

reminiscent; of the men of their university year, of mutual friends in the far-away "God's country" to the eastward, of the Gaston's epistolary epistles, of the exiles' cast for fortune in the untamed West, and one other.

"That brings us a little nearer to the things that be—and to your prospects, David," said the guest. "How are you fixed here?"

"Gaston is dead, as you see; too dead to bury."

"Why don't you get out of it, then?"

"I shall some day, perhaps. Up to date, the best I can do is to go to and no good way to arrive. Like some thousands of others, I've made an ass of myself here, Loring."

"By coming, you mean? Oh, I don't know about that. I take it, but if you are the same David Kent I used to know they have made a bigger man of you."

"Think so?"

"I'd bet on it. We have had the Gaston's epic done out for us in the newspaper. No man could live through such an experience as you must have had without growing a few inches. Hello! What's this?"

A turned corner had brought them in front of a high building in Texas street with its straggling crowd gathered about the porticoed entrance. As Loring spoke there was a rattle of snare drums, followed by the drum-drum of the bass, and a brass band ramped down the sidewalk measures of a campaign march.

"It is a rally," said Kent, when they had passed far enough beyond the zone of brass-throated clamorings to make the reply audible. "I told you that the Gaston wolf-pack had gone into politics. We are in the throes of a State election, and there is to be a political speech-making at the opera-house to-night, with Bucks in the title role. And there is a fair measure of the deadness of the town! When you see people flock together like that to hear a brass band play, it means one of two things: that the town hasn't outgrown the country village stage, or else it has passed that and all other stages and is well on its way to the cemetery."

"That is one way of putting it," Loring rejoined. "If things are as bad as that, it's time you were moving on, don't you think?"

"I guess so," was the lack-luster response. "Only I don't know where to go, or what to do when I get there."

They were crossing the open square in front of the wide-aved passenger station. A thunderous tremolo, dominating the distant music, thrilled on the still air, and the extended arm of the station semaphore with its two dancing lanterns wagged twice.

"My train," said Loring, quickening his step.

"No," Kent corrected. "It is a special from the west, bringing a Bucks crowd to the political rally. Number Three isn't due for fifteen minutes yet, and she's always late."

They mounted the steps to the station platform in good time to meet the three-car special as it came clattering in over the switches, and presently found themselves in the thick of the crowd of departing railers.

It was a mixed masculine multitude, fairly typical of time, place and occasion; stalwart men of the soil for the greater part, bearded and bronzed and rough clothed, with here and there a range rider in picturesque leathers, a chapeau, smoking pistols and wide-flapped sombrero.

Loring stood aside and put up his eyeglasses. It was his first sight near at hand of the untrammelled West in person, natural, and he was finding the spectacle both instinctive and diverting. Looking to Kent for fellowship he saw that his companion was holding himself stiffly aloof; also, he remarked that none of the boisterous partisans flung a word of recognition in Kent's direction.

"Don't you know any of them?" he asked.

Kent's reply was lost in the deep-chested bull-bellow of a cattleman from the Rio Blanco.

"Hold on a minute, boys, before you scatter! Line up here, and let's give three cheers and a tail-twister for next Governor Bucks! Now, then—everybody! Hip, hip!"

The ripping crash of the cheer jarred Loring's eyeglasses from their hold and he replaced them with a smile. Four times the ear-splitting shout went up, and the "tiger" trailed off into silence the attention voice was lifted again.

"Good enough! Now, then, three cheers for the land syndicates, alien mortgages and the Western Pacific Railroad, by grab!" And to hell with 'em!"

The responsive clamor was a thing to be acutely remembered—sustained, long-drawn, vindictive; a nerve-wrenching pandemonium of groans, yelpings and catcalls, in the midst of which the partisans shuffled in loose marching order and tramped away towardward.

"That answers your question, Loring," said Kent, smiling broadly. "If not, I can set it off for you in words. The Western Pacific is the best baited corporation this side of the Mississippi, and I am its local attorney."

"I don't envy you," said Loring. "I had no idea the opposition crystallized itself in any such concrete ill will. You must have the whole weight of public sentiment against you in any railroad litigation."

"I don't," said Kent, simply. "If every complaint against us had the right to pack his own jury we couldn't fare worse."

"That is at the bottom of it? Is it our pricking of the Gaston's bubble by building on to the capital?"

"Oh, no; it's much more personal to these shouters. As you may, or may not know, our line—like every other Western railroad with no competition—has for its motto, 'All the traffic will stand,' and it bleeds the country accordingly. But we are forgetting your train. Shall we go and see how late it is?"

CHAPTER II.

A Man of the People.

Train No. 3, the Western flyer, was late, as Kent had predicted—just how late the operator could not tell; and pending the chalking up of its arriving time on the bulletin board two men sat on an empty baggage truck and smoked in companionable silence.

As they waited Loring's thoughts were busy with many things, and he had a certain amount of the exiles' cast for fortune in the untamed West, and one other.

He knew what his father's had determined Kent's career and, and the scene of it, laying its lines in the narrow field of her own choosing.

Later, as Loring knew, the sentimental anchor had dragged until it was hopelessly off holding-ground. The young woman had laid the blame at the door of the university, had given Kent a bad half-year of fault-

finding and recrimination and had finally made an end of the matter by bestowing her dowry of hillside acres on the son of a neighboring farmer.

Therefore Kent had signified quietly, living with simple rigor the life he had marked out for himself; thankful at heart, Loring had suspected, for the timely intervention of the farmer's son, but holding himself well in hand against a repetition of the sentimental offense. All this until the opening of the summer hotel at the foot of Old Crocydon and the coming of Elinor Brentwood.

No one knew just how much Miss Brentwood had to do with the long-delayed awakening of David Kent; but in Loring's forecastings she enjoyed the full benefit of the doubt. From tramping the hills alone and whipping the streams for brook trout, David had taken to spending his afternoons with lover-like regularity at the Crocydon Inn, and at the end of the season had electrified the sleepy home town by declaring his intentions to go West and grow up with the country.

In Loring's setting forth of the awakening the motive was not far to seek. Miss Brentwood was ambitious, and if her interest in Kent had been only casual she would not have been likely to point him to the wider battlefield. Again, apart from his modest patrimony, Kent had only his profession. The Brentwoods were not rich, as riches are measured in millions

his guest edged their way through the standing committee in the foyer; but by dint of careful searching they succeeded in finding two seats well around to the left, with a balcony pillar to separate them from their nearest neighbors.

Since the public side of American politics varies little with the variation of latitude or longitude, the man from the East found himself at once in homelike and reminding surroundings. There was the customary draping of flags under the proscenium arch and across the set-piece villa of the background. In the semicircle of chairs arched from wing to wing sat the local and visiting political lights; men of all trades, these, some of them a little shamed and ill at ease by reason of their unwonted conspicuity; all of them listening with a carefully assumed air of strained attention to the speaker of the moment.

Also there was the characteristic ante-election audience, typical of all America—the thing most truly typical in a land where national types are sought for microscopically, wheel-horses who came at the party call; men who came in the temporary upbraid of enthusiastic patriotism, which is lighted with the opening of the campaign and which goes out like a candle in a gust of wind the day after the election; men who came to applaud blindly, and a few who came to cavil and deride. Loring oriented himself in a leisurely greensweep and so came by easy grad-

ence with him step by step; moving the great concourse of listeners with his commonplace periods as a mellifluous Hawk could never hope to move it.

Loring saw the miracle in the throes of its outworking; saw and felt it in his own proper person, and sought in vain to account for it. Was there some subtle magnetism in this great bulk of a man that made itself felt in spite of its hamperings? Or was it merely that the people, weary of empty rhetoric and unkept promises, were ripe to welcome and to follow any man whose apparent earnestness and sincerity atoned for all his lacks?

Explain it as he might, Loring soon assured himself that the Hon. Jasper G. Bucks was laying hold of the sentiment of the audience as though it were a thing tangible to be grasped by the huge hands. Unlike Hawk, whose speech flamed easily into denunciation when it touched on the alien corporations, he counseled moderation and lawful reprisals. Land syndicates, railroads, foreign capital in whatever employment, were prime necessities in any new and growing commonwealth. The province of the people was not to wreck the ship, but to guide it. And the remedy for all ills lay in controlling legislation, faithfully and rigidly enforced.

"My friends: I'm only a plain, hard-handed farmer, as those of you who are my fellow townsmen can testify. But I've seen what you've seen, and

we ought to be."

"I know her nobility: which is all the more reason why I shouldn't take advantage of it. We may scoff at the social inequality, as much as we please, but we can't laugh them out of court. As between a young woman who is an heiress in her own right, and a briefless lawyer, there are differences which a decent man is bound to effect. And I haven't been able."

"Does Miss Brentwood know?"

"She knows nothing at all. I was unwilling to entangle her, even with a confidence."

"The more fool you," said Loring, bluntly. "You call yourself a lawyer, and you have not yet learned one of the first principles of common justice, which is that a woman has some rights which even a besotted lover is bound to respect. You made love to her that summer at Crocydon; you needn't deny it. And at the end of things you walk off to make your fortune without committing yourself, without knowing, or apparently caring, what your stiff-necked poverty-pride may cost her in years of uncertainty. You deserve to lose her."

Kent's smile was a fair measure of his unhelpful mood.

"You can't well lose what you have never had. I'm not such an ass as to believe that she cared greatly."

"How do you know? Not by anything you ever gave her a chance to say, I'll dare swear. I've a bit of good news for you, but the spirit

was moving me mightily to hold my tongue."

"Tell me," said Kent, his indifference vanishing in the turning of a leaf.

"Well, to begin with, Miss Brentwood is still unmarried, though the gossips say she doesn't lack plenty of eligible offers."

"Half of that I knew; the other half I took for granted. Go on."

"Her mother, under the advice of the chief of the clan Brentwood, has been making a lot of bad investments for herself and her two daughters; in other words, she has been making ducks and drakes of the Brentwood fortune."

"What do I think of him? I don't know, David; and that's the plain truth. He is not the man he appears to be as he stands there haranguing that crowd. That is a pose, and an exceedingly skillful one. He is not altogether apparent to me, but he strikes me as being a man of immense possibilities—whether for good or evil. I can't say."

"You needn't draw another breath of uncertainty on that score," was the curt rejoinder. "He is a demagogue, pure and unadulterated."

Loring did not attempt to refute the charge.

"Are he and his party likely to win?" he asked.

"God knows," said Kent. "We have had so many lightning-transformations in politics in the State that nothing is impossible."

"I'd like to know," was Loring's comment. "It might make some difference to me, personally."

"To you?" said Kent, inquiringly. "That reminds me: I haven't given you a chance to say ten words about yourself."

"The chance hasn't been lacking. But my business out here is—Well, it isn't exactly a star chamber matter, but I'm under promise in a way not to talk about it until I have had a conference with our people at the capital. I'll write you about it in a few days."

They were ascending the steps at the end of the passenger platform again, and Loring brood away from the political and personal entanglement to his friend's word of negative comfort.

"We dug up the field of recollection pretty thoroughly in our after-dinner presence in your rooms, David, but I noticed there was one corner of it you left undisturbed. Was there any good reason?"

"I made no show of misunderstanding."

"There was the excellent reason which must have been apparent to you before you had been an hour in Gaston. I've made my shot, and missed with my shield held well to the fore. He was the last man in the world to assault a friend's confidence recklessly."

"I thought a good while ago, and I still think, that you are making a mountain out of a mole-hill. David, Elinor Brentwood is a true woman in every inch of her. She is as much above caring for false notions of caste

as you ought to be."

"I know her nobility: which is all the more reason why I shouldn't take advantage of it. We may scoff at the social inequality, as much as we please, but we can't laugh them out of court. As between a young woman who is an heiress in her own right, and a briefless lawyer, there are differences which a decent man is bound to effect. And I haven't been able."

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CHAPTER III.

The Bostonians.

It was precisely on the day set for the Brentwoods' westward flitting that the postman, making his morning round, delivered two trunkfuls into the house in the Back Bay sub-district. Elinor was busy packing for the migration, but she left Penelope and the maid to cope with the problem of compressing two trunkfuls into one while she read the letter, and she was reading it a second time when Mr. Brookes Ormsby's card came up.

"You go, Penelope," she begged.

"Not I," said the younger sister, cavalierly. "he didn't come to see me." Whereupon Elinor smoothed the two small wrinkles of impatience out of her brow, tucked her letter into her bosom, and went down to meet the early morning caller.

Mr. Brookes Ormsby, clubman, gentleman of athletic leisure and inheritor of the Ormsby millions, was coming back and forth before the hand of fire in the drawing-room grate when she entered.

"You don't deserve to have a colle sheep dog," he said, "but you are so profligately. How was it to know that you were going away?"

Another time Elinor might have felt that she owed him an explanation, but just now she was careful, and troubled about the letter in her bosom.

"How was I to know you didn't know?" she retorted. "It was in the Transcript."

"Well," said Ormsby. "Things have come to pretty pass when I have to keep track of you through the society column. I didn't see the paper. Dyckman brought me word last night at Vineyard Haven and we broke a propeller blade on the Amphitrite trying to get here in time."

"I am so sorry—for the Amphitrite," she said. "But you are here and in good season. Shall I call mother and Nell?"

"No, I ran out to see if I'm in time to do your errands for you—take your tickets, and so on."

"Oh, we shouldn't think of troubling you. James can do all those things. And I don't know how to get a dependable young woman at the head of this household. Haven't I personally conducted the family all over Europe?"

"James is a base hireling," said the caller, blandly. "And as for the capable young woman; do I or do I not recollect a dark night on the German frontier when she was glad enough to call on a sleepy fellow pilgrim to help her wrestle with a particularly thick-headed customs officer?"

"If you do, it is not especially kind of you to remind her of it."

He looked up quickly, and the masterful soul of the man for which the clean-cut, square-set jaw and the athletic figure were the outward presentments, put on a mask of deference and humility.

"You are hard with me, Elinor—always flinty and adamant, and that sort. Have you no soft side at all?"

She laughed.

"The sentimental young woman went out some time ago, didn't she? One can't be an anachronism."

"I suppose not. Yet I'm always trying to make myself believe other things about you. Don't you like to be cared for like other women?"

"I don't know; sometimes I think I should. But I have had to be the man of the house since father died."

"I know," he said. "And it is the petty anxieties that have made you put the woman to the wall. I'm here this morning to save you some of them; to take the man's part in your outsetting, or as much of it as I can. When are you going to give me the right to do that for you and all the little worries, Elinor?"

She turned from him with a faint gesture of cold impatience.

"You are forgetting your promise," she said, quite disparagingly. "We were to be friends; as good friends as we were before that evening at Bar Harbor. I told you it would be impossible, and you said you were strong enough to make it possible."

He looked at her with narrowing eyes.

"It is possible in a way. But I'd like to know what door of your heart it is that I haven't been able to open."

"The sentimental pleading and took refuge in a woman's expedient."

"If you insist on going back to the beginnings, I shall go back, also—to Abigail and the trunk-packing."

"You are forgetting your promise before her, the mask lifted and the masterful soul asserting itself boldly."

"It wouldn't do you any good, you know. I am going with you."

"Oh, no; to the jumping-off place out West—wherever it is you are going to hibernate."

"No," she said decisively; "you must not."

"Why?"

"My saying so ought to be sufficient reason."

"It isn't," he contended, frowning down on her goddaughterly. "Shall I tell you why you don't want me to go? It is because you are afraid. I am going. I am not," she denied.

"Yes, you are. You know in your own heart there is no reason why you should continue to make me unhappy, and you are afraid I might over-persuade you."

Her eyes—they were the serene eyes of cool gray that take on slate-blue tints in stressful moments—met his defiantly.

"If you think that, I withdraw my objection," she said coldly. "Mother and Penelope will be delighted, I am sure."

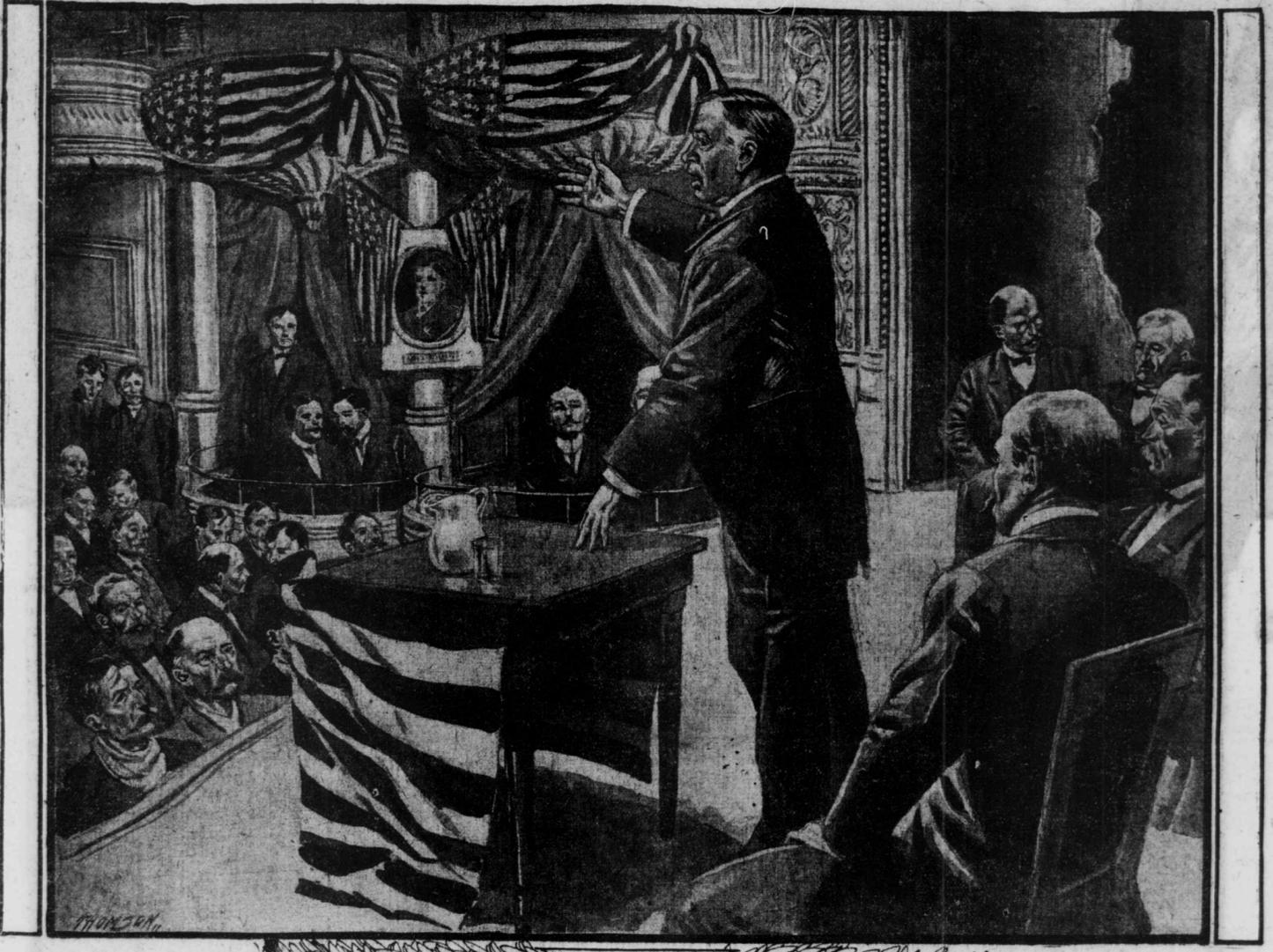
"And you will be bored, world without end," he laughed. "Never mind; I'll be decent about it and keep out of your way as much as you like."

Again she made the little gesture of petulant impatience.

"You are continually placing me in a false position. Can't you leave me out of it entirely?"

"It is one of the prime requisites of successful mastery to know when to press the point home, and when to recede gracefully. Ormsby abruptly shut the door upon sentiment and came down to things practical. The delicate masterful soul that concerned itself chiefly with I am going to take all three of you in charge, giving the dependable young person a well-earned holiday—a little journey in which you won't have to chatter with me about it, and I'll have my own route to the western somewhere."

Miss Brentwood had the fair, transparent skin that tells tales and the



ALL THE TRAFFIC THE TRAFFIC WILL STAND, WILL BE NO MORE KNOWN IN ISRAEL.

but they lived in their own house in the Back Bay wilderness, moved in Boston's older substantial circle, and, in a world where success, economic or other, is in some sort the touchstone, were many social planes above a country lawyer.

Loring knew Kent's fierce poverty-pride—none better. Hence, he was at no loss to account for the exile's flight afield, or for his unhelpful present attitude. Meaning to win trophies to lay at Miss Brentwood's feet, the present stage of the rough joust with Fortune found him unhorsed, unweaponed and rolling in the dust of the lists.

Loring chewed his cigar reflectively, wishing his companion would open the way to free speech on the subject presumably nearest his heart. He had a word of comfort, negative comfort, to offer, but it might not be said until Kent should give him leave by taking initiative. Kent broke silence at last, but the prompting was nothing more pertinent than the chalking up of the delayed train's time.

"An hour and twenty minutes: that means any time after 2 o'clock. I'm honestly sorry for you, Grantham—sorry for any one that has to stay in this charnel-house of a town ten minutes after he's through. What will you do with yourself?"

Loring got up, looked at his watch, and made a suggestion, hoping that Kent would fall in with it.

"I don't know. Shall we go back to your rooms and sit a while?"

The exile's eyes gloomed suddenly.

"Not unless you insist on it. We should get back among the relics and I should bore you. I'm not the man you used to know, Grantham."

"No," said Loring. "I shan't be hypocritical enough to contradict you. Nevertheless, you are my host. It is for you to say what you will do with me until train time."

"We can kill an hour at the rally, if you like. You have seen the street parade and heard the band play; it is only fair that you should see the manager on exhibition."

Loring found his match box and made a fresh light for his cigar.

"It's pretty evident that you and next-Governor Bucks are on opposite sides of the political fence," he observed.

"We are. I should think a good bit less of myself than I do—and that's needless—if I trained in his company."

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