that office where the engraving of George Washington hung between the windows, three men sat in the mid-morning light, about the mahogany table. They were talking business. Each man had his own offices and his own businesses, but they frequently and quietly met in this one because most of the businesses of each were closely allied with the business-interests of all.

There was nothing unusual about the outward appearance or public actions of this trio; they were apparently but three units of the legion that makes this portion of New York a city by day and a desert by night. Each had come down town in his own motor that morning, defying speed-laws and traffic regulations, just as scores of his business neighbors had done. Each had descended at his own offices, passed through half a dozen doors guarded by six bowing attendants, and proceeded to his own desk in his own private room, precisely as a small army of other business men were doing at the same time within a radius of half a mile. Each looked like the rest of that army. All three were men of about the average height, not noticeably either above or below it, and two were inclined to bulkiness. Those two had pale faces and close mouths and steady eyes, which looked out from under bushy brows with glances that gave the lie to the lethargic indications of the little pouches of lax skin below their lower lids. They wore flowers in the lapels of their coats; one wore a white waistcoat; the cropped mustache of one was black; that of the other was touched with grey. Hallett chewed leisurely at the end of an unlighted cigar; Rivington's slim hand stroked his mustache with a contemplative movement.

The man at the head of the table was almost of the age of the man that used to sit there, but he was somewhat shorter, and he was thin. His clothes fell loosely about his bony frame. His eyes were narrow. He sat before a neat pile of memoranda, with his thin hands, the blue veins of which marked them like a map, tapping upon the surface of the table. Like his predecessor's, his elbows were raised at right angles to his torso and pointed ceilingward; his chest heaved visibly, but his breathing was inaudible. His eyes were everywhere.

He had come to his office betimes that morning. He had read his letters, directed his charities, instructed his brokers, given his orders to lieutenants at the state capitals and to such lieutenants at the national capital as needed them. Now he was receiving his fellow commanders in council.

"McKay?" he said in thin comment on some remark of Rivington. "What McKay?"

"Henry," said Rivington. "Dohan's successor in the M. & N. He's the sort of man——"

"We can unload this stock," said Hallett, "any time now."

Rivington began a question.

"It's all right," nodded Hallett. "And by the way, that little Forbes concern's come into the combine."

"I know," said Rivington; "but those letters—You remember——"

"Stein sent 'em over to me yesterday morning. We'll burn 'em this time."

The man at the head of the table rapped with his spatulate finger-ends.

"We are too busy to bother with trifles," he said. "I've got here"—he indicated the memoranda—"all the reports on the proposed foodstuffs monopoly. I must decide on that right away...."

After a momentary silence, the stock-ticker, with metallic insistence, went on weaving out its yards of tape beside the windows that looked down to the web of radiating streets, on which minute black objects that were men and women bobbed and buzzed like entangled flies....

THE END

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BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE HOUSE OF BONDAGE
THE GIRL THAT GOES WRONG
THE SENTENCE OF SILENCE
THE WAY OF PEACE
WHAT IS SOCIALISM?
RUNNING SANDS
THE THINGS THAT ARE CÆSAR'S
ETC., ETC.

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