

The MAN of the HOUR

BY
**ALBERT
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GEORGE H. BROADHURST

(Chapter Four Continued)

the advance agent of the millennium? To think of old Tightwad Wainwright—

Ingram forestalled any reply from the financier by entering with the tidings that Thompson was in the ante-room with an important message for Wainwright.

"May I see him in here?" asked the visitor. "It is my private secretary, and—"

"Certainly," asserted Bennett. "Show him in, Ingram."

"I'd like to see a private secretary of mine come buttin' in like this," confided Phelan to the picture. "I'd chase him so far he'd discover a new street. I'd—"

The alderman broke off short. His eye had fallen on Thompson as the latter entered. Phelan stood rigid, with mouth open and eyes bulging, taking in every detail of the quiet, pallid young man's appearance. The secretary meanwhile had gone up to Wainwright and begun to deliver his message.

"Mr. Horrigan called you up, sir," said he, "just a minute or so after you left the office. He wishes you to come and see him immediately if possible."

"All right," answered the financier. "I'll come at once. I'm sorry, your honor, that I am called away just now, for I'd like to discuss this Borough bill further with you. But what I wished to express can be said in a nutshell. If I, who own the rival road, am in favor of granting the Borough franchise, I can't see why any one else should object to it. Come on, Thompson. Good day, your honor. Good day, alderman."

The financier passed out. Thompson was following when Phelan, who had never once removed his eyes from the secretary, stepped in front of him.

"Well, young man!" said he.

"Well, sir!" said Thompson in mild surprise.

"You remember me?"

"I don't think so, sir."

"Hub! That's queer! I'm Alderman Phelan of the Eighth."

"I've read about you, of course, sir, but I—"

"But you don't know me? Never met me before?"

"I'm sorry, sir, but I can't recall it if I did. Good day, sir."

The secretary hurried out after his employer. Phelan, with a puzzled shake of the head, seemed trying to solve some elusive problem. But Bennett, who had not noted the brief scene between Thompson and the alderman, broke in on the latter's musings with the remark:

"You appeared to be amazed at Mr. Wainwright's attitude toward the Borough Street railway franchise."

"Amazed? Is a mild, gentle word for my feeling," declared the alderman. "To hear that old flint heart prattlin' about widows and orphans and fair play—why, say, your honor, I know Charles Wainwright from way back, and I tell you he has the same affection for the money of widows and orphans that a tomcat has for a canary. As for fair play, he wouldn't recognize it if he was to hear it through a megaphone. He's up to something! I don't know just what. But I'll—"

"Come, come!" remonstrated Bennett good naturedly. "I'm sure you do Wainwright an injustice. He—"

"He's a fine old bird! Do you chance to remember the Garrison case nine years back? President Garrison of the Israel Putnam Trust company?"

"Who shot himself after being ruined by a financier who was his dearest friend? Yes. What has that to do with—"

"With Wainwright? Oh, nothin' much. Only Wainwright happened to be the financier."

"No! You must be mistaken."

"Am I? I ought to know something about it. I was the chief of police at the time and handled the case. It was I who suppressed Wainwright's name. For a small consideration I—"

"Wainwright!" gasped Bennett. "Of all men! But—"

"So you see why I coppered the 'mercy' and 'fair play' cards when he dealt 'em just now," purred Phelan. "There's something big behind this talk of his in favor of the Borough bill. Wasn't it at his house last summer that Horrigan offered you the nomination? That's the story, and—"

"Yes. On the 25th of July. He—"

"The 25th of July, hey? That was the day he had me out there. The day I met that fellow Gibbs. By the way, your honor, the papers say it's Gibbs' firm that's buyin' all that Borough 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 cham. Horrigan and Wainwright frame up your nomination; then the minute you come into power this Borough franchise bill is flashed on you by Horrigan, and Wainwright begs you to sign it. Take my tip—Wainwright owns the Borough road as well the City Surface, and Horrigan'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 Horrigan—"

"But I've no personal quarrel with Horrigan. He—"

"You've got the same quarrel with him that the pigeon has with the muskrat. 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 worked 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 understand you better. If it's any joy to you to know it, Jimmy Phelan says, 'You're all right!'"

He held out his hand, and Bennett gripped it cordially.

"I'm glad we had this talk, alderman," 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. "As for Horrigan, when I'm done with him he'll be rolled up in a nice bundle, and 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.



"I had a surprise for you, Alwyn," interrupted his mother.



He held out his hand, and Bennett gripped it cordially.

CHAPTER V.

"DALLAS!" cried Bennett, oblivious 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 outstretched hands the girl bowed in mock reverence and answered his ardent 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 mother. "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 embarrassment in an instant.

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

"The same, ma'am, at your service," asserted 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 perfectly 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 understood. 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 you, but if you'd been workin' an' livin' an' sleepin' an' starvin' for twelve months in a stuffy, dark, smelly back tenement room, toffin' like a slave to keep food an' clothes betwixt the kids an' starvation, an' was barely able to keep body an' soul together—well, maybe then, you'd understand

what them outings an' turkey feasts an' loads of coal means to the poor. And they won't turn down Jimmy Phelan at Horrigan's orders."

"I do understand," cried Dallas, her big eyes bright with tears. "I understand, 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 if—"

"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 annoyance toward the door.

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

"Oh, I forgot to tell you, Alwyn," whispered Mrs. Bennett in a hurried aside to her son as the latter summoned 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—"

"I saw 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' Horrigan 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?" exclaimed the girl, turning to Bennett in surprise. "And are you going to veto it?"

"Office secrets," reproved Alwyn jestingly. "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, forestalling Alwyn, who was about to speak.

"Because," cut in Gibbs before Bennett 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 Bennett.

"Oh, I just spoke in generalities. As a matter of fact, the break in the price today was lucky for those who wanted 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, Bennett, 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 action toward the Borough bill. You cannot 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.

"Certainly, if you like," assented Gibbs, with a shrug of his broad shoulders. "I am afraid my time is up. Good day, Bennett. I'm sorry you misconstrued—"

"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, alderman!" 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 strangers 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 Cynthia. 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, understood, 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 instead 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 inspiration, 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 accordingly 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 success 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 Horrigan, red faced and angry, burst in. "I understand that you've—Oh, I didn't know you had a lady calling on you," he broke off.

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

"Don't keep me waitin' long," said Horrigan.

"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 Horrigan. "There's something you and I have got to settle today. Understand? I'll be outside. Don't keep me waiting long!"

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 interrupted. That—Horrigan 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 calmly, 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 Horrigan.

"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 plainly 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?"

Horrigan stared in savage amazement. He doubted if his ears had not played him false. Bennett had always treated the boss with uniform courtesy, and Horrigan belonged to the too numerous class who do not understand until too late the difference between gentle breeding and weak cowardice. That a man should speak to him courteously and not interlard his talk with oaths, obscenity or roughness seemed to Horrigan, as it does to many another boor, an evidence of timidity and lack of virility. A Damascus blade is a far more harmless looking 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 foundation who deserves the newly popular term of "mollicodde."

Had Horrigan'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.

Continued on next page.

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"Don't keep me waitin' long," said Horrigan.