



HERE you have the first installment of "The Thirteenth District," by Brand Whitlock. It is one of the strongest stories of love and politics ever written. It reveals the vampire-like allurements of social life in Washington as no book has ever done before. Pitiful and brilliant, largely typical, full of thought and facts digested and too altogether true. The candidate, the hero, the victim of his own conceit, his own ambition, his own confidence and his own weakness, is Jerry Garwood, the man who ran for Congress; the man who won through the strenuous efforts of those, his friends, who loved him; the man who broke his promises as easily as he made them; the man who flung away his friends as quickly as he flung away his older and his better self in the struggle; the man who crashed to earth again, to find no faith, no friendship still his, except that of his wife, who once loved where she honored and trusted, but now loved and hoped because he was the father of her children.

"Who's all right?" And then the crowd rose to its tip-toes and the answering cry was of such immense unanimity that it made the very platform shake.

"G-a-r-wood!"

The train had stopped and Garwood was being hustled toward the door. Some impatient fellows from the platform, men who had mounted the steps of the car, now pressed in and stretched their bodies incredible distances across the backs of seats to grasp Garwood's hand, to seize him by the coat and call in his face.

"Good boy, Jerry!"

"You're the stuff!"

He was oblivious to the progress he was making, if he was making it at all, and the conductor, although he had caught the non-taligant spirit of the triumph, thought it best to let the Polk County delegation soon after the train left Clinton and had shown Garwood the deference due a successful candidate, began to be concerned for the time he was losing and said with smiling indifference:

"Big Rankin then squeezed himself in front of Garwood and waving his little bag dangerously before him, rushed his way out, drawing the others after him in his turbulent wake. As usual the passengers in the train looked on with the good-humored toleration an American crowd always exhibits to those not participants in its moving enthusiasms and mildly inquired what that town was."

When Garwood gained the platform of the car and the people at last caught sight of him, the cheering suddenly attained a new pitch of intensity, and a band, clustered near the rotting log where the backs made their stand, spontaneously crashed into "Hail to the Chief." The band played the piece in furious time, and the man who peered over the tuba seemed to have taken upon himself the responsibility of voicing the whole enthusiasm of Polk County out to Garwood, to whom the strains came across that tossing mass of heads and hats and faces, the music was sweet. He felt himself suddenly choking, his eyes filled with tears. He could not have trusted himself to speak just then, though the cheers were being more and more punctuated by cries of "Speech!"

"Speech!"

"Well, if we'd been here when you needed sympathy."

The truth flashed upon Garwood at once, and if it embittered for an instant his triumph, when it was at its sweetest, it seemed to give him a better control, so that as he settled himself in the back seat of the carriage, with the Mayor beside him, and Rankin filling the whole front seat,

beer. But Rankin, again swinging his dangerous little bag, was making a way through the crowd toward the wide door. Garwood was almost lifted from his carriage and felt himself helplessly swept into the hotel office on the great hurrahs that rolled in that way. When his feet touched the floor again the loud cry went up: "Speech! Speech!"

Rankin turned toward him.

"You'll have to give it to 'em, Jerry, 'fore they'll let you go."

And he was led up the stairs, toward the Mayor and a self-appointed committee following and in another minute he had stepped out on the balcony and bared his head to the breeze that was blowing warm off the prairie. As he stood there, erect and calm, with the little wind loosening the locks of his forehead, his lips compressed and white, his right hand in the breast of his coat, after the fashion of all our orators, many in the crowd for the first time were conscious of how the Congressman this young fellow really looked. They began to celebrate the discovery by another cheer, but Garwood drew his hand from the bosom of his coat and raised it toward them. Instantly a warning "Sh!" ran through the whole concourse.

The few wagons rattling by halted suddenly and by and by, Garwood's eye swept the old familiar square, his face flushed, his heart beat high, but outwardly he was so calm, so physically able to do so, that he paused to add so much to oratory. And then he began with studied simplicity.

"My friends," he said, in a voice that seemed low, but which carried in so evening air across the square, "and feel free to express fittingly how much it means to me. For thirty years I have gone in and out among you as a boy and as a man, and it has always seemed to me that the highest honor I could achieve in life would be found in your respect, your confidence, your approval. I have always wished and your welfare have ever been my first and highest thought. I know not what responsibilities await me in the future, but whether they be small and light or great and heavy, still my wish and duty shall remain the same—to serve you, to be of service to you, to do for you what I know that nothing can ever bring to my heart the deep gratitude and the sense of well-being that I feel for you. I am, my friends, your old friend, your old neighbor, your old comrade, and I am proud to stand before you tonight as your candidate for Congress."

"You must not expect a speech from me this evening. At a later day and at some more convenient time, I shall address you upon the issues of the approaching campaign, but I would not intrude partisan considerations upon you in this hour. But I cannot let you go away without the assurance that I am deeply sensible of the great interest you all have in me. With a sincerity wholly unfeigned I thank you for it. May God bless you all, may you prosper in your business and in your home life, and may you wander far away to the ragged edges of the crowd—thank you again and again, bid you good night."

A cheer promptly arose and Garwood bowed himself backward through the window. Rankin, standing near him, laid his hand on his shoulder and said: "John," he said to that executive, "he'll do."

Then the hand-shaking and the congratulations began again. Garwood stood there, at times passing over his brow the handkerchief he held in his left hand, his hand on his shoulder, his appreciation and beginning to ache. And outside the crowd, feeling when the American passion for speech-making was satisfied that it had done its due, went away, leaving the square deserted.

The mother of the new candidate for Congress in the Thirteenth District expected to see the pride of the county in cooking for him that night, with her own hands, a supper of the things he most loved to eat and while the candidate consumed the supper with a gusto that breathed its ultimate sigh in the comfortable sense of repelition with which he washed his face, his mother, who had followed there, and half an hour later he left his mother to the usual loneliness of her widowed life. Sangamon avenue, where the self-elected better element of Grand Prairie had gathered to enjoy the envy of the lower classes, stretched away under its graceful shade trees in aristocratic leisure. The darkness of a summer evening rolled under the elms and oaks and blurred the outlines of the tall chimneys and peaked roofs which a new architecture coming from the East had lately given to the houses of the prosperous. Here and there a strip of cool and open lawn, each blade of its carefully mown bluegrass threading beads of dew, sparkled in the white light of the sun in the dust that hung at the street crossings. On the wide verandas which were shrouded in the common darkness, white forms could be seen indistinctly, rocking back and forth, and the murmur of voices could be heard in bland and desultory interchange of the banalities of village life. One avenue had been laid an inch deep in mud by the garden hose, which might have been seen in the last hours of the day, united in a common effort to subdue the dust that puffed in little white clouds as Grand Prairie's horses stumbled along.

Garwood's face flushed, his heart beat at high, but outwardly he was calm."

Now and then some surrey, the spokes of its wheels glistening in the electric light, went rattling leisurely by as some family solemnly enjoyed its evening drive; now and then some young man, his cigarette glowing into a spark of life and then dying away, loitered down town. The only other life was represented by the myriad of insects feverishly rising and falling in clouds about the arc lamps, or some silent bat describing vast circles in the darkness, and at intervals swinging into the light on membranous wings to snatch their evening meal, bite by bite, from that mass of strenuous, purposeless animal life.

As he stood, slowly, for he wished to preserve his collar intact until he should present himself immaculate before the woman of his love, Garwood felt some of the peace of the sleepy town fall upon him. He gave himself up to the sensuous effect of it, inhaling the odors of a summer night, and when he turned into the yard of the Harkness home his heart leaped. A film of light in white slowly faded, as if by magic, to his romantic vision, out of the darkness that lay thick under the veranda. Half way down the street, the old oaks met.

"Jerome! I'm so proud!"

The pride she had felt in him still glowed in her eyes as they sat there in the wicker chair, but when she heard him sigh she bent toward him and her voice filled with a woman's pity as she said:

"You're tired, aren't you—poor boy?"

"Yes, very tired," he assented, with a man's readiness to be coddled. "But then he added, "It's rest just to be here."

He laid his hand on hers and she drew back, looking eagerly into his face. She needed no other light than the glow of the summer night to make his features plain to her eyes. She looked at him, and then she withdrew her hand and sat erect, smoothing her skirts with an affected primness and folding her hands in her lap.

"Now you must tell me all about it," she said. "The newspapers are so unsatisfactory in their looks, and I've only had the one little note you wrote me Wednesday night—when you thought you were beaten."

"They laughed, now that they could do so with impunity, at the danger he had been in so short a time before."

Garwood paused. She sat with her chin on her hand. The lace of her sleeve fell back, exposing her round forearm, white like marble in the moonlight that was spilled through the purple shadows of the trees and trickling on her dress. But a sobersness clouded her eyes.

"How do you suppose he did it, Jerome?" she asked presently.

"I don't know," Garwood answered, "and what's more," he added with a dry little laugh, "I don't want to."

The girl's sobersness deepened as the silence in which she received his last words lengthened. Garwood glanced at her in some concern and then he hurried on:

"Well, it came out just as he said. The next morning Platt County threw her vote to me on the first ballot, and by the time it got down to Tazewell it was all over with Sprague; his man Simp Lewis—you've heard me speak of him—moved to make it unanimous, and the noise began."

"He laughed again, this time in sheer joy as he lived those hours once more. "It lasted all morning, when we weren't making speeches telling how we loved how unworthy I became, to what depths old flag; it lasted all the way over here on the train, until I got home and saw everybody, but the one woman I'd done you're mine."

"I never heard you make a speech before, you know," she went on, "and I had always wished to—it was a splendid speech."

"Yes," he mused, and strangely for him, seemed not to have heard her praise. "I saw you, I saw nothing but you!"

"Oh, Jerome," she said, "I was happy and proud that minute to think that I suddenly had crushed her, crushed her to him as if in some sudden access of fear."

"Dearest," he said, "all this is nothing to me besides you and your love. Do you really love me so very much?"

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