

CONGRESSIONAL BUBBLES

Why He Went

Of course he said he didn't want to go to the White House reception. No one in official life ever admits a desire to go; but they all go. Besides, he made it a point to scorn the social side of everything. He went, he explained, to take the wife and daughter of a prominent supporter at home. It was his first session in Congress, and he was not yet on intimate terms with all the high-brows in Washington; but he thought he knew a great many.

When he had steered his folks safely down the receiving line and returned to the safe precincts of the East Room, he looked about him. Gold lace and swell clothes everywhere; but not a single acquaintance! The situation was critical. He didn't want the women to go back and say that he didn't know anybody. So he extended a glad hand to the Chinese Minister and introduced him to his friends. He next greeted a Supreme Judge and Admiral Dewey, whom all people claim the right to know. After that he had no trouble.

Everyone pretended as much as he did, and the woman and the girl began to meet distinguished people. They felt proud of their Congressman, also of themselves. No one was harmed. The Congressman did his duty as he saw it by his friends; the women were delighted; and the other people didn't mind. Some of them blamed themselves for not being able to recall the name of the cordial member who remembered them so well.

Surprising a Diplomat

THE attaché watched the red liquid sparkle into his glass and was glad. Some one had told him that his hostess never served wine. His thirst was mordant and he had grieved at the thought of his dinner that night. So he lifted his wine-glass with gratitude. He set it down in surprise. The glow that should have followed was missing, and the more he took the more it failed. So he anchored his hope to another wingless that stood empty at his place. And when he saw it filled with amber sparkles he felt that the end of depression was at hand. But it wouldn't stand the test either. There was nothing in it that the attaché was looking for. He had never heard of grape juice. He thought the hostess had been swindled in her wine.

There were other things, too, he didn't know about. He ate a chop that was not a chop but peanuts. Also he partook of a roast that was beans and eggs that pretended to be fish. It was his first encounter with embodied vegetarianism.

Late that night, when he swallowed a raw beefsteak and sipped the real stuff, he confided to himself that Washington society held surprises even for a trained diplomat.

The Senator's Waterloo

THE Senator believed in himself. He never apologized for being in existence, and he didn't care how much he got in other people's way. His own way was his chief concern. Many people declared that his conduct was intolerable, that his egotism made him insufferable even to humble folk who didn't think much of themselves.

There were times when he wanted to do all the talking in the Senate. At large dinners he took charge of the conversation; at small ones he seemed a happy guest. There were some hostesses who never sent him a second invitation. His wife was used to his ways and liked him; perhaps not so much as she did once, but enough to obscure her reason and make her think him things he said.

One night they were guests at a small theater supper. Also there was a Congressman who proceeded to push the Senator off the earth into space. The Senator's wife didn't like it, and she said so to a person who had been a chronic sufferer from the Senator's self appreciation.

"He's so disgustingly conceited! I despise him! I wonder how he ever got into Congress?"

"Most men of brains and ability are contented," mildly condoned the sufferer.

"Why, my husband isn't! He's the most modest man I ever knew," said the Senator's wife.

"Didn't she know, or was she only bluffing?" wondered the other woman.

Punishment in Society

THE Representative's wife lifted the phone from its hook. "Is that Senator Blank?"

"No, but it's the Senator's office."

"Is he there?"

"Yes; but he's very busy. Might I take the message? I'm his secretary."

"I want to speak to the Senator, please."

"Oh, all right."

Long wait.

"Hello! Hello!" gruffly.

"Is that Senator Blank?" sweetly.

"Uh-huh."

"Well, this is Mrs. Congressman," in honey-eyed tones.

"Uh-huh."

"We're very anxious to have you dine with us on Friday evening," timorously.

"Uh-huh."

"I hope we can expect you?" nervously.

"Dun no. I'll ask my secretary. He keeps a list of my engagements."

Silence.

"I'm very sorry, but the Senator has an out of town engagement for Friday evening," said the smooth voiced secretary.

"Oh, very well," faintly.

Mrs. Congressman hung up the 'phone and wept. "He was shockingly indifferent and rude!" she wailed to her husband.

"Why didn't you send him a card instead of using the telephone?"

"I didn't have time. The Elbert Smiths are here for only a few days. I'll never, never speak to him again!"

"He's been an awfully good friend of mine."

"Has he?" weakly.

"Yes, and is going to help me a whole lot this session with my Spoilation Bill."

"Oh, very well," resignedly. "I'll include him in our anniversary dinner."

But she put him at the other end of the table.

Doing the Unusual

THE Congressman's wife was an original and believed in things, not definitions. She admired the conventionalities; but she never practised them. They wouldn't stay with her; but went harking back to more congenial spirits. She was frequently a surprise, more often a puzzle, to those who observed her. There were a few, she believed, who understood her. But that's doubtful.

One time, with the rest of the congressional crowd, she went to an afternoon function at the White House. Her mind was not made up to do anything unusual. In fact, she felt obedient and tractable. But the opportunity, which seems to be always awaiting her, was there, and she fell upon it as naturally as a cat pounces upon a mouse when it gets in the way.

After her turn at shaking hands with Mrs. and the Chief Executive, she should have been satisfied; but she wanted to return and say more things to them. When she approached for this purpose, the gilded aide who runs the White House interposed.

"Mrs. and the President do not expect their guests to take leave of them at a function of this character."

"You say it's not usual?" asked the Congressman's wife.

"Yes."

"Well, now, you watch me and you'll see me do the unusual!"

She glided amiably by and had a long talk with the heads of the nation. And the gilded one murmured to himself:

"I wonder what State's responsible for her?"

At the Dinner

"I DON'T want to go, and I sha'n't talk to the man who takes me out to dinner!" She yawned as her husband fastened the last hook on her plainest dinner gown. "I shall study the gas fixtures; we need new ones at home."

Toward the end of the fish course the man on her right began to observe her.

"What have you got against me?" he said genially.

"Nothing," coldly.

"See here, what's your State?"

"One below Mason and Dixon's line."

"Ah! A rebel! Here's to General Lee!" lifting his wineglass.

"In what spirit?"

"Friendly, though I come from Chicago."

"Also patronizingly," she objected.

"No, the toast is off except on my terms."

She replaced her wineglass. "They are—"

"That General Lee was the greatest man and the greatest General of the war and represented the greatest cause ever fought for."

"I surrender, if you'll sign a Treaty of Peace."

The toast was drunk.

"How did you come out?" asked her husband later as he unhooked her gown.

"All right. I fought through the entire Civil War and had everything my way."

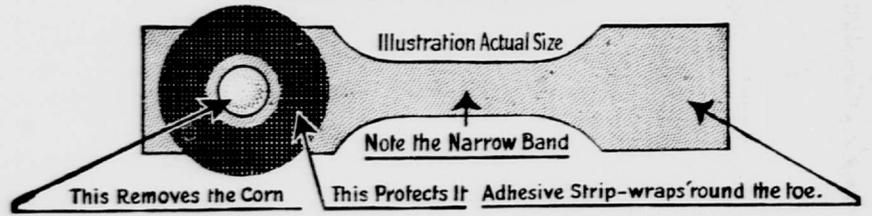
"My luck was awful," he said. "I discussed woman suffrage and was stoned from soup to coffee."

"I wish I'd worn my best gown," she murmured.

"What?"

"Oh, nothing."

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