

THE NATION'S PAWN

BY ROY NORTON

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13)

giving no more satisfactory reason than the statement "that most all places looked alike to him, and the 'big show' was going to be pulled off right there within a few weeks, unless he's forgotten how to guess."

Before Dick and he had had time to accustom themselves to the Washington atmosphere, his predictions seemed in the way of fulfillment. Looking back over the country's history, it was not hard to foresee possibilities. In less than one hundred and fifty years of existence as an independent nation, it had faced four crises in which a resort to arms was threatened, or had eventuated with disastrous and mournful results. The Hayes-Tilden episode was still remembered by patriarchs and the fact that, for many days when the decision hung in the balance, thousands of men good and true, survivors of the civil war, had looked sorrowfully at their rusted arms and feared an exigency where they might be taken from the walls, oiled and brought to further deadly use. It had been believed that legislation immediately following the events of 1887 had forever put aside the possibility of a similar occurrence; but even the wisdom of the law-makers of that day had not foreseen the possibility of an entanglement when the country itself expanded to the point where it might have an outlying state ten days distant from the seat of national government. Thus it was that in the present difficulty old men tore open ancient wounds, and sternly decided according to the individual views that justice should be done; and their lead was followed by the younger men. The country had enjoyed a long season of exceptional prosperity, despite the disputes which had from time to time arisen between employer and employee, between the producer and the seller, and despite the financial manipulation of thousands of men adequately able to act independently in obedience to the dictates of their sense of right and wrong. The long period of anxiety and suspense between the dates of the nomination, election and final decision had been done, in accordance with individual viewpoints. There was a terrific outcry from the liberal press; there were inflammatory speeches by indignant partisans; and there was, too, a persuasive sense of personal injury among myriads of men in scattered sections who, while they made no declaration of rebellion, decided, nevertheless, that they would visit the national capitol and be present on the day of inauguration. It was only natural that members of the conservative faith, also, holding an equal belief in the justice of their cause, should move forward.

In the week following the official announcement that Morgan Lester had been chosen as president of the United States, there was not a train running in the direction of Washington that did not carry thoughtful, undemonstrative men, many of whom carried rifles in worn cases, showing that their owners had familiarized themselves with their weapons in the chase or in war and were now prepared to use them in support of their convictions. In smoking room disputes, they led each other out by degrees to expressions of opinion, divided into coteries, and constantly added to the bitterness which had already fomented. They arrived at Washington, they overflowed the hotels, the lodging houses, and the places where shelter might be obtained, and, on the tenth day after the president of the senate had delivered his historic ultimatum, two encampments of tents had sprung up with mushroom celerity on opposite sides of the city. By a curious intuition, by the rapid dissemination of news through spirited journals, and by the intermediary of gossip which flies with inconceivable speed, other incoming men knew which way to turn the moment they set foot in the city. They separated on the station pavement without bidding one another good bye, looking at one another coldly, realizing that when next they faced it might be across the menacing embankments of rifle trenches.

One and all, they were orderly. If accosted by perturbed officers, they resolutely replied that they were not bent on any unlawful mission; that, on the contrary, they came to uphold the peace, welfare and constitution of their common country. Harassed to the point of endurance, the Washington guardians of the law invoked a forgotten statute, and inquired of those who came openly armed whether they had ammunition for the weapons they carried. In some instances this was denied, the chambers of the rifles were exposed, and found to be empty. Or, in other cases, the law took arbitrary course and confiscated small stores of ammunition. But, whichever or not prepared to fire, these men found their way to the camps of their choice, where they were speedily enrolled and unannouncedly began a course of drill at which, under less patriotic fervor, they would have rebelled.

The tutelage of retired military men and of those who were trained technically was not wanting on either side, and outlying fields were trodden to areas of dust by moving feet, which marched night and day to attain military proficiency. Hour by hour and day by day

these two armies were augmented. Yet there had been no calls to arms, no declaration of rebellion and no admission that bloodshed was contemplated. From no source could a statement be gained of the whys and wherefores of the two bodies of men, who performed evolutions with the earnestness of those who depend upon their celerity and training for success.

Whispers went out now and then which told the tale. It was understood, as thoroughly as if shrieked from the housetops or blazened on the skies, that if Morgan Lester attempted to take the oath of office and assume the responsibility of rulership, civil war would be inevitable. The reaction began, and timorous or aged men cried peace, but they cried too late. The cry of "On to Washington!" was muttered rather than shouted throughout the land. Men who had been lifelong friends stared at each other inquiringly, and passed one another in the street with averted glances. The war-blaze, which produced one hundred thousand when Lincoln called for minute-men, was kindled anew, and a million stood ready to respond. No Mason and Dixon's line at this time divided the country into sections. The trampling feet of contending sides shook the ground of every city and of every hamlet. Farm boys, wearied by the day's work in the field, marched back and forth at country cross-roads, while their selected officers pored over the manual at arms to gain knowledge of simple commands. Militiamen who had undergone training in the ranks of the National Guard became leaders, perforce of hastily assembled squads. The crackling reports of firearms trained upon target fields disturbed the peace of serene valleys, and feud-fond mountaineers who knew their prowess speculated as to whether it would be brought to play in the grim tragedy of internecine war. Conflict seemed inevitable.

As "Tiger" Reilly, walking arm-in-arm with his protege through the streets of Washington, said, "They're like two big bulldogs whetting their teeth to tear each other's throat."

In all this time both Lester and Barnes had counseled moderation. This but added faggots to the blaze. It was natural for the maddened liberals to assert that in moderation lay Lester's strength; that the man who was sure of office, if undisturbed, could well afford to assume the role of peacemaker, knowing that in supine surrender of the liberal cause was acquisition of the most coveted office. The conservatives, on the other hand, loudly declaimed their belief that Barnes counseled his followers to submission, and called upon them to disband, in the hope of shirking the responsibility for lawless acts.

The president, after vain appeals in which he pleaded for tolerance and conservatism, had resorted to meetings of his cabinet, and now, at last, he was in a desperate mood. He called into consultation the commissioners of the District of Columbia, but, among them all, they were unable to find a cause of action. No overt act had been committed, no law had been broken, and no open threat had been made against the government itself sufficient to give cause for drastic action. It was, therefore, necessary to resort to more arbitrary methods—which terminated in a singular way.

Into the freight yards of the capitol there rumbled a clanking, groaning train, the way-bills of whose cars were received in freight offices duly checked "Expensed." At once processions of teamsters began receiving their freight. At this juncture the officers of the law, spurred to extraordinary action, swooped down upon them, and found that the cases, outwardly harmless and consigned to certain quartermasters of both volunteer gatherings, were filled with munitions of war. It was probable that these were not the first shipment; it was certain that the time had come for governmental interference. Telephones jangled, the commissioners hastily convened; they appealed to the president, and were authorized to detain the deadly packages. There was no ground for other action than detention of war supplies; nevertheless, the suspected cargoes were of such sinister significance that the president broke all precedents, and began mobilizing that portion of the regular army which was available.

From the nearby barracks of the east, the isolated stations of the west and the dimly mountain fortresses and barricades of the very Alaskan lands which had been so prominently involved in this dreary dispute, blue-coated men were entrained to come hurrying forward to Washington, and their improvised encampment arose over the close-clipped lawns surrounding the White House and the national capitol, debouching into the streets leading thereto and through the unoccupied spaces in the heart of the city. They spread as they came, an ever-increasing army of blue, weather-stained and bearing the marks of widely divergent fields. Row on row, the little tents became a city of dusty white, and hour after hour the rumble of moving batteries shook the pavements of the capitol. Staccato notes of bugles aroused citizens from sleep, or warned them of retiring time. Washington had become a city under military rules, yet not besieged.

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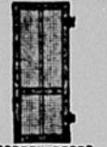
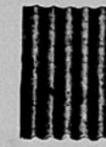
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With a total standing army of less than sixty thousand men, the greater portion of whom were on duty in islands possessions far removed from the scene of prospective combat, the government was able to make but a pitiful showing. For every detachment of one troop of the regular infantry or cavalrymen there were ten of civilians who were assembling, not because they were ordered, but because they were imbued with the possible necessity of fighting for the cause which they espoused. The sturdy spot of blue might spread and grow, might stand unflinching, and sacrifice itself to the last man; but it was ignored by those menacing squadrons which, on either side of the city, drilled and tightened their thews for a portending grapple.

The president and the country realized that it was too late to call a halt upon those partisans who had swarmed down upon Washington, avowing peace, but prepared for war. A chaos was impending that threatened the very existence of the government itself.

Continued next week.

The Millionth Chance

By William T. Beymer.
(Continued from page 4)

cross-road. I had abandoned all notions of appealing to the timekeepers and patrols at the stations. I saw my appearance would prohibit even a hearing. I alone could now save D'Raiel and my own honor. I made a long detour around the intersections of the cross-road and the course, for I feared the guards about the wagon. I heard the whir and throb of car after car pass while I was in the field and the sound drove me to sprint with my remaining strength for the road. D'Raiel was due in not more than five minutes. I had formed no plan for warning him; to shout from the roadside was useless; to stop him while I explained the danger would certainly cost him the race, with Hemmis pushing him so closely; besides, I knew nothing but the yellow flag—the official danger signal would stop him—if only I might get a message to him without checking his speed! "Nothing but an angel from heaven could do that!" I groaned. Perhaps my words suggested it, perhaps it was pure inspiration but—I saw my way!—the only way. The time was nearly past; I strained to catch the first sound from the approaching car. On an envelope I printed: "X wagon—Kay's"—the customary signal for had "cross-roads." The envelope I put in the band of my straw hat. A feverish search through my pockets discovered the cord, and I tied one end through a hole in the hat brim. For a second I hesitated; I dared not leave the signal hanging. I must be ready to swing it into the car in the probable event of the car not passing down the center of the road. Faint, far away, I heard a low whining hum-m-m like the wind in telephone wires. I had not the fraction of a second to lose. I sprang on the fence,

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