

# The MAN of the HOUR

stock. They've been buyin' it up on the quiet for months. I begin to see a lot of funny little lights that make this thing clearer. Gibbs is buyin' Borough stock. He's Wainwright's chum. Horri- gan and Wainwright frame up your nomination; then the minute you come into power this Borough franchise bill is flashed on you by Horri- gan, and Wainwright begs you to sign it. Take my tip—Wainwright owns the Borough road as well as the City Surface, and Horri- gan's gettin' a fat wad of stock for arrangin' the franchise. Oh, they've got your honor all tied up in ribbons, like you was a measly booky. You and me ought to get together and fight this thing out side by side, and when once I get the Indian sign on Dick Horri- gan—

"But I've no personal quarrel with Horri- gan. He's—"

"You've got the same quarrel with him that the pigeon has with the musk- rat. If you don't use your wings you'll be swallowed. Let me put you on to a few of the little jokers in that bill of his. You see?"

"I see more about that bill than you think," interposed Bennett. "I've work- ed over it night after night, with my lawyer. Don't you get the idea I've been asleep just because I haven't been making any premature disturbance?"

"I think," observed Phelan slowly, "I think I'm beginnin' to get a new line on you and under- stand you better. If it's any joy to you to know it, Jim- my Phelan says, 'You're all right!'"

He held out his hand, and Bennett gripped it cordially. "I'm glad we had this talk, aldeman," said he. "We are fighting from different points of view, but our main object is the same. I think we can pull together on this matter."

"We sure can!" agreed Phelan. "An' as for Horri- gan, when I'm done with him he'll be rolled up in a nice bundle, an' I'll print on it in big letters, 'Use all the books you like.'"

"Mrs. Bennett, sir," said Ingram. "I thought you was single!" exclaimed Phelan.

"It's my mother. Show her in." From the musty antechamber came the rustle of feminine attire, and Mrs. Bennett came in. Devoted as he was to his mother, Alwyn now had no eyes for her, for over her shoulder he had caught a glimpse of another face.

CHAPTER V.  
"DALLAS!" cried Bennett, ob- livious of his surroundings—of everything except that the girl he had so long missed and who had inspired him to all he had achieved—that she was standing before him.

It was Dallas herself who brought him to a sense of the other's presence, for as he sprang forward to meet her and eagerly grasped both her out- stretched hands the girl bowed in mock reverence and answered his ar- dent greeting with a demure:

"Good afternoon, your honor?"

"Don't!" he begged half in jest. "It's so good to see you again that I—"

"I sent word that I had a surprise for you, Alwyn," interrupted his moth- er. "I knew it would please you. But," with a glance at the alderman, "you're busy? Perhaps we—"

"Not at all, mother. May I present Alderman Phelan? Miss Wainwright, this is—"

"Alderman Phelan of the Eighth," amended the politician, thoroughly ill at ease in the presence of the visitors. "I must be goin' now, your honor. I—"

But Dallas had come forward with a smile that melted the speaker's em- barassment in an instant.

"The Alderman Phelan who gives turkeys to all those poor people at Christmas?" she asked in genuine in- terest. "I've often read about—"

"The same, ma'am, at your service," assented the delighted Phelan. "I fill 'em with turkey an' coal in winter an' I take their wives an' kids on outings in summer. Ever been to one of the James Q. Phelan outings, miss?"

"No," replied Dallas, with a perfect- ly grave face. "I'm sorry to say I haven't. Tell me about them, won't you?"

"They've got to be seen to be under- stood. A thousand poor tired wives an' white faced, spindly kids turned out into the country for the only glimpse of green grass an' shady trees they ever get all year. A thousand mothers an' children out in a cool grove with nothing to do but roll around the soft grass an' play an' eat all the fancy grub they can hold. Maybe, miss, it wouldn't mean a lot to

ut if you'd been workin' an' an' sleepin' an' starvin' for months in a stuffy, dark, smelly nement room, tollin' like a slave food an' clothes betwixt the n' starvation, an' was barely keep body an' soul together— maybe then you'd understand em outings an' turkey fests an'



"I had a surprise for you, Alwyn," in- terrupted his mother.

loads of coal means to the poor. And they won't turn down Jimmy Phelan at Horri- gan's orders."

"I do understand," cried Dallas, her big eyes bright with tears. "I under- stand, and, in behalf of all women and children, I thank you with my whole heart!"

"You're all right, miss," muttered the delighted, embarrassed Phelan, at once at a loss for words. "You're—you're all right! I'll leave it to his honor!"

"Indeed she is!" broke in a suave voice at whose sound the little spell of sentiment was broken and which caused Phelan and Bennett to turn in an- noyance toward the door.

Scott Gibbs, bland, well groomed, quite ignoring the other men's lack of welcome, stood bowing on the thresh- old.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you, Alwyn," whispered Mrs. Bennett in a hurried aside to her son as the latter summon- ed up sufficient civility to greet the newcomer. "I forgot to tell you. Mr. Gibbs was calling on Dallas when I stopped for her, and he asked leave to come along. I'm sorry, but—"

"How are you, Bennett?" Gibbs was saying. "And—Mr. Phelan, too, isn't it? Alderman, I'm glad to see you again. You remember me? Scott Gibbs? I met—"

"Yes," said Phelan, "I remember you, all right. You was up to Wainwright's last summer—that day me an' Horri- gan sent the dove of peace screechin' up a tree. I didn't know you visited the city hall too."

"I don't, as a rule," answered Gibbs. "I came here with Mrs. Bennett and Miss Wainwright. I wanted a glimpse of the man who can make one pen stroke that will send Borough Street railway stock up to 100 or down to 10."

"Do you mean," broke in Dallas, "that Mr. Bennett can really have such an effect on the stock market?"

"That and more," Gibbs assured her. "Why, the mere rumor that he meant to veto the Borough's franchise bill has sent the stock tumbling eight points since the market opened today."

"What power for one man!" ex- claimed the girl, turning to Bennett in surprise. "And are you going to veto it?"

"Office secrets," reproved Alwyn jest- ingly. "Hands off!"

"Veto it?" echoed Gibbs, with a laugh. "Of course he isn't. It would be too hard upon his friends—unfair and unkind, to say the least."

"But why?" queried Dallas, forestall- ing Alwyn, who was about to speak. "Because," cut in Gibbs before Ben- nett could interfere, "the men who are backing the Borough bill are the men who made him mayor. It wouldn't be square for him to turn his new power against the very men who gave him that power. Now, would it?"

"By the men who are backing the bill whom do you mean?" asked Ben- nett.

"Oh, I just spoke in generalities. As a matter of fact, the break in the stock today was lucky for those who were to buy."

"An' your firm's doin' most of the buyin', I'm told," interpolated Phelan. "We have a great deal of the stock, I admit," said Gibbs; "so you see, Ben- nett, you can make me or break me. I place myself in your hands."

"I see you are taking a most unfair advantage of me, Mr. Gibbs," retorted Alwyn, with some heat. "You have no right to thrust this information on me and to appeal!"

"But I was only—"

"You were trying to influence my ac- tion toward the Borough bill. You can- not do it."

"Why, I didn't think you'd be angry at—"

"I'm not. Let's drop the subject, please."

"I only answered Miss Wainwright's questions. I—"

"We'll leave Miss Wainwright's name out of the matter, please," replied Ben- nett.

Gibbs, with a shrug of his broad shoul- ders. "I am afraid my time is up. Good day, Bennett. I'm sorry you mis- construed—"

"I didn't. Good day."

"I'll be on my way, too," announced Phelan, breaking the awkward pause that followed Gibbs' exit. "Ladies, I'm proud to have met you. If either of you knows a poor woman needin' a turkey or a family wantin' an outing, just drop me a line, an' I'll see they get it. An' they needn't come from my ward neither."

"That's bad politics, aldeman!" laughed Bennett.

"It's good humanity, though. There's two things I love to do—first, to down the man who's me enemy, an', second, to give good times to folks who's stran- gers to fun. Goodby, your honor. I'll be in ag'in now I've found my way, ladies."

"Alwyn," said Mrs. Bennett as the alderman bowed himself out with many flourishes, "I want to see Cyn- thia. Can I go into her office now, or is she too busy? I'll be back in a few minutes, Dallas, and bring her with me. I know how anxious she is to see you again."

"I wonder what Phelan would think of that for 'raw' work," thought Alwyn as the old lady bustled into the inner room, leaving Dallas and himself alone. Perhaps Dallas, too, under- stood, for her manner was less assured than usual as her eyes met his.

"It is so good—so good to see you again!" he said. "It seems years in- stead of months since you went away."

"But how splendidly you've filled the time! And what a magnificent fight you made! I was so proud of you, Alwyn!"

"Really? I remember you once said I was a mere idler—a rich man's son—and that you weren't at all proud of me."

"That is past. We must forget it. You are awake now."

"Forget it? Not for worlds. I owe all my success to you, Dallas. It was your face that strengthened me when there seemed no hope. It was the memory of your words that kept me brave and made me resolve to win against all odds. You were my in- spiration, the light in my darkness. At each step I thought 'Dallas would be glad' or 'Dallas would not approve of this.' And I steered my course ac- cordingly to victory."

"No, no," murmured the girl. "It was your own courage, your strength—"

"Not mine. It was your faith in me. Do you know, I think no man ever accomplishes anything by himself. There is always a woman, I think, behind every great achievement. The world at large does not see her—does not know of her existence—but she's in the heart of the man who is making the fight. He battles in her name as did the knights of old, and the triumph is hers, not his. Whether his reward is the crown of love or the crown of thorns, she is the inspiration."

"Then if I had a share in your suc- cess I am very happy, Alwyn, for your name is in every mouth. You are the man of the hour, even as you were in the olden days on the football field. Oh, I am proud of you—very, very proud! There is a glorious future before you."

"That all rests in your dear hands," cried Alwyn.

"Future or present, Dallas, it's all the same. If only you—"

"Say, Bennett," roared a deep voice as the door from the outer office was banged open and Horri- gan, red faced and angry, burst in. "I un- derstand that a you've— Oh, I didn't know you had a lady call- ing on you," he broke off.

"Well, I have," retorted Bennett, furious at the untimely intru- sion. "Ingram should have told you that at the door."

"I don't stop to hear what folks tell me at doors. I'll wait outside till you're alone."

"Don't trouble to wait. Goodby."

"You can bet I'll trouble to wait," snarled Horri- gan. "There's something you and I have got to settle today. Understand? I'll be outside. Don't keep me waiting long!"

CHAPTER VI.  
"WHAT a strange man!" ex- claimed Dallas Wainwright in wonder, as the anteroom door slammed behind the boss. "And what utterly abominable manners! Who is he, Alwyn?"

"Horri- gan."

"Richard Horri- gan, the—"

"The boss. Yes. He has a pleasing way of stamping into this office un- asked, as if he owned it and as if I were his clerk. But today's behavior was the worst yet. It's got to stop!"

"But don't do or say anything reck- less, Alwyn. Promise me. Remember how strong he is!"

"There's no danger of his letting me forget his power," said Bennett, with

a bitter smile. "He—"

"But you'll be careful, won't you? Please do, for my sake. And you mustn't keep him waiting. If there's a way out through Cynthia's office we'll go by that. Goodby. I'll explain to your mother. No; you must let us go now. Office business must come first. Won't you call this evening? I'll be home and alone."

Despite Bennett's remonstrances she was firm, and it was in no pleasant frame of mind that the mayor threw himself into a seat when he was left alone in the room. That the talk with Dallas, which had promised so much for him, should be thus rudely inter- rupted. That— Horri- gan flung open the door and stamped in. The boss' anger had by no means subsided in the few moments of delay, but had, rather, grown until it vibrated in his every word and gesture. He wasted no time in formalities, but came to the point with all the tender grace and tact of a pile driver.

"Look here, Bennett," he rumbled, menace underlying tone and look. "I'm told Phelan's been here this afternoon. What did he want?"

"To see me," answered Bennett calm- ly, the effort at self control visible only in the whitening of the knuckles that gripped the desk edge.

"What did he want to see you about?"

"A business matter."

"What business matter?"

"Mine."

"Yours, eh?" sneered Horri- gan. "Well, young man, I want you to understand here and now that no one can be chummy with Jim Phelan and be my man at the same time. Got that through your head?"

"Yes," assented Bennett; "I think I have. And while we're speaking plain- ly I want you to understand here and now that no one can bully me, either here or elsewhere, and that I'm no man's man. Have you got that through your head?"

Horri- gan stared in savage amaze- ment. He doubted if his ears had not played him false. Bennett had always treated the boss with uniform cour- tesy, and Horri- gan belonged to the too numerous class who do not under- stand until too late the difference be- tween gentle breeding and weak cow- ardice. That a man should speak to him courteously and not interlard his talk with oaths, obscenity or rough- ness seemed to Horri- gan, as it does to many another boor, an evidence of tim- idity and lack of virility. A Damas- cus blade is a far more harmless look- ing weapon than a bludgeon, yet it is capable when the necessity arises of far deadlier work.

"It is only the man whose gentleness has not granite strength as its founda- tion who deserves the newly popular term of 'mollycoddle.'"

Had Horri- gan's large experience with men been extended to embrace this fact he would probably never have picked out Alwyn Bennett in the first place as candidate for mayor nor deemed the younger man a fit tool for the organization's crooked work. The French nobles of the old regime, whose polish of manner was the envy of the world, fought like devils on occasion and went to death on the scaffold with a smile and a jest on their lips, while many a brutal demagogue in the same circumstances broke down and scream- ed for mercy. However, Horri- gan changed to be more familiar with the history of the organization than with that of France; hence, deeming Ben- nett's reply a mere sporadic flash of defiance from a properly cowed spirit, he resolved to crush the rebellion at a blow.

"Don't give me any insolence!" he roared. "I won't stand for it, and—"

"Moreover," quietly continued Ben- nett, as though the boss had not spoken, "I shall be very much obliged if in future you will knock at my door instead of bursting in on me. This is my private office, not yours."

"Do you mean to—"

"I've explained as clearly as I can just what I mean. If you don't under- stand me I can't supply you with in- telligence."

"Bennett," said the boss, his burn- ing rage steadied down to a white heat, far more dangerous, but less in- coherent, "you and me are talking too much and saying too little. We've got to come to a showdown. You're a cle- ver boy and you made a rattling good fight, and you're on the right side of the public and of the press too. You're the best material we've got, and if you try and do the right thing there's no limit to what you can rise to—but only if you do the right thing."

"The right thing," echoed Bennett. "What do you mean by the right thing?"

"I mean you've got to do the right thing by the men who put you where you are today."

"That's fair. But who put me where I am today?"

"I did—I, Dick Horri- gan. Who ever heard of you till I took you up? No- body. If I didn't make you mayor, who did, I'd like to know?"

"The voters. The people of this city."

"The voters," scoffed Horri- gan. "The deuce they did! Who had you nomi- nated?"

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(To be continued)

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