

THE MAN OF THE HOUR

Continued from page three.

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 screamed for mercy. However, Horrigan chanced to be more familiar with the history of the organization than with that of France; hence, deeming Bennett'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 Bennett, 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 understand me I can't supply you with intelligence."

"Bennett," said the boss, his burning rage steadied down to a white heat, far more dangerous, but less incoherent, "you and me are talking too much and saying too little. We've got to come to a showdown. You're a clever 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 Horrigan. Who ever heard of you till I took you up? Nobody. If I didn't make you mayor, who did, I'd like to know?"

"The voters. The people of this city."
"The voters," scoffed Horrigan. "The deuce they did! Who had you nominated?"

"You did. But it was the public who elected me, and I'm going to obey your orders in one thing. I'm going to do the right thing by the men who put me where I am today. I'm going to pay the voters for their trust in me by giving them a fair and square administration. In the case of this Borough Street railway franchise bill, for instance," tapping the document lying before him on his desk, "before I sign that bill I intend to make sure it's for the good of the people, that it is for the good of the city, not merely for the good of Richard Horrigan and a clique of his friends and hangers. No, don't swear. It'll do you no good. I'm firm on this matter. If you're discontented with me it's your own fault. I warned you months ago that if I was elected I should keep my oath of office. As for this Borough bill"—

"As for this Borough bill," broke in Horrigan savagely, "you'll sign it. If you don't!"
"Well?" queried Bennett, as the boss paused, choked by his own fury. "If I don't sign it—what then?"

"If you don't, your political career is ended from this time on. See? It's ended. Smashed flat. You think of yourself as a fine, promising young man who's on the road to the governorship and maybe to the White House. Well, you aren't. You're what Dick Horrigan made you, and your future will be what Dick Horrigan chooses to make it. I lifted you up, and I can tear you down just as easy. And, what's more, by —, I'll do it if you don't sign the Borough bill. I'm a man of my word, and before ever you were nominated I pledged my word to have that bill put through. The bill paid your election expenses. It—"

"I paid my own election expenses. You know that."

"Your personal expenses, perhaps. But who paid for parades, halls, banners, fireworks, speakers, advertisements, workers and watchers and all the other million things that elected you? The men behind that Borough bill paid them. And they did it on the understanding you'd sign the bill."

"In other words," remarked Bennett, "you made a bargain for me. Well, I can't keep it."

"Oh, I'll keep it all right. You'll sign that bill or you'll!"

"Mr. Horrigan," exclaimed Bennett, controlling his temper with more and more difficulty, "you said something just now about our coming to a showdown. This is the time for it. I want you to remember henceforth that I wear no man's collar—yours or any one else's—and that you can't deliver any goods you've bargained for in my name. If I sign that bill it won't be under your orders, but because I think it right."

"Oh," laughed Horrigan, who thought he began to see the drift of the other's mind, "I don't hold out for that. I don't care why you sign it as long as you do sign it."

"What do you think about the bill yourself?" inquired Alwyn. "Do you consider it honest?"

"What do I care? It's got to be signed, and—"

"I care. And I think the bill is fraudulent."

"Getting tender in the conscience, aren't you? Well?"

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9:04	12:22	Goshen	3:19	...
8:40	12:05	Everson	3:36	...
8:25	12:01	Hampton	3:41	3:43
8:10	...	Worthen	...	3:53
8:00	...	Lynden	...	4:00
...	11:54	Clearbrook	...	4:00
...	11:45	Sumas	...	4:00
...	10:10	Maple Falls	...	5:30
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"Then veto it! Veto it if you dare! I'll not only smash your political career, but I'll pass the bill over your veto. That'll show you pretty well how you and the stand as to power in the city. I'll make you the laughingstock of the administration by taking the whole thing out of your hands and passing it in spite of you."

"I doubt it," answered Bennett, smiling, but meeting coolly the fiery wrath in Horrigan's little red eyes. "I intend to fight your Borough bill in the aldermanic chamber and outside that council. To pass a bill over my veto you'll have to get a two-thirds majority. That means fourteen votes. You have only your 'solid thirteen.' And I'll make it my business to see you don't get a fourteenth vote."

"I'll look out for that, all right, all right."

"One thing more, Mr. Horrigan. I have reason to believe there is bribery in this matter. I'll ferret out the name of every man who gives or takes a bribe in connection with the Borough franchise bill, and I'll send every one of them to jail—not only the aldermen, but the capitalists who are behind the measure. Receiver and thief shall go to jail together."

"Is that so?" chuckled Horrigan. "Then, Mr. Reformer, let me tell you who is really behind this whole affair, the man you'll have to jail first of all, Mr. Charles Wainwright, uncle of the girl you're trying to marry."

He leaned back to note the effect of his revelation, but Bennett's face moved no muscle, gave no hint of what lay beneath.
"Besides," went on Horrigan, eager to press his advantage, "every cent of Wainwright's fortune and of her brother's has been put by Wainwright into Borough stock. If the franchise is beaten, that stock will collapse and Miss Wainwright will be a pauper. You'll beggar the girl you're in love with and her young brother if you veto that bill. Now go ahead and do as you like."

It was Horrigan's trump card, and he had played it well. White, silent, Bennett walked back to his desk. The fight seemed all knocked out of him. Heavily he moved, like a man overexhausted. Picking up a pen, he wrote rapidly, then cast aside the pen, crossed to the window and looked out into the snowy, crowded park.
"You've signed the bill?" cried Horrigan in delight.
"I've vetoed it," replied Bennett.

Continued next week.

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