# POLITICS - - - - - - - - Drawn by James Montgomery Flagg

"THE LARGE AND INTELLIGENT AUDIENCE."

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# FAMILIAR INCIDENTS - - - - - - - - By Stephen Leacock

### With the Photographer.

"I WANT my photograph taken," I said.

The photographer looked at me without enthusiasm. He was a drooping man in a gray suit, with the dim eye of a natural scientist. But there is no need to describe him. Everybody knows what a photographer is like.

"Sit there," he said, "and wait."

I waited an hour. I read the *Ladies Companion* for 1912, the *Girls Magazine* for 1902 and the *Infants Journal* for 1888. I began to see that I had done an unwarrantable thing in breaking in on the privacy of this man's scientific pursuits with a face like mine.

After an hour the photographer opened the inner door.

"Come in," he said severely.

I went into the studio.

"Sit down," said the photographer.

I sat down in a beam of sunlight filtered through a sheet of factory cotton hung against a frosted skylight.

The photographer rolled a machine into the middle of the room and crawled into it from behind.

He was only in it a second—just time enough for one look at me—and then he was out again, tearing at the cotton sheet and the window panes with a hooked stick, apparently frantic for light and air.

Then he crawled back into the machine again and drew a little black cloth over himself. This time he was very quiet in there. I knew that he was praying and I kept still.

When the photographer came out at last he looked very grave and shook his head.

"The face is quite wrong," he said.

"I know," I answered quietly; "I have always known it."

He sighed.

"I think," he said, "the face would be better three-quarters full."

"I'm sure it would," I said enthusiastically, for I was glad to find that the man had such a human side to him. "So would yours. In fact," I continued, "how many faces one sees that are apparently hard, narrow, limited, but the minute you get them three-quarters full they get wide, large, almost boundless in ——"

But the photographer had ceased to listen. He came over and took my head in his hands and twisted it sideways. I thought he meant to kiss me, and I closed my eyes.

But I was wrong.

He twisted my face as far as it would go and then stood looking at it.

He sighed again.

"I don't like the head," he said.

Then he went back to the machine and took another look.

"Open the mouth a little," he said.

I started to do so.

"Close it," he added quickly.

Then he looked again.

"The ears are bad," he said; "droop them a little more. Thank you. Now the eyes. Pull them in under the lid. Put the hands on the knees, please, and turn the face just a little upward. Yes, that's better. Now just expand the lungs! So! And hump the neck—that's it—and just contract the waistcoat—and twist the hip up toward the elbow—now! I still don't quite like the face, it's just a trifle too full, but——"

I swung myself round on the stool.

"Stop," I said with emotion but, I think, with dignity. "This face is my face. It is not yours, it is mine. I've lived with it for forty years and I know its faults. I know it's out of drawing. I know it wasn't made for me, but it's my face, the only one I have——" I was conscious of a break in my voice, but I went on: "Such as it is, I've learned to love it. And this is my mouth, not yours. These ears are mine, and if your machine is too narrow——" Here I started to rise from the seat.

Snick!

The photographer had pulled a string. The photograph taken. I could see the machine still staggering from the shock.

"I think," said the photographer, pursing his lips in a pleased smile, "that I caught the features just in a moment of animation."

"So!" I said bitingly—"features, eh? You didn't think I could animate them, I suppose? But let me see the picture."

"Oh, there's nothing to see yet," he said. "I have to develop the negative first. Come back on Saturday and I'll let you see a proof of it."

"Is it me?"

On Saturday I went back.

The photographer beckoned me in. I thought he seemed quieter and graver than before. I think, too, there was a certain pride in his manner.

He unfolded the proof of a large photograph and we both looked at it in silence.

"Is it me?" I asked.

"Yes," he said quietly, "it is you," and we went on looking at it.

"The eyes," I said hesitatingly, "don't look very much like mine."

"Oh, no," he answered, "I've retouched them. They come out splendidly, don't they?"

"Fine," I said, "but surely my eyebrows are not like that?"

"No," said the photographer with a momentary glance at my face, "the eyebrows are removed. We have a process now—the Delphide—for putting in new ones. You'll notice here where we've applied it to carry the hair away from the brow. I don't like the hair low on the skull."

"Oh, you don't, don't you?" I said.

"No," he went on, "I don't care for it. I like to get the hair clear back to the superficies and make out a new brow line."

"What about the mouth," I said with a bitterness that was lost on the photographer. "Is that mine?"

"It's adjusted a little," he said, "yours is too low. I found I couldn't use it."

"The ears, though," I said, "strike me as a good likeness; they're just like mine."

"Yes," said the photographer thoughtfully, "that's so; but I can fix that all right in the print. We have a process now—the Sulphide—for removing the ears entirely. I'll see if——"

"Listen!" I interrupted, drawing myself up and animating my features to their full extent and speaking with a withering scorn that should have blasted the man on the spot, "Listen! I came here for a photograph—a picture—something which (mad though it seems) would have looked like me. I wanted something that would depict my face as heaven gave it to me, humble though the gift may have been.

"I wanted something that my friends might keep after my death, to reconcile them to my loss. It seems that I was mistaken. What I wanted is no longer done. Go on, then, with your brutal work.

"Take your negative or whatever it is you call it—dip it in sulphide, bromide, oxide, cowhide—anything you like—remove the eyes, correct the mouth, adjust the face, restore the lips, reanimate the necktie and reconstruct the waistcoat. Coat it with an inch of gloss, shade it, emboss it, gild it, till even you acknowledge that it is finished.

"Then when you have done all that—keep it for yourself and your friends. They may value it. To me it is but a worthless bauble."

I broke into tears and left.

### My Unknown Friend.

He stepped into the smoking compartment of the Pullman where I was sitting alone. He had on a long fur lined coat and he carried a fifty dollar suit case that he put down on the seat.

Then he saw me.

"Well! well!" he said, and recognition broke out all over his face like morning sunlight.

"Well! well!" I repeated.

"By Jove!" he said, shaking hands vigorously, "who would have thought of seeing you?"

"Who, indeed," I thought to myself.

He looked at me more closely.

"You haven't changed a bit," he said.

"Neither have you" said I heartily.

"You may be a little stouter," he went on critically.

"Yes," I said, "a little; but you're stouter yourself."

This of course would help to explain away any undue stoutness on my part.

"No," I continued boldly and firmly, "you look just about the same as ever."

And all the time I was wondering who he was. I didn't know him from Adam; I couldn't recall him a bit. I don't mean that my memory is weak. On the contrary, it is singularly tenacious. True, I find it very hard to remember people's names; very often too it is hard for me to recall a face and frequently I fail to recall a person's appearance, and of course clothes are a thing one doesn't notice.

But apart from these details I never forget anybody, and I am proud of it. But when it does happen that a name or face escapes me I never lose my presence of mind. I know just how to deal with the situation. It only needs coolness and intellect, and it all comes right.

I shall not try to be quite so extraordinarily clever.

My friend sat down.

"It's a long time since we met," he said.

"A long time," I repeated with something of a note of sadness. I wanted him to feel that I too had suffered from it.

"But it has gone very quickly."

"Like a flash," I assented cheerfully.

"Strange," he said, "how life goes on and we lose track of people and things alter. I often think about it. I sometimes wonder," he continued, "where all the old gang are gone to."

"So do I," I said. In fact I was wondering about it at the very moment. I always find in circumstances like these that a man begins sooner or later to talk of the "old gang" or "the boys" or "the crowd." That's where the opportunity comes in to gather who he is.

"Do you ever go back to the old place?" he asked.

"Never," I said firmly and flatly. This had to be absolute. I felt that once and for all the "old place" must be ruled out of the discussion till I could discover where it was.

"No," he went on, "I suppose you'd hardly care to."

"Not now," I said very gently.

"I understand. I beg your pardon," he said, and there was silence for a few moments.

So far I had scored the first point. There was evidently an old place somewhere to which I would hardly care to go. That was something to build on.

Presently he began again.

"Yes," he said, "I sometimes meet some of the old boys and they begin to talk of you and wonder what you're doing."

"Poor things," I thought, but I didn't say it.

I knew it was time now to make a bold stroke, so I used the method that I always employ. I struck in with great animation.

"Say!" I said, "where's Billy? Do you ever hear anything of Billy now?"

This is really a very safe line. Every old gang has a Billy in it.

"Yes," said my friend, "sure. Billy is ranching out in Montana. I saw him in Chicago last spring—weighed about two hundred pounds—you wouldn't know him."

"No, I certainly wouldn't," I murmured to myself.

"And where's Pete?" I said. This was safe ground. There is always a Pete.

"You mean Billy's brother," he said.

"Yes, yes, Billy's brother Pete. I often think of him."

"Oh," answered the unknown man, "old Pete's quite changed—settled down altogether." Here he began to chuckle. "Why, Pete's married!"

I started to laugh too. Under these circumstances it is always supposed to be very funny if a man has got married. The notion of old Peter (whoever he is) being married is presumed to be simply killing.

I kept on chuckling away quietly at the mere idea of it. I was hoping that I might manage to keep on laughing till the train stopped. I had only fifty miles more to go. It's not hard to laugh for fifty miles if you know how.

But my friend wouldn't be content with it.

"I often meant to write to you," he said, his voice falling to a confidential tone, "especially when I heard of your loss."

I remained quiet. What had I lost? Was it money? And if so, how much? And why had I lost it? I wondered if it had ruined me or only partly ruined me.

"One can never get over a loss like that," he continued solemnly.

Evidently I was plumb ruined. But I said nothing and remained under cover, waiting to draw his fire.

"Yes," the man went on, "death is always sad."

Death! Oh, that was it, was it? I almost hiccoughed with joy. That was easy. Handling a case of death in these conversations is simplicity itself. One has only to sit quiet and wait to find out who is dead.

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