

*DESPOTISM  
AND  
DEMOCRACY*

A Study  
in Washington Society  
and Politics







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DESPOTISM AND DEMOCRACY





DESPOTISM AND DEMOCRACY  
A STUDY IN WASHINGTON  
SOCIETY AND POLITICS



*By Molly Elliot Seawell*

NEW YORK  
McCLURE, PHILLIPS  
AND COMPANY  
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Published, June, 1903, R

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DESPOTISM AND DEMOCRACY



## *Chapter One*

### MEN AND WOMEN

Certain aspects of Washington, both outward and inward, are like Paris. Especially is this true of the outward aspect on a wet night, when the circles of yellow-flaring gas lamps are reflected in the shining expanse of asphalt, when the keen-flashing electric lights blaze upon the white façades of great buildings and the numerous groups of statuary against a black background of shrubbery, and when some convention or other brings crowds of people to swarm upon the usually dull Washington streets. The Honourable Geoffrey Thorndyke, M.C., spoke of this Parisian resemblance to his colleague, the Honourable Julian Crane, M.C., as they sat together on a warm, rainy April night in the bay-window of Thorndyke's apartment. The rooms were lofty, wide, and dark, according to the style of forty years ago, and overlooked one of those circular parks in Washington which fash-

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ion seemed only to have patronised briefly in order to desert permanently. But the rooms and the situation suited Thorndyke perfectly, and he had spent there all of the five terms of Congress which he had served. Thorndyke's remaining in that locality secretly surprised Crane, a man from the Middle West. He himself had an apartment in a modish hotel, which cost him more than he could afford and was not half so comfortable as Thorndyke's. But then Thorndyke was born to that which Crane was toilsomely achieving—for this vigorous product of the Middle West was sent into the world with enormous ambitions of all sorts, and not the least of these was social ambition. And combined with this social ambition was a primitive enjoyment of society such as the Indian gets out of his pow-wows with unlimited tobacco and fire-water. Crane, although bred on the prairie, cared nothing for fields and woods and the skies of night and the skies of morning. Men, women, and their affairs alone interested him. Thorndyke, on the contrary, although town-bred, cared for the God-made things, and at that very moment was studying with interest the great tulip-tree, dark and dank before



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his window. When he made the remark about Washington having sometimes a look of Paris, he added:

“And I expected to be in Paris at this very moment but for this”—here he interjected an impolite adjective—“extra session. However,” he continued, good-humouredly, “I hardly expect you to agree with me, considering your late streak of luck—or, rather, your well-deserved promotion, as I shall call it on the floor of the House.”

Crane acknowledged this with a smile and a request for another cigar, if possible, not so bad as the last. He was tall and well made, and had a head and face like the bust of the young Augustus in the Vatican gallery. He was elaborately groomed, manicured and all, judging that time spent on beauty like his was not thrown away. In contrast to this classic beauty was Thorndyke—below, rather than above, the middle height, with scanty hair and light blue eyes, and who could not be called handsome by the mother that bore him. But when women were about, Geoffrey Thorndyke could always put the handsomest man in the room behind the door.

And he had a peculiarly soft and musical voice

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which made everything he said sound pleasant, even when he proceeded to make uncomfortable remarks about the late turn in national affairs which had sent Crane's political fortunes upward with a bound.

"For my part," he said, knocking the ash off his cigar, "I have lived long enough and read enough to know that such a stupendous opportunity as your party has now is generally fatal to that party before the next Presidential election. See—in the middle of a Presidential term, you carry the Congressional elections by a close shave. The new Congress is not expected to meet for thirteen months afterward. The Brazilian matter reaches an acute stage, and the President is forced to call an extra session in April instead of the regular meeting in December. Of course, the Brazilian matter will come out all right. Any party, at any time, in any civilised country, is capable of managing a foreign affair in which all the people think the same way. But when it comes to domestic affairs—my dear fellow, when the President saw how things were going and that he really could invite you to make fools of yourselves for the next fourteen months

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before the Presidential convention, it was beer and skittles to him.”

Crane turned in his chair and sighed. The intricacies of national politics, the wheels within wheels, the way of putting out a pawn to be taken, puzzled and confused him. It had seemed to him the most unmixed political good to him when his party had secured control of the House at an international crisis. It could vote supplies with splendid profusion, it could shout for the flag, it could claim the credit for everything done, while the Senate and the Administration being in opposition, very little real responsibility attached to anything the House might leave undone. And when the man who was certain to be the caucus nominee for Speaker had sent for Crane at one o'clock in the morning and had offered him the chairmanship of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to succeed Thorn-dyke, Crane had felt his cup of joy to be overflowing. Everything was in his favour. Without the least doubt about his powers, which were considerable, he had some diffidence on the score of experience; but Thorndyke, who would be the ranking member of the minority on the committee, would

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help him out, quietly and generously. In the midst of his elation Crane remembered that Thorndyke had not been wholly satisfied with the chairmanship of that great committee—and Thorndyke had been suffered to exercise a degree of power far greater than Crane felt would be permitted him for some time to come. On most Congressional committees there are two or three men who have come into the world booted and spurred, while the remainder were born saddled and bridled. Thorndyke was one of those who got into the saddle early, and yet, the saddle or the steed had not seemed to suit his taste exactly. Crane spoke of this, and bluntly asked the reason.

“Because,” replied Thorndyke, coolly, “there was no more promotion for me—and I was made to accept it, whether I wanted it or not. You see, although the Constitution guarantees every State a republican form of government, all the States don’t have it. Mine hasn’t, nor has yours. My boss, however, is a good deal more astute than your boss. Mine never lets any man have what he wants. Unluckily, when I was a Congressional tenderfoot I wanted the earth and the fulness thereof, and I

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worked for it as well as I knew how. When the next nominating convention was held I was left out in the cold world. I waited two years. Then, being still green, with all the courage of inexperience, I went to my boss. I said to him that I wished to get back in public life, and to stay there—and he said——”

Thorndyke paused and blushed a little.

“Out with it,” said Crane, encouragingly.

“My boss has some extraordinary virtues—all real bosses have—among them a very engaging frankness. He said, without beating about the bush a moment, that it wasn’t his policy to promote men who might—who might one day get a little too big for him. That was about what he said. He told me if I would be satisfied with a seat in Congress and the chairmanship of a good committee, I could have it as long as I kept out of State politics, and didn’t make myself offensively prominent at national conventions. Then he proceeded to advise me as Cardinal Wolsey advised Thomas Cromwell. He charged me to fling away ambition, and reminded me that by that sin the angels fell, and likewise a number of very imprudent young pol-

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iticians—I don't use the word statesman any more—all over the State. I squirmed, and the old fellow grinned and told me if at any time I hankered after a foreign mission I could get it. I thanked him and told him I had no fancy to be buried until I was dead, and at last we compromised on his first proposition. I like the life—God knows why. The salary is enough for me to live on and support an invalid sister—all I have in the world. I have sense enough to see that I am better off than if I gave a loose rein to my ambition and was forever chasing rainbows. A man without fortune, who lives upon the hopes of an office which will beggar him if he gets it——”

“That's it!” cried Crane, suddenly interrupting, his eyes lighting up with anxiety. “That's it, Thorndyke. I know all about it. I'll tell you the whole story—the story I never even told my wife——”

There is something touching and appealing when a man lays bare his wounds and bruises. Thorndyke, without saying a word, gave a look, a slight movement of the head that brought out Crane's story. He told it readily enough—he had

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the mobile mouth and quick imagination of the orator, and he was always eloquent when he was talking about himself.

“You see, when I got the nomination to Congress it was that or bankruptcy. For two months before the convention was held I’d walk the floor half the night, and the other half I’d pretend to be asleep, to keep my wife from breaking her heart with anxiety. Annette is a good woman—too good for me. I had neglected my law practice for politics until I had no practice left, and then I was transported to Congress and Heaven and five thousand dollars a year. I determined to do two things—cut a wide swath in Washington and save one-third of my salary.”

“Great fool—you,” murmured Thorndyke, sympathetically.

“But—I didn’t know what a wide swath was. I didn’t know anything about it. I came to Washington and brought my wife and three children. We went to a boarding-house on Eleventh Street—you called to see us there.”

“Yes. I remember thinking Mrs. Crane the prettiest, sweetest woman I had seen that season.”

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This was true, for Annette Crane had the beauty of form, of colour, of sweetness and gentleness to an extraordinary degree. She was no Perdita—no one would have taken her for a princess stolen in infancy. But not Ruth in the harvest-field was more natural, more sweetly graceful than this lady from Circleville, somewhere in the Middle West.

“Annette admired you tremendously,” continued Crane, in the easy tone of a man who knows his wife is desperately in love with him, and thinks her fully justified. “She said it was kind of you to call. Like me, she thought we were going to do wonderful things—I believe she used to pray that our hearts might not be hardened by our social triumphs. Well, you know all about it. We were asked to the President’s receptions, and my wife called on the Cabinet officers’ families, and at the houses of the Senators and the Representatives from our own State. We were asked to dinner at our junior Senator’s house. I thought it would be grand. It was, in a way—the old man is pretty well heeled—but it was exactly like one of those banquets a Chamber of Commerce gives to a distinguished citizen. Annette was the prettiest woman



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there, but she didn't wear a low-necked gown like the other women, and that embarrassed her. In the end she found out more things than I did. She said to me before the season was over :

“ ‘Julian, it's not being rich that makes people in Washington. If it were, we shouldn't mind not being in it. But there are plenty of people, like the Senator, who have the money and the wish to make a stir socially—but they can't, while a plenty of poor ones do. Look at Mr. Thorndyke'—she hit upon you the first man—'he's asked everywhere, and he says he is as poor as a church-mouse. No, Julian, to be as you would wish to be here, needs not only the money we haven't got, but something else we haven't got and can't acquire, so let's give it up. Another winter I'll stay in Circleville—it will be better for the children, better for me, better for you'—for I own up to having been deuced surly all that winter. So we adopted that plan, and Annette has never been to Washington since. But—I'll confess this, too—I had from the beginning a fancy to see the inside of those houses where the people live who make up this world of Washington. It wasn't merely idle curiosity. I was con-

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vinced, and I am so still, that the number and variety of people in Washington must make these Washington parlours—drawing-rooms, you call them—the most interesting of their kind in the world. Well—I've got into some of them. It's a good deal easier for a man without his wife than a man with her; and Thorndyke, I own up, I am bewitched. Oh, it's not so much to you; you've known it too long, and seen too much of it all over the world to know how it strikes a man born and brought up until he is thirty-five years old in Circleville. I swear when I get a dinner invitation I am like the girls out our way, who will drive twenty miles in a sleigh to go to a dance. The mere look of the table—the glass, the silver, the flowers—goes to my head. The terrapin intoxicates me. Those quick, soft-moving servants fascinate me. And the conversation! They let me talk all I want."

"You are a vastly entertaining fellow in your own mental bailiwick," interjected Thorndyke.

"And the women! So unaffected—so unconscious of their clothes! And such listeners! I have never been to a stupid dinner in Washington. And

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the club—I never knew a man of leisure in my life until I came to Washington. I daresay you think me a fool.” Crane paused, with a feeling rare to him that he could not express half what was in him, but Thorndyke’s knowledge supplied the rest.

“No, I don’t. It is quite as you say, but you are taking it all too seriously.”

“Circleville,” murmured Crane.

“Well, three-fourths of these people you so admire came from Circlevilles. Forty years ago, how many of them, do you think, had a servant to answer the door-bell? Just consider, my dear young friend, that, except at the South, servants were unknown to a large proportion of the American people until a short time ago. The parents of these people you see here, with eighteen-horse-power automobiles, and with crests upon their writing-paper, their carriages, their footmen’s buttons, thought themselves in clover when they could afford a maid-of-all-work. So far, they are merely at the imitative stage. Their grandparents were pioneers and lived mostly in log cabins, and although the three generations are divided by only fifty years, it is as if æons of time existed between them! By Jove! It

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is one of the most astounding things in American life!"

"That's so," replied Crane. "It is said that one-half the world doesn't know how the other half lives, but in these United States about nine-tenths of the society people have no more notion how their grandparents lived than they have of life on Mars or Saturn. I went to a wedding the other day. It was magnificent beyond words. The two young people had been brought up in——"

"Barbaric luxury," Thorndyke interrupted. "It's barbarous to bring children up as those two were—I know whom you mean. The girl had her own suite of rooms almost from her birth, her own maid, her own trap. Even when there was an affectation of simplicity it cost enough to have swamped her grandfather's general store at Meekins's Cross Roads, where he laid the foundation of his fortune. When she came out in society it simply meant more of everything. No daughter of the Cæsars was ever more conscious of the gulf between her and the common people—I say common people with the deepest respect for the term—than this girl is conscious of the gulf between herself and the class to

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which her grandparents belonged. The young man's story was the same *da capo*, except that he was given a boy's luxuries instead of a girl's. It has been carefully concealed from them by their parents that their grandparents swept, dusted, chopped wood, traded at country stores, and did all those plain but useful and respectable things which made their fortune. To hear them talk about 'grandmamma' and 'grandpapa' is the very essence of simplicity."

"And yet those people constitute the most exclusive set in Washington," said Crane, angrily, as if thereby some wrong was inflicted on him.

"Naturally," replied Thorndyke. "Don't you see that the first result of their prosperity in their own community was to segregate them from their less fortunate friends and neighbours? Don't you see how inevitably it came about that their children were separated from their neighbours' children? And in the end they were drawn from the Circle-villes and the Meekins's Cross Roads by sheer necessity? They became fugitives, as it were, from their own class, and how natural it was for them to be afraid of their own and every other class except

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the recognised few, and to build up a wall around themselves and their children.”

“I wonder if you would dare to use that word class on the floor of the House?” asked Crane.

“I would dare to but I shouldn’t care to,” answered Thorndyke. “One reason why I have so little to say on the floor of the House is because it involves many explanations to men who know just as well what you mean as you do, and agree with you thoroughly. But there’s Buncombe County to be considered.”

“At all events,” said Crane, returning to himself as a subject of consideration, “this social side of life appeals to me powerfully—too powerfully, I am afraid. I feel an odd sort of kinship with those old ladies of seventy that I see going the rounds in Paris gowns and high-heeled shoes, with their scanty white hair crimped and curled within an inch of their lives. It’s serious business with them; and, by George, it’s serious with me, too. Of course I am a blamed fool for acknowledging so much.”

“Not in the least. But you must know that it can only be a pastime with you. There is Circleville, and Annette, and the babies——”

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Thorndyke saw Crane's face grow a little pale, and he fell silent for a minute or two, and while Thorndyke was watching the current of his thought, as revealed by a singularly expressive and untrained countenance, Crane burst out:

"The best in the way of women I've seen yet is Constance Maitland—I wonder why she never married. She's nearer forty than thirty; that she told me herself."

It was now Thorndyke's turn to grow pale. Constance Maitland was responsible to a great degree for most that had happened to him for the last eighteen years, and in all that time he had not seen her once; but the mere mention of her name was enough to agitate him; and she was in Washington and he had not known it——

It was a minute or two before he recovered himself and began to pull at the cigar in his mouth. Then he saw by Crane's face that Constance Maitland was something to him, too. Had the poor devil fallen in love with her as he had with Washington dinners? Thorndyke was disgusted with his friend, and showed it by saying, coldly:

"I knew Miss Maitland well some years ago. She

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is very charming. But, Crane, it's bad manners to call ladies by their first names." Thorndyke used the old-fashioned word "ladies" where the moderns say "women."

Crane coloured furiously. He did not mind in the least being coached in legislative affairs, but he winced at being taught manners. However, he had the highest admiration for Thorndyke's manners, so he replied, carelessly:

"I accept the amendment. As you say, Con—Miss Maitland is very charming, and has been charming men for the past twenty years. Now, in Circleville she would have been called an old maid ten years ago."

Yes, of course, she had always had a train of men after her, and the fact that she remained unmarried showed either that she had no heart—or—sometimes a wild thought had crossed Thorndyke's mind—suppose Constance Maitland still remembered him? This thought, coming into his head, set his heart to pounding like a steam-engine while Crane talked on.

"That woman epitomises the charm of Washington life to me. First, she is unlike any woman I



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ever saw before; that is in itself a charm. Then, she has an environment; that, too, is new to me. I went to see her four times last winter." Then he mentioned where she lived. "Her parlour—I mean drawing-room—was nothing compared with the others I'd been in here, but it was distinctive. It wasn't furnished from bric-à-brac shops and art-sale catalogues. All the antiques came from her own family—all the miniatures and portraits were her own kinsfolk. And, after having lived in Europe for twenty years, as she told me—because she doesn't mind mentioning dates—and having seen more of European society than one American woman in ten thousand, she loves and admires her own country, and came back here to live the first minute she was free. That struck me all of a heap, because, though you wouldn't judge so from my Fourth of July speeches at Circleville, I should think that Europe would be something between Washington and Paradise."

"You haven't been there yet," was Thorndyke's response to this. And then Crane proceeded to tell a story which Thorndyke knew by heart.

"It seems, so I heard from other people, she

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was brought up by an old crank of an aunt, who had married a Baron Somebody-or-other in Germany. This old feminine party tried to make Constance marry some foreign guy, and when she wouldn't, the old lady, in a rage, made a will, giving all she had to Constance on condition that she did not marry an American. It was thought the old lady wasn't exactly in earnest, but unluckily she died the week after, and so the will stands—and that's why Con—Miss Maitland never married, I guess."

Just then a band came blaring down the street, followed by the usual crowd of negroes, dancing, shouting, and grimacing along the sidewalk, and looking weird in the high lights and black shadows of the night. Crane, to whom the negroes had never ceased to be a raree show, got up and went to the window, whistling the air the band played; meanwhile Thorndyke lay back in his chair trying to get used to the knowledge that Constance Maitland had been in Washington months and he had not known it. There was a prologue to the story just told by Crane—and Crane had no suspicion of this prologue. A young American of good birth

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but slender fortune—himself, in fact—was the primary cause of the old Baroness von Hesselt's remarkable will. It was he whom the old lady held responsible for Constance Maitland's flat refusal to marry the son of an imperial privy councillor with seven points to his coronet. Oh, those days at the Villa Flora on Lake Como—those days that come only in youth, when the whole world seems young! When, from the terrace, Constance and himself watched the sunset trembling in the blue lake and making another heaven there! And those starlit nights when Constance and himself were in a boat alone together, and she sang to her guitar for him, and he repeated verses from Childe Harold to her! They were both young and singularly innocent, and were deeply in love—of that Thorn-dyke could never doubt; and because they were young and innocent and in love with each other the old Baroness thought them the wickedest and most designing creatures on earth. She had spent all her life in Europe, had frankly married for a title, and wished Constance to do the same. The old Baron, a helpless invalid, was not reckoned in the equation.

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The Baroness von Hesselt had acquired what many Americans who live abroad acquire—a spite against her own country. This was accentuated by the fact that she was a Southerner of the old régime, who hated liberty, equality, and fraternity from the bottom of her heart, and who instinctively realised her unfitness for America. She had also forgotten a good deal about it, and thought a very effective way to keep Constance from marrying Thorndyke or any other American was to cut her off from a fortune in that event. The will was made, and the old Baroness proclaimed it loudly for a week. At the end of that time the gentleman on the pale horse unexpectedly summoned her. There was but one thing for any man to do in Geoffrey Thorndyke's circumstances, and that was, to go far away from Constance Maitland. No definite words or promises had passed between them, but unless eyes and tones of the voice, and all sweet, unutterable things are liars, they were pledged to one another.

Thorndyke, being in those days a very human youngster, hoped that Constance would send him a line—a word—and doubted not for a moment that his love would make up to her for a fortune.

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But no line or word ever came. As years went on Thorndyke reached the sad knowledge that modern life requires something more than bread and cheese and kisses, and felt a sense of relief that it had not been in his power to take Constance Maitland's fortune from her with only love to give in return. But this knowledge did not make him content. On the contrary, year by year had her memory become more poignant to him. It was that which had made him throw himself with all his being and equipment into public life. It was that which made him tender to all innocent, sweet women like Annette Crane—innocent, sweet women brought back to him something of his lost love. He knew she had never married, but all else concerning her was a blank to him. He was consumed with a desire to ask Crane something about her—all about her—but he had noted instantly that in Crane's eye and voice was a manner which revealed a dangerous interest in Constance Maitland; and Thorndyke was held back and urged forward to speak of her.

The band passed on, the street once more grew quiet, and Crane returned to his seat. Thorndyke smoked savagely to keep from mentioning Con-

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stance Maitland's name. Crane did likewise with the same motive, but having less self-control than Thorndyke he could not but hark back to the ticklish subject.

"So you say you knew Miss Maitland?"

"Yes. A long time ago."

"She's very old-fashioned; enough so to stay out of society when she is wearing mourning. She's been in mourning for her uncle by marriage ever since she's been in Washington—six months. The exclusives don't stay in mourning more than six months for husbands, wives, or children. Parents and aunts and uncles don't count."

"The exclusives don't have any aunts and uncles," Thorndyke put in shortly. "They have nieces and nephews who are presentable after they have been washed and combed—but they can't go back as far as uncles and aunts."

"So they can't. Their uncles and aunts are just like *my* uncles and aunts. Well, I gather that the old Baron for whom Miss Maitland has worn mourning wasn't a bad old party—better, perhaps, than his American wife."

"He was," said Thorndyke.

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Crane looked at him suspiciously and then kept on.

“Miss Maitland is going out this spring. She says I’m quite right in thinking there is a delightful society attainable here in Washington, but she’s so pleased to be back in her own country that she praises everything right and left. She doesn’t even mind the Dupont statue, and won’t discuss the Pension building. To see her flow of spirits you would think her the happiest woman in the world. Yet she told me once that she wasn’t really happy.”

“All women tell you that before you get through with them,” growled Thorndyke.

“Annette never has,” said Crane, rising and throwing away his cigar. “Some time, if you wish to call on Miss Maitland, I’ll take you round.”

Thorndyke restrained the temptation to brain Crane with the carafe on the table by him, partly out of regard for himself, partly out of regard to Crane, and partly from the fact that Crane was a much bigger man than he was. But his colleague was evidently quite unconscious of Thorndyke’s bloody inclinations, and thought himself the best fellow in the world to be willing to give Thorndyke

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a view into the paradise of Constance Maitland's company.

"And as for my streak of luck, as you call it, I intend to devote all my powers to my work, so that no matter what other committee makes a fool of itself, the Committee on Foreign Affairs won't—at least through its chairman," Crane continued.

"It's easy enough to steer that committee when everything is peaceful," answered Thorndyke, meaning to take the new chairman down a peg. "And it's a great deal easier when we get into a continental mess as we are now. Wait until you get on the Ways and Means, or Committee on Elections, or Banking and Currency, if you want to have a little Gehenna of your own on earth. Good-night."

Thorndyke sat up smoking until after two o'clock. His thoughts were not concerned with Crane's political future, nor with his own either, nor with the continental mess. He was thinking about that dead-and-gone time, and how far away it was; the moderns did not make love through the medium of sentimental songs to the guitar and to stanzas from Childe Harold. They preferred ragtime on the mandolin and the Rubáiyát of Omar



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Khayyám; and they no longer seemed to fall in love in the painful and whole-souled manner which had befallen him; and then he wandered off into thinking how a man's will could go so far and no farther, and how he should feel when he saw Constance Maitland, as he must eventually, and how she would look and speak. He concluded, before he went to bed, that he had experienced that unlucky accident, the breaking of heart, which would not mend, do what he could; for he was one of those rare and unfortunate men who can love but once.

## *Chapter Two*

### THE RISE OF A PREMIER AND SOMETHING ABOUT TWO HEARTS

On the fifteenth of April Congress met for one of the most exciting sessions in the history of the country. There was excitement both for the members and for the public. Usually, when great economic questions have to be disposed of, which rack the intelligence of the strongest men in the House and Senate, which make and unmake Presidents and policies, at which men work like slaves toiling at the oar, by night as well as by day, and of which the harvest of death is grimly reckoned beforehand, the people go on quietly, reading with calm indifference the proceedings of Congress in the newspapers or skipping them because of their dulness. When questions affecting the honour and prestige of the country arise, the American people, justly described as "strong, resolute, and oftentimes violent," become deeply agitated, are swayed all one way by

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the same mighty impulse, and force Congress to act as the people wish. The Congress at these times is calm. There is nothing to do but comply with the mandates of the people. One party is as willing to vote supplies as another. All march together. The march would become a wild storming party but for a few cool heads and obstructives, who act as a brake, and keep the pace down to something reasonable and the policies in the middle of the road. But the brake is powerless to stop the march onward.

At this session, though, there were to be things to agitate both the people and the Congress. The question of peace or war had to be decided; and if it were peace, as the cooler heads foresaw, it would be peace on such stupendous terms of power and prestige to this country that it might be impossible to deal sanely with the great economic problems which were like the rumblings of an earthquake, and were liable to produce vast convulsions. For the present, however, economic questions were in the background, the Committee on Foreign Affairs was the most prominent one in the House.

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It almost cured Crane of his infatuation for Washington society to see how little it was impressed by the large events waiting to burst from under the great white dome on the hill. Himself, in a fever heat of suppressed excitement, he felt aggrieved that dinners still went on unflaggingly, that the first long season of grand opera Washington had ever known was about to begin, and claimed much attention. None of these smart people seemed to care in the least that he was to present the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs in an unprecedentedly short time—a report which might mean war or peace. He expressed his sense of personal injury to Thorndyke as the two sat hard at work in their committee-room one night a week after the meeting of Congress.

They were quite alone, and it might be said that the report was theirs alone. There were other strong men on the committee, but they had got used to the autocratic rule of Thorndyke, and rather liked it. He consulted them attentively, but he was always the man who acted. The new chairman recognised this, and being ambitious to rule as Thorndyke had ruled, he consulted his predeces-

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sor somewhat ostentatiously—at which his colleagues smiled and let him alone. Crane had just experienced an instance of Thorndyke's good will, who was in the act of saving his chairman from making a ridiculous blunder which would have hindered his prospects very much as Oliver Goldsmith's unlucky red coat did for him with the Bishop. The Secretary of State, a very long-headed person in a small way, had previously got the length of the Honourable Julian Crane's foot, as the vulgar express it. He had asked Crane to play golf with him; he had invited the member from Circleville to little dinners with him. The Secretary's wife had requested Crane as a great favour to assist her widowed daughter in chaperoning a party of *débutantes* and college youths to the theatre, and when a scurrilous journal had reflected grossly upon himself, a married man, and the young widow, Crane was in secret hugely flattered. To be linked, even remotely, in a scandal with the daughter of the Secretary of State was a social rise—although he happened to know that Cap'n Josh Slater, the father of the Secretary of State, had been engaged in steam-boating on the Ohio River in the wild for-

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ties with his own grandfather, Cap'n Ebenezer Crane. The Secretary's father had made money, and his daughters were replicas of Lady Clara Vere de Vere. Of his sons, one, the present Secretary of State, had left the banks of the Ohio never to return, and by a steady evolution had passed from the Western Reserve College to Harvard, thence to Oxford for a post-graduate course, to Berlin as attaché to the then Legation, thence home to exercise a gift the politicians had found in him, viz., the power to form a silk-stocking contingent in the party to offset the silk stockings in the opposition. Being a man of some brains and much perseverance, he had reached the most highly ornamental position in the Government of the United States—the Secretaryship of State. He maintained it with dignity. He had, of course, long since, abjured the Methodist faith, in which he was reared, and was as uncompromising a Churchman as his brother, the Episcopal Bishop—for such had been the career of the steam-boat captain's other son. Both had been brought up in an auriferous atmosphere totally denied the descendants of Cap'n Ebenezer Crane, who had lost his all in the steam-boat business, and

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spent his last years keeping the Circleville tavern. Crane knew all about this, one of his grandfather's standing quarrels with Fate being that Josh Slater, a durned fool, and a rascal besides, in Cap'n Ebenezer's opinion, had made so much, where a better man—that is, himself—couldn't make a living. But Crane knew better than to refer to any of these matters before the Secretary, who was indeed only dimly acquainted with his father's profession. The Secretary, a polished, scholarly man, was a very good imitation of a statesman. He liked to be called the Premier, prided himself on his resemblance to Lord Salisbury, and dressed the part to perfection. During Thorndyke's chairmanship of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, when the present international complication had been brewing, the Secretary had been a good deal annoyed by being sent for to the Capitol on what he considered flimsy pretexts. He determined when Crane succeeded Thorndyke to make a bold stroke, and have the chairman come to him occasionally, on the sly, as it were. To this end he had written Crane a little note beginning, "My Dear Crane." In it the Secretary spoke pathetically of his lumbago, also of

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his age—sixty-one—and would Crane, on the score of old friendship and the Secretary's many infirmities, come to see him at a certain hour at the Department, and perhaps the necessity might be avoided of the Secretary taking a trip in the changeable weather to the Capitol, which otherwise would be inevitable.

Crane showed this note with ill-concealed pride, and was about to fall into the Secretary's little trap through the telephone when Thorndyke hastily interposed:

"My dear fellow," said he, grinning, "you had better wait until the Secretary's lumbago gets better, rather than inaugurate the policy of running up to the State Department to see him, when it is his business to come here to see you. The old fellow tried that game on me, but, in return, I used to get the committee to invite him down here about once a week to give his views on something or other for which we didn't give a tinker's damn, as the Duke of Wellington used to say. But it cured him. He stopped inviting me cordially and informally to come to the State Department to see him."

Crane's face flushed.



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“The d——d old sneak!” he yelled—and then dashed off a curt note to the Secretary. Thorn-dyke promptly confiscated this note, and dictated another, which was, if anything, more affectionate in tone than the Secretary’s. Crane would wish, above all things, to oblige the Secretary, but was himself under the weather, and so forth, and so forth.

“But I played golf with him at seven o’clock this morning!” cried Crane, throwing down his pen.

“So much the better,” replied Thorndyke. “You are returning his own lie to him with interest. Go on—‘Possibly by to-morrow you may be well enough to comply with the wish of the committee, and come to the Capitol. In any event, before a formal request is made for your attendance, your convenience will be consulted with regard to the hours and the weather.’ And when you get him up here put him in the sweat-box and give him all that’s coming to him—that’s the way to get on with him.”

“I see,” said Crane, light breaking upon him, “and when you had the old fellow up here, and I

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thought you were so friendly and polite to him, you were just 'sweating' him."

"That's what I was doing. However, I reckon the present Secretary to be the ideal man for the place. He is highly ornamental, perfectly honest, and satisfied with the shadow of power. Occasionally he reaches out for something in the way of etiquette or attention, as in the present case, but when he doesn't get it he subsides quietly. The State Department has been steadily losing power and prestige from the foundation of the government until now, when it is recognised as a mere clerical bureau and a useful social adjunct to the Administration. Do you think if Daniel Webster were alive to-day he would take the portfolio of State? He would see the Administration at the demnition bow-wows first. Mr. Blaine took it twice under compulsion, and was the most wretched and restless man on earth while he had it. Both times he was so much too big for the place that he became exceedingly dangerous, and had to be forced out each time to save the Administration from total wreck. The lesson has not been lost on succeeding Presidents, and there will be no more Blaines and

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Websters in the State Department. The trouble is, however, that foreign Chancelleries persist in taking the State Department seriously. They can't take in that you, as chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, are of a good deal more consequence at present than the Secretary of State. You can send for him, but he can't send for you. You can call for information from him and practically force him to give it to you, but he can't make you tell the day of the week unless you want to."

Crane, who had signed and sealed his note while Thorndyke was speaking, glowed with pleasure at the last words. But he returned to his grievance about none of the smart set taking any particular interest in what was going to happen on the morrow.

"The diplomatic people are taking the deepest interest in it," replied Thorndyke, grimly, "and when this report is read to-morrow they will be up against a fierce proposition." Thorndyke was not above using slang when in the company of men alone.

They fell to work again at some last details, and

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it was not far from midnight when they left the great white building on the hill. In spite of the engrossing matters which had employed them, both men had been haunted by the recollection of their conversation the night before, about Constance Maitland—but neither had spoken her name. Thorndyke said, as they came out on the deserted moonlit plaza:

“It’s a pity Mrs. Crane can’t be here to listen to you speak to-morrow.”

“Yes,” replied Crane, promptly. “But I have written her about it, and I shall send her a despatch as soon as I get through to-morrow. By the way, I sent Miss Maitland a ticket to the reserved gallery. I shall probably see her at the French Embassy, where I am going to take a look at the ball.”

It was Crane’s first invitation to the French Embassy, and he was slightly elated at it, and being unable to conceal anything, Thorndyke saw his elation. His only reply to Crane’s important communication was, “Good-night—here’s my car.” And he jumped aboard the trailer just passing.

When he reached his own door he turned away from it. The night was growing more enchanting-

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ly lovely every hour. A great white April moon was riding high in the heavens, and the soft freshness of the spring night was in the air. Thorndyke made the beauty of the night an excuse to himself for remaining out of doors. In truth, he had felt a yearning, ever since Crane had first told him that Constance Maitland was in Washington, to see her habitation—it was next to seeing her. He struggled against it for an hour or two, walking away from the street wherein she dwelt. He soon found himself in the poorer part of Washington, a long way from the gay quarters; a part of narrow brick or frame houses, cheap churches, and many small shops. He was reminded of that saying, as old as Plato, who did not himself say it first: “In all cities there are two cities—the city of the poor and the city of the rich.” The city of the poor in Washington, however, is the least disheartening of its sort in the world—for even the poorest house has air and space and sunlight about it and green trees to shelter it.

After having wandered about until he felt certain the West End was asleep, Thorndyke yielded to the overmastering impulse and set out

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for his goal at the other end of the town. He soon entered Massachusetts Avenue—that long and beautiful avenue, shaded with double rows of lindens, their pale green buds breaking out into their first delicate leaf, the vista broken by open spaces with statues, and closing with the rich foliage of Dupont Circle. All was quiet, silent, and more and more brightly moonlit. No glaring gas lamps marred the light or darkness of the perfect night—for in Washington when the moon shines the gas lamps don't shine.

Thorndyke's soul, dragging his unwilling feet, brought him to one of the pretty side streets opening upon the splendid avenue. It was here that Constance Maitland's house was.

Thorndyke believed—such is the folly of love—he would have known the house even if Crane had not mentioned the number. But the number was conclusive. It was an old-fashioned house, broad and low for a city house. It had been the advance guard of fashion. There was a little strip of garden and shrubbery at the side, where clipped cedars were formally set, and three great lilac-bushes were hastening into a bloom of purple splendour. The

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scent of the lilacs brought back the terrace on Lake Como, where lilacs also grew, and where he and Constance had spent those glowing and unforgettable hours—and by moonlight they had often sung together the old duet from Don Pasquale, “Oh, April Night!” Thorndyke, entranced and lost in visions, began to hum the old, old air. What strange power of restoring the past have old songs and the perfume of flowers long remembered! Thorndyke felt as in a dream; all the intervening years melted away; it was once more Como, with its moonlight, its flower-scents, its songs, its loves—and then he looked up and saw Constance Maitland standing before him.

She had just returned from the ball—the carriage from which she had alighted was rolling off. As she met Thorndyke face to face on the sidewalk she started slightly, and her long white mantle slipped from her delicate bare shoulders to the ground. Her eyes met Thorndyke’s—everything was in that gaze except surprise. When two persons think of each other daily for many years, the strangeness is not in their meeting but in their separation. They had seen each other last on a moon-

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lit night, and the sweet scent of lilacs was in the air—and now, after eighteen years, it was so alike!

The moonlight was merciful to them both. Neither saw all of Time's earmarks—Thorndyke saw none at all in Constance. Her girlish figure was quite unchanged. Her pale yellow ball-gown, the pearls around her throat, were youthfulness itself. She had never been remarkable for beauty, but her face showed no lines, her silky black hair, simply arranged, revealed none of the silver strands that were visible by daylight. Thorndyke received a distinct shock at her youthfulness. It was his lost Constance of the Villa Flora.

She held her hand out to him without a word, and he clasped it. In that clasp Constance realised that she had all and more of her old power over him. Thorndyke could not have said a word at first to save his life, but Constance, with equal feeling, had a woman's glibness, and could have plunged into commonplaces on the spot. But she refrained, knowing that her silence was eloquent. She withdrew her hand lingeringly. Then Thorndyke saw the white cloak lying on the ground. He picked it up and held it wide for Constance, and



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when he enfolded her in the cloak she was enfolded for one thrilling, perilous instant in his arms. Another moment and she would be at his mercy. Constance, knowing this, and suddenly remembering the maid waiting for her, and possibly belated neighbours looking out of their windows, withdrew a little. This restored Thorndyke's vagrant senses, and after a moment or two he said:

"It does not seem—now—so long since we parted."

"It is very long; it is nearly eighteen years," Constance replied. Her voice was the sweet voice of the far South, for her young eyes had first opened upon the blue waters of another lake than Como—Lake Pontchartrain. In her speech there were continual traces of her Louisiana birth—Thorndyke had ever thought her voice and her little mannerisms of language among her greatest charms—and he was confirmed in his belief at the first word she uttered. He said to her:

"I did not know until yesterday that you were in Washington."

"I did not like to send you a card," Constance replied.

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“You might have done so much.”

“I do not know which of us is in the wrong,” she said—said it so deliberately that it might convey a thousand meanings. “But if you are waiting for me to ask you—come. Of course, I cannot ask you in now; if we were as young as we once were, it would be quite dreadful for us to be standing and talking as we are—but both being old enough to take care of ourselves, we have our liberty.”

Love and hate are closely allied, and often reason alike from the same premises. As Thorndyke realised more and more that Constance Maitland still had power to disturb him powerfully he resented her ease and tranquillity—and aware of the lines in his face, conscious that he was growing bald, he felt injured at her continuing youth. Evidently, the recollections which had made him forswear love, forego wealth, and had turned him into a Congressional drudge, had left no mark on her. He took, at once, her hint to leave her, and said stiffly:

“If you will give me your key——”

Constance handed it to him; he went up the steps and opened the door. The gaslight fell full upon

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her, and it was as if with every glance they became more infatuated with each other and found it harder to part.

“To-morrow,” said Thorndyke.

“Yes; to-morrow,” Constance echoed, dreamily.

Thorndyke banged the door to and literally ran down the street.

When he came to himself, as it were, he was in his own room, smoking. He kept on saying to himself, “To-morrow—to-morrow,” and then called himself a fool—a purely academic proceeding, however, which never really influences any issue between a man and his will. When at last he went to bed the sky was opalescent with the coming dawn.

## *Chapter Three*

DOWN AMONG THE CAPTAINS AND THE SHOUTING

After four hours of sleep Thorndyke waked with the uncomfortable feeling which waits on excess in everything, especially excess in the emotions after one is forty years of age. The tumults of youth are killing after forty.

He got through with his breakfast and his mail under the disadvantages of seeing visions of Constance Maitland floating all about him—visions of Constance offering to give up her fortune and live with him on what he could save of his Congressional salary after supplying the wants of his crippled sister, Elizabeth. And in case he should lose the nomination at the hands of his boss, as he had once done, there would be nothing at all for Constance or Elizabeth, either, nor for himself that he could then foresee. What a strange infatuation was Congressional life! It was almost as strange as the infatuation for a woman forever barred from him—

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and by the worst luck in the world, he, Geoffrey Thorndyke, was the victim of both!

These unpleasant thoughts walked every step of the way with him to the Capitol on that bright April morning. When he reached the great white building, sitting majestically on the hill, he was one of a vast multitude of people surging toward the south wing. It still lacked half an hour of twelve, and the flag was not yet hoisted. Crowds were disembarking from the street-cars, the plaza was black with carriages, and over all was that tension of feeling which communicates itself to thousands and tens of thousands of persons at once. Something was about to happen that day in the House of Representatives. As Crane said, the smart set cared nothing for it, but their majesties, the people, were deeply interested in it, and had every reason to be, and assembled in great crowds to see the first act. Thorndyke made his way to his committee-room. No one was there except Crane. The gentleman from Circleville was dressed for his first appearance as a star. Thorndyke, being in rather a savage humour, thought he had never seen Crane so overdressed, so full of elation and vain simplicity, and,

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in short, so nearly a fool. In this he did Crane great injustice, for Crane never was, at any time, in the category of fools, although he often did foolish things.

He spoke to Thorndyke affably, although with a slight air of superiority, holding in his hand the report of which Thorndyke had supplied the most effective part—the close reasoning, the conclusive logic, the historical precedents, and the invincible moderation. Thorndyke might indeed have said of that report, as Cæsar said of the Gallic wars, “All of this I saw—most of this I was.” And in the debate that would follow, Thorndyke would be obliged to take care of Crane—for Crane, although a powerful and attractive speaker, was easily disconcerted when on his feet, and had a tendency to panic under the enfilading fire of debate. Thorndyke was not an orator in the popular sense, but when it came to having all his wits about him, to defending his position, to bold incursions into the enemy’s territory, he was not surpassed by any man in the House. As his colleagues said of him, he always went documented, and carried concealed parliamentary weapons about his person.

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By way of revenge, Thorndyke began to chaff his colleague on the subject of his dress. Crane's shirt-bosom snapped like giant crackers, his cuffs rattled, his collar creaked. He was conscious of this, and glowered darkly at Thorndyke's jokes. Thorndyke's clothes, in contradistinction to Crane's, were the clothes of a clothes-wearing man. They were neither old nor new, neither out of the fashion nor conspicuously in the fashion—they were, in short, the clothes of a man whose father before him had worn clothes.

Both men were in their seats, which were near together, when the Speaker's gavel fell. The galleries were packed, the corridors jammed. In the diplomatic gallery every seat was occupied. The bright costumes of the Orientals and the flower-decked spring hats of the ladies made it gay. The gallery reserved for the President's family and the Cabinet families was also full. So great was the pressure that the motion was at once made to admit ladies to the floor of the House. They came fluttering in like a flock of pigeons, and soon filled all the space back of the desks. They were not, in general, of the smart set, who, as Crane complained,

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were like Gallio, and cared for none of these things—but were chiefly of official families.

As soon as the prayer and some routine business was over, the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs was called for. The calling of the roll had been waived—it was easy enough to see that every member was present who could get there, as well as many Senators. When the report was handed to the reading-clerk there was a deep pause. Thorndyke looked at Crane. He was very pale, but the veins in his neck were pulsating strongly. He glanced up at the reserved gallery at the side, and his face flushed deeply. Thorndyke followed his eye. It fell upon Constance Maitland sitting in the front row. She was dressed in a rich black toilette which contrasted strongly with the brilliant colours around her. A delicate black tulle hat sat upon her graceful head, and she fanned herself slowly with a large black fan.

Her distinction of appearance was extreme, and she showed her perfect knowledge of it by the simple but effective trick of wearing black when there was a riot of colour around her. By means of a good figure and perfect dressing this seduced the



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world into thinking her far handsomer than she really was. Thorndyke recognised that when he saw how much more attention she attracted than much younger and more beautiful women.

But then the silence was broken by the great, bell-like voice of the reading-clerk reading the report. As the clerk proceeded, Thorndyke perceived that the tone and manner of the report were making a strong impression. The matter of it could not be wholly digested, but the manner of presentation commanded attention. Nearly every one of the three hundred and fifty members present saw Thorndyke's fine Italian hand in the business—but the crowd gazed in admiration at the tall and handsome member from Circleville, who was reaping the glory of the present occasion. The reading over, Crane arose, with a few notes in his hand, prepared to defend the report. He was a born speaker, and as soon as he began to talk he forgot his clothes and also made his audience forget them, too. Thorndyke listened with enforced admiration. Crane spoke lucidly, strongly, yet temperately—Thorndyke had taught him the enormous power of moderation. Thorndyke, quite unobserved, watched

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the faces of the European diplomats in the diplomatic gallery, who were listening intently. One man, whom Thorndyke reckoned the ablest diplomat among those representing Western Europe, stealthily took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead. An Ambassadors dropped her card-case at his feet and he did not see it. Another, a round, red-faced, sensible, guileless man, looked about him with a frankly puzzled air, which said as plainly as words, "God bless my soul—what are we to do about this?" The younger men unconsciously assumed expressions of contempt, indifference, and displeasure. They had every reason to be displeased at the turn international affairs were taking—and there was no alternative but war.

Thorndyke, being experienced in legislation, could very readily estimate the effect on his colleagues of what Crane was saying. It was tremendous. The vast hall was stilled, and the stillness grew intense. By some communicable psychic force all knew that here was a great issue met and disposed of for a hundred years to come. To the Americans present it was a source of pride and of relief. The mellow, unchanging sunlight that

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glowed softly through the iridescent glass roof of the hall fell upon their faces, serious indeed, but steady and cheerful. The Congress was back of that report, and the people were behind the Congress. There was no hysteria among the Congress or the people, but a fixed and resolute determination which was, in effect, the registering of a decree of fate.

Crane spoke for half an hour, his rich, full voice growing richer and fuller, without becoming louder, as he proceeded. At the very end he had allowed himself a little leeway, rightly judging that by that time the audience would be wrought up to the pitch which would permit what is called eloquence. When the last sentences, ringing with terse Americanism, rolled out, the effect was magical. A great storm of feeling had been evoked and had responded. The applause was long and loud and deep and steady, like the breaking of ocean waves upon granite rocks. Crane's words had pierced the heart of every American present, and a common impulse brought all of them to their feet. Even the Speaker, not knowing what he was doing, rose from his chair, then sat down again shamefacedly. None es-

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aped the tumult outwardly except the European occupants of the diplomatic gallery. They were ostentatiously cool, and talked and laughed during the tempest of applause, while secretly they were more agitated than any of the cheering multitude. They had heard that which meant surrender to each and all of them.

The Speaker's gavel descended presently, and quiet was partially restored. Crane was surrounded by members of both parties congratulating him, and he received their praise with a modesty more sincere than was generally believed. But to him had it been brought home that the crisis was bigger than the man, and the people were bigger than the crisis. Thorndyke, sitting near him, had shared in the tempest of feeling, but a sickening disappointment possessed him when he saw Crane's personal triumph. In all of Thorndyke's years of labour Fate had never given him any such a chance as this. But it was his years of labour which made Crane's success possible. He could imagine the turgid, strained spread-eagleism, the powerful but ill-reasoned speech, which Crane, but for him, would have made. His eyes, in his cold fit of chagrin,

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wandered toward the place where Constance Maitland sat. A slender black figure, gracefully holding up the train of the black gown, was just disappearing through the door. Thorndyke's impulse to follow Constance was accentuated by a strong desire, if there should be any debate, to leave Crane to his fate, but he soon found out that the whole matter would go over until the next day, and by that time his better self would assert itself, and he would do his part—not for Crane's sake, but for the sake of that overmastering sense of public duty which he cherished religiously and never alluded to. So, finding himself free and superfluous, he left the chamber, partly to avoid the sight of Crane's triumph and partly drawn by Constance Maitland. Before leaving, however, he went up like a gentleman and congratulated Crane, who, moved by an honest and generous impulse, expressed the utmost gratitude to him.

Out in the spring sunshine that flooded the plaza and the parklike gardens and blazed upon the golden dome of the fair white National Library, visible beyond the fringe of great green trees, Thorndyke looked about him for Constance Maitland.

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She was just stepping into a smart little brougham with a good-looking pair of brown cobs, and drove away toward the quiet, shady, beautiful but unfashionable part of the town on the east.

The carriage went slowly, and Thorndyke, pursuing it, saw it stop a few blocks from the Capitol, by one of those parks large enough for one to wander in and feel alone as if in the woods. Constance descended from the carriage holding her skirts daintily, and walked into the park. Thorndyke boldly followed her—she had said to-morrow—and this was to-morrow.

He came upon her in a few minutes in a little open space, shut in, except for the pathway, by shrubbery on every side. The grass was full of daisies which had just put on their little white shirts and yellow caps, and a pair of robins hopped about with as much gayety and freedom as if they were country robins instead of town robins.

Constance was sitting on a rusty iron bench, a little in the shade. She had taken off her gloves, and her hands, small and innocent of rings, lay in her lap. She seemed to be day-dreaming, as if she were eighteen instead of thirty-eight years of age.

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Thorndyke was pleased to see that by the searching light of day she did not look nearly so young as in the mysterious night. But she was not the less charming on that account—she had simply reached the fulness of her development in mind, in feeling, and even in beauty, such as hers was.

As Thorndyke took off his hat and bowed to her he received a distinct invitation, by means of her eyes and smile, to remain, so he seated himself on the bench by her side. She began the conversation by saying:

“I have just come from the House. It was very exciting. I do not see how any one can call life in America dull. It is Europe which is dull—it is stagnation compared with this, our country.”

Thorndyke again noted, with delight, in her speech that slight trace of her Creole blood which years had not changed. She said “do not” and “can not” in place of “don’t” and “can’t;” she took extraordinary pains to pronounce the *th*, and had a way of accenting last syllables in a manner not recommended by the dictionaries. The result was piquant and charming. Constance herself was quite unconscious of it, and Thorndyke remembered that

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in the old days he could bring her to pique and pouts at any time by asking her to pronounce certain words and phrases which were a perpetual stumbling-block to her. He did not venture now to laugh at her about this pretty idiosyncrasy, but gravely took up the thread of conversation where she dropped it.

“What did you think of Crane’s speech?”

“It was quite extraordinary. But it was not like him. It seemed to me as if he were making somebody else’s speech. Was it yours?”

If Constance had searched the realms of thought to find out the words that would most soothe and satisfy Thorndyke at that moment she could not have found any better than those she uttered. Smarting under the sense of having sown for another to reap, Thorndyke needed consolation. He had the defects of his qualities, and along with his passionate devotion to parliamentary life was the natural desire for popular applause. But he had never had it. He fondly believed that had this superb opportunity been awarded him he should have proved equal to it. Had it but occurred two months earlier! He and not Crane would have been envel-



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oped in trailing clouds of glory. But Constance—Constance, with her woman's wit, had seen that some one else besides Crane deserved the credit for that effort. He made no reply to her questions beyond a slight smile, but he let it be seen that she had hit the bull's eye.

“Mr. Crane tells me he knows you,” he said, presently.

“Yes,” answered Constance. “He has been a few times to see me. Last night I met him at the ball at the French Embassy. I danced with him.”

“He owned up to me some time ago that he was taking dancing-lessons—at forty-two, with a wife and children in Circleville. I fancy his performance answers the description that Herodotus gives of the dancing of Hippocleides—it is diverting to himself, but disgusting to others.”

“On the contrary, he dances very well—when he is not trying to do his best. Perhaps you are surprised that I should still care to dance—but remember, pray, my mother was Creole French.”

And to this Thorndyke made a speech which brought the blood into Constance Maitland's cheeks, knocking ten years off her age at once.

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“I remember everything,” he said.

After a moment's pause Constance, still with a heightened colour, continued:

“I have seen Mr. Crane several times this winter—not only in my own house, but in others. Whenever I am with him I am consumed with pity for him.”

“He does not need your pity now,” said Thorn-  
dyke, grimly. “It is more needed by his senior  
Senator, who is the fly-wheel of the political ma-  
chine in his State. The old gentleman, I know, is  
at this minute walking the floor in his committee-  
room and gnashing his teeth over Crane's success.  
The senior Senator took Crane up, send him to  
Congress, and thought he had secured a really effi-  
cient understrapper. I don't think Crane will fill  
that place after to-day's triumph, and the senior  
Senator knows it, and has got to discover means, if  
possible, to garrote Crane politically before the next  
Congressional campaign.”

“I see,” replied Constance, who was only interest-  
ed in the subject because she saw Thorndyke was.  
“Mr. Crane, by virtue of making your speech, has  
got beyond the control of his master. By the way

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—I am so ignorant of Congressional matters—how can I get the Congressional Record sent me every day?”

“You have already got it—by mentioning to me that you wished it. It is one of my few privileges. I am glad to do at least that much for you.”

Thorndyke heard himself saying these things without his own volition in the least. If Constance Maitland were willing at this moment to give up a fortune for poverty with him, would he accept the sacrifice? Never. How could a woman of her mature age, nurtured in luxury, descend to poverty—for poverty is the lot of every member of Congress who wishes to live in something more than mere decency on his salary. And yet Thorndyke, at every opportunity, had assured Constance Maitland of his unforgetting, of his tender, recollections—in short, of his love. Nor had she showed any unwillingness to listen. It is not a woman’s first love for which she wrecks her life; it is her last love—that final struggle for supremacy. There can be no more after that. Sappho, on the great white rock of Mitylene, knew this and perished.

Some thoughts like this came into Constance

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Maitland's mind, and, driving away her colour, restored to her the lately vanished years. Silence fell between them for a while, until Constance roused herself, and, affecting cheerfulness, said:

"I shall study the Congressional Record with interest. Everything in one's own country is of interest after a long and painful exile."

"You should read Lord Bolingbroke's defence of exile," replied Thorndyke, moving a little nearer to her, and resting his elbow on the back of the bench so that he could look into her pensive, changing face.

"And yet, I daresay, Lord Bolingbroke pined in his exile. Nobody believed him when he said he did not mind. Mine, however, was complete. My uncle, von Hesselt, who was an honourable man in his way, thought he was carrying out my aunt's wishes by keeping me wholly away from all Americans and wholly with foreigners."

"But you could have left him after you were of age."

"Ah, you do not know! He was the most terrible sufferer you can imagine, for fifteen years. And what was worse, he was surrounded by people, his

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own relatives, who, I truly believe, would have shortened his life if they could. He knew this, and feared it even more than was reasonable. Once, my longing for my country grew such that it overcame me, and I told my uncle I must, I must come to America. He pleaded with me—imagine an old man, whose life was one long stretch of pain and fear, pleading with you until he fell prone in a paroxysm of despair! I, too, was in despair, and I promised him I would remain with him during his life.—I hardly knew what I was saying—I was not twenty-one at the time—but I knew well enough after it was said. I kept my word, and I nursed him through his last illness and closed his eyes in death. Then, as soon as all was over, I sailed for America. I feel now as if I never wished to see Europe again.”

“And did Baron von Hesselt realise the enormous sacrifice you made for him?”

“Yes—that is, partly.”

“Your aunt certainly was most unjust to you,” said Thorndyke, coolly. “I mean, that provision robbing you of all your fortune in case you marry an American.”

“Yes, very unjust,” replied Constance, with equal

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coolness, although the flush returned to her cheeks.

“And I—I was to blame for that,” cried Thorn-  
dyke, venturing farther upon ticklish ground.

“Not altogether,” replied Constance, maintain-  
ing the steadiness of her voice. “My aunt hated  
our country; she could not forget the Civil War;  
and she meant—poor soul, I forgive her now—  
that I should never return to America permanently.  
It was a strange thing to do, but I must admit  
my aunt to have been in some respects both a strange  
and a foolish woman. Let us not speak of her  
again. I am back, and if I feel as I do now I shall  
never live in Europe again. It is time for me to  
prepare to grow old.”

She said this with a wan little smile, and all at  
once thought with terror of her age; there was but  
four or five years' difference between Thorndyke  
and herself, and that difference, at a certain point,  
becomes transferred to the gentleman's side of the  
ledger. Suddenly the spring afternoon seemed to  
become melancholy and overcast. A sharp wind  
sprang up from the near-by river; the world  
turned from gold to gray. At the same moment

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Thorndyke and Constance rose and walked away from the spot that had been only a little while ago so sweet and sunny.

“Why is it,” asked Constance, as they followed the pathway leading out of the park, “a spring morning is the merriest thing in life, and a spring evening the saddest?”

“Why should anything be sad to you, spring evenings or any other times?” asked Thorndyke, quietly and with perfect sincerity.

“Why should any one be sad at all? Because we are human, I suppose,” was Constance’s answer to this.

As they came out upon the streets, which were less deserted than usual, Thorndyke looked toward the south wing of the Capitol. The flag was fluttering down from its flag-staff.

“The House has adjourned,” he said, “and some history has been made to-day—likewise a great reputation for our friend Crane.”

The brougham was driving up and down, and the coachman, perceiving the graceful black figure on the sidewalk, drove toward them. Thorndyke noted, with disgust, the elegance of the turnout—

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the two perfectly matched cobs, the silver-mounted harness of Spanish leather, the miniature brougham with "C. M." in cipher on the panels—the whole must have cost about half his yearly income. This, together with Crane's remarkable triumph, made him surly, and he said, stiffly, as he assisted Constance into the brougham:

"You gave me permission to call to-day."

"Yes, but I withdraw it. It is now nearly three o'clock. I have not had my luncheon, I am tired, and I must rest this afternoon, and I go out to dinner. To-morrow at five."

Her tone and manner discounted her words. It was as if she were saying: "I must save something for to-morrow—I will not be a spendthrift of my joys." Thorndyke, finding nothing to discompose him in her words, replied, in a very good humour:

"It is always to-morrow—but to-morrow is better than not at all. Good-bye."

The brougham rolled off, and Thorndyke stepped aboard a street-car bound for the West End.

At the Capitol plaza a great crowd got on, among them the two gentlemen whom Thorndyke affectionately described as his boss and Crane's boss.



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The two men stood together on the platform outside. Both of them revealed in their faces their mastery of men and affairs, for your true boss is necessarily a very considerable man. Senator Standiford, Thorndyke's boss, had an iron jaw, which was emphasised by a low brow, but his face was not without a touch of ideality. Senator Bicknell, Crane's boss, had likewise a determined face, but his forehead and eyes betrayed the human weakness which made him like clever men as his instruments. Both men were millionaires. Senator Standiford lived in three rooms at a hotel, rode in street-cars, and gave liberally of his money to campaign funds, charities, and his poor relations, but was never known to part with an atom of his power if he could help it. Senator Bicknell fared sumptuously every day, had a splendid house and gorgeous carriages, only rode in the street-cars for a lark, and was reported to be a skinflint in money matters, and somewhat foolishly lavish in giving away his power. The two men exchanged some words which Thorndyke, wedged inside as he was, could not but hear. Senator Standiford was saying to his colleague:

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“S. M. & L. stock must be going down when *you* ride in a street-car.”

“I lost one of my coach-horses last night,” replied Senator Bicknell, “and can’t use my carriage to-day.”

“Misfortunes never come singly,” said Senator Standiford, enigmatically, then adding, “I suppose it’s in order to congratulate you on the success of your protégé, Crane, to-day?”

Thorndyke could scarcely keep from laughing at the look of chagrin which came over Senator Bicknell’s countenance at this.

“Y-yes,” he answered, dubiously.

“Don’t get in a panic,” kept on Senator Standiford, with rude good-humour; “I know how it is with those fellows. Crane thinks from this day forth that you are a back number, an old foggy, and a dead cock in the pit. He will go into what he considers a grooming process for the next four years—oh, I know those fellows! He will kick up a lot of dust in the gubernatorial convention, will make a great display of not wanting the nomination, and will bide his time until your term expires. Then he will find it is a grueling and not a groom-

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ing he has had, and he will get a small bunch of votes, but I don't think you need take the fellow seriously just now."

At this last sentence Senator Bicknell's face shone like the sun. It shone the more when Senator Standiford kept on:

"There's no reason to fear a man who makes a good speech——"

"I am in no fear of any one," gravely replied Senator Bicknell, who thought it essential to his dignity to say so much.

"It's the strong debater who is likely to become formidable. There's Thorndyke now—Crane has made the speech—largely Thorndyke's—but he is totally unequal to the running fire of debate. Thorndyke could do him up inside of ten minutes. Luckily for him, the debate will not be fierce, and Thorndyke will really conduct it."

"Mr. Thorndyke is a very able man," said Senator Bicknell, as if thinking aloud.

"Yes, but totally without ambition," replied Senator Standiford, gravely, and Thorndyke, within the car, laughed silently.

It was, however, no laughing matter, but Thorn-

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dyke, having chosen his rôle for better or for worse, could only cleave to it, forsaking all others. However, he would see Constance Maitland the next day at five o'clock. There was balm in Gilead, or hash-eesh in the pipe, he knew not exactly which.

## *Chapter Four*

### GOVERNMENT WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED

Life is a battle and a march—especially public life. Thorndyke waked the next morning prepared for both a battle and a march. A glance at the morning newspapers showed that the country was entirely with the Congress, and the people, having given their orders, would see to it that these orders were promptly obeyed. The Continental press of Europe with few exceptions barked furiously. The French newspapers alone retained dignity and good sense, pointing out the inevitable trend of events, and advised that, instead of abusing the United States, they should be copied in that system which had made them great, not by war, but by peace. The English newspapers were fair, but in some of them bitterness was expressed at England being shouldered out of her place as the greatest of the world-powers by the young giant of the West. There

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was in all of them, however, a note of triumph, that this first place had been lost only to an offshoot of the sturdy parent stock. This sentiment is often ridiculed as a peculiarly absurd form of national self-love, but there is, in reality, nothing ridiculous about it. As long as self-love is a part of nations and individuals, so long will each nation and each individual strive to share in the general stock of glory, achievement, and success.

In the American newspapers the man most prominent was Crane. He was compared to Henry Clay, to Stephen A. Douglas, to any and every American public man who had early in life made a meteoric rise in Congress. He was represented as the embodiment of youth with the wisdom of age. One newspaper reckoned him to be a political Chatterton, and called him "the Wondrous Boy." His beauty was lauded, his voice, his delivery, the fit of his trousers; and one enthusiastic journal in Indianapolis promptly nominated him for the Presidency. Thorndyke searched the newspapers carefully, and did not find his own name once mentioned. He reflected upon Horace Greely's remark that fame is a vapour.

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Disappointing as it was to him to feel that another had reaped his harvest, it did not give him acute pain; for he had waked that morning with the agreeable consciousness which comes occasionally to every human being, that the world is more interesting to-day than it was yesterday; that consciousness which illuminates the cold, gray stage of life, and indicates that the lights are about to be turned up and the play to begin. The kind tones of Constance Maitland's voice were still in Thorn-dyke's ears, and the unmistakable look of interest in her soft eyes had visited him in dreams. He was no nearer marrying her than he had been at any time during the past eighteen years; the same obstacle was there—a very large, real, terrifying, and obvious obstacle—but there was also a sweet and comforting suspicion in his mind that Constance, as well as himself, had cherished the idyl of their youth. And then, by daylight, she did not look so preposterously girlish as she had looked by moon-light and in ball-dress. This gave Thorndyke considerable pleasure as he brushed the remnants of his hair into positions where they would do the most good. Her apparent advantage of him in the mat-

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ter of youth and good looks had been disturbing to him at first. She still had much of youth and great good looks, but yet, a man with scanty hair and a grayish moustache would not look like an old fool beside her, as he had feared.

Thorndyke, according to his custom, walked to the Capitol. The morning, like most spring mornings in Washington, was as beautiful as the first morning in the garden of Eden. He chose unfrequented streets, and, passing under the long green arcades, had only the trees for his companionship on his walk.

Instead of reaching the building by way of the plaza, Thorndyke chose rather to ascend the long flights of steps leading upward from terrace to terrace on the west front. It is a way little used, but singularly beautiful, with its marble balustrades, its lush greenness of shrubbery, and the noble view both of the building and the fair white city embosomed in trees, spread out like a dream-city before the eye. Half-way up Thorndyke saw Senator Standiford sitting on one of the iron benches placed on the falls of the terrace. Thorndyke was surprised to see him there, and it occurred to him at once that



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it was a premeditated meeting on the Senator's part.

He was a tall, ugly old man with chin-whiskers, but his appearance was redeemed by the power which spoke from his strongly marked face, and by his punctilious, old-fashioned dress and extreme neatness. He wore a silk hat made from a block he had used for thirty years. His coat, gray and wide-skirted, seemed of the same vintage, and his spotless collar of antique pattern, and his large black silk necktie might have been worn by Daniel Webster himself. A big pair of gold spectacles and a gold-headed cane completed a costume which was admirably harmonious, and produced the effect of an old lady in 1903 with the side curls and cap of 1853.

The Senator had a newspaper spread out before him, but as Thorndyke approached folded it up, pushed his gold spectacles up on his forehead, and called out:

"Hello! Have you read about the 'Wondrous Boy' this morning?"

"I have," replied Thorndyke, smiling pleasantly as he lifted his hat, and in response to a silent invi-

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tation he seated himself on the bench by Standiford's side.

"Great speech, that," continued the Senator. "At first I was disposed to give you the credit for all of it—but there's something in that fellow Crane. You couldn't have coached him so well if he hadn't been capable of learning."

"You do me too much honour," replied Thornydyke, laughing, but with something like bitterness.

Senator Standiford continued with a dry contortion of the lips which was meant for a smile:

"But you'll see, my son, that your friend Crane won't grow quite so fast as he thinks he will. In our times public men require the seasoning of experience before they amount to anything. There'll be no more Henry Clays elected to the House of Representatives before they are thirty. The world was young, then, but we have matured rapidly. It is true that we have relaxed the rule of the Senate a little, and allow the new senators to speak in the Senate Chamber at a much earlier period in their senatorial service than formerly. But speech-making is a dangerous pastime. Much of the small success I have achieved"—here Senator Standiford's

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face assumed a peculiar expression of solemnity which made him look like a deacon handing around the church plate—"I lay to the fact that I never could make a speech in my life, and I found it out at an early stage in my career. I'm a Presbyterian, as you know, but in my town I'm classed as a heretic and an iconoclast, because when they want to call a new preacher and to have him preach a specimen sermon I always tell the elders, 'Why do you want to judge the fellow by the way he talks? It's the poorest test in the world to apply to a man. Find out what he can *do*.' But they won't listen to me, of course, and the Fourth Presbyterian Church is perennially filled by a human wind-bag, who snorts and puffs and blows dust about until the congregation get tired of him and try another wind-bag. In Congress wind-bags don't last."

"All the same, I wish from the bottom of my heart that I had had Crane's chance yesterday and had used it as well," replied Thorndyke.

"If you had you would have given our junior Senator a bad quarter of an hour," replied Senator Standiford, gravely.

Now, in common with all true Senatorial bosses,

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Standiford had seen to it that his junior Senator was a man of straw, put in the place in order that the boss might have two votes in the Senate. Never had the junior Senator yet voted or acted in opposition to his master; but had Thorndyke been the junior it would have been another story, and both men knew it. This caused Thorndyke to remark, coolly:

“He would have no reason to disturb himself—the ass! You have been kind enough to give me to understand that I am ineligible for promotion, not being made of putty, as our junior Senator is.”

“Now, now!” remonstrated Senator Standiford, again assuming his air of a seventeenth-century Puritan. “To hear you anybody would think that our State organisation didn’t want every first-class man it can get! We have the highest regard for your services, and we do what we can to keep you in your present place because we see your usefulness there.”

Senator Standiford punctiliously used the euphemism “we” just as he gravely consulted all the pothouse politicians and heelers in “the organisa-

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tion," but it did not materially affect the fact that he was the whole proposition in his own State.

Thorndyke looked full into the deep, calm eyes of the rugged old man before him, and could not forbear laughing; but there was not the glimmer of a twinkle in them. Presently the old man said, coolly:

"Suppose I should tell you that I may retire at the end of my term, two years from now?"

"I should wish to believe anything you say, my dear Senator, but I am afraid I couldn't believe that."

"What a fellow you are! But let me tell you—mind, this is a confidence between gentlemen—my retirement is not impossible. You know my daughter, my little Letty——"

As Senator Standiford spoke the name his face softened, and a passion of parental love shone in his deep-set eyes.

"She is a very remarkable girl, Mr. Thorndyke, very remarkable; and she loves her old father better than he deserves. I have as good sons as any man ever had—but that daughter left me by my dead wife is worth to me everything else on

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God's earth. The doctors have been frightening her about me lately. They tell her I work too hard for my time of life—that I ought to take a rest, and if I will do it I can add ten years to my life. Now, you know, the State organisation will never let me take a rest”—Senator Standiford said this quite seriously—“and Letty as good as told me six months ago that if I should be re-elected to the Senate”—the Senator uttered this “if” in a tone of the most modest deprecation—“*if* I should be re-elected for another term—as she wishes me to be—then she wants me to resign. I don't mind admitting that if any other human being had said this to me except my daughter Letty, I should have reckoned myself drunk or crazy to have listened to it. But my daughter, as I mentioned to you, is a remarkable girl. Besides, the child is not strong herself, and if she gets to worrying about me—well, you can see, Mr. Thorndyke, how it is with me. The world credits me with loving place and power above everything on earth, but there is something dearer to me than the office of President of the United States: it is my daughter. And the sweetness and the tenderness of that child for her old father——”

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Here Senator Standiford took out a large red silk handkerchief and blew a blast like the blast of Roncesvalles.

Being an accomplished judge of men, Senator Standiford, while speaking, had watched Thorn-dyke closely. Had he shown any undue elation over the political prospects indicated by Senator Standiford's possible retirement, Thorndyke's fortunes would have been ruined. But by the lucky accident of having a good heart he said the most judicious thing possible.

"I don't see any indications of overwork in you, Senator. At the same time I know you do the work of ten men, and I also know the exercise of power is so dear to you that, from the pound-master in your own town up to the candidate for President, you give everything your personal supervision. But as for Miss Standiford's not being strong—why, I took her in to dinner less than a month ago, and remarked on her freshness and beauty. She looked the picture of health and ate more dinner than I did."

"Did she?" asked the Senator, anxiously. "What did she eat?"

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Thorndyke did not feel in the least like laughing at Senator Standiford's inquiry, and answered, promptly:

"Oh, everything. I remember chaffing her about her good appetite."

"Thank God! The doctors say if she can only eat and live out in the fresh air and play golf and ride horseback she will be all right. But, Thorndyke, I swear to you, I am as soft as milk about that girl. If she goes out to golf I am unhappy for fear she will take cold. If she rides I am in terror for fear some accident will happen to her. Ah, Thorndyke, a man is no fit guardian for a girl like that—the sweetest—the most affectionate——"

Here Senator Standiford again blew his nose violently.

"She has always been very sweet to me," answered Thorndyke, "although I believe she thinks me old enough to be her grandfather."

"She is a very remarkable girl, sir; that I say without the least partiality," replied Senator Standiford, earnestly. "She's a little wild, having no mother, poor child—but her heart, sir, is in the right place. And the way she loves her old father



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is the most splendid, touching, exquisite thing ever imagined!"

Thorndyke listened attentively, deeply interested in the human side of a man who had seemed to him to have a very small amount of the purely human in him. The little story of Letty Standiford's health and heart and nature did not strike him as puerile—there was nothing puerile about Silas Standiford, and his love for this child of his old age was, in truth, a Titanic passion, strong enough, as he said, to make him forego the chief object of his existence: power over other men. Thorndyke really liked and pitied Letty Standiford, living her young life without guidance, in a manner possible only in America and not desirable anywhere for a young girl. He had not suspected the delicacy of her constitution, and after Senator Standiford ceased speaking said:

"I wish, Senator, you could persuade Miss Standiford to be a little more prudent about her health. The night I dined out with her, when it came time to go home she was about to pick up her skirts and run two blocks to your hotel, in her satin slippers, with sleet coming down, and the streets like glass—this, for a lark. I took her by the arm and shoved

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her in a cab, got in myself, and took her home. I thought she would box my ears before I got there, but I carried my point.”

“She told me about it—she tells me everything; and I thank you for taking care of the child. You may imagine what I suffer on her account.”

Senator Standiford rose then, and, resting both hands on his old-fashioned gold-headed stick, he looked full into Thorndyke’s face, and said, slowly:

“I hope we understand each other, Mr. Thorndyke. We think you a very strong man, and strong men are liable to become dangerous. The State organisation wishes you to remain where you are. But in the event that I should be re-elected and should be forced to resign, I have no hesitation in saying that unless something unforeseen happens you would certainly have my personal good wishes toward getting you the party nomination for Senator.”

“I understand you perfectly, Senator,” replied Thorndyke, with equal coolness, “and though I admit I think it a shameful state of affairs that any organisation or any man should have the power to dispose of any man’s political future, yet it is a

fixed fact in our State and can't be helped for the present. So far as your personal kindness to me goes I have the deepest sense of it, and the chances are, on the strength of what you have just said, that I may one day be senator."

"And when you are you won't be as much down on the State organisation as you are now," remarked Senator Standiford, beginning to climb the marble steps. "You will probably be called a boss yourself."

"No, I shall not," answered Thorndyke. "I shouldn't have the heart to put men through the mill as I have seen you and Senator Bicknell and a few others do."

Senator Standiford professed to regard this as a pleasantry, and so they entered the Capitol together.

The day was the regular one for the meeting of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and there was a full attendance, every member being prompt except the chairman. Ten minutes after the hour struck, Crane entered. It was almost impossible for a man to have had the personal triumph he had enjoyed the day before, without showing some con-

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sciousness of it. Thorndyke had expected to see Crane crowing like chanticleer. Instead, he was remarkably quiet and subdued. He was greeted with the chaff which senators and representatives indulge in after the manner of collegians. Several members addressed him as the "Wondrous Boy," and others, displaying copies of the Indianapolis editorial, presented their claims to him for cabinet places and embassies. One member—the Honourable Mark Antony Hudgins, a colleague of Crane's, who posed as a greenhorn and was really a wit—solemnly engaged Thorndyke to write him a speech to deliver at the first seasonable opportunity, but warned him not to make it too much like the speech of the "Wondrous Boy." Thorndyke laughed. He had taken no part in the joking and chaffing. Crane's face flushed. He did not like to be reminded of Thorndyke's share in his success, but he was too considerable a man to deny it.

The meeting was brief and devoted to routine matters. The debate would begin directly after the morning hour, and it was supposed it would go along smoothly. There was, it is true, an able and malevolent person from Massachusetts who would

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be likely to stick a knife between the joints of Crane's armour, and two or three Southern members who would be certain to discover an infringement of the Constitution of the United States in something or other—but these were only the expected rough spots in an otherwise smooth road.

At two o'clock the debate began. Again were the galleries packed, though not to the same degree as on the day before. When Crane rose to defend the report he was loudly applauded. He was interrupted once or twice by the able and malevolent representative from Massachusetts, who never disappointed expectations in that particular. And there were some sly allusions to the Indianapolis newspaper and the "Wondrous Boy." This bothered Crane obviously, who had a reasonable and wholesome fear of ridicule. He had his share of a certain crude humour—God never makes an American without putting humour of some sort into him—but Crane's was not the rapid-fire, give-and-take humour which counts in debate. He was always afraid of committing some breach of taste and decorum when he wished to raise a laugh. He remembered certain men whose remarks had caused a tem-

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pest of mirth in the House, but those same remarks seen in cold type next day had seriously damaged their authors. It was here that Thorndyke came to Crane's rescue. While he sat glowering and fuming and hesitating, Thorndyke stood in the breach with a good story, full of wit and pith. The House immediately went into convulsions of laughter. The able and malevolent member from Massachusetts in vain tried to bring the gentlemen back to a state of seriousness and disgust with affairs generally. But the turn injected by Thorndyke into the discussion put everybody into a good humour, the debate went swimmingly, as it was foreseen, and when the adjournment came it was plain that the report would be adopted substantially as it came from the committee.

Thorndyke watched the big clock over the main doorway, and precisely at four left the chamber, and likewise left Crane to his fate, which, however, proved to be easy enough. Thorndyke had other business on hand then.

## *Chapter Five*

### A RAPTUROUS HOUR WHICH WAS RUDELY INTERRUPTED

When Thorndyke got out of doors the bright morning had changed into a cold, determined down-pour of rain. The gray mists hung over the city at the foot of the hill, and the summit of the monument was obscured by sullen driving clouds. Thorndyke's spirits rose as he surveyed the gloomy prospect. It was not much of an afternoon for visiting—he should find Constance alone.

He went to his rooms, dressed, and before five was at Constance Maitland's door. The afternoon had grown worse. A sad northeast wind had been added to the rain; the lilac-bushes in the little lawn at the side of the house drooped forlornly, and the dejected syringas looked like young ladies caught out in the rain in their ball-gowns.

The rain, the cold, and the wind outside was the best possible foil for the fire-lighted and flower-

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scented drawing-room, into which the young negro butler ushered Thorndyke. The walls were of the delicate pale green of the sea, the rug on the polished floor was of the green of the moss. A wood-fire danced and sang in a white-tiled fireplace, and laughed at its reflection in the quaint mirrors about the room, and glowed upon family portraits and miniatures on the walls. There were many old-fashioned chairs and tables, and a deep, deep sofa drawn up to the fire. By its side was a tea-table gleaming with antique silver.

Like most men, Thorndyke was highly susceptible to the environment of women without being in the least able to analyse the feeling. It takes a woman to dissect an emotion thoroughly. He became at once conscious that this quaint, pretty, sparkling drawing-room was a home, and that what was in it had no connection whatever with shops for antiques and art-sale catalogues. He had often noticed with dislike the spurious antiquity of many modern drawing-rooms, which are really museums, and represent the desire of the new for the old. But Constance Maitland had inherited the furnishings which made her drawing-room beauti-



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ful and distinctive, and in process of use, especially by one family, chairs and tables and tea-kettles acquire a semi-humanity which creates that subtle and enduring thing called atmosphere. The portraits on the walls gave an inhabited look to the room—it was never without company.

While Thorndyke was considering the curious fact that all the mere money in the world could not create a drawing-room like Constance Maitland's, she herself entered the room with her slow, graceful step. She wore a gown of a delicate gray colour, which trailed upon the floor, and at her breast was a knot of pale yellow cowslips. A bowl of the same old-fashioned flowers was on the tea-table.

Thorndyke had never been able to contemplate without agitation a meeting with Constance Maitland. But, as on the two previous occasions, so soon as he came face to face with her, nothing seemed easier, sweeter, more natural than that they should meet. He placed a chair for her, and they exchanged smilingly the commonplaces of meeting and greeting. At once Thorndyke felt that delicious sense of comfort, security, and well-being which some women can impart so exquisitely in

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their own homes. The quiet, fire-lighted room seemed a paradise of peace and rest, which was accentuated by the northeast storm without. The surety that he would have the room, the fire, the sweet company of Constance Maitland to himself made Thorndyke feel almost as if he had a place there. And Constance, by not taking too much notice of him, increased the dear illusion. She got into a spirited discussion with the negro butler, who rejoiced in the good old-time name of Scipio, to which Constance had added Africanus. Scipio had his notions of how tea should be made, which were at variance with his mistress's. After the manner of his race, he proceeded to argue the point. Constance entered with spirit into the controversy, and only settled it by informing Scipio that where tea was concerned he was, and always would be, an idiot, at which Scipio grinned in a superior manner. Thorndyke thought Scipio in the right, and said so, as he drank a very good cup of tea brewed by Constance.

“But I can never let Scipio believe for a moment that I am in the wrong about anything,” replied Constance, with pensive determination. “You dear,

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good Northern people never can be made to understand that with a negro everything depends on the personal equation. He is not, and never can be made, a human machine. He is a personality, and his usefulness depends entirely on the recognition of that personality."

"The commonly accepted idea of a servant is a human machine," said Thorndyke, willing to champion Scipio's cause for the purpose of having Constance Maitland's soft eyes glow and sweet voice quicken in discussion. In the old days at Como they had many hot wrangles over the North and the South.

"Ah, if you had been served by human machines for eighteen years, as I was, you would understand how I longed to see an honest, laughing black face once more. My negro servants do much toward making this house a home for me. You would laugh at the way we get on together. When I am in an ill humour they must bear the brunt of it. I am a terrible scold when I am cross. But when the servants are lazy and neglectful, then I bear with them like an angel, and so we hit it off comfortably together. Even Scipio Africanus, who is altogeth-

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er idle and irresponsible, becomes a hero when I am ill and a gentleman when I am angry.”

“Another cup of tea, please.”

“Already? You will become a tea-drinker like Doctor Johnson. However, my tea is so good that you are excused.”

The conversation went on fitfully, but to Thornydyke delightfully. Like all women who truly know the world, Constance had a charming and real simplicity about her. She made no effort to entertain him. She talked to him and he replied or was silent according to his mood. Every moment increased Thornydyke's sense of exquisite comfort and quiet enjoyment. He had reached the inevitable stage of life when amusements are no longer warranted to amuse; when only a few things remained, such as certain books and certain conversations, which were a surety of pleasure. Nor had it been much in his way to enjoy those simple pleasures which are found only in quiet and seclusion. It was as much a feeling of gratitude as of enjoyment which made him say to Constance:

“I did not think there remained for me such an

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hour of rest and refreshment as you have given me.”

Constance turned toward him, her eyes pensive but not sad. There was something soothing in her very presence. She had known and suffered much, and had led a life far from quiet, and now, in her maturity, she had reached, it seemed to her, a haven of peace and quiet. She had acquired a knowledge worth almost as much as youth itself—the knowledge that never again could she suffer as she had once suffered. And the meeting with Thorndyke had confirmed her in a belief which had been her chief solace under the sorrows of her life of exile and disappointment. She knew he loved her well. For some years of her youth she had been haunted by the thought, cruel to her pride, that Thorndyke, after all, had been only playing at love. But as time went on, and she knew herself and others better, she had become convinced that Thorndyke had truly loved her, and his leaving her was only what any other man of honour, burdened with poverty, would have done. And he had remembered and suffered, too. As this thought came into her mind Thorndyke made some little remark that referred

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vaguely to their past, something about a song from one of the Italian operas, those simple love-stories told in lyrics which she had often sung in the old days. A blush swept over Constance's cheek, and after a little pause of silence and hesitation she went to the piano and sang the quaint old song. She had a pleasing, although not a brilliant, voice, and her singing was full of sweetness and feeling, the only kind of singing which the normal man really understands.

When she returned to her chair Thorndyke leaned toward her with eyes which told her he loved her, although he did not utter a word. Constance, in turn, resting her rounded chin on her hand, leaned toward him with a heavenly smile upon her face—the smile a woman only bestows on the man she loves. Even if he could never speak his love she was conscious of it, and that was enough for her woman's heart. Under the spell of her eyes and smile Thorndyke felt himself losing his head—how could he refrain from touching the soft white hand which hung so temptingly near him!

“Mr. Crane,” announced Scipio Africanus, and Julian Crane walked in.

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Every man receives a shock when he finds he has interrupted a tête-à-tête, and Crane's shock was augmented by finding that Thorndyke was the victim in the present case. Thorndyke had not said a word about going to see Miss Maitland, and Crane had meant to do a magnanimous thing by taking him there! And while outside the door he had heard Constance singing to the piano. She had never mentioned to him that she had such an accomplishment.

Thorndyke behaved as men usually do under the circumstances. He spoke to Crane curtly, assumed an injured air, and took his leave promptly, as much as to say:

“It is impossible for me to stand this man a moment.”

Constance, womanlike, showed perfect composure and politeness, bade Thorndyke good-bye with a smile, and then, by an effort, brought herself to the contemplation of Julian Crane. She saw then that he was very pale, and the hand which he rested on the back of a chair was trembling. The first idea which occurred to her was that Crane had heard bad news; but she could not understand why he

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should come to her under the circumstances. Perhaps it was only nervousness, the relaxation after great tension. With this in mind, she said pleasantly, as they seated themselves:

“So you waked this morning and found yourself famous.”

“My speech appears to have been well received by the country,” replied Crane, in a strained voice, after a pause.

“It is a pity Mrs. Crane was not present to enjoy your triumph,” she said.

“Mrs. Crane does not care for politics,” replied Crane, still in a strange voice.

“I cannot say that I am especially interested in politics,” replied Constance, “but I am interested in contemporary history of all sorts.”

“And interested in your friends, Miss Maitland, when they are in public life.”

“Extremely. I was at the House yesterday to hear you speak, and read your speech over again this morning in the Congressional Record.”

“Which, no doubt, you received through Thorn-dyke,” Crane answered, pointedly, after a moment.

Constance felt an inclination, as she often did,



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to get up and leave the room when Crane was talking with her. He had no reserves or restraints, and said just what was in his mind—a dangerous and alarming practice. She controlled herself, however, and looked closer at Crane. He was evidently deeply agitated, and Constance forebore the rebuke that she was ready to speak. Like a true woman, to feel sorry for a man was to forgive him everything. Suddenly Crane burst out:

“Have you heard the news? Senator Brand—our junior Senator—was run over by a train at Baltimore this morning, and died within an hour.”

There is a way of announcing a death which shows that the speaker is contemplating the dead man's shoes with particular interest. Without fully taking in what it meant to Crane and what he wished to convey, Constance at once saw that in Senator Brand's death lay some possible great good for Crane. She remained silent a minute or two, her mind involuntarily reconstructing the horror and pity of the dead man's taking off.

Crane rose and walked up and down the room, his face working.

“I have committed a great, a stupendous folly,”

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he said. "At the very outset of my real career I may have ruined it. I couldn't describe to you what I have suffered this day—yet no one has suspected it. I felt the necessity for sympathy, the necessity to tell my story to some one, and I came to you. I know I have no right to do it—but it seems to me, Constance, that ever since the day I first saw you, you have had some strange power of sustaining and comforting me."

As Crane spoke her name, Constance involuntarily rose and assumed an air of offended dignity. But Crane's distress was so real, his offence so unconscious, that her indignation could not hold against him.

Without noticing her offended silence he came and sat down heavily in the chair that Thorndyke had just vacated.

"You know," he said, "in cases like this of Senator Brand's death, the Governor appoints a senator until the Legislature meets and can elect, which will not be until the first of next January. Just as I had heard the news about poor Brand at my hotel I ran into Sanders, our Governor. I didn't know he was in Washington. Sanders is a brute—al-

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ways thinking of himself first. He button-holed me, took me into his bedroom, locked the door, and closed the transom. There were three other men present—all of whom I would not wish to offend. One of them has indorsed two unpaid notes for me. Sanders told me he had been looking for me, and with these other fellows—practical politicians every one of them—had already formulated a plan of campaign. The Governor would appoint me to fill the vacancy until the Legislature met in January and elected a senator for the short term, provided I would give him a clear track then. In further recompense, he agreed to support me for the long term—the election is only two years off. Sanders has had the senatorial bee in his bonnet for a long time, but the State organisation is not overkindly to him, and Senator Bicknell is a little bit afraid of him, and naturally wouldn't encourage his aspirations. And do you know, after an hour's talk I allowed Sanders and those three fellows to wheedle me into that arrangement—and, of course, I can't, in two years, supplant Senator Bicknell. Sanders is a long-headed rascal, and he knew very well that I was under money obligations to those

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men, and among them, aided and abetted by my own folly, I was buncoed—yes, regularly buncoed.”

The rage and shame that possessed him seemed to overpower Crane for a moment, and he covered his face with his hands. Then he dashed them down and continued:

“Of course I could have made a good showing in the race in January, and after my success of yesterday I believe I could have won. Senator Bicknell is not by any means the czar in the State which he would wish people to believe. But because Sanders dangled before my eyes the bauble of the appointment to the Senate—a present mess of pottage—and because I owed money I could not pay, I gave up the finest prospect of success any man of my age has had for forty years!”

Crane struck the arm of his chair with his clinched fist. His furious and sombre eyes showed the agony of his disappointment.

“As soon as it was done I knew my folly, and since then I have been almost like a madman. I went to my room to recover myself before going to the Capitol, and managed not to betray myself

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while I was there. But I couldn't stand the strain until adjournment; I had to come to you."

Constance sat looking at him; pity, annoyance, and a kind of disgust struggled within her. This, then, was politics. Accomplished woman of the world that she was, this natural and untutored man thoroughly disconcerted her. If only she had not felt such pity for him! And while she was contemplating the spectacle of these elemental passions of hatred, disappointment, revenge, and self-seeking, Crane's eyes, fixed on her, lost some of their fury, and became more melancholy than angry, and he continued, as if thinking aloud:

"Suddenly I felt the desire to see you. You would know how insane was my folly, but you would not despise me for it. That's the greatest power in the world a woman has over a man: when he can show her all his heart, and she will pity him without scorn or contempt. Ah, if Fate had given me a wife like you, I could have reached the heights of greatness!"

At those words Constance Maitland moved a little closer to him so that she could bring him under the full effect of her large, clear gaze.

"I think," she said, in a cool, soft voice, with a re-

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buke in it, but without contempt, "that you are forgetting yourself strangely. I have often noticed in you a want of reticence. You should begin now to cultivate reticence. What you have just said has in it something insulting to me as well as to your wife—a person you seem to have forgotten. As for the political arrangement which you regret so much, I can only say that it seems to me to have been cold-blooded and unfeeling on both sides to a remarkable degree. You have spoken plainly; I speak plainly."

Constance leaned back quietly in her chair to watch the effect of what she had said. She felt then a hundred years older than Crane, who was older than she, and who knew both law and politics well, but was a child in the science of knowing the world and the people in it—a science in which Constance Maitland excelled. But even her rebuke had a fascination for him. No other woman had ever rebuked him—his wife least of all.

"Do you complain of me," he said, "for telling you my weaknesses, my misfortunes? Don't you see that what you have just told me is proof of all I have said? You see my faults, you tell me of them,

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you inspire me with a desire to correct them. No other woman ever did so much for me. Is it forbidden to any one to utter a regret?"

"Very often it is forbidden," replied Constance, promptly. "Unavailing regrets are among the most undignified things on earth. Is it possible that you have lived past your fortieth birthday without getting rid of that school-boy idea that our environment makes us—that a man is made by his wife, or by any other human agent except himself? So long as self-love is the master passion, so long will we heed our own persuasions more than any one else's."

"I hardly think you understand how things are with me," replied Crane, his eyes again growing sombre. "Yesterday was an epoch-making day with me. To-day, the first of the new epoch, I make a hideous mistake. It unmans me; it unnerves me. Not often do two such catastrophes befall a man together. I follow an impulse and come to you and you are angry with me. Bah! How narrow and conventional are women, after all! Nevertheless," he kept on, rising to his feet and suddenly throwing aside his dejection, "no man ever yet rose

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to greatness without making vast mistakes and retrieving them. This moment the way of retrieving my mistake has come to me. I will go to Sanders—no, I will write and keep a certified copy of the letter—saying that I shall withdraw from my engagements with him. I will refuse to accept the appointment as Senator and will contest the election with him before the Legislature. But—but—if only the man who indorsed my notes hadn't been in the combine!”

As suddenly as he had rallied, Crane again sank into dejection.

“You don't know what it is to want money desperately—desperately, I say,” he added.

“N-no,” replied Constance, slowly. “I think I know the want of everything else almost which is necessary to happiness—except only the want of money.”

“Then you have escaped hell itself, Miss Maitland. This American Government, which you think so impeccable, is the most niggardly on the face of the globe. With untold wealth, it pays the men who conduct its affairs a miserable pittance—a bare living. How can a man give his whole mind to



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great governmental and economic problems when nine out of ten public men owe more than they can pay? I owe more than I can pay, and I owe, besides, a host of obligations of all sorts which the borrower of money, especially if he is a public man, cannot escape.”

Constance, at this, felt more real pity and sympathy for Crane than she had yet felt. Women being in the main intensely practical, and in their own singular way more material than men, the want of money always appeals to them. And Constance had an income much greater than her wants—that is, unless she happened to want an American husband. Every other luxury was within her reach. This idea occurred to her grotesquely enough at the moment. She said, after a moment’s pause:

“It seems to me that to make your disentanglement complete, you should, if possible, pay your debt to the man that you say helped to wheedle you into the arrangement. You might easily borrow the money; it is probably not a large sum. If—if—perhaps Mr. Thorndyke—might arrange——”

Crane instantly divined the generous thought in Constance Maitland’s heart.

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“No,” he said. “I know what you would do—through Thorndyke. But it is not to be thought of. With all my shortcomings, I can’t think of borrowing money from a woman. But your suggestion is admirable—the payment of the money is necessary. It is not much.”

Crane named something under a thousand dollars—and then fell silent.

“Mr. Crane,” said Constance, after a while, “what advice do you think your wife would give you as to that money?”

Crane smiled a little.

“Annette is a regular Spartan when it comes to practical matters. She would advise me to give up my rooms at the expensive hotel and go into the country near by for the balance of the session.”

“Could any advice be more judicious?” asked Constance. “And is it any disadvantage to a public man, who is known to be a poor man, to live plainly?”

“By Heaven!” exclaimed Crane. “You are right! It would show those fellows in the Legislature next January that I have clean hands. What an admirable suggestion! And I can save at least

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enough to pay half what I owe on that note before the end of the session!"

"You forget," said Constance, gently, "that the suggestion really is your wife's. Perhaps, if you had listened to her oftener, you would have found life easier. You are, perhaps, like many another man—he marries a pretty little thing, and she remains to him a pretty little thing. Meanwhile, she may have developed a capacity for affairs far superior to his."

Crane did not like the hint that perhaps Annette's head for affairs was better than his, but he had heard several home-truths that afternoon.

He rose to go, and his changed aspect confirmed his words when he said earnestly to Constance:

"I came in here with shame and despair in my heart. I go away enlightened and encouraged and comforted beyond words. You will at least let me say that it is to you I owe it."

"Good-bye," replied Constance, cheerfully.

The feeling that another woman's husband or lover can be enlightened, encouraged, and comforted by her is a very awkward circumstance to a woman of sense.

## *Chapter Six*

### DEVILS AND ANGELS FIGHT FOR THE SOULS OF MEN

Crane went back to his rooms, wrote his letter to Governor Sanders, and awaited developments.

Nothing happened for more than a week concerning the senatorship. Meanwhile, he gave up his expensive rooms, and with the assistance of a note-broker managed to borrow enough money from Peter to pay Paul and to relieve himself from present obligations to one of the gentlemen who had so urgently invited him to commit political hari-kari. He secured quiet quarters in one of the suburbs of Washington and found that he was quite as comfortable as he had been at his high-priced hotel, at about one-fourth the cost.

The May days that followed were cool and bright and soft, as May days in Washington often are. The called session of Congress and the necessary presence of so many officials and diplomats

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made the gay town gayer than usual. The whole country was in a mood of exhilaration and self-gratulation, which was vividly reflected at Washington.

There could be no doubt that Crane's success was real and substantial, and that he was already a person to be reckoned with.

Crane hugged himself with satisfaction when he reflected on his escape from being interned in the Senate, forced to remain quiescent during the time that he should have been most active, and finally enter the senatorial contest, two years ahead, with a reputation which would probably have dwindled as rapidly as it had developed. Instead of that he was in the centre of movement and interest, and even if he could not make a serious effort before the Legislature in January, he was in a good strategic position for the senatorial election two years in advance—and a great deal may happen in two years.

The Secretary of State, however, was disappointed in Crane. He proved to be quite as intractable as Thorndyke had been, and with less excuse—for Thorndyke had never been asked to little dinners at the Secretary's house. The Secretary's wid-

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owed daughter, Mrs. Hill-Smith, the beautiful, well-gowned, soft-voiced granddaughter of Cap'n Josh Slater, of Ohio River fame, murmured once or twice when Crane was under discussion that he was "so very Western," and assumed a rather apologetic tone for having been seen at the play with him. The Secretary himself, despairing of making the chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs a handy tool for the State Department, returned to his legitimate business. This business consisted of labouring and slaving, in conjunction with foreign chancelleries, to make elaborate treaties, which the House and Senate treated as college football teams treat the pigskin on hard-fought fields. The Secretary felt peculiarly aggrieved over the Brazilian affair, in which the State Department made a ridiculously small figure, in spite of innumerable letters, memoranda, protocols, treaties, and what not. When the time came for action the Congress had quietly taken the whole matter in charge, and had not even censured the Secretary if it could not praise him. Could he have been attacked and denounced, as Mr. Balfour and M. Combes and Chancellor von Buelow, and the Prime

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Ministers of Europe were, it would have been a consolation. But even this was cruelly denied him. He had gone through all the strenuous forms of diplomacy which meant something a hundred years ago, when there was neither cable nor telegraph, and when diplomats were not merely clerks and auditors of their respective foreign offices. The Secretary had practised all the diplomatic expedients he knew. When he had not made up his mind what to say to an ambassador, he had gone to bed with lumbago. When he wished to impress one of the great Powers of Europe with the notion that it had in him a Bismarck to deal with, he had lighted a cigar in the presence of five full-fledged ambassadors. Remembering how eagerly the world always waited for the speech of the Prime Minister of England at the annual Lord Mayor's banquet, the Secretary had spent a whole month composing and revising his remarks at a great banquet in New York on Decoration Day, and the reporters had got his speech all wrong, and a disrespectful New York newspaper had made game of his trousers, had compared them to Uncle Josh Whitcomb's in "The Old Homestead," and had asked pertinently—or

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impertinently—where the Secretary had hired them. In Congress he fared little better. The Senate had taken some small notice of him. In the House he had been practically ignored, except once when a member alluded to having “an interview with the Secretary of State.” A member of his own party, the same Honourable Mark Antony Hudgins, of Texas, who had guyed Crane, had sternly rebuked his colleague for his phraseology, and declared that what he should have said was “an audience with the Prime Minister”—and the House laughed at the unseemly joke. The Secretary had in secret a low opinion of the collective wisdom of Congress, and in this he was at one with the whole diplomatic body in Washington.

Crane, like everybody else, had really forgotten the Secretary in the press of affairs. He was amazed at not receiving an answer to his letter to Governor Sanders, and so told Thorndyke one night a few days after their meeting at Constance Maitland's house. Crane had a great esteem for Thorndyke's sincerity, which was justified, and Thorndyke, in his heart, was forced to admire Crane's force and to expect great things of him.



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He did not entertain any doubt of Crane's loyalty, but he watched curiously the development of the character of a man exposed to Crane's peculiar temptations. That Crane had both good and bad qualities in great vigour he saw easily enough, but he could not tell which were the fundamentals. Crane was desperately poor, was foolishly proud, was rash and vainglorious, and was destined to shine brilliantly in the world of politics. What was to become of such a man? What usually became of such men? It was with these thoughts that Thorn-dyke, at his lodgings, on a warm May night, listened to Crane's account of what had happened to him in the last few days.

He assured Crane that his conduct regarding Governor Sanders and the senatorship seemed eminently sensible, after deducting the initial folly of it. And his making his first serious attempt to save money at the very time when it might be expected he would become extravagant inclined Thorndyke to the belief that Crane was, after all, fundamentally honest.

Crane at that very moment suffered from a feeling of conscious guilt. He had begun to practise

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more than the one virtue of economy. He was practising several others, but all with a view to his own advantage. One of them was that his wife should come on and visit him during the remainder of the session. She had not been in Washington for five years—not since that first unlucky venture in the Eleventh Street boarding-house.

He mentioned to Thorndyke his intention to send for his wife, and had the grace to say that it was because he was lonely without her—and in saying so he was conscious of uttering a colossal lie. But being inexpert as a liar he did badly, and felt ashamed of doing badly even in lying.

Thorndyke, on whom Annette Crane's simple and natural charm had made a strong impression, was pleased at the thought that Crane would pay her the compliment of having her with him and pleased at the thought of seeing her again.

"I shall be going West next week," he said, "and if Mrs. Crane is ready to come to Washington I shall be proud to escort her back."

"Thank you," answered Crane, "it would be a kindness to me as well as to Mrs. Crane. She is not an experienced traveller."

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Both Thorndyke and Crane when they were together desired to keep Constance Maitland out of their conversation, but by one of those contradictory and involuntary impulses which cannot be accounted for, her name always came up between them. This time it was by Crane's saying, after a while:

"Have you seen Miss Maitland lately?"

"I dined there night before last," answered Thorndyke.

Crane knew that Constance Maitland's favourite form of entertaining was at little dinners, which were perfection in the way of guests and service. He had never been asked to one of them, and thought gloomily that after Constance's very plain speaking to him at their last interview his chance of being invited was thin to attenuation.

"Was that the night that fellow Hudgins from Texas dined there?" asked Crane, who had not taken Constance's sound advice to cultivate reticence.

"Yes, and I never saw a better dinner-man than Hudgins, nor was ever at a more agreeable dinner."

"Bosh! Hudgins?"

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“Yes, Hudgins. The fellow has a quiet manner, a soft voice, and the most delightful and archaic reverence for ‘the ladies,’ as he calls them. It is like what history tells us of General Sam Houston. Hudgins was a screaming success at the dinner.”

Seeing that the account of Hudgins’s triumph gave Crane acute discomfort, Thorndyke, lighting a fresh cigar, kept on remorselessly:

“Miss Maitland wanted to ask some really representative man to meet Sir Mark le Poer, a very agreeable and considerable Englishman, one of the permanent under-secretaries in the British Foreign Office—it seems he is a great friend of hers. He had been gorgeously entertained by all the retired trades-people who are in the smart set here, but complained that he hadn’t met any Americans—they *would* ask all the diplomats to meet him, fellows that bored him to death in Europe and still more so here. It seems that Miss Maitland had heard that the long, thin, soft-voiced Texan was delightful at dinner—so she asked me to bring him to call, and the dinner invitation followed. Besides Sir Mark and Hudgins and myself, there was Cathcart—a navy man—good old New England fam-

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ily, four generations in the navy, travelled man of the world, and flower of civilisation. But Hudgins was easily the star of the occasion. There were three other women present besides Miss Maitland, all of them charming women, who know the world and command it; and the way they, as well as the Englishman and the naval officer, fell in love with Hudgins and his soft Texas accent, and his stupendous Texas yarns, and his way of looking at things—well, it was a show.”

“Oh, come, Thorndyke—Hudgins!”

“Yes, Hudgins, I tell you. When the time came for the ladies to leave the table none of them wanted to go, and they said so. Then Hudgins rose and said in that inimitable manner of his, which catches the women every time, ‘If Miss Maitland would kindly permit it, I’d rather a million times go into the parlour with her and the other ladies than stay out here with these fellows. I can get the society of men and a cigar any day, but it isn’t often that I can bask in the presence of ladies like these present.’ And the presumptuous dog actually walked off and left us in the lurch—and you can depend upon it, the women liked him better than any of us.”

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“If women are won by compliments like that, any man can win their favour,” said Crane, crossly.

“My dear fellow, women know vastly more than we do. It wasn't Hudgins's compliments in words that won the women—it was his giving up his cigar and the extra glass of champagne and the society of men that fetched 'em—it was the sincerity of the thing. When we went into the drawing-room Hudgins was sitting on the piano-stool telling them some sentimental story about his mother down in Texas when he started out in life, with nothing but the clothes on his back and a six-shooter in his pocket. The women were nearly in tears. As for the rest of us, including Sir Mark le Poer, we simply weren't in it with Hudgins. We stayed until nearly midnight; then the men adjourned to the club, where Hudgins kept us until three o'clock in the morning telling us more yarns about Texas. Sir Mark would hardly let him out of sight, and Hudgins has engaged to spend August with him in Scotland at a splendid place he has near Inverness. That's the way a man with great natural gifts of entertaining and being entertained can get on, if he has a chance.”

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Crane felt humiliated and disappointed. In all honesty, he could not imagine why he, with his recognised talents, his extreme good looks, his fondness for society, should have no such social triumphs as that long, lean, lanky Texan. He had not grasped the truth that society is a pure democracy, and until a man has abandoned all pretensions to superiority he will not be acceptable in it.

Just then, along the dusky street a carriage came rolling. At Thorndyke's door it stopped, a footman descended from the box and assisted Senator Bicknell to alight.

"The Senator has come hunting you up," Thorndyke remarked to Crane. "When a man is anxious enough to see you to come after you, it is generally possible to make your own terms with him."

Crane's backbone was considerably stiffened by this remark of Thorndyke's, and then Senator Bicknell walked in the room and greeted Thorndyke and Crane affably. He made an elaborate apology for seeking Crane, but said frankly he wished to discuss some matters of State politics with him.

Thorndyke at once rose to leave the room, but Crane, asking Senator Bicknell if he had any ob-

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jection to Thorndyke's remaining and the Senator feebly agreeing to it, Thorndyke sat down again to enjoy the scrap. As it was not in his own party, he was a perfectly disinterested listener.

"Mr. Crane," began Senator Bicknell, in a dulcet voice, "I hardly think you realise what it means to our State organisation to introduce discord into it at this time."

It was less than fourteen months before a national convention and the rainbow of a Presidential nomination had arisen upon Senator Bicknell's political horizon. This had happened more than once, but the Senator had never been able, heretofore, to catch the rainbow by the tail—yet, hope springs eternal in the human breast.

To this Crane replied, firmly:

"I desire, Senator, to do everything I can to promote harmony in the State organisation. It is Governor Sanders who is making trouble, and I shall defend myself from him, and die in the last ditch, if necessary."

Crane was by nature a gladiator, and the prospect of a fight by no means discomposed him.

Senator Bicknell sighed. He had already on his



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hands nine bloody fights in various parts of the State, and the prospect of a tenth fight, of a triangular nature at that, with two such sluggers as Crane and the Governor of the State, made the Senator's head ache. He looked sadly at Thorndyke and yearned after a knowledge of the secret by which his friend, Senator Standiford, could get hold of a man like Thorndyke, and keep him forever in a subordinate position, while he, Senator Bicknell, was always engaged in a tussle with his lieutenants.

Crane improved the opportunity to explain fully his position; and there could not be the slightest doubt that he had narrowly escaped from a conspiracy meant to ruin him.

Senator Bicknell said little and was evidently impressed by Crane's statement. Thorndyke was mentally comparing his own boss with Crane's boss. All the pleas in the world would not have availed Crane had he been dealing with Standiford. He would have been required to sacrifice himself without a moment's hesitation and accept the disastrous honour of the senatorial appointment or be quietly put out of the way. Politics with Senator Standi-

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ford was a warfare in which quarter was neither asked nor given, and no time was permitted to succour the wounded or bury the dead. Yet Thorn-dyke doubted if Senator Bicknell, or any man then in public life, had ever known a tithe of the tremendous parental passion which Senator Standiford had for his daughter. So strange a thing is human nature.

A discussion followed Crane's words which made a very important fact clear: that Crane had suddenly become a factor in State politics. Crane's colour deepened as Senator Bicknell made a last effort with him for peace with Sanders, and when it was met with a firm refusal to accept the appointment, Senator Bicknell dropped some words which indicated plainly that if forced to choose sides he might be with Crane. For a man who a month before had been obscure this was a vast though silent triumph.

After an hour's talk Senator Bicknell got up and departed. It was well on toward ten o'clock, and Crane, too, rose to go. Thorndyke went out with him and they walked together as far as the foot of the hill at Connecticut Avenue. Then Thorndyke

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turned back, to indulge in a folly which had been his nightly, since that first afternoon with Constance Maitland. It was, to pass within sight of her house, then to return sick at heart to his own rooms and ask himself if he could be such a fool as to wish her to give up that charming home for lodgings such as he could afford.

Crane presently reached his quarters, a comfortable suburban house with many verandas, and not unlike his own house at Circleville. On the table in his room lay a parcel, evidently containing photographs. He opened it and took out a photograph of his wife with her two children, Roger and Elizabeth, by her side. The children were handsome—the boy the sturdy, well-made replica of his father, the little girl her mother in miniature; both of them children of whom any father might be proud. As for Annette, the sweetness, the soft, appealing character of her beauty, was singularly brought out in the photograph. Nor was there any suspicion of weakness in the face, which most men would have fallen in love with on the spot.

But Crane was dissatisfied. She was not a woman even to be talked about. Crane would have liked a

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woman whose name would be in the newspapers every day. True, Constance Maitland kept out of them all she could, but she was too striking a personality not to attract the attention of the society correspondents. If she had been the wife of a public man, she would have been in print quite as often as he was.

Still Crane was glad he had sent for his wife. He had not realised until this crisis in his fate had come upon him what a mistake he had made in not having her with him sometimes. Not a man of his acquaintance who owned a wife but had her occasionally in Washington. He began to think with terror of what his enemies might have to say concerning this, and then, going to his table, wrote Annette another letter more urgent than his first, in his desire that she should come to Washington. He mentioned the chance that Thorndyke, who had never failed to show interest in her, had offered to escort her East. He felt like a hero and a martyr while writing this. But after he had posted his letter, and he had gone back to the balcony of his room and gazed out into the solemn night, he had a return of that strange sense of guilt. He felt like a hypo-

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crite ; and, as he was not a hypocrite by nature, the feeling was uncomfortable. He put his request to Annette on the same ground he had alleged to Thorndyke—his wish to see her. And he ought to wish to see her—he *did* wish to see her ; but the stillness of the night and the presence of the stars is disconcerting sometimes to one's conscience. The stars were very bright and it was wonderfully clear, although the moon was just rising. Tall apartment houses blazing with light made centres of radiance in the purple night. The Washington monolith was like a pillar of cloud, and the dome of the Capitol seemed suspended in mid-air. It was all very beautiful, but Crane saw nothing of its beauty. He saw only before him a struggle with stupendous forces—these he feared not—but also a struggle with himself ; and this he feared ! He went to bed and slept uneasily.

## *Chapter Seven*

### HOW VARIOUS PERSONS SPENT A MAY SUNDAY IN WASHINGTON

Next morning Crane rose with the intention of going to church—a thing he had not done for years. And in the practice of this virtue he committed an act of the greatest hypocrisy. He knew the very hour when Hardeman, the correspondent of his home paper, took his Sunday morning stroll on Connecticut Avenue. Crane timed his own appearance so that he met Hardeman directly in front of the Austrian Embassy.

In half a minute afterward Crane mentioned that he was on his way to church.

As he spoke Hardeman took a newspaper out of his pocket, and opening it, held it up before Crane. On the first page, with the most violent display-head, was the official announcement of his appointment by Governor Sanders to the unexpired time of the late Senator Brand's term.

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Crane turned pale. He was ready for the fight, but the fight had come unexpectedly soon. And that it was to be to the knife, and knife to the hilt, was now perfectly plain.

“Come with me,” said he to Hardeman, “and I’ll tell you all about it.”

They turned back to Dupont Circle, seated themselves on a bench left vacant by a coloured brother, and Crane told the whole story to Hardeman to be printed next day.

As he talked, his course of action, simple, above-board, and effective, at once took shape in his mind. He wrote out on a pocket-pad a letter to the Governor, saying as the Governor had thought fit to make the public aware of his action in the senatorship before communicating with Crane himself, that he, Crane, should do likewise and make a public declination of it. He then gave a brief statement of what had passed, inserted a copy of his first letter to the Governor, and reiterated his refusal to accept the senatorship. Hardeman, a keen-eyed man, was in the seventh heaven of delight. The letter would, of course, be sent to the Associated Press, but there was “a good story” for the home

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paper, and a specific mention that Representative Crane was on his way to church when the news was communicated to him.

Crane, still pale, rose and announced that he should keep on to church—a fact also certain to be chronicled. Church was a very good place to think out the problems which would come out of this extraordinary and far-reaching fight.

He went on, sat through a long sermon of which he heard not a word, listened to the musical gymnastics of a high-priced quartette, and gradually became himself, or, rather, more than himself, for the fight at hand brought out in him all the thews and sinews of courage, foresight, and judgment. At the very last, when the name of God was mentioned in the final prayer, Crane had one moment of sincere piety. Otherwise his thoughts were very far from pious, being absolutely those of self-seeking and revenge. Like other men, he promised himself that when Mammon had granted him all he wanted, then he would turn to God.

When he found himself on the street again it was a little past twelve o'clock. He turned into the side streets to escape the throng of people going



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home from church. As he walked under the arcade of the sweet-smelling tulip-trees with the May sunshine filtering through, he felt the ever-present longing for sympathy. He would have liked to go to Constance Maitland, but something in her tone and manner at their last meeting made him afraid.

On that former occasion he had scarcely been master of himself, he did not know when he was offending her; but now he was far more composed. Yet he dared not go.

While these thoughts were passing through his mind he looked up and saw Constance coming down the street under the dappled shadows of the tulip-trees. She was dressed simply in black, but Crane had never been more struck by the distinction of her appearance. With her was a fine-looking man whom Crane surmised was Cathcart, the naval man. Crane intended to pass the pair without stopping, but when he raised his hat Constance halted him. There was that ever-present feeling of pity for him, and she was conscious of having said some hard things to him in that last interview.

“I have glanced at the newspaper this morning,”

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she said, "and I fancy your friend, Governor Sanders, has treated you rather shabbily."

"Very shabbily," replied Crane, smiling; "he has driven me to the wall, but he will find me fighting with my back to the wall."

Then Constance introduced her companion, and it was Cathcart, after all.

"You can't expect much sympathy from me, Mr. Crane," said Cathcart, smiling. "If it had not been for you and your colleagues I might have been in command of a ship at this moment, making a run for the Caribbean Sea. You did us naval men a bad turn by forcing those beggars to back down without striking a blow."

Cathcart, like all naval men, was eager to play the great game of war with the new implements lately acquired, and did not welcome the exercise of peaceful power which had forced an amicable arrangement of a dangerous question.

Just then a handsome victoria drew up at the sidewalk. In it sat Mrs. Hill-Smith, the widowed daughter of the Secretary of State, and a beautifully dressed, high-bred-looking girl, Eleanor Baldwin. Baldwin, *père*, whose cards read, "Mr.

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James Brentwood Baldwin," was the successful inventor of a machine for stitching shoes, which had brought him a great fortune early in life, and had enabled him to establish himself in Washington and adopt the rôle of a gentleman of leisure and of inherited fortune. His daughter looked like the younger sister of Lady Clara Vere de Vere, as Mrs. Hill-Smith, Cap'n Josh Slater's granddaughter, looked like Lady Clara Vere de Vere herself.

Mrs. Hill-Smith beckoned to Constance, who approached, leaving the two men a little distance away talking together under the overhanging branches of the tulip-trees.

"My dear girl," said Mrs. Hill-Smith, who had adopted the "dear girl" mode of addressing all women like herself over thirty-five, "you must come to the meeting of the Guild for Superannuated Governesses, which is to be organised at my house to-morrow. It is a branch of the one presided over in London by the Princess Christian"—and Mrs. Hill-Smith ran over glibly a number of names of ladies of the diplomatic corps in Washington who were interested in it, winding up with, "And we *can't* get on without you."

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Constance Maitland's full gaze had in it power over women as well as over men, and Mrs. Hill-Smith was not quite certain whether there was a laugh or not in Constance's deep, dark eyes, as turning them on her she replied:

"Very well—but my first proposition will be revolutionary, I warn you. I shall suggest that we pay governesses enough to enable them to save something, and thus we can get hold of the economic problem by the head instead of by the tail."

Was she really in earnest? Mrs. Hill-Smith did not know, but there was certainly a flippancy in Constance's tone which shocked both Mrs. Hill-Smith and Miss Baldwin. The serious, hard-working women by whom they were mothered and grandmothered had given them a deadly soberness and energy in the pursuit of social schemes and pleasures, just as their forbears had industriously and seriously washed and baked and brewed.

Mrs. Hill-Smith was so annoyed by Constance's manner of receiving her communication that if Constance had not been very intimate at the British Embassy Mrs. Hill-Smith would have made her displeasure felt. But she was constitutionally timid,

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like all social new-comers—timid in admitting people into her circle, and timid in turning them out—so she merely smiled brightly and said as they drove off:

“You’ll come like a dear, and be as revolutionary as you please. Good-bye.”

Constance, with her two men, lingered a minute, and then Crone left her. He yearned for his stenographer, and set out to seek him. Cathcart walked home with Constance and left her at the door. She was malicious enough to describe to him some of Mrs. Hill-Smith’s charities, at which Cathcart was in an ecstasy of amusement.

Meanwhile Mrs. Hill-Smith went home with Eleanor Baldwin to what they called breakfast, but most Americans call luncheon. On the way the two women had discussed Constance Maitland cautiously—each afraid to let on to the other what she really thought—because, after all, Constance was intimate at the British Embassy.

Arrived at the Baldwin house—an imposing white stone mansion, with twenty-five bedrooms for a family of four, of whom one was a boy at school, a family which never had a visitor overnight—

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Eleanor led the way to the library, where her father sat.

It was a great, high-ceiled, cool room, dark, in spite of many windows and a glass door opening on a balcony. At a library table near the glass door sat Mr. James Brentwood Baldwin, alias Jim Baldwin, and on the balcony outside, under the awning, sat Mrs. James Baldwin, née Hogan.

It was easy to see whence Eleanor Baldwin had got her beauty. Jim Baldwin was handsome, Nora Hogan Baldwin was handsomer.

From the days when Jim Baldwin had carried home parcels of tea and buckets of butter in his father-in-law's corner grocery, he had cherished an honourable ambition to have a great big library full of books. In the course of time, through the operations of the shoe-stitching machine, he had been able to gratify this ambition and taste. He had all of those books which Charles Lamb declares "are no books—that is, all the books which no gentleman's library should be without." They were all bound sumptuously in calf, and éditions de luxe were as common as flies in a baker's shop. The four vast walls were lined with these treasures, and from

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them Baldwin derived an excess of pleasure. This was not by reading them—he had never read a book in his life. Two Chicago newspapers, one from New York, and the Washington morning and evening papers satisfied his cravings for knowledge. But he got from the outside of his books all the pleasure that most people get from the inside. He justly felt that to be seen surrounded by the glorious company of the living who died a thousand years ago, and the conspicuous dead who live today, was to give him dignity and poise. Nobody but himself knew that he never read. His days were spent in his library—he always spoke of himself as “among my books”—and shrewd, sharp, and keen as he was and ever must remain, he had actually succeeded in bamboozling himself into the notion that he was a person of “literary tastes.”

Mrs. Baldwin was one of the handsomest women in Washington, and considered quite the proudest. Her abundant grey hair, setting off a face of Grecian beauty, gave her a look as of a queen in the days of powder and patches. She had a rarity of speech, a way of looking straight ahead of her, which was regal. But this exterior of pride was

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really a result of the sincerest bashfulness and reserve. When Nora Hogan, the grocer's daughter, had married Jim Baldwin, the contractor's son, Fortune was already smiling on Jim. Then suddenly she opened her apron and deluged him with gold. Mrs. Baldwin was frightened and stunned. She was afraid to say much for fear she might make mistakes—so she gradually came to saying nothing at all. She dreaded to look from side to side for fear she might find some one laughing at her. So she always looked straight ahead of her. By degrees she acquired a degree of coldness, of stiffness, that was perfectly well suited to the mother of Lady Clara Vere de Vere. She was, of course, an unhappy woman, being a misjudged one. Her chief solace lay in the practice of secret acts of charity among the poorest of the poor, not letting her left hand know what her right hand did. The promoters of fashionable charities complained that Mrs. Baldwin was so stately and so unsympathetic that they could not get on with her in charitable work. True it is, that at the meetings for fashionable charities Mrs. Baldwin would be more silent, more queenly than ever, but her heart would be crying



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aloud for the poor who are born to suffer and to die, and to have helped them she would cheerfully have given the very clothes off her back. But cowardice kept her silent, as it kept her silent in the presence of her servants, whom she feared inexpressibly.

If Mrs. Baldwin was constitutionally timid, not so Eleanor. All the courage of her father had gone into his willowy, beautiful, well-groomed daughter. Her first recollections were of the inland town where they lived secluded in their big house, because nobody was good enough for them to associate with after their fortune was made. Then she was taken to Europe and returned a finished product, with no more notion of what the word "American" meant than if she had been a daughter of the Hapsburgs. As a compromise between Europe and America, Baldwin had pitched upon Washington as a place of residence. His social status had been agreeably fixed by a lucky accident—he had been asked to be pall-bearer for a foreign Minister who died in Washington. Baldwin rightly considered the dead diplomat worth, to him, all the live ones going; for, having assisted

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in carrying the dead man from the Legation to the hearse, Baldwin was, in consequence, elected to the swell club, asked to the smart cotillon, and made more headway in a month in the smart set than he could have made otherwise in a year. He repaid his debt to the dead diplomat by buying some very ordinary pictures at the sale of the Minister's effects, and paying the most extravagant price ever heard of for them.

To Eleanor their social rise was nothing surprising. She expected it, having been bred like a young princess, only with less of democracy than real princesses are bred. When she entered the room with Mrs. Hill-Smith, Baldwin rose and responded smilingly to Mrs. Hill-Smith's remark:

"Here you are, as usual, among your books."

"Yes—as usual, among my books. I daresay your father, the Secretary, spends a good deal of time among *his* books."

"Oh, yes," replied Mrs. Hill-Smith, airily, "but he has been dreadfully put out of late. Congress has been so troublesome. I don't know exactly *how*, but it has annoyed papa extremely."

"Very reprehensible," said Baldwin, earnestly,

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who had the opinion of the average commercial man that Congress is a machine to create prosperity, or its reverse, and if prosperity is not created, Congressmen are blamed fools.

“I *hate* Congressmen—except a few from New York,” said Eleanor, drawing off her gloves daintily. “There was one talking to Miss Maitland when we stopped her on the street just now. The creature was introduced to me at one of those queer Southern houses where they introduce people without asking permission first, and ever since then the man has tried to talk to me whenever we meet. But I really couldn’t stand him. This morning I cut him dead. His name is Crane, and he’s from somewhere in the West.”

Now it happened that there was another Crane in the House from the West, and Baldwin had a business motive for wishing to cultivate this particular Crane—and business was business still with Jim Baldwin. So, at Eleanor’s words, he turned on her. His air of scholar-and-gentleman, man-of-the-world, and person-of-inherited-leisure suddenly dropped from him; he was once more Jim Baldwin, the shoe-stitching-machine man.

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“Then let me tell you,” he said, authoritatively, “you made a big mistake. That man Crane is on the Committee on Manufactures, and we have been arguing with him, and sending the most expensive men we have to prove to him that we are entitled to the same rebate on the platinum used in our machines as the Oshkosh Shoe-Stitching-Machine people get—and I have reason to know that Crane is the man standing in the way. I wish you had snuggled right up to him.”

Eleanor surveyed her father with cold displeasure. Mrs. Hill-Smith was politely oblivious, especially of the word “snuggled.” Coming, as she did, of a very old family which dated back to 1860, she felt a certain degree of commiseration for brand-new people like the Baldwins, who had not appeared above the social horizon until 1880—twenty years later. But she really liked them, and with a diplomatic instinct inherited from her father she relieved the situation by rising and saying:

“I see dear Mrs. Baldwin on the balcony and must go and speak to her.”

And as she flitted through the glass door a deep masculine voice just behind Eleanor said:

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“Good morning, Miss Baldwin.”

It was the Honourable Edward George Francis Castlestuart-Stuart, third secretary of the British Embassy, whom Eleanor had asked to breakfast that morning. She grew pale as she rose to greet him—suppose—suppose he had heard that remark about the shoe-stitching machine? And what was more likely? The shoe-stitching machine was the family skeleton, and was usually kept under lock and key. By some occult and malign impulse her father had hauled it out and rattled it in Mrs. Hill-Smith’s face, and perhaps it might be known at the British Embassy!

Baldwin himself realised the impropriety of his conduct, and tried to rectify it by saying, with great cordiality, to the Honourable Mr. Castlestuart-Stuart:

“Good morning—good morning. Very pleased to see you. You find me, as usual, among my books—my best and oldest friends.”

To this Castlestuart-Stuart replied simply, like the honest Briton that he was:

“I hate books.”

Baldwin was nearly paralysed at this, and still

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more so when the honest Briton quite eagerly went out on the balcony to speak to Mrs. Baldwin. Only the day before, in one of his rambles about town, he had come upon her getting out of a cab before a poor lodging-house in Southeast Washington, her arms loaded with bundles. A swarm of poor children had run forward to greet her—they evidently knew her well. Her usually cold, statuesque face had been warmed with the sweet light of charity, and a heavenly joy shone in her eyes in the process of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick.

As Castlestuart-Stuart went out on the balcony and took Mrs. Baldwin's hand cordially, she blushed, but not painfully. She, too, had seen him yesterday, and he had managed to convey with that peculiar art of a simple and candid nature that he admired her for what she was doing. Again did she feel this sincere and admiring approval, and was profoundly grateful for it. Castlestuart-Stuart knew the history of the family—all the diplomats in Washington know the family history of those who race and chase after them. He remembered hearing Constance Maitland say "Mrs. Baldwin re-

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deems the whole family.” Goodness such as hers could redeem much worse people than the Baldwins, thought Castlestuart-Stuart, and he proceeded to be bored by Mrs. Hill-Smith and Eleanor with the best grace in the world. His chief had told him to take what was set before him in a social way, asking no questions for conscience’ sake. In the performance of his duty he had dined, breakfasted, and lunched with pork, dry-goods, whiskey, shoes, sewing-machines, and every other form of good, honest trade. But the word trade was never so much as mentioned among them—certainly not at the breakfast which was now served.

## *Chapter Eight*

A NEW SENATOR—A RAILWAY JOURNEY—THE ROSE  
OF THE FIELD AND THE ROSES OF THE GARDEN

Crane was in nowise disappointed at the sensation his published letter made. The justice of his position was at once apparent. But it was equally apparent that he was making a serious break in the political dykes which held the party together in his State against the ocean of the party opposed to it. Under Senator Bicknell's rule, insubordination had gradually crept in. The late landslide, which had elected a Congress in opposition to the party in power, increased the importance of States like Crane's, where the balance of power shifted about every ten years between the two parties. Senator Bicknell, in the seclusion of his boudoir—for such was his luxurious den in reality—tore his hair and used all of the expletives permissible in polite society. In a week or two Governor Sanders, without



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any further newspaper controversy, appointed to the vacant senatorship Mr. Michael Patrick Mulligan, a gentleman of Hibernian descent, who had made a vast fortune out of manufacturing pies by the wholesale, and who cherished an honourable ambition to legislate for the hated Saxon. Senator Bicknell, Crane, and everybody in the State knew of Mr. Michael Patrick Mulligan, who was commonly called Mince Pie Mulligan. He was a ward politician of the sort peculiarly unhampered by prejudices or principles, and who bought and sold votes by wholesale, very much as he bought and sold pies. He was totally without education, but by no means without brains, and proposed to himself a seat in the Senate as an agreeable diversion, without the least idea of doing anything beyond voting as directed by "the boss"—for so he designated the Senator who was chairman of the National Committee of Mr. Mulligan's party. It was, on the whole, about as harmless an appointment as could be made. Mulligan's private life was perfectly clean, and he was known to have an open hand for charity, and never to have forgotten a friend. It gave both Senator Bicknell and

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Crane a breathing-spell, and they were willing enough to put up with Mince Pie Mulligan until the first of January.

Senator Bicknell, although easy enough in his mind about Mulligan, was far from easy about Crane, who had gone up like a rocket, but showed no disposition to come down like a stick. The Senator got into the way of stealing over to the House, "just to see how things are going"—in reality to see how Crane was going—and it scared him to observe how Crane was making good his footing everywhere. His first triumph, even after subtracting Thorn-dyke's assistance, had been a real triumph. Following hard on this came his controversy with the Governor, in which he clearly had the best of it. The shrewd men in his party saw that in the readjustment of allegiances Crane must be counted, and the chairman of the National Committee said as much to Senator Bicknell when the two discussed the war between the Governor and Representative Crane. When the chairman said that, Senator Bicknell felt as Henry IV. of England felt when he saw the Prince of Wales trying on the crown before the looking-glass.

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Meanwhile, Thorndyke was speeding West, as he had said, and after a week's absence he turned eastward again, escorting Annette Crane and her two children to Washington, as he had suggested to Crane.

For the purpose of acquiring knowledge of others and of one's self, there is nothing like a long railway journey. Marriage itself is scarcely more of an eye-opener. The old Greeks, who reasoned so closely on the nature of man, would have been vastly informed could they have taken a few long journeys. Locke could have known more of the human understanding had he taken the Chicago Limited, with a party, from Chicago to Washington. In that journey Annette Crane found out all about Geoffrey Thorndyke, and Geoffrey Thorndyke found out all about Annette Crane. Their mutual discoveries changed the natural sympathy which had been established between them to a deep and lasting friendship.

Those five years of seclusion at Circleville had been developing years for Annette Crane. In appearance she had gained in dignity and had not lost in youthfulness. She had fair hair and a wild-

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rose complexion, and a pair of the sweetest, most limpid hazel eyes in the world. Everything about her bore the impress of a gentle sincerity—her frank gaze, her pretty smile, her soft voice, in which the Western burr was almost obliterated. Those five years represented a cycle to her. In that time all of her relations to life seemed to have changed—and especially were her relations with her husband curiously altered. In their early married life Crane's intensity of love and excess of devotion had frightened her a little. But in time other passions had come to take the place of this one in his wife, and it had been shouldered out of place. He was a fairly good husband, but after the microbe has once lodged in a man's brain that he is very superior to his wife, he may still be called a good husband, but scarcely an agreeable one.

At this stage of the proceedings—which was at the time she first came to Washington—Annette discovered that she adored her husband. As he had always accused her of coldness and reserve, she determined to show him all the treasures of her love. It was the common mistake of youth and ignorance; but Annette, whose secret pride was great, suf-

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ferred a horrible mortification in finding that the display of her affection did not bring forth the response on which she had confidently relied. She had made no moan, and had deceived the whole world, including Crane himself, into believing that she was a satisfied wife; but her misery had been extreme. Her pride, informed by common-sense, had helped her over the crisis. She had herself proposed to spend the winters in Circleville, instead of Washington, thus forestalling any possibility of the proposal coming from Crane; and in Circleville she had set herself the task of making the most and best of herself, not only for her husband, but for her children. She had learned a good deal in that brief and unpleasant experience in Washington. Among others was a just appreciation of herself. She realised that she had certain great advantages, and she no longer had the self-deprecatory tone of mind which had made her feel that Crane had perhaps condescended in marrying her. She was as passionately attached to him as ever, but her eyes were opened and she saw.

She had taken to reading as a solace, and as a duty, and not because she was strongly attracted to

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books. The result, however, was good, and she found it enabled her to meet men like Thorndyke on a common ground. In training her children, she had performed the inevitable function of training herself. Under her system, her children had become quieter and sweeter than American children usually are. The American women in general can more than hold their own with the women of other countries, except in two trifling particulars—the arts of housekeeping and of bringing up children. In these two things they generally fail egregiously, and the more money they have the more conspicuous is their failure. To paraphrase the Scripture—“See you the house of the rich American man? Behold therein a tribe of undisciplined and impudent servants and children.” The newness of the rich in America may account for the undisciplined servants, of whom their mistresses are in mortal terror. But American women have been bringing up children ever since the settlement at Jamestown and the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers, and every year they seem to know less about it.

However, Annette Crane's children were more quiet, more simply dressed than most American

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children. They had escaped, to a great degree, the demoralising influences of children's magazines, "The Children's Page" in newspapers, and children's plays, and they had not been amused to death. Annette, it is true, had not mastered the science of managing servants, but in that she was at one with the women of other parts of the country, except the South—for, as Senator Hoar once remarked on the floor of the Senate, as a preliminary to a ferocious attack on the South, it is the Southerners alone, in this country, who have the habit of command. Annette Crane, however, although she could no more manage her household staff of one maid-of-all-work than Mrs. James Brentwood Baldwin or Mrs. Hill-Smith could manage her retinue of English flunkies and French maids, yet, by tact and judgment, succeeded in keeping the maid-of-all-work within bounds—which is more than the Brentwood Baldwins and the Hill-Smiths could do with their maids and flunkeys.

On the journey with Thorndyke, not one word had passed Annette's lips to indicate any rift between her husband and herself. She spoke of him frankly and affectionately. But the two children

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showed none of that happy eagerness to meet their father which the average American child shows to meet a dutiful and obedient parent. This did not escape Thorndyke, and amazed him. He had the usual bachelor's fear and dread of children, but two days and nights of travel with little Roger and Elizabeth Crane had placed him upon terms of perfect intimacy with them. Roger had climbed all over him, and Thorndyke, instead of resenting it, had been secretly pleased at it. He had wrung permission from Annette to take the boy into the smoking-car with him occasionally, and Roger emerged with many mannish airs for his eight years. Thorndyke's berth was at the other end of the sleeper from Annette's and her children, and on the second night, when Thorndyke turned in, he found the youngster had eluded his mother's vigilant eye, and had crawled into Thorndyke's berth for a talk about Indians. Thorndyke not only submitted to this, but permitted Roger to send word to his mother by the porter that he would sleep in Mr. Thorndyke's berth, because Mr. Thorndyke had asked him—and the two of them managed to defy Annette in the matter. Little Elizabeth took an extreme



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fancy to Thorndyke, and inquired if she might ask Mr. Thorndyke to be her uncle Thorndyke.

Annette, being acute, as most women are, in affairs of the heart, knew, the very first time that Thorndyke casually mentioned Constance Maitland, that he was in love with her. When he said that he had known her long ago, at Lake Como, and proceeded to describe the beauty of those Italian days and nights, Annette Crane was convinced that it was in those sweet hours that Thorndyke had first loved Constance Maitland. Women have no conscience in probing the love-affairs of men, reckoning them the common property of the sex—and while Thorndyke was blithely unconscious that he had revealed anything, Annette was in full possession of all the essential facts. Also, Thorndyke let out that Crane knew Constance Maitland. Crane had never mentioned Constance's name to his wife. That was in itself enough to give Annette a painful interest in this woman who, as Thorndyke said, could charm the birds off the bushes.

When the train came bumping into Washington on a pleasant May afternoon, Crane was waiting at the station. He seemed delighted to meet his fam-

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ily again, and indeed, on seeing them, a kind of tenderness came over him. He kissed his children affectionately, to which they submitted. Just behind them was a shabby, one-armed man, whom a girl of ten or twelve was hugging and kissing with little gurgles of delight. Crane wished that his children had met him like that.

He thanked Thorndyke warmly for taking care of Annette, who said a few words of earnest thanks, and gave him a smile from her dewy lips and eyes that meant much more. The children bade him good-bye with outspoken regret, and would not be comforted until Thorndyke promised to take them to the Zoo the next Sunday to see the baby elephant.

As the party came out of the station together, a handsome little victoria whirled by. In it sat Constance Maitland, her delicate mauve draperies enveloping her, a black lace parasol shading her head, and a filmy white veil over her face. By her side sat a little, withered old lady in rusty black—one of the flotsam and jetsam of weary old people who drift to Washington to die. It was one of Constance Maitland's pet charities to take these weary old people to drive, and in so doing to wear her love-

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liest gowns, her most exquisite hats—a delicate compliment unfailingly appreciated.

She did not see Thorndyke and the Cranes as they walked out of the station—but both men saw her. Annette Crane had abundant confirmation of her hypothesis about Thorndyke. His clear-cut, but rather plain, features became almost handsome as he watched the passing vision of the woman he loved. Of far more interest to Annette was Crane's countenance. It was full of expression, and he was totally untrained in controlling it. There was in his eyes a strange and complex look, which Annette interpreted instantly to mean, "You are the type of woman I most admire and to whom I most aspire." It struck her to the heart, but, unlike Crane, she had acquired an admirable composure which made her mistress of herself. She was glad, however, that Constance had not seen her first, after two days of hard travel.

When the Cranes had reached the suburban villa where Crane lived, a number of letters and despatches were awaiting him. Two or three men, Hardeman among them, came out that evening to see him. From them Annette found out the great

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struggle in which her husband was engaged. He had scarcely mentioned it to her.

Not a word of inquiry or reproach from her followed. When Crane, however, alluded to the great fight some days afterward, he was a little staggered to find that Annette knew as much about it as anybody. A study of the newspaper files at the National Library had enlightened her.

Thorndyke did not see Constance for some days after his return; that is to say, he did not show himself to her. But he resumed his nightly prowling in her neighbourhood—a practice ridiculous or pathetic according to the view one takes of an honourable and sensitive man, whose honour stands between him and the love of his life. He did not dream that Constance knew of it, but the fact was she had known of it from the very beginning. It was this knowledge which made her somewhat sad dark eyes grow bright, which brought out a delicate flush upon her cheeks, and gave her step the airy spring of her first girlhood. It is the glorious privilege of love to restore their lost youth to those who love. Constance knew, by an unerring instinct, that Thorndyke, like herself, treasured

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everything of their past—that past, so ethereal, so innocent, so dreamlike, but to them eternal as the heavens. On the first evening after Thorndyke's return, when Constance, from her balcony, half-hidden in towering palms, caught sight of the flame of Thorndyke's cigar as he strolled by in the murky night, she slipped within the darkened drawing-room. The next moment Thorndyke heard her playing softly some chords of the old, old songs—nay, even singing a stanza or two. It filled his heart with a vehement hope that set his pulses off like wild horses, into an ecstasy which lasted until he got home to his old-fashioned bachelor quarters. What! Ask Constance Maitland to give up her beautiful home, her carriages, her French gowns for *that!* Thorndyke called himself a blankety-blank fool, with an emphasis that bordered on blasphemy. Next day he was so dull that the Honourable Mark Antony Hudgins charged him with having been jilted by a certain tailor-made and Paris-enamelled widow whom Thorndyke paid considerable attention to and cordially hated. That very afternoon, though, he had his recompense, for, strolling through the beautiful but unfashionable Smith-

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sonian grounds, he met Constance Maitland driving; and in response to a timid request on his part, she took him in the victoria, and they had a delicious hour to themselves under the great, overhanging elms and lindens. Few situations are more agreeable than driving in a victoria with a charming woman on a sunny spring afternoon through a secluded park. Something like it may be experienced by sitting in a darkened theatre-box a little behind, and within touch of a dainty ear, inhaling the odour of the flowers she wears upon her breast, and watching, with her, the development of the old love-story on the stage. But all pleasures have their seasons—and in the spring, the victoria is more enticing than the theatre-box. And Constance was so very, very kind to him that afternoon!

She showed a truly feminine curiosity about Annette Crane, whom Thorndyke praised unstintedly, and when he asked Constance to call on Mrs. Crane, Constance replied that she already intended to do so. She asked about Crane's political prospects, which Thorndyke assured her were of the brightest, adding he had grave apprehensions that the majority in the lower House would not, after all,

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make fools of themselves as he ardently desired they should—which sentiment was promptly rebuked by Constance, who, womanlike, never could be made to really understand the game of politics. Then he asked her what she had been doing in that week. She had been out to a suburban club to a dinner given by Cathcart, at which information Thorndyke scowled. Sir Mark le Poer was coming back to town for a few days, expressly, so Constance believed, to see the Honourable Mark Antony Hudgins, of Texas. The meeting of the Guild for Superannuated Governesses had taken place at the house of the Secretary of State, Mrs. Hill-Smith in the chair, and had been extremely amusing. It had been determined to give an amateur concert in a fashionable hotel ball-room. This, as always, had caused many heart-burnings and bickerings. The concert was to be followed by a tea in the same ball-room. All of the prominent ladies of the diplomatic corps had been asked to act as patronesses, and all had agreed, but were not sure they could be present. Some ladies of great wealth, who were even newer than the Baldwins, came rather aggressively to the front. Mrs. Hill-Smith, with

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other scions of old families of her date—1860—thought that no one whose family was not moderately old—that is to say about 1870—should be among the directors and patronesses. They did not speak this aloud, but there was a general knowledge prevailing of the period when the various ladies had emerged from having “help” to the stage of having servants—when they had changed the two-o’clock dinner to the eight-o’clock function. Each of these ladies knew all about the others, but hugged the delusion that the others did not know about them, or thought, as Eleanor Baldwin did, that they had come of a long line of belted earls, the Hogans included. Mrs. Baldwin, handsomer, haughtier-looking, and more silent than usual, listened to what was said. Constance Maitland—she alone, who fathomed the nature of this misunderstood woman—said, in describing it to Thorndyke, that she believed Mrs. Baldwin realised the nonsense of the proceedings better than any one present. Constance’s eyes danced when she told about the way in which her only suggestion was received—that it would be impossible to find any parallel between the conditions of governesses in England and the United



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States. This, however, was ruthlessly brushed aside by a lady who was determined that her daughter should sing a duet at the concert with a member of the Austrian Embassy staff. For the first time Mrs. Baldwin's voice was heard and in it quiet advocacy of something sensible. This was when it was determined to charge a stupendous price for the tickets.

"In that case," she said, "it seems to me that we ought to have some real music. It doesn't seem quite right to charge the price asked to hear good music, and then give a mere amateur performance."

"But it is for charity!" screamed several ladies in chorus.

Then Constance, still with dancing eyes, told that great stress had been laid upon the alleged opinions of various ladies of the diplomatic corps, who had carefully refrained from expressing any opinions at all and were not present to take care of themselves; and Constance had landed a second bomb-shell in the camp by pleading ignorance of many admirable things, owing to her ill-fortune in being educated chiefly in Europe. This remark necessitated an immediate departure, in which she was fol-

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lowed by Mrs. Baldwin. The two going out together, Mrs. Baldwin had said diffidently to Constance:

“Miss Maitland—I—I think you are right in all you have said to-day. I hope you’ll come to see me soon. I don’t seem to be afraid of you—you’re genuine. You’re never pretending to anything. Good-bye.”

Mrs. Baldwin had not the gift of tongues, but, as Constance said, a compliment from Mrs. Baldwin was of value, no matter how awkwardly it was expressed.

A few afternoons later, Constance drove out to the Cranes’ suburban villa, but Mrs. Crane was not at home. Constance was disappointed—her curiosity to see Crane’s wife was unabated. Ten days afterward, on a warm afternoon, Constance sat in her cool drawing-room, fresh in its summer dress of linen covers, bead portières, and shaded by awnings, waiting for her carriage. Mrs. Crane was announced. The first impression which Constance got of Annette Crane was that she was exquisitely dressed. Her gown was a delicate, pale-blue muslin, her hat, a white straw, trimmed with white ribbons.

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Both gown and hat were of her own creation, and the whole outfit had cost less than ten dollars—but not the greatest man-milliner in Paris ever turned out anything more becoming to Annette's simple and natural beauty than she herself had evolved from the "Emporium" at Circleville. The daintiness and freshness of it was charming; and when, in moving, she accidentally displayed a snowy, lace-edged petticoat, this daintiness and freshness was emphasised.

Never in her life had Annette looked forward to a visit with the same dislike as this one. Crane had at last spoken of Constance Maitland, saying he meant to ask her to call. He was very guarded in all he said, but Annette, as would any intelligent wife, saw that he was on his guard, and that, in itself, told much. She said nothing; she was far above the spites of petty jealousy. She no longer depreciated herself in general, but she had been a little frightened by Thorndyke's praises of Constance Maitland's intelligence and charm. And Annette had, by clairvoyance, come very near to Crane's real feeling for Constance. It was not love—she had begun miserably to doubt whether he were really capa-

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ble of love—but it was a degree of admiration which could not be agreeable to any wife, because it was plain that Constance was the standard by which Crane measured women. Constance could at any moment influence Crane; so Annette justly surmised. No woman of sense objects to her husband's simple admiration of another woman, but when it comes to another woman being a factor in his life and his thoughts, a wife must and should resent it.

So it was that Annette disliked the visit she had to pay, and yet was careful not to postpone it. But by some magic of thought and feeling, the instant she came face to face with Constance Maitland, Annette Crane knew she had a friend. In a moment she was at ease. Like a woman of the world in the best sense, Constance at once found something in common to talk about, and the two sat, in the friendliest conversation possible, each singularly pleased with the other.

Seeing Constance dressed to go out, and the victoria standing at the door, Annette, after paying a short visit, rose to go, and with more reluctance than she had thought possible.

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“If you are returning home, perhaps you will allow me to drive you out,” said Constance, affably, and Annette accepted without any demurs.

Seated together in the carriage, the conversation between the two turned on Thorndyke. Annette expressed frankly the deep regard she had for him, and described her efforts to keep the children from annoying him, while Thorndyke, from simple tolerance of them at first, had become an accomplished child-spoiler and destroyer of parental discipline. Constance spoke of Thorndyke as frankly and without the least embarrassment, but Annette, who had surmised very readily where Constance stood in the regard of two men, one of them her own husband, had little difficulty in settling to her own satisfaction that Miss Maitland had a particular regard for Mr. Thorndyke.

After driving for three-quarters of an hour along a suburban road, they came to the cottage where the Cranes had established their quarters. It was near six o'clock, and Crane had returned early from the Capitol. He was sitting on the veranda reading to Roger and Elizabeth when Constance Maitland's carriage drove up.

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Since the meeting with his children and noting their perfectly respectful, but perfectly evident, indifference toward him, Crane had received a blow where he least expected it. He was surprised at the degree to which it affected him. Their laughing eyes, suddenly growing demure on his approach, haunted him amid the hurly-burly of debate, and in long conferences on his political future. Impelled by all the natural impulses, Crane determined to try and win his children's hearts; and as a beginning, he had come home early from the House that day, bringing with him a book to read to them. The reading had been a success, and in the midst of it Crane looked up and saw the victoria approaching with his wife and Constance Maitland in it. He rose at once and walked down the shady path to where the carriage stood. The children, hand in hand, followed after, blowing kisses to their mother.

Crane was so possessed with the idea that Annette, as a native of Circleville, must be far inferior to Constance, that he had a shock of surprise when he saw the two women actually compared, and realised that Annette was by no means cast into the shade. Constance was conscious of this, but good-

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naturally wished Annette to have the benefit of it.

Crane talked pleasantly with Constance for a few minutes, Annette still sitting in the carriage. He was certainly remarkably handsome, as the declining sun shone on his clear-cut, olive face, with the little rings of dark-brown hair showing on his forehead. Constance thought the Cranes the handsomest couple she had seen for a long time. The children were introduced, behaved well, as American, and especially Western, children seldom do—and then Constance said to Annette:

“I shall soon be closing my house for the season, but before doing so, I hope to have you and Mr. Crane to dinner with me some evening.”

“We will come with pleasure,” replied Annette; and a date was arranged for the following week.

Constance returned to town, thinking to herself what a fool Crane must be not to be satisfied with such a wife as Annette.

## *Chapter Nine*

### CONCERNING THINGS NOT TO BE MENTIONED IN THE SOCIETY JOURNALS

The days went rapidly by for Crane, to whom they were full of events. The House committed fewer follies than might have been expected, and the management of the international crisis had put the country into a thoroughly good humour with both the House and the Administration. Crane gained steadily in consequence among the politicians, and it was with difficulty he kept his head; but he kept it.

He did not relax his efforts to win his children's hearts, and in the effort he began to feel a strange jealousy of Thorndyke, who had won them without any effort at all. Thorndyke had not only taken Roger and Elizabeth to the Zoo on the first Sunday, but on the next he had appeared, looking extremely sheepish, and had requested the pleasure of



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their company to the Zoo again. The children were in paroxysms of delight, and Annette laughed outright at Thorndyke, particularly when he admitted that he had declined an invitation to a breakfast at the Brentwood Baldwins on the ground of a previous engagement in order to carry out this little trip to the Zoo. The trio went off together in great spirits, and Crane and Annette were left alone. Through all the laughing and joking with the children, Crane had sat silent and sombre—they had not yet laughed and joked with him. Suddenly, he proposed a walk to Annette. It was so long since such a thing had occurred that he was embarrassed in giving the invitation, and she in accepting it; but they walked together along the country lanes in the quiet Sunday noon, and a shadow of the old confidence was restored between them. But Crane was still fully convinced that Annette was not cut out for the wife of a public man, and could not shine in cosmopolitan society. He was soon to have an opportunity to judge of her in this last particular.

Constance Maitland had set her mind to work upon that difficult and interesting problem—the

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composition of a small dinner. More than that, she meant it to be one at which Annette would be at her best.

The materials to form a good dinner abound in Washington, and Constance Maitland knew it. As the smart set in Washington is composed largely of persons who have made large fortunes in trade, and who have come to Washington to enjoy these fortunes, Constance knew that from this particular element she could not well draw the material for a really sparkling dinner. The people in Europe know something after all, and their dictum that an elegant and brilliant society cannot be constructed out of retired merchants has not yet been disproved. Let us be candid to ourselves. But in Washington the materials for a real society exist outside of this element, and Constance Maitland had been lucky enough to find it. Sir Mark le Poer was in town again, which Constance reckoned as a special Providence. Like all Englishmen of good position, Sir Mark was bored within an inch of his life by the Anglo-American girl, who is an easily detected imitation. Constance, having been a friend of Sir Mark's for many years, and knowing him like a

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book, spared him this infliction. She selected in the construction of the party Mrs. Willoughby, an accomplished Washington woman, whose family had social antecedents dating back to the days of Abigail Adams. Mrs. Willoughby had been a distinguished hostess for twenty years, until the influx of pork, whiskey, dry-goods, and the like commodities had overwhelmed everything to the manner born. She took it all good-naturedly, and got a great deal of amusement out of the status quo. Then there was Mary Beekman, of New York, young, charming, and rich, whose parents had owned a box at the New York Academy of Music, but who were conspicuously out of it with the Metropolitan Opera set. As Mrs. Willoughby remarked, when Constance mentioned the party she had made up:

“What a very interesting collection of has-beens you have got together, my dear.”

For the men, besides Crane and Sir Mark le Poer, Constance had secured Thorndyke, an admirable dinner man, and a courtly old Admiral—for she was quite unlike the widow of a prominent shoe-dealer, who emigrated to Washington and became violently fashionable, and who declared that on her

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visiting list she "drew the line at the army and navy." On the evening of the dinner there was to be a belated reception at the White House, in honour of an international commission which had just opened its sittings in Washington, and it was arranged that the dinner should be somewhat early, that the whole party, being invited to the White House, might adjourn there.

The rest of the guests were assembled in Constance's drawing-room before the Cranes arrived. Crane himself always looked superbly handsome in evening-clothes, and Annette's appearance was scarcely inferior in another way. As on her first meeting with Constance, Annette gave the impression of being exquisitely gowned. A simple white crêpe, cut low, showed off her beautiful arms and shoulders, and a few moss rosebuds in their green leaves gave the needed touch of colour to her costume. Simplicity is always the last form of elegance to be attained, and Annette Crane had attained it.

Constance Maitland, too, was at her best, in a shimmering black gown, like a starry night, and with her grandmother's pearl necklace around her

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white throat. Mrs. Willoughby, with resplendent black eyes and snow-white hair, looked like one of Sir Peter Lely's court of beauties, and Mary Beekman was pretty enough to shine anywhere.

When they were seated around the table the men secretly congratulated themselves on the looks of the women with whom they were to dine; and Thorndyke voiced this opinion by quoting Oliver Wendell Holmes's suggestion that peas and potatoes could be warmed into an early fruition by surrounding them with a ring of handsome women—such as were then present—which caused the ladies all to beam on him.

Annette, seated between the Admiral and Sir Mark le Poer, with Thorndyke's kind eyes across the table to encourage her, and with Constance Maitland's fine gift as a hostess to sustain her, felt perfectly at ease. Such was not the case with Crane himself. It was the first time he had ever dined at Constance Maitland's house, and he yearned to distinguish himself. He wished the conversation would turn on public affairs; he felt he could easily lay them all under a spell then, forgetting that people don't go out to dinner to be spellbound, but to enjoy

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an idle hour, and to exchange those pleasant freedoms and trifles which make up the sum of recreation.

The Admiral, a white-moustached, charming old man, who had hobnobbed with princes, and was none the worse for it, began to compliment Annette on her gown, after having previously called her "my dear."

"Really," he said, "that gown is a most stunning creation."

Thorndyke chimed in here:

"Yes," he said. "It makes Mrs. Crane look like a white narcissus blooming in a bed of mignonette."

No woman is ever disconcerted by compliments, and Annette was charmed at the praises lavished on her—and particularly in Crane's presence.

"I should say," remarked Sir Mark le Poer, "with my feeble powers of comparison, that Mrs. Crane's gown reminds me of some of your delicious American dishes, not all sauces and flavourings like our European things, but fresh and new and exquisite. I know I have a grovelling nature, but, 'pon my soul, is there anything more charming than a dish of delicate soft crabs on a bed of parsley——"

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“Oh, oh!” cried Constance. “How your soul must grovel! However, it’s the highest compliment Sir Mark can pay you, Mrs. Crane, because I know he has an unholy passion for soft crabs.”

“I will pay you the highest compliment of all,” said Mrs. Willoughby, “I will ask you, who is your dressmaker?”

“I made this gown myself,” answered Annette, with a pretty smile.

Crane thought he should have gone through the floor into the cellar. He had never in his life felt such a rage of shame. There was Constance Maitland in a gown that shouted out its French nationality in every line and fold. Mrs. Willoughby and Miss Beekman wore the smartest of smart creations—probably not one of them had ever done a stitch of sewing in their lives, while here was Annette announcing that she made her own gown! The next thing he expected her to proclaim was that she had just completed six suits of pajamas for him, all made with her own hands and feet, on her own sewing-machine at Circleville.

Three persons at the table—Thorndyke, Constance, and Annette herself—saw how annoyed

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Crane was at what he regarded as a very damaging admission. Annette, however, was quite composed. She saw that instead of making a mistake she had really made a hit, for she was more complimented than ever upon her cleverness in making so beautiful a gown. In truth, the sweet and natural way in which she owned to her handiwork completed the charm of her simple and unaffected personality. Mrs. Willoughby, turning despairingly to the other women, said:

“We are simply outclassed. Every man here thinks that all of us, like Mrs. Crane, could make our own gowns if only we were clever enough.”

“I have always thought,” said Thorndyke, smiling, “that Napoleon’s idea of the education of women was probably right—a plenty of religion and needle-work. However, as I may get myself in trouble, I will say no more.”

“Very properly,” replied Constance, who meant to enlighten Crane on his wife’s accomplishments. “I have a great deal of religion, when I am not annoyed by anything, and I beg all of the gentlemen to observe that even if I were clever enough to make a gown like Mrs. Crane’s, I could not wear it.



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It is too well adapted to Mrs. Crane's style for any one else to venture on it."

"I could have worn it thirty years ago," said Mrs. Willoughby, with dangerous candour. "But the fact is, Miss Maitland, all of these men are so absurdly prejudiced in favour of the gown, that they overrate it. After all, the rest of us are fairly well-dressed."

Annette took all this in the spirit of playful compliment in which it was meant, and was flattered by it. Not so Crane. He thought that Annette had, at first, let an ugly cat out of the bag, and secondly, that Mrs. Willoughby was insolent in saying the gown was overrated. But before the dinner was over, his eyes were opened to the fact that Annette had made a most agreeable impression, and every man present admired her, and every woman present liked her.

As soon as the rather short dinner was through, the carriages were called to take the party to the White House. When Crane and Annette were alone in their cab, he said to her:

"It seems to me you made a bad break in saying you made your gown yourself."

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“Far from it,” replied Annette, pleasantly. “It seems to have made them all like me better. Mrs. Willoughby and Miss Beekman both said they would be glad to call to see me, and so did the Admiral. I think I was a success.”

Crane felt like rubbing his eyes and pulling his ears. Was this his submissive Annette, who never questioned his word on any subject? He half expected her to call attention to the fact that he had been rather dull at the dinner, but although Annette knew it quite as well as he did, she forbore to mention it.

When they reached the White House, there was the usual crowd of carriages, their lamps twinkling like myriads of stars in the soft spring night, the roar of horses' hoofs upon the asphalt, the crowds of gaily dressed women in evening-gowns disembarking at the north portico, the blare of music from the red-coated band within the corridors. Constance Maitland, on Sir Mark le Poer's arm, and followed by her dinner-guests, presently found herself shaking hands with the President and bowing to the line of ladies of the Administration, which extended across the oval reception-room. Next the

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President's wife stood the wife of the Secretary of State. She was a small, thin woman, with a determined nose and the general aspect of a mediæval battle-axe. She was simply though splendidly attired in black velvet, with lace and diamonds, and was as faultlessly correct as the Secretary himself, in language and deportment, except in one small particular—she could not pronounce the word "Something." She invariably called it "su'thin"—a souvenir of her early bringing up on the banks of Lake Michigan. She greeted Constance coolly, remembering the meeting at her house for the Guild of Superannuated Governesses, but she was effusive toward Sir Mark le Poer.

Constance, however, blandly unconscious, passed on, and when she reached the point whence ingress is had to that select region known as "behind the line," she was invited, with Sir Mark, to join the elect. Directly behind her was Thorndyke with Mary Beekman, followed by the Admiral with Mrs. Willoughby, and they, too, were invited within the holy precincts. The President himself had stopped Crane for a word with him, and, on having Mrs. Crane presented, had promptly invited her behind

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the line. This was partly due to the white crêpe gown.

In the general mix-up that followed in the hallowed spot, Constance found herself one of a group near Mrs. Hill-Smith, on the arm of the British Ambassador, and Eleanor Baldwin and the Honourable Edward George Francis Castle Stuart-Stuart. Close by were Mrs. James Brentwood Baldwin and Mr. James Brentwood Baldwin, and Mr. James Brentwood Baldwin was gravitating toward the Secretary of State, who loomed large at hand. The Secretary was in a very bad humour for so amiable a man, but diplomatically concealed it. After eighteen months spent in labouring over a couple of treaties, they had been knocked out in three weeks by the Senate. The chief of the gang who perpetrated this nefarious act was a Southern Senator—the wildest, woolliest, and weirdest of all the wild and woolly and weird Senators to be found in the north wing of the Capitol. But he happened to be a lawyer, and he had punched the treaties so full of holes that they were literally laughed out of court. This injured the Secretary's feelings very much, but he remembered that Beaconsfield

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and Gortschakoff and Bismarck used to be ruffled the same way, so he concluded to bear it like a statesman and a Christian.

Drifting toward the Secretary and Mr. Baldwin was a very odd-looking object, whom Thorndyke whispered to Constance was Senator Mince Pie Mulligan. These three got into conversation, very languid on the part of the Secretary and Mr. James Brentwood Baldwin, but very strenuous on the part of Senator Mince Pie Mulligan. A part of Mr. James Brentwood Baldwin's coyness came from the fact that he and Senator Mulligan were old acquaintances—a fact which Mr. Baldwin had no disposition to brag about.

The new Senator had a head of blazing red hair which was as good as a stove on a cold night. He might have stepped bodily from the pages of *Life* as regarded his contours, but his small, light-blue eye glittered with humour and shrewdness, while his great slit of a mouth, which divided his face fairly in the middle, had lines of both sense and kindness. He was enjoying himself hugely, and was not afraid to let anybody see it. Not so Mr. James Brentwood Baldwin, or the Secretary of State, but a Senator

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is a Senator to the Secretary of State, and Secretary Slater had in mind other treaties to be laid before the Senate, and so was fairly civil to Senator Mulligan. Mince Pie, himself, was much struck by the appearance of Eleanor Baldwin, who was easily the handsomest woman present, except her mother, but although Mr. James Brentwood Baldwin owned up that Eleanor was his daughter, he made no move to introduce Senator Mulligan to her.

Eleanor Baldwin was a patriot. It was her sense of patriotic duty alone which took her to a White House reception. White House receptions, in every particular, including the cabinet people and those behind the line, were "mixed." This word "mixed" meant, to Eleanor, a social Gehenna, while the word "exclusive" spelled, for her, the very joy of living. There were some "nice people"—by whom she meant the diplomatic corps and those who were intimate with them, and some people from the smart sets of near-by cities—but still it was "mixed." There was Letty Standiford, whose father, had Eleanor but known it, was personally responsible for the present occupant of the White House being there. Then she noticed, quite close to her, the daughter of a

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Senator who lived in a very unfashionable part of the town—a girl whom she would never have known, except that paying calls one day, with Mrs. Hill-Smith, she happened to go to the Senator's house. It had contained for her the one unattainable thing in life—some fine old furniture and portraits, and a beautiful old grandfather's clock, which had been inherited, and by which the Senator's daughter had not seemed to set any special store. Eleanor would have given all of their costly bric-à-brac for one single piece of old silver or furniture or lace that had belonged even so far back as to her grandparents; but neither the Baldwins nor the Hogans had inherited any silver, furniture, or lace, or anything except good, strong legs and arms, and the capacity to use them. The sight of family treasures always produced a vague discomfort in Eleanor Baldwin's mind, and gave her a kind of pique toward those who possessed them. At that very moment she felt a secret dislike toward the Senator's daughter, who had on a beautiful antique lace bertha, which had been worn by many generations of ladies before the Brentwood Baldwins had "arrived," as the French say. There had been a fire

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in the Baldwin family, and likewise one in the Hogan family, and Eleanor had persuaded herself that the frame houses burnt down in these two fires were stately mansions, and priceless family treasures had perished in the flames—and she had hinted at this so often that she had really come to believe it. She was surprised to see that her father and also the Secretary of State were talking with that curious-looking object, Senator Mulligan, whose name she had heard. But seeing the British Ambassador approach with Mrs. Hill-Smith on his arm, and Constance Maitland with Sir Mark le Poer, Eleanor turned her whole attention to them. She, too, had brought dinner-guests with her. She had been the hostess at one of those extraordinary dinners introduced within the last few years by hostesses whose experience of dinner-giving is rudimentary. At these dinners, which are considered by their innocent perpetrators as being the acme of elegance, all the men are foreigners. When Eleanor Baldwin had achieved one of these dinners, she felt that she had accomplished a social triumph. Mrs. Hill-Smith had chaperoned the dinner; and the diplomats invited had refrained from laughing in



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the face of their hostess, although they had chuckled with amusement when in the dressing-room.

Mrs. Baldwin, who stood in the background, wore more than her usual expression of icy pride, which meant that she was more than usually frightened. Eleanor's lovely face relaxed into a smile as she turned to the British Ambassador, who was a widower. He was a tall, handsome, high-bred-looking, elderly man, with a clean-shaven face, and a thin-lipped mouth, which had contorted itself into a grin on his first arrival in Washington, and the grin had become fixed and perpetual. He had no fortune beyond his salary and pension, he had rheumatism, liver complaint, nervous dyspepsia, chronic bronchitis, and a family of six unmarried daughters and four sons, ranging from thirty-six to sixteen years of age—yet Eleanor Baldwin would have jumped down his throat, and Mrs. Hill-Smith was going for him with the stealthy energy of a cat after the cream-jug.

Eleanor, putting on a roguish expression of countenance, said to the Ambassador:

“Ah, Mrs. Hill-Smith and I are becoming factors in diplomacy! At our dinner to-night, every man

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present was a diplomat, and you may imagine what state secrets were disclosed!"

"The results may be serious," replied the Ambassador, laughing a little. "We shall have to keep our eyes upon the American diplomats who were present so as to find out how our secrets were betrayed."

"There weren't any Americans present," answered Eleanor, gaily.

"Eh?" said the Ambassador, pretending to be deaf.

Eleanor repeated her words a little louder. There was Constance Maitland near enough to hear, and like Mrs. Hill-Smith, Eleanor was a little afraid of Constance Maitland, and also of Mr. Thorndyke, who had an uncomfortable way of laughing at very serious matters; and just at her elbow was that queer Castlestuart-Stuart, who blurted out things, such as not liking books, which other people kept to themselves; and it was this British bull which now proceeded to play havoc in the china-shop.

"Yes," he said, with an air of infantine innocence, and addressing his chief boldly. "It's positively true. Not a blessed American man there.

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Never saw such a thing anywhere in my life before. Fancy giving a dinner in London to foreign diplomats and not having an Englishman there—haw! haw!”

Both Eleanor and Mrs. Hill-Smith turned pale. Constance Maitland laughed outright; the Ambassador and Sir Mark le Poer looked gravely into each other's eyes, and telegraphed, without winking, their amusement. Castlestuart-Stuart kept on.

“And Hachette, the new French third secretary, told us in the dressing-room about a letter he had got from his mother in Paris—terribly strict old lady. She said, ‘You have written me about going to dinners where no American men are present. You are deceiving your old mother. It is impossible that persons such as you describe as giving those dinners should not know any respectable American men. At all events, do not bring me back a daughter-in-law who has no acquaintance among respectable men in her own country’—haw! haw! haw!”

A flood of colour poured into the faces of Eleanor Baldwin and Mrs. Hill-Smith. The Ambassador's

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chronic grin had become a little broader; Sir Mark le Poer was tugging at his moustache. That impossible person, Castlestuart-Stuart, was haw-hawing with the keenest enjoyment. Constance Maitland felt that it was time to come to the rescue of her country even at the sacrifice of her countrywomen—so, smiling openly, she said to the too truthful Castlestuart-Stuart:

“I can’t blame you for laughing—it makes all the initiated laugh. But you must see for yourself that it is only the newest of the new who do such things. All people new to society do strange things.”

“Never saw it done anywhere before, ’pon my soul,” replied this incorrigible Briton. “We have our new people at home—tea, whiskey, drapery, and furniture shops—and rawer than you can think—but they wouldn’t dare—haw, haw! to give a dinner without an Englishman at it!”

Constance bit her lip—Castlestuart-Stuart was telling the truth, and there was no gainsaying it; nor could she offer any fuller explanation than she had already given. Mrs. Hill-Smith and Eleanor Baldwin were glaring at her, but Constance re-

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mained calm and unmoved. Then from a most unexpected quarter came a terrible complication. Mince Pie Mulligan, having been frozen out by the Secretary of State and by Mr. James Brentwood Baldwin, had been jammed by the crowd almost in Eleanor Baldwin's arms, without the least resistance on his part, and had been an open-mouthed and delighted listener to Castlestuart-Stuart's candid words. At the first break he proceeded to improve his opportunities by hurling himself into the conversation, and looking straight into Eleanor's eyes the Senator bawled to Castlestuart-Stuart:

“To give such heathenish dinners as you say, people have got not only to be new, but they have got to be blamed fools besides!”

There was a moment's awful pause, and then an involuntary burst of laughter from all except Mrs. Hill-Smith and Eleanor Baldwin. The functions of society with them meant deadly serious things, such as baking and washing days had been to their grandmothers, and they thought one about as little a subject of a joke as the other. Eleanor Baldwin drew herself up, and looked coldly at the British Ambassador, whose mouth had certainly

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grown wider. Mrs. Hill-Smith, who was really timid, felt frightened to death. Like Eleanor Baldwin, she had thought it the acme of elegance to have a dinner where every man present was a foreigner and a diplomat, and secretly regretted that, from motives of state, there always had to be Americans at a cabinet house. And here were the diplomats themselves laughing at her! It was exquisitely painful.

However, something more painful still was in store for Eleanor Baldwin. Mrs. Baldwin approached the group, and at sight of her Mr. Mulligan held out his hand, and a broad smile carried the corners of his mouth back to his ears.

"Why, Nora Hogan," he cried, "it's good for sore eyes to see you. I haven't seen you before for twenty-five years. Jim Baldwin didn't tell me, just now when I was talking with him, that you were here, and didn't introduce me to his daughter, though I gave him some pretty broad hints. Sure, you know Mike Mulligan, who was clerk in your father's store thirty years ago."

"Certainly I do, Mike," responded Mrs. Baldwin, calmly and sweetly and offering her hand. It was

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the first time Constance Maitland had ever seen Mrs. Baldwin unbend from her cold stateliness.

The kindness of her greeting seemed to inspire Senator Mulligan with the greatest enthusiasm.

“A better man than your father, Dan Hogan, never lived,” proclaimed Mr. Mulligan, addressing the circle, “and it’s the training I got with him that’s made my fortune. ‘Dale square, Mike,’ Dan Hogan would say—he had a beautiful brogue on him—‘and give the widders and the orphans the turn of the scale when you’re sellin’ ’em sugar and starch and such.’ And I’ve done it, Nora, in memory of good old Dan Hogan—and if any man says it’s impossible to keep a corner grocery and be honest, I say to ’em—‘It’s Danny Hogan, it is, that was the honest man and kept the corner grocery.’”

Mrs. Baldwin’s face grew softer and softer as Mr. Mulligan proceeded. She was so great a lover of charity and had such beautiful humility of spirit that the idea of her father’s example having moulded a man into a like charity gave her the deepest gratitude and pleasure; and if pride had owned a lodgment in her heart she would have been proud at that moment.

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But not so Eleanor, or Mr. James Brentwood Baldwin, who now appeared hovering on the edge of the group. Eleanor, her face very pale, fixed her eyes on Senator Mulligan with a haughty stare, which he perfectly understood, and resented. A gleam shot into his eye which showed that he meant to pay her back for her insolence. Mr. Baldwin, in the most acute misery, practised the goose-step and tried to stem the tide of Senator Mulligan's eloquence.

“Er—ah—eh—Mr. Mulligan, your compliments to the late Mr. Daniel Hogan are very much appreciated by me, as well as Mrs. Baldwin—especially as I recall with pleasure—what an—er—important—er—factor you were in the commerce of our native place. For myself, business has no real charm for me,” continued Mr. Baldwin, turning to the British Ambassador. “I have been reasonably successful, but my taste always lay in the way of books. I live among my books.”

Up to this time Mr. Mulligan had spoken with a very fair Irish accent, but now he chose to lapse into the most violent brogue that ever grew on the green sod of Ireland. This was accompanied with a wink



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to Constance, which gave her extreme enjoyment, and a nudge in the Ambassador's ribs, which he did not in the least resent.

"Faith, and it's the way yez always was, Jim Baldwin," cried Mince Pie Mulligan. "Whin you an' me was luggin' the buckets of butter an' jugs of the most iligant molasses to th' cushtomers, it was you, Jim Baldwin, as was always a-savin' your tin cints to buy a book. An' when you was a-coortin' Dan Hogan's pretty daughter, ye'd actually mourn over the ice-cream ye filled her up wid bekase it wasn't books wid a gilt bindin'!"

At this point Mr. Mulligan squared himself off, and distributed a general wink around the circle, including Eleanor, who glared at him like a basilisk. Mrs. Hill-Smith felt acutely for her dear Eleanor, but, being secretly consumed with curiosity about antecedents as new to her as they were to Constance Maitland, could not forbear remaining. The Slaters were well established socially and financially at the time of Mrs. Hill-Smith's birth, and she was as innocent of the phase of American life which Senator Mulligan was describing as if she had been born and reared in the royal apartments of Windsor Cas-

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tle. Rochefoucauld has said there is something not unpleasant to us in the misfortunes of our best friends—and it was certainly true of Mrs. Hill-Smith—for while she was eyeing Eleanor Baldwin with an expression of the tenderest sympathy, she was inwardly rejoicing that there was no blot of butter or molasses upon the escutcheon of the Slaters. But a relentless fate seemed to direct Senator Mulligan's tongue, and turning to her the Senator said, cheerfully, and without the least encouragement:

“And I'm tould ye are the granddaughter of Cap'n Josh Slater, that I knew like me ould hat, when I was but la'ad, and he was Cap'n of the River Queen, one o' the floatin' palaces of the day on the Ohio River.”

Mrs. Hill-Smith trembled a little, but answered, coldly:

“I think you must have been misinformed.”

“Well, hardly,” responded Senator Mulligan, blithely, “since it was your own father as tould me, not half an hour ago. I knew th' ould man well—an' he was an honest ould cuss, but for tobacco-chewin' an' bad whiskey ye'll not find his match be-

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tune here and the lakes o' Killarney. He knew how to turn th' honest pinny though, did ould man Slat-er. No givin' of widders an' orphans the turn of the scale, nor the turn of a hair neither—he was out for the last rid cint. He was a good-lookin' ould chap, when he was washed up and had on a clean shirt—and now, I'll say, I think you're like him—*raymarkably* like him—and it's up to you to prove that he wasn't your grandfather, begorra!"

Had a bomb with a burning fuse dropped at Mrs. Hill-Smith's feet, she could not have been any more astounded. She looked from Mince Pie Mulligan's laughing face to Eleanor Baldwin's, and then glanced helplessly around the circle. It was impossible not to see that the British Ambassador, Thorndyke, and the wretched Castlestuart-Stuart, who was primarily responsible for the whole dreadful business, were all enjoying themselves extremely. Constance Maitland alone seemed to feel some sympathy for the unfortunates. It was, however, chiefly on account of Mrs. Baldwin, who began to be painfully embarrassed, that Constance said, smilingly, to Senator Mulligan:

"Your reminiscences are very interesting, and

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what you say of Mrs. Baldwin's father must give her cause for honest pride. You have described a phase of American life of which nobody need be ashamed."

"Except them as has been through it," promptly responded Senator Mulligan. "There's some things human nature"—he called it "natur"—"will always be ashamed of as long as it is human nature. One of 'em is that more people blush for a rise in their family than for a fall. And it ain't so foolish as it seems; because, if you were born on top of the pile, and all your people were, bedad, you don't do any of these outlandish things such as me young friend," indicating Castlestuart-Stuart, "has been tellin' us about. By the way," asked Senator Mulligan, explosively, of the terrible Castlestuart-Stuart, "who was it give the dinner anyhow?"

And what should that scion of aristocracy, the Honourable Edward George Francis Castlestuart-Stuart, do but answer:

"Miss Baldwin's was the last I went to—but there were plenty of others!"

Ambassadors are not supposed to laugh—but at

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this, the British Ambassador abandoned all hope of keeping serious. Constance was laughing frankly, Thorndyke was in quiet convulsions, Castlestuart-Stuart and Senator Mulligan were exchanging sympathetic grins—and then Eleanor Baldwin said, with the air of an offended queen:

“Papa, give me your arm.”

This Mr. James Brentwood Baldwin, with a heightened colour, did, but not before Senator Mulligan genially remarked:

“Well, the best of frinds must part, so here’s good-bye and good-luck to ye, Jim Baldwin, and I’ll say to you, Miss Baldwin, I hope ye’ll live and die as honest as ould Danny Hogan, your grandfather, and a better man never stepped in shoe-leather;” and then, turning to Mrs. Hill-Smith, Senator Mulligan continued, “I commind to you the example of your grandfather, Cap’n Josh Slater, that I had the honour of knowin’ and who always got what he wanted, and was an agreeable man enough barrin’ the bad tobacco and mean whiskey. But in the polite society in which we find oursilves, in these dazzlin’ halls of light an’ scenes of pothry an’ splendour, both Cap’n Josh Slater an’ good

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ould Danny Hogan wud be about as much at home as a ham sandwich at a Jew picnic!"

With these words, Senator Mince Pie Mulligan bowed himself off, leaving a great trail of social devastation behind him.

## *Chapter Ten*

THERE ARE MEN WHO CAN RESIST EVERYTHING  
EXCEPT TEMPTATION

Congress adjourned on the 15th of June, just two months after it was convened in extra session. Thorndyke's apprehensions had been confirmed. Few legislative follies had been committed—the House had gone with the people, leaving to the Senate and the Administration the disagreeable task of stemming the popular tide as far as possible, when it rushed on too fast. No reputations had been damaged in either House, and several had been made—but none to equal Julian Crane's. As for Thorndyke, the newspapers seemed to have forgotten his existence.

By the time adjournment was reached, Washington was deserted. The class which is designated as "everybody" was either going or gone. The outgoing steamers carried half the town across the ocean. Thorndyke had promised himself a treat—

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a trip to Europe that year—the first since that long-remembered one which had settled his fate in some particulars for him. It was the first time in years that he felt he could afford it, for he was a free-handed man, generous to his invalid sister, not averse to lending money when he had it, and fond of giving presents. To do this on his Congressional salary did not leave much surplus. This summer, however, he concluded he could take a three months' trip. Constance Maitland's return had not changed his determination, because he felt that he could not, in decency, follow her wherever her summer wanderings might take her; and if he could not be with her, he would rather, just then, be in Europe.

But one word from Constance, on the afternoon when he went to bid her farewell, changed all this in the twinkling of an eye.

He found that she had just returned from a nearby place in Virginia, where her family had been established many generations before the Louisiana Purchase had sent them toward the Gulf of Mexico. Constance was full of her Virginia trip, and told Thorndyke that she meant to take, for the summer, the old family place, Malvern Court, at the foot of



MEN WHO CAN RESIST EVERYTHING the Blue Ridge Mountains, where many generations of dead and gone Maitlands had lived and flourished, after their migration from their first American home on the shores of the Chesapeake. She showed him a photograph of the place. It was an old brick manor-house, very tumble-down, but picturesque, with noble old trees around it, and even in the picture it conveyed a delicious look of repose. It was the sort of a place where nothing startling had ever happened except the Civil War, and nothing ever could happen again. The present owner of the place, an elderly maiden lady, "Cousin Phillis," was the last of her race. She had taken up the notion that she would like to spend the summer at "the Springs," as she had done "in papa's time, and grandpapa's time;" and Constance, meaning to confer a benefit on her, had offered to rent Malvern for the summer at a price which would have been dear for a Newport cottage. The old lady, after a long struggle, had agreed. Constance did not tell all of this, but Thorndyke shrewdly suspected that the arrangement was designed to help Cousin Phillis far more than she imagined.

"And Cousin Phillis thinks she is doing me the

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greatest favour in the world, and that she is giving me the place for nothing," Constance explained, smiling, to Thorndyke.

Then she went on to tell of her battles with Cousin Phillis regarding what was necessary for the house. Cousin Phillis could not conceive that anything should be wanting at Malvern Court, which stood exactly as it was at the beginning of the war, minus forty odd years of wear and tear; and Constance had only got the old lady's consent to fit up the house somewhat according to modern ideas, by promising to remove every one of the new-fangled fallals and gewgaws when she should give up the place. By hard fighting she had got Cousin Phillis to agree to have some painting and papering done, and hoped when once Cousin Phillis was out of the way, that the house could be made as comfortable as it was picturesque.

It was two hours by train from Washington and six miles from the nearest railway-station.

"Will it not be very lonely for you up there?" asked Thorndyke, smiling at Constance's description of her efforts to benefit Cousin Phillis against her will.

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“Ah, you do not know Virginia cousins,” answered Constance. “Nobody yet was ever known to want for company in Virginia. The two days I was at Malvern it rained cousins. Each one had to be treated with distinguished consideration, and after I had worn myself out with civility to them—for they were coming all day and half the night to call on me—Cousin Phillis gently intimated to me that if I wasn’t more attentive to my relations I might find myself very unpopular with them; and I find that in Virginia to be unpopular with one’s relations is to be an outcast. They regard me with great suspicion; my Louisiana ways and my Louisiana accent only half please them; and they seem to think me a very forgetful person because I do not remember every birth and death in the family which occurred during the seventy or eighty years that the Maitlands have been established in Louisiana. I hope,” she continued, smiling, “that you will have the opportunity to meet some of my Virginia cousins. I shall have a great many house-parties during the summer, and you are among those I shall invite. I hope you may accept.”

“I accept now,” replied Thorndyke, and in a

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breath his trip to Europe melted away and was as if it had never been. Then Thorndyke very artfully found out the hour of her departure, which was to be three days later.

When Constance, on a warm June morning, arrived at the station, with her five negro servants and her household and personal paraphernalia, to start for her summer in Virginia, she found Thorndyke waiting for her. In the station he had met Annette Crane, who had just seen a constituent off on the train. At the same moment they caught sight of Constance.

“Come,” said Thorndyke, “go with me and say good-bye to Miss Maitland. She is a real friend of yours, and I know she will be glad to see you before she goes.”

“I feel that she is a real friend,” answered Annette. “I never knew a woman in whom I felt greater confidence.”

“Constance is a very loyal and a very large-minded woman,” replied Thorndyke, absently. He had used her first name inadvertently, and only became conscious of it when Annette began laughing softly. Then he coloured violently, and explained that he

MEN WHO CAN RESIST EVERYTHING had lost his mind, or lost his manners, or something of the sort, to account for his calling Miss Maitland by her first name.

They came upon Constance very smartly dressed, as always, and looking young and animated. She was superintending the tickets and luggage of herself and her five servants. There were innumerable boxes and trunks to be seen to, besides a couple of traps and a pair of horses, and Constance was doing it vigorously, with Scipio Africanus, her young butler, and Charles Sumner Pickup, her coachman, acting as purely ornamental adjuncts, giving her frequent and disinterested advice about the horses, the trunks, and other impedimenta, but in reality being waited on by their mistress. Whenever negroes go on a journey, they at once become children, and are treated as such by those who understand them. In a group stood the cook, an elderly, respectable negro woman, dressed in black, with the stamp of "fo' de war" written all over her honest black face, and a housemaid and a lady's maid, both chocolate coloured.

Whenever Thorndyke had observed Constance's servants before, they had been dressed with entire

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correctness—but on this occasion they had evidently been allowed complete latitude. The two maids wore the shortest of short skirts, with violent-coloured shirtwaists. They had on hats exactly alike—large picture-hats of white, with wreaths of red roses. The same riot of colour had broken out on Scipio Africanus and Charles Sumner Pickup. Scipio sported a scarf-pin composed of two United States flags crossed, while Charles Sumner Pickup carried a cane from the handle of which fluttered red, white, and blue ribbons. The cook, who was plainly an ante-bellum product, had donned, for the journey, an immense crape veil, which dangled to the ground, and implied that she was in the first stages of widowhood. As a fact, she had “planted her ole man,” in the Afro-American vernacular, about thirty years before, but at intervals since, she had adorned herself with the crape veil, as a dissipation in dress akin to the maids’ wreaths of red roses, and the butler and coachman’s assumption of the national colours.

Thorndyke, on reaching Constance’s side, proffered his assistance, but his offer was promptly repulsed.

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“How on earth would you manage five negroes?” she asked. “You would lose your patience in five minutes—you do not know what they know or what they do not know. I think I have everything straight now—I will keep the tickets myself”—and then, escorted by Thorndyke, she saw her five charges and the horses, the traps, and the trunks in their proper cars, and, sending Thorndyke after Annette Crane, herself took her place in the drawing-room car for her two hours’ trip.

When Annette stepped in the car to spend ten minutes with her, Constance was sincerely glad. She felt a strong and strange sympathy with Annette Crane. Never were women more dissimilar in type, in environment, in ideas, than those two women; but both were gentlewomen of sense and right feeling, and on that common ground they met and became friends.

Constance expressed a wish that Mrs. Crane might be in Washington the next winter, and Annette quietly replied that she expected to be.

Thorndyke then began telling her of his amusement at watching Constance, with five servants, working like a Trojan for them.

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“Of course, you, with your cool Northern temperament, cannot understand the negro,” replied Constance, good-humouredly. “You would expect a negro to work when he could help it. What a delusion! Suppose I had trusted Scipio or Charles to buy those tickets and get those horses aboard, and meanwhile a street-band had come along?”

“I suppose Scipio or Charles would have got the tickets and attended to the horses just the same,” answered Thorndyke.

“Do you? That shows your utter density regarding Scipio and Charles. I daresay you thought it very amusing that I should work for my servants.”

“I did.”

“They work for me when I want them and make them—that is, they work in a certain way—their way. And I suppose you would have that United States flag pin off Scipio’s bosom and that cane with the red, white, and blue ribbons out of Charles’s hand if you were travelling to Newport with them.”

“I am afraid I should.”

“And you could not stand the wreaths of red roses on the hats of my two maids?”



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"I am quite sure I couldn't."

"Then, Mr. Thorndyke, stop legislating for the negroes, because you know nothing about them."

"I admit," said Thorndyke, "that the patience and indulgence of Southerners toward negroes has always amazed and charmed me. But I believe the negro would be better off if he were made to assume greater responsibilities."

"Go to. Can the Ethiopian change his skin?"

Just then, Mr. James Brentwood Baldwin and Eleanor sauntered into the state-room of the car. They were to join a yachting party at Old Point Comfort. They spoke distantly and coolly to both Constance and Thorndyke—the memory of Senator Mince Pie Mulligan's candid praise of "ould Danny Hogan at th' corner grocery" was still a green and smarting wound in their breasts.

Mr. Baldwin's English valet and Eleanor's French maid were doing everything possible for the comfort of their master and mistress and with perfect intelligence. Thorndyke smilingly indicated it, but Constance shook her head.

"I am always hearing complaints about French and English servants in this country, but we who

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are accustomed to negro servants never complain of them."

"Because you never require anything of them; however," added Thorndyke, "I'll admit there seems to be a comfortable sort of arrangement between you. It would drive any but Southern people mad, but you don't seem to mind it."

Then Constance, turning to Annette, said she would be so glad if she and Mr. Crane would pay her a visit during the summer. Annette's eyes sparkled; it was a distinct triumph for her, because she knew, and knew that Crane knew, that he never would have been asked but for her. She thanked Constance warmly, but said she was afraid it was impossible—she never went away from Circleville in summer; and Constance, seeing longing in Thorndyke's eye, repeated her invitation to him, and made his middle-aged heart beat fast by doing it; and then it was time to go, and the train pulled out, and Constance was gone.

Thorndyke put Annette on her suburban car, and walked back to his lodgings, through the hot, bright streets—hot and bright in spite of the lush greenness of the shade. But the day had turned

MEN WHO CAN RESIST EVERYTHING lead coloured to him; and although there were still plenty of persons in town, and the capital was seething, for it was yet some days before adjournment, Thorndyke felt as if the whole town were silent and deserted.

The presence of Constance Maitland made any place full for Geoffrey Thorndyke, and her absence made a desert to him. He contrasted in his own mind his feelings of to-day and of a year ago. Then, he had reached a kind of dull acquiescence in fate, or thought he had. Despairing of forgetting Constance, he had learned to endure quietly the poignant pain of remembering her, and in default of all else in life to interest him he had thrown his whole soul and being into politics. Now, the sound of Constance Maitland's voice, the touch of her hand, was always with him, and had turned an otherwise dull and prosaic world into a region of splendid tumult and delicious agitations, for he would not have gone back to his past state for anything on earth. Constance had a deep regard for him—of that there could be no doubt. She commanded his society whenever she could; she exerted herself to please and flatter him; and he accepted

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it as a man drinks water in the desert, not analysing it, but exulting in it. Even those frequent seasons when he called himself a blankety-blank fool were not devoid of enjoyment—at least, it was not stagnation. He yearned after a million or so of money, that he might lay at Constance's feet, and ask her to throw away the fortune that stood between them, but he was too sound and sane a man to imagine that he would ever be a rich man. Politics had by no means lost its interest for him, but rather had it gained—that at least was something to give him value in Constance's eyes. As for that bare possibility of the senatorship two years hence, in the event that Senator Standiford should retire, Thorndyke regarded it as an iridescent dream. He did not believe that Senator Standiford would retire. He heard no more of Letty Standiford's delicate health, or the Senator's, either. Letty was rushing about Washington in an automobile, hailing at young gentlemen on the street, and doing many loud, unnecessary, and innocent things which require much nervous energy and lung-power. The Senator himself gave no indications of ill-health and fatigue. In Washington he led a life as reg-

MEN WHO CAN RESIST EVERYTHING ular and temperate as that of a boarding-school miss, but when local elections were impending, or a national convention was on hand, Thorndyke had known the old gentleman to go for a fortnight at a time almost without eating or sleeping, and then come out looking as fresh as a daisy. So Thorndyke was a little sceptical about his boss's possible retirement from the field, and took it that the Senator had been trying some sort of an intellectual bunco game upon him.

When the adjournment of Congress was reached, Thorndyke took the first train to his northern home. It was a comfortable old place, on the skirts of an old colonial town left high and dry among more progressive places; but shady, serene, and comfortable in the extreme. Here, in the house where he and his father and his grandfather and great-grandfather were born, Thorndyke's summers were spent with his sister Elizabeth, a gentle, sweet-faced creature, who had not walked for many years, but whose mind and hands were busy doing such good as lay in their reach.

Down in the town before a wooden one-story office with a porch, hung a battered tin sign, which

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had been repaired and repainted twenty times since first, in Geoffrey Thorndyke's grandfather's time, it had borne the legend, "Geoffrey Thorndyke, Counsellor at Law." Thorndyke still kept the dingy little office which had been his grandfather's and his father's before him. He had given up the best of his law-practice at the time that he had been thrown down and securely roped for Congress by Senator Standiford and his trusty cowboys, the State Committeemen, but had always clung to the old law-office as a refuge in case Senator Standiford should relegate him to private life. Although he had been compelled to abandon the active and continuous practice of his profession—for according to the old axiom, "The law is a jealous mistress"—Thorndyke remained a student of law. He was by nature and training a very considerable lawyer, and his legal acquirements had helped to win for him the high and steady position he held in the House of Representatives. He was not a leader of men, but rather a thinker and adviser, and was proud of the somewhat scornful appellation of "the scholar in politics."

In his quiet summer home, among his few shabby

MEN WHO CAN RESIST EVERYTHING books—which, unlike Mr. James Brentwood Baldwin, he read diligently, and never thought to mention that he lived among them—Thorndyke spent his placid summers. He read much, and observed a great deal. He was close to the border of Crane's State, and their congressional districts were contiguous, and naturally Thorndyke knew the political happenings across the border.

In all his experience of men, Thorndyke had never watched with the same interest the development of a man in his public and private life as he watched Julian Crane's. He saw the good and the evil struggling together in Crane, and had not yet found out which was fundamental.

Crane, with Annette and the two children, had returned to Circleville immediately after the adjournment of Congress, and immediately, on reaching home, he had been beset with a temptation, against which he had made a short, hard fight, and then was conquered, and gave up all the honesty of his soul as regards politics. One week after his return to Circleville, he had received overtures for peace from Governor Sanders, and a meeting between them had been arranged.

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It took place in a neighbouring city, in the private parlour of a hotel. The two men were entirely alone. Sanders, a bull-dog of a man, came out frankly and told Crane that, by the cutthroat policy they were pursuing, they were simply playing into Senator Bicknell's hands, and depriving the State of its just weight with the National Committee in the year of a Presidential convention. His proposition was a large one, but was put in a few words. The Governor began by freely admitting that Crane had got the best of him in the matter of the senatorial appointment—the politicians were agreed on that. But all men make blunders, and Governor Sanders proposed to atone for the blunder he had made about the senatorship by joining forces with Crane instead of opposing him further. It was plain that there was a strong revolt against Senator Bicknell, and a split was inevitable among the chiefs as soon as the Legislature met, which would elect a senator. When this break came, new alignments must be made, and Governor Sanders believed and said that if he and Crane should join forces they could oust Senator Bicknell and get control of the machine.



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At the mention of Senator Bicknell's name, Crane changed countenance, and mumbled something about his political obligations to the Senator. Sanders met this by saying that it was his opinion, if Senator Bicknell were not ousted, there would be grave danger that the party would lose the State at the next election; and, in any event, there must be a new arrangement of forces, and he was simply proposing to take advantage of the inevitable. He then went on to explain briefly his plan. The protocols must provide that Governor Sanders should throw all his strength toward getting Crane the party nomination for the short senatorial term in January, and second Crane's efforts to succeed himself. In return, Crane was to devote all his energies toward securing the Governor's election two years hence to succeed Senator Bicknell. Meanwhile, Senator Bicknell was nursing a very robust and promising Vice-presidential boom, which must, of course, be strangled in the cradle. Nothing must be heard of it at the next Presidential convention a year hence; but four years hence, when both Crane and Sanders would be in the Senate, it would be time enough to decide which one would strive for

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it. The geographical position of the State and the uncertainty of the elections for many years past would put them in a very good strategic position either to capture the Vice-presidential nomination or to dictate it to the convention; and that was a prize which could be held in reserve.

The success of the whole, however, depended upon keeping Senator Bicknell in the dark, for although he had not displayed the qualities of a truly great boss, like Senator Standiford, yet he was a man of considerable force, well liked, a gentleman, and a favourite in his party. If he suspected the plotting of an insurrection against him, he might in two years' time overthrow it completely; but he was an unsuspecting man—a bad thing in a boss—and could be easily deluded into believing that no effort was necessary on his part to hold his own. For that reason, the warfare between Sanders and Crane should be ostensibly kept up. Especially must this be the case in selecting delegates to the National Convention. Senator Bicknell's aspirations for the Vice-presidential nomination must be frosted on the apparent ground of dissensions among the leaders in the State—but as soon as the election was over

MEN WHO CAN RESIST EVERYTHING they could come together and have four years' amicable struggle to prove whether Sanders or Crane should be seriously put forward for the Vice-presidential nomination five years hence.

Crane listened to this nefarious scheme with disgust—a disgust in which a great longing was strangely and violently mingled. Every word that Sanders said was true; Crane knew that perfectly well. The machine was going to pieces—there could be no doubt of that—and Crane, with accurate knowledge of conditions, saw that the Governor's plan, although far-reaching, was quite practicable. The whole thing, however, hinged upon keeping Senator Bicknell in the dark. If it had been a free, fair fight, the Governor and himself might be worsted. Senator Bicknell might be considered the founder of Crane's political fortunes, and had certainly treated him with great kindness, and had procured his advancement; but then, it was a question whether the great law of necessity would not compel Crane to go with Sanders. Senator Bicknell would not, if he could, ruin Crane, but Governor Sanders was fully capable of it, and would, if he could. Indeed, Sanders conveyed as much.

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“Of course,” he said, carelessly, as he lighted a cigar, “you would have to be very circumspect in every way from now on. Voters, you know, are easily offended. As a matter of business, purely, I shall mention to you that there has been some talk about your leaving your wife at home during your time spent in Washington. I have heard that, except for the short visit she paid you during the extra session, she has not been there since the first session at which you took your seat. Of course, everybody knows that it is all straight between you, but it was a mistake on your part, just the same. It will give your enemies a handle against you.”

Crane grew pale. How strange it was that in all those years he had never been conscious of the supreme folly of his behaviour! It had not once occurred to him until that evening in Washington, hardly more than a month ago!

“Mrs. Crane remained by choice in Circleville on account of the children,” replied Crane, “and because my salary as a congressman doesn’t admit of my having my family there as I would wish—particularly as I had some debts to pay, and my house in Circleville has a mortgage on it.”

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“Oh, I understand perfectly, Mr. Crane. All of us who know you do. I was not speaking of the views of your friends, but of your enemies, on the subject. However, if money is the consideration, I think I could guarantee your senatorial term in good style; nothing extravagant, you know, but enough to put your mind at ease. Your notes, with my indorsement, would be accepted at any bank in the State, and the matter could be kept quiet.”

It was the old story—making chains out of his necessities. And they were very great. Crane spoke of paying his debts. He had scarcely made any reduction in the principal, and had only succeeded in paying the interest—which, with his living expenses, of which his own were twice as much as Annette’s and the children’s, and his small life-insurance, had galloped away with his five thousand a year. And if he should lose the nomination—there was not much danger of that now, but everything was possible with a machine and a man like Governor Sanders.

Crane’s better nature, however, rebelled against the deceit to be practised on Senator Bicknell.

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That he declared he could never bring himself to—and believed it at the moment.

“Then,” said Governor Sanders, rising, “we may conclude our conference. The entire success of the campaign I have mapped out depends upon Senator Bicknell not being taken into our confidence. We are not proposing anything against the party; we are simply proposing to do for ourselves what Senator Bicknell has done for himself; and if things go on as they have been going under his direction, I think we stand an excellent chance of losing the State at the Presidential election.”

Before Crane’s ardent mind loomed a vision. Six years in Washington as a Senator—and he was not yet forty-three years old; living in good style, and then, the chance, not a bad one by any means, of the Vice-presidential nomination in a little over four years. It was a glorious vista. Like the Arabian glass-seller, his imagination far outstripped itself. He saw himself, at forty-eight, Vice-president, at fifty-two, another term, at fifty-six, still in the Senate, with a great reputation—even the Presidency did not seem beyond him. He had the enormous advantage of youth over most

MEN WHO CAN RESIST EVERYTHING of his rivals. A Vice-president stands one chance in three and a half of succeeding to the Presidency—altogether, it was a dazzling dream—so dazzling that Crane began to feel the old regret and longing that Fate had not given him a wife like Constance Maitland; he was afraid even, in thought, to wish that it might be Constance Maitland. How that woman would shine in an official position! And then, the other side—but there was no other side. Without Sanders's help, he would have a desperate fight before the Legislature; and that outlook which had seemed so rosy when he described it to Constance Maitland in her drawing-room a few months before, grew dismal and gruesome when examined in parlour number 20 of the Grand Hotel. If defeated for the senatorship, and under the ban of Governor Sanders, his seat, a year hence, would be certainly doubtful, and if the machine ran over him it meant annihilation. So, tempted of the devil, Crane yielded, and promised everything the Governor required.

As the Governor had found him an uncertain quantity before, there were due precautions taken to keep him in the traces this time, by veiled

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threats of what would befall him if he kicked them over a second time. Crane understood perfectly well. He also realised that there were two men under his skin—one, honest and loving the truth, and the other, craving money and power and consideration, tormented with vanity, enslaved by self-love, a fierce and hideous object to contemplate. But he need not contemplate it; and with this determination he took a friendly cocktail with the Governor, and departed for Circleville. That hint about his wife opened Crane's eyes to the necessity of the outward practice of virtue, and he then determined to compass, as far as in him lay, the whole comprehensive sin of hypocrisy. He would be very attentive to his wife and devoted to his children. He would go to church regularly. He would adopt a Cincinnatus-like mode of life, that out of his small means he might contribute to charity and have it known by the special correspondents. In short, he proposed to become that object of man's hate and God's wrath, a hypocrite.



## *Chapter Eleven*

IN THE SWEET-DO-NOTHING OF THE SUMMER-  
TIME

Straightway, Crane began a hypocritical mode of life, and deceived everybody in the world except the two most necessary to deceive—himself and his wife.

He did not deceive himself. There was enough of honesty in him to make him loathe himself, while doggedly carrying out the devil's programme, into which he had entered with Governor Sanders. As he went to church on summer Sundays, with Annette by his side and the two children trotting soberly in front of them, Crane felt as if a bolt from heaven ought to descend upon him for his treachery to the man who had befriended him. Sitting in the cool, dim church, his head devoutly bowed as if in prayer, he doubted that

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there was a personal God; for if so, how could He tolerate such blasphemy as a man praying, to be seen of men; giving, to be published in the newspapers, and saying to his brother, "How is it with thee, my brother?" and then stabbing him in the back?

At one thing, the evil spirit within him shuddered and turned away. This was when he had a very friendly letter from Senator Bicknell, saying he should be in the neighbourhood of Circleville in the next fortnight, and if convenient he would accept Crane's often-urged invitation to stop and spend a day at his house.

The idea of receiving under his roof the man he had betrayed was too much for Crane. Enough moral sense remained in him to make him shrink from that. He wrote Senator Bicknell a very friendly and even affectionate letter explaining that important business would take him away from home for that week, and expressing the deepest regret that he could not have the long-promised visit. And forthwith, on the promised day, Crane made an excuse of business, and went speeding toward the nearest city. He said no word to Annette about

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his letter from Senator Bicknell, but some suspicion of the actual state of things had crept into her mind. She knew that Crane was under obligations to Senator Bicknell, and a close reading of the newspapers had shown her that Crane and Governor Sanders were supposed to be mortal enemies. Yet, she knew that the Governor and Crane were in the most friendly communication, while Crane had ceased to mention Senator Bicknell's name. And some anxiety was weighing upon him—that she saw plainly. She saw that Crane was prosperous, that he was rising in importance every day, and yet was miserable. He had grown thin and pale in those few weeks since he had entered into his evil compact. It could not be want of money, because Annette had never known him to be so well supplied. She began to suspect some moral lapse on his part, and the thought nearly broke her heart—for Julian Crane was the love of her life; and she loved him in his degradation as profoundly as in the time when she had believed him to be the soul of honour.

A singular complication came of Senator Bicknell's letter. He did not get Crane's in reply, and

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on the day he had proposed to be in Circleville he found himself at the little station. There was no one to meet him, but it was easy enough to find the way to Crane's house—he was the local great man of Circleville.

When he reached the house, with its many verandas, embowered in fine and vigorous elm-trees, the front door was wide open, and looking through the low, wide hall, he could see the garden beyond. There, under a tall lilac hedge, sat Annette in a rustic chair, sewing. On a rustic table before her the children had their books, and took turns reading aloud to her. As always, she was simply but freshly and becomingly dressed, and as the green light fell upon her fair hair and her pensive, pretty face, she made a charming picture for any man to contemplate. Senator Bicknell had an æsthetic soul as well as an honest heart, and the pretty scene appealed to him. He walked through the hall, into the trim garden, and, hat in hand, introduced himself to Annette.

She rose at once, smiling and blushing, and made him hospitably welcome. She knew nothing of his expected arrival, which convinced Senator Bicknell

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that there had been some misunderstanding concerning his letter. But the Senator was so pleased with his first impressions that he accepted Annette's invitation to remain and share their one-o'clock dinner—an invitation given with palpitations, but so promptly and gracefully accepted that Annette was delighted at her own courage in proposing it. The Senator, seated on a rustic settee, and admiring the aspect of things in the house and garden, as well as the mistress and her children, thought himself in luck. He expressed great regret at not seeing Crane, but frankly declared himself very well satisfied with things as they were.

Emboldened by her success in entertaining the Senator, Annette proposed that she should notify the leading citizens, and invite them to call at five o'clock to pay their respects to him. Senator Bicknell good-humouredly assented—it would be of advantage to Crane, he thought, mistakenly enough—and it was worth while obliging a subordinate if that subordinate had a wife as pleasing as Mrs. Crane.

By the time this was settled it was one o'clock, and the Senator found himself seated at Annette's

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dainty table, with the two children, and being waited on by Annette's one servant, a neat, hard-featured creature, who knew how to cook.

The Senator was worth millions, had a French chef, and a chronic dyspepsia, but he spoke truly when he told Annette he had not enjoyed a dinner so much in years as the one she gave him. It was very simple, but good, and well served. The children never opened their mouths except when spoken to. Annette was surprised, as at Constance Maitland's dinner, to find herself altogether at ease, and was conscious that she was making an agreeable impression every moment of the time. To be appreciated gives the most timid confidence; and it was perfectly evident that this trained man of the world appreciated this woman, as sweet and natural as the wild roses that grew in the roadside hedges. They found much to talk about, and Thorndyke was mentioned, at which Annette overflowed in praises of him, to which Senator Bicknell agreed.

He was much amused by Annette's impromptu plan of having a reception for him that afternoon, and accused her of aspiring to be a second

## IN THE SWEET-DO-NOTHING

Madame Roland, but laughingly agreed with her when Annette assured him that it would be worth several votes to Crane in the coming senatorial contest.

After dinner he was shown to a cool and spotless chamber, where he had a very refreshing nap and a bath. At five o'clock he was summoned below. Annette awaited him in the modest drawing-room. She wore a pretty muslin gown, and looked as fresh as a dewdrop. With the assistance of the neighbours, the lower floor was dressed with flowers, and simple refreshments were served upon tables in the large and well-kept garden.

Annette, taking her stand at the door of the drawing-room with the Senator, received with dignity and grace the people who came pouring in—the Judge of the County Court, the professional men in the town, the principal of the Circleville High School—all accompanied by their ladies, wearing their best silk gowns and very tight kid gloves. Senator Bicknell was affability itself. He was an amiable man, and Annette Crane's virtues and charms were such as appeal peculiarly to men, so that most of them wished to oblige her. He was

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secretly amused at the courage and capability she had shown in organising a political reception for him on such short notice, and determined to help her through with it. By way of showing his goodwill, he spoke with enthusiasm of Crane to many persons, and said that he should be pleased if Crane might be his colleague after the first of January.

At seven o'clock he was obliged to take his train. Before he stepped into the carriage of the Judge, who had asked the honour of driving him to the station, Senator Bicknell expressed to Annette the most sincere gratitude and pleasure at his visit.

"Tell Mr. Crane," he whispered to her, "that with a wife who has such masterly capacity for political management as you, my dear Mrs. Crane, he may expect any sort of promotion. If our State is honoured by being awarded the Vice-presidential nomination, I am afraid no one else will be heard of except Mr. Crane, if you take the affair in charge."

"You are laughing at me," cried Annette, laughing herself, but colouring with pleasure at Senator



Bicknell's kind manner and flattering words.

"Imagine me as a political manager!"

"My dear lady, the only political managers in the world, among women, are those like yourself, who don't know that they are managing. Good-bye, and a thousand thanks. I have not spent so pleasant a day for a long time. Remember, when you come to Washington, you are to dine with me many times, but I can't make you enjoy your dinner as much as I enjoyed mine. Regards to Crane"—then, stepping into the carriage, the Senator said to the Judge in a voice meant to be heard by those around:

"Charming woman—sweet, well-behaved children—comfortable home—our friend Crane is in luck."

Crane did not return until the next evening, and was greeted by the sensational news of Senator Bicknell's visit. Annette was, of course, full of her achievement in entertaining the Senator. Instead of receiving her account with the pleasure which might naturally have been expected, Crane listened with sombre eyes and a face which grew pale and paler as Annette proceeded

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with the story of the success of her impromptu reception. It was indeed a horribly awkward complication for Crane, and vastly increased his difficulties. His chagrin could not be concealed, and Annette was quickly convinced, to her distress and amazement, that Senator Bicknell's visit was anything but pleasant to Crane.

When this was borne in upon her, she stopped speaking, and involuntarily fixed her clear, accusing eyes on her husband. All at once her suspicions of the changed relations between Crane and Senator Bicknell, and Crane and Governor Sanders, became a certainty. In a moment of inspiration—the inspiration of an intelligent honesty—the probable state of affairs flashed upon her. She remained silent for a time; they were seated alone at the tea-table, in the garden, and the August sunset was at hand. Crane's countenance grew anxious as Annette watched him.

“Did the Senator say he had got my letter?” he asked.

“He expressly said he had not heard from you,” replied Annette. “Did you go away from home to avoid the Senator?”

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It was but a chance shot, but it hit the bull's eye. Crane did not answer the question, but got up and walked to the other end of the garden. They were sitting and talking in the very spot where Annette had so successfully entertained the Senator the afternoon before.

She could not, of course, know the details, but she knew then that Crane was a traitor, and was pretending a goodwill which he was far from feeling. Annette suffered as only a high-minded woman can suffer when the lower man in one she loves reveals itself. But she said nothing. She knew that Crane must work out his own salvation, and that she could be of no help to him there.

And Crane, having a guilty conscience, knew that Annette suspected the game he was playing; and this made him more unhappy but not less guilty than before.

Annette had told Crane of Constance Maitland's invitation to them, which piqued as much as it gratified him. He knew quite well that but for Annette he would have had no invitation. Later on came a note from Constance repeating the in-

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vation very cordially, but Annette felt obliged to decline it with all the thanks in the world.

So the summer passed for those two.

For Thorndyke the summer was, first, one long anticipation of that visit he was to pay Constance, and then, one long retrospection of it. He had enjoyed every moment of it, although the beginning was inauspicious. When he changed trains at Washington to go into Virginia, whom should he find in the Pullman with him but Mince Pie Mulligan, who greeted him effusively. Thorndyke carefully concealed his destination from Mr. Mulligan, but the junior Senator was by no means so secretive.

“I’ll tell you where I’m going,” he said, in the friendly juxtaposition of the smoker. “I’m going to a place up in Virginia to see that stunning woman I met in Washington, Miss Maitland. Never saw her but once, but, by Jove, that was enough to make me want to see her again. I’ve found out where she is spending the summer, and I’m going there just to do a little prospecting.”

Mr. Mulligan had abandoned the violent brogue which he had used on a former occasion, and spoke

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pretty fair English, but his mouth was as wide and his hair was as red as ever.

Thorndyke, consumed with inward rage, inquired blandly of Mr. Mulligan:

“May I ask if you were invited by Miss Maitland to visit her?”

“Lord, no,” responded Mr. Mulligan, cheerfully. “But I’m just prospecting. I don’t know whether I shall like her or not after I know her better; but I expect to like her. The way she sat down on those two young women snobs added a year to my life, and I’m thinking I gave ’em a good whack or two.”

“I suppose,” said Thorndyke, longing to throw Mulligan out of the car-window and under the locomotive wheels, “you have engaged accommodations in Miss Maitland’s neighbourhood?”

“Never a bit of it. I just found out that Miss Maitland’s station was Roseboro’ station on this road, and I presume there must be some sort of a hotel within reach, or I can stop at the next town.”

“There are no towns in that part of the county, and Miss Maitland has informed me that there isn’t

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a hotel or boarding-house within ten miles," replied Thorndyke, stalking angrily back into the Pullman.

The train stopped at Roseboro' on being flagged, and Thorndyke had one of the most delicious moments of his life when he stepped into a smart trap driven by Constance herself, and left Senator Mulligan, the man of millions and of pies, stranded at the station, which consisted of the passenger shed and the station-master's house, which had four rooms, in which the station-master with his wife and eleven children lived in much dirt and comfort.

Constance, sitting in the trap, looking remarkably handsome in her summer costume and large black hat, felt a thrill of sympathy for the unfortunate Mulligan, standing in the little shed of a station with his luggage piled around him. Not so Thorndyke, who derived acute pleasure from Mulligan's miserable situation.

"I hope," said Constance to the forlorn Senator, "that you will come over to see me some afternoon while you are at Roseboro'. Malvern is only six miles away."

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“Thank you,” cried Mulligan, at once rising into a mood of enthusiastic optimism, “I’ll call early and often.”

“The fellow is a good-natured ruffian, but I hope I’ll be out when he calls,” was Thorndyke’s remark to Constance as they left the sandy road of Roseboro’ station and entered the cool and shaded highway which led to Malvern.

As Constance and Thorndyke drove along the sweet-scented country lanes, crossing streams by rickety bridges and bumping up and down hills, Thorndyke felt himself near Paradise. Constance was so kind to him, so unaffectedly glad to see him. Her country life had freshened up her complexion, and she looked positively girlish, and her high spirits were infectious. She described the house-party—Mrs. Willoughby, half a dozen Virginia cousins of different ages and sexes, a French friend and her husband travelling in America, and Cathcart, the navy man—at whose name Thorndyke felt a sensible diminution of his happiness. Constance was charmed with Malvern Court, and declared it had been the happiest summer of her life—almost.

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“And when I think of those weary, dreary foreign watering-places of which I grew so tired, and of those tiresome Swiss hotels, I think I am in Heaven to be once more in my own country among my own kith and kin, and hearing no language but good, honest English.”

“I intended to go to Europe this summer,” said Thorndyke, meekly. “I had planned it for two or three years.”

“Why did you not go?” asked Constance, heedlessly.

“Because you asked me to visit you,” replied Thorndyke, something within him forcing the truth out of him against his will, and then he added, hastily:

“Forgive me, I’m a perfect brute. I wouldn’t blame you in the least if you sent me back north by the next train.”

“Get up, Frolic, you idiot!” cried Constance to her smart cob, and flicking him with the whip. Her face coloured, her eyes shone—it was plain she was not displeased. But a horrible suspicion occurred to Thorndyke—possibly she was, after all, a thorough-going flirt! Many of those South-



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ern women are, and can't imagine why a man should object to having a football made of his dearest affections as long as it amuses the lady in the case.

This gruesome and uncanny thought, together with Cathcart's presence at Malvern, was a huge fly in Thorndyke's ointment, but misery is as much a concomitant of love as joy is, and Thorndyke had his share of miseries.

The great live oaks were casting long shadows on the large, smooth lawn when Constance drove up to the doors of Malvern Court. It was a spacious brick house with wings, and at the back a four-roomed structure common to Virginia houses, and known as "the office," where the bachelors were lodged. The house-guests were having tea under the trees, where the shadows were long, when Thorn-dyke and Constance joined them. Scipio Afri-canus served the tea, which was iced, and was like water in the desert to travellers. It was handed with much ceremony by Scipio, who had doffed his smart livery, and appeared in a snow-white linen jacket. He was assisted by one of the coloured maids, who now wore the smartest of smart caps

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and the neatest of neat print gowns instead of the short skirt, pink shirtwaist, and picture-hat which had electrified Thorndyke at the Washington station a few weeks before. Constance Maitland knew precisely when to relax and when to tighten discipline among her staff of negro servants.

Like all people in a country house, the guests were glad to see some one from the outside world. It was a pleasant and amiable party, and Thorndyke enjoyed himself in spite of Cathcart's presence; but Cathcart, being a remarkably pleasant and personable man, everybody except Thorndyke relished his company.

While they were lingering over tea, a ramshackly buggy of the prehistoric age of buggies, with an unkempt horse, was seen driving up the winding, shady road which led to the lawn. In the buggy sat no less a person than Senator Mince Pie Mulligan. He had seen himself ignominiously left in the lurch by Thorndyke, but with the same spirit of enterprise which had made him the greatest pie-manufacturer on earth he had investigated his resources, and promptly pursued his object

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with the best means at hand—a sure mark of superiority.

When he alighted from his ancient buggy, Constance advanced to meet him, and greeted him with a cordiality which inspired Mr. Mulligan with admiration and hope. He did not know that Southerners in their own habitat meet every guest, however undesirable, with the same overflowing cordiality, which is reckoned as merely good manners. Senator Mulligan, however, thought this custom of generations a special tribute to himself, and gloated over that cool, supercilious Thorndyke, who had smiled in a superior manner at the Senator's predicament at Roseboro' station. So he replied genially to Constance's greeting:

“As you were good enough to ask me to call, and as I don't know how long I'll be in these parts, I said to myself, ‘Faith, I'll pay Miss Maitland a visit this very afternoon.’ And here I am with this ould cruelty cart, when I've got a stable full of horses at home, and a Panhard red devil that cost me six thousand dollars to buy and a thousand a year to keep—but, like the butterfly, I get there just the same.”

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Constance, being a clever woman, looked into Michael Mulligan's soul and saw that it was honest, according to his lights, and that his bragging was not bragging at all, but an innocent way of mentioning what the pie business had brought him.

"I am very glad to see you, Senator," she replied, smiling, and then gravely introduced this member of the august Senate of the United States to the group sitting about the tea-table.

Nobody but Thorndyke and Cathcart took in the situation. The Virginia cousins, to whom political preferment means that the object of it belongs to one of the first families in his own home, supposed that Mr. Mulligan, although certainly very odd-looking, had a long line of distinguished ancestors, and it was with much cordiality that an ex-Confederate Colonel, grave and suave, with a snow-white moustache and imperial, shook Mike Mulligan's hand, saying:

"I am pleased, sir, to make your acquaintance, and to bid you welcome upon the soil of old Virginia."

The Frenchman, a retired army officer, and his

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wife, a thorough-bred French gentlewoman, were equally polite, but they arrived at a much more correct estimate of Senator Mulligan's social status than the ex-Confederate Colonel. As for the Honourable Mike, he started in to enjoy himself in a whole-souled manner, which would commend him to all sincere persons. He drank three glasses of iced tea running, complimented the late President Davis and General Lee, declared that he meant to buy up a good part of the State of Virginia, and worked himself up into a whirlwind of enthusiasm over everything he saw. This completely captivated all the ex-Confederates present, amazed the French strangers, and amused Thorndyke and Cathcart beyond words. On leaving, Senator Mulligan told Constance nothing but the truth when he said that he had never enjoyed an afternoon more, or had found himself among more "conjaynial company."

Then began for Thorndyke a week of rapture, mixed with agonising jealousy; for let no man suppose that his passions have no more power to trouble him after his hair grows scanty and his moustache grows grey. In all those years of sep-

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aration from Constance, the edge of Thorndyke's pain had been dulled, but the ache was still there; and from the April night he had first seen her, until then, he felt himself being steadily and securely mastered by that great love of his life—as steadily and securely as if he could have offered her his honest and devoted heart. And to be thrown with her daily—to spend the bright summer mornings in the cool, old drawing-room with Constance, listening to the pleasant, languid talk of people in a country house, the shady afternoons in driving over the rich, green, placid country, sometimes with Constance by his side—the deep, blue nights, sitting on the great stone porch, watching the silver moon rise over the distant pine-crowned mountain-peaks, and looking at Constance, in a thin white gown, seeming as young by night as in those sweet Italian nights long past—it would have been bliss but for two things. One was that she was as kind to Cathcart as to himself, and the other was that she was so very kind to him. For since she could not possibly think of marrying him, she could only be amusing herself at his expense.

Thorndyke was nearly forty-five years old, he

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was a member of Congress, and reckoned a peculiarly cool-headed and long-headed man, but he was thereby exempt from the agonies of love.

As for Senator Mulligan, Thorndyke did not need to recall the frank confession made on the train to know that Mince Pie had speedily made up his mind that Constance was worth the winning, and to go about it with promptness and energy. On the very last afternoon, Thorndyke, disgusted with the goodwill which Constance had shown Cathcart, retired to a rustic summer-house on the lawn, to writhe in secret with jealousy, and incidentally to read the New York newspapers. Presently he saw Constance and Senator Mulligan walking across the sward toward the house. Constance's face was flushed, and she was walking rapidly. Senator Mulligan was talking earnestly to her, and his brogue was more evident than usual, under the stress of emotion. Immediately in front of the summer-house Constance stopped and faced the Senator.

"I must beg of you," she said, in a clear voice, with a faint ring of indignation in it, "to say no

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more on this subject to me now, or at any other time."

"Well, I've said about all I had to say," replied Senator Mulligan, warmly. "I asked you to marry me, I did, and I tould you, I did, if you had to lose what money you had because I'm an American, thank God, that I'd make it up to you a dozen times over. I said that, I did, and I didn't desave you about the senatorship." The brogue by this time was rampant. "The thing was going a-beggin', and the Governor, he sends for me, and he says to me, 'Mike,' says he, 'you'll be nothin' but a stop-gap, and don't get any other notion into your red head but that—and ye'll step down and out the first of January,' says he; 'and don't monkey with the buzz saw,' says he. And I says, says I, 'I won't, Governor, and I'll have my fling at Washington, and I'll take down my Panhard red devil, and go a-scorchin' over the Washington streets, and have the time of my life,' and bedad, I have. And I had no more thought of falling in love and getting married than I have of trying to get up a diligation to present my name to the next Prisdential convention. But then I met you, Miss



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Maitland, and I came up here after you, and you've bowled me over, senatorship and all, and I've told the truth, and not a lie in the bunch, and I've offered to give up your money, and I don't see that I've done anything for you to look at me like Lady Macbeth, and I beg your pardon if I've offended you."

During this speech Constance Maitland's heart softened toward Mince Pie Mike. He had only claimed a man's inalienable right, and he had behaved as honourably as in him lay. So she said, with a softening of the voice as well as the heart:

"I feel sure that all you say is true and I am sorry if I have wounded you—but what you ask is not to be thought of for a moment."

"Well," remarked the Senator, resignedly, "it's a disappointment, it's a great disappointment, but there are other things in life, Miss Maitland. There's the pleasure of helping widows and orphans, and I swear to you I have done that as well as I could ever since I was a clerk in good old Danny Hogan's corner store, and there's the pleasure of managing the primaries and handing over

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the biggest batch of votes for the money of any man in the State——”

“Mr. Mulligan!” cried Constance, in horror.

“Yes, there’s no denying of it in some States—and there’s automobiling and plenty of other clean, dacent pleasures to make up for love. But I tell you, Miss Maitland, there never can be the time, if I’m still single, that you can’t be Mrs. Michael Patrick Mulligan, and your money may go to the bow-wows for all I care, and I honour and admire you above all the women I iver knew, I do that. Good-bye. Don’t snub the life out of me in Washington if I meet you next winter.”

“I shall not, I promise you—good-bye,” said Constance, and walking briskly into the summer-house, while Senator Mulligan turned away, she almost walked into Geoffrey Thorndyke’s arms.

“I couldn’t help hearing,” said Thorndyke, with a burning face. “I couldn’t get out—it would have been beastly to the poor devil——”

And then both of them suddenly burst into a gale of laughter, nor could they, all that day and evening, meet each other’s eyes without laughing mysteriously.

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Thorndyke's visit lasted a week. It was a week of heaven and hell to him. When he went away, Constance Maitland realised that, to accomplish her heart's desire, she would have to do the proposing herself, as Queen Victoria did on a similar occasion.

## *Chapter Twelve*

WHAT IS IT TO BE HONEST IN POLITICS AND TRUE  
IN LOVE?

On the first Monday in December—a gloriously bright winter day—the flags were run up over the Senate and House wings of the Capitol building. Congress had met once more.

There were the usual thronging multitudes in the corridors, the usual pleasant buzz of meeting and greeting in cloak and committee rooms, and the cheerfulness and exhilaration of the last session was flamboyant in the present one.

Among the last members of the House to arrive was Julian Crane. He had come late because he wished to put off as long as possible the meeting with Senator Bicknell. Of course, they must meet early and often, but that did not make Crane take any less pains to postpone, if even for a day, the

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sight of the man he had betrayed. But almost the first acquaintance he ran across was the Senator in a group of brother senators who had strolled over to the House side.

Senator Bicknell greeted Crane with unusual cordiality. In the first place, he really wished to attach Crane to the Bicknell chariot, but he had such agreeable recollections of his August day in Circleville, of Annette and her spotless table, her roast chicken and boiled corn, her sweet, fresh spare bedroom, where he had enjoyed one of the best naps of his life, and her impromptu reception in the afternoon, that he felt an increased kindness for Crane. He showed this by button-holing Crane in the midst of the group of senators, and telling the story of his day in Circleville. He paid Annette many sincere compliments, and declared that if Crane should enter the senatorial contest a year and a half hence, and should defeat him, it would simply be on account of the charming Mrs. Crane. It was not fair to pit a man with such a lovely wife against a hopeless and incurable bachelor like himself.

Under other circumstances Crane would have

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been highly gratified, but now it tortured him. He heard once more ringing in his ears Governor Sanders's words, "It is absolutely necessary that Senator Bicknell be not taken into our confidence." To cap the climax, Senator Bicknell said:

"Be sure and give my warmest regards to Mrs. Crane, and tell her I shall take the first opportunity to call on her—she is here, I suppose? She mentioned last summer that she was coming on with you."

"Yes," replied Crane, "we are established for the season"—and he gave the name of a comfortable, but not expensive or fashionable, apartment house where they had quarters.

"And say to her that, although I can't give her a dinner half so good as what she gave me, I shall expect her and you to arrange to dine with me at my house at a very early day. Good morning."

Crane escaped and went to his seat in the House. While he was contemplating the baseness of his own conduct, Thorndyke came over and spoke to him.

Thorndyke's first impression of Crane was that

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he looked haggard and worn, and Crane's impression of Thorndyke was that he had grown about ten years younger. His greeting to Thorndyke was very cordial, but he was conscious of a strange thing—that ever since his bargain with Sanders, the meeting with former friends, men of sterling probity, gave him a vague uneasiness. It seemed to him as if, in duping Senator Bicknell, he was duping every honest man he knew. Thorndyke, too, asked after Mrs. Crane, and it began to dawn upon Crane's mind that Annette had the power, in a remarkable degree, of pleasing men of the world. Still, he thought her not quite good enough for himself, particularly if the brilliant future he planned should materialise—as it must and should.

The proceedings of the day were perfunctory, and it was but little after three o'clock when Thorndyke left the House. The afternoon was briskly cold, and the sun glittered from a heaven as blue as June. Just as Thorndyke came out on the plaza he encountered Crane, who would have avoided him, but it was scarcely possible.

The two men walked down the hill, and toward Thorndyke's old quarters. They talked amicably

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and even intimately, but Thorndyke got a curious impression of reserve from Crane—and reserve was the last thing in the world to develop in Julian Crane. As they walked along the streets in the dazzling sun of December in Washington, they were speaking of the great economic questions with which the Congress would have to deal. Thorndyke, as an accomplished lawyer, saw certain difficulties in the way of regulating these matters which Crane did not at first perceive.

“After all,” said Thorndyke, “it comes down to whether either political party will deal honestly with these questions. If they do, a solution will be found, and the whole matter can, in the course of a few years, be properly adjusted.”

“What do you call perfect honesty in politics?” asked Crane, after a moment.

“That’s rather a large proposition,” replied Thorndyke, laughing. “I should say, if called upon to give an immediate definition, that perfect honesty in politics means keeping one’s hands clean in money matters, and being an outspoken friend or enemy.”

Crane’s heart sank at this. He did not know why



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he should have asked such a question, and he was hard hit by Thorndyke's reply.

"There must be a good, wide margin allowed for offensive partisanship," Thorndyke continued. "That's the trouble with the professors of political economy in colleges—they leave human nature out of the equation. There's my boss, Senator Standiford. He is as honest as the day as far as money goes, and honest in using his enormous power for the good of the party, and he was born with the notion that his party and the country are interchangeable terms. He uses dishonest men sometimes, but not dishonest methods. It is both shameful and ridiculous that a great State like ours should hand over such vast power to one man as it has to Senator Standiford, but that's not his fault. It is rather to his credit that he has not misused his power. The trouble is, that the people will get accustomed to the system of one-man government, and when Senator Standiford goes hence, the party will choose another dictator, probably neither as honest or as able as he."

"Senator Standiford is a rich man. Suppose he were poor? What percentage would you allow a

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poor man in political life in his efforts to be honest?"

"I can't figure it out that way," answered Thorn-dyke, "although I ought to know public life from the viewpoint of the poor but honest Congressman. I am not worth ten thousand dollars in the world outside of my Congressional salary. But as the Kentucky colonel said on the stump, 'I am as honest as the times will allow.'"

"Don't you think," persisted Crane, for whom this discussion of honesty in public life had a powerful fascination, "that the same man in certain political circumstances would remain honest, while in different circumstances he might succumb to temptation? Take the case of a poor man in politics."

"I admit that the most desperate venture on earth is for a man to attempt to live by politics. Some men have done it, like Patrick Henry, for example. But those men are quite beyond comparison with every-day men. However, Marcus Aurelius says, 'A man should *be* upright, he should not be made to be upright.'"

This saying of Marcus Aurelius troubled Crane.

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He did not fully believe it. He thought that Marcus Aurelius, like the professors of political economy in colleges and universities, left out of account the great factor of human nature, which makes a bad man to do good acts, and a good man to do bad acts, and makes a man good at one time, bad at another, and both good and bad together. Presently he roused himself and said:

“It would be a great thing for any public man if he could lead such a life that every word he said or wrote could be printed.”

“Why, have you been writing letters lately?”

“God knows, no! I have always had sense enough for that—to write as few letters as possible.”

At that moment Crane felt a thrill of satisfaction—not one line did Governor Sanders have of his.

The two men then began to talk about the political situation generally, and Thorndyke noticed in Crane an exultant spirit, a disposition to brag which had been absent in him at the time of his first rise into prominence, when it might have been expected to develop. The truth was that Crane found the only solace for his moral lapses lay in

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contemplating the splendid prizes which Sanders had dangled before his eyes. He had come to believe that some of these splendid prizes must be his; it was incredible that he should not receive the price for which he had sold his honour. And as the case always is, whether a man is or is not wholly bad, Crane promised himself at some future time, when he had garnered all the fruits of his wrongdoing, to lead a life of perfect rectitude.

Then they came to the street corner where their paths diverged, and Thorndyke said at parting:

“Please give my warmest regards to Mrs. Crane, and tell her I mean to presume upon her past kindness to me and call to see her in the evening.”

“Have you seen Miss Maitland?” asked Crane.

“No,” replied Thorndyke, who had just proclaimed himself a man of truth. He had not, indeed, seen Constance to speak to her, but the night before, within two hours of his arrival, when he had gone out to smoke his after-dinner cigar, he had sneaked up to her house, and had watched her as she passed to and fro before the lighted windows of the drawing-room.

Crane went upon his way gloomily, turning over

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in his mind his conversation with Thorndyke, and all the difficulties of his situation, which were accentuated by his being in Washington. The strong fancy which Senator Bicknell had taken to Annette made everything harder. It seemed as if all those things which might be reckoned an unmixed good for an honest man were a burden and a perplexity to him, Julian Crane.

Thinking these uncomfortable thoughts, he found himself at the entrance to the big apartment house, and went to his own quarters.

They were small and cramped, but the locality was good and the outlook pleasant. Annette and the two children met him with smiles. The children had grown acquainted with him and had become fairly fond of him. As for Annette, she had never, in all her married life, so striven to help her husband as in the last few months, when she had seen that he was troubled and suspected that he was engaged in wrong-doing. All her pity, all her loyalty as a wife, had risen within her. She had gradually abandoned the attitude of reserve which she had maintained toward him ever since that first unfortunate experience in Washington

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so long ago. She reproached herself, as the good always do, for not having been better. Had she given him more of her confidence and sought his more, she might now be in a position to help him, or at least to sympathise with his trouble, whatever it might be. But her conscience should never upbraid her again for want of sympathy and tenderness to him. He might tell her of his perplexities, or he might keep them to himself, she would be all tenderness and softness to him. And then the hope was born and lived in her heart, which every neglected wife has, that calamities of the soul as well as the heart might bring her husband once more to her side. For Annette had never ceased to love her husband—and loving spells forgiveness with a woman.

Crane dutifully delivered Senator Bicknell's and Thorndyke's messages, and Annette's eyes sparkled with pleasure. She felt an increase of courage. She thought Crane must have seen that she had been a help, not a hinderance to him, socially and personally, when she had been given a chance, and she meant to show him that she could hold her own in Washington as well as in Circleville.

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A week or two passed in all the gay confusion of the beginning of the season in Washington. Thorndyke had watched his chance to call on Constance Maitland. Carefully avoiding her usual day at home, he had called on a peculiarly raw and disagreeable afternoon, very late, when he felt sure that she must have returned from her daily drive. He found her in her drawing-room, which was dusky, although it was not yet six o'clock, with a bright fire leaping high and making the charming room bright with its ruddy glow.

Constance, wrapped in rich dark furs, her cheeks tingling with the fresh cold air without, her eyes sparkling, was standing before the blazing fire. She was unaffectedly glad to see Thorndyke, and he felt that sense of quiet wellbeing which always came upon him when he was with her in her own house. They had much to talk about. Constance took off her furs and the long, rich cloak which enveloped her, and sat down on the deep, inviting sofa, and motioned Thorndyke to her side.

Among the persons they spoke of were Julian Crane and Annette. Thorndyke volunteered the suggestion that Crane was passing through some

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sort of a crisis—he was so changed, so silent where he was formerly talkative, so full of vague exultation and of equally vague depression. Thorndyke had seen Annette and the children. Annette had asked to be remembered to Miss Maitland, and Constance replied that she should call at once to see Mrs. Crane. She was not particularly interested in Julian Crane's crises, except that she said, woman fashion, that he ought to be more attentive to his wife.

Thorndyke then mentioned that Senator Mulligan was in town, at which they both laughed. But soon the conversation got down to the you and I—the books each had read, the thoughts each had pondered, the places each had been. Constance had remained continuously at Malvern Court from June until late in November. She had had a succession of house-parties during the summer, but in the golden autumn she had been quite alone.

“It was the sweetest, the most peaceful life you can imagine,” she said, thoughtfully. “All the world was shut out, except Virginia cousins, but I even escaped most of them. All day I was out in the woods and lanes, riding or driving or walking, and



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in the evening, with a wood fire, a book, a piano, and a lamp—it was company enough, yet it was solitude itself. It was like Omar's shady tree and loaf of bread and jug of wine and book of verse."

"And thou," added Thorndyke, under his breath. He was watching her with a silent rapture which possessed him on meeting her after an absence. She surely had the softest and sweetest voice in the world, and those charming tricks of pronunciation—she called solitude "solee-tude" and piano "pe-arno," and was quite unconscious of it, and bitterly denied any difference between her speech and Thorndyke's. Constance was conscious of the adoring look in Thorndyke's eyes; she had heard the one suggestive word; perhaps it was that which caused a happy smile to flicker for a moment on her lips, revealing the faint, elusive dimple in her cheek, but she continued as if she had neither heard, nor seen, nor understood.

"I have heard about the solitude there is in crowds, but I never could find it so. I am so dreadfully sociable—Southern and Creole French, you know—that I always find troops of friends and

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acquaintances in a crowd. But in that solitary old country house in the autumn—that, if you please, was to be alone.”

“You seem to have a passion for solitude,” said Thorndyke, rather crossly.

“Oh, no, only a taste for it at times. I never contemplated with pleasure a solitary life, and I have a horror of a lonely old age.”

What did she mean? Was she proposing to him? Thorndyke was a good deal staggered by this speech from the lady of his secret love.

The time sped fast with them, and both of them started when a neighbouring clock struck seven. Constance rose at once.

“I must go and dress for dinner—and you—you will remain?”

Such an idea had never entered Thorndyke’s brain before, but in half a quarter of a second he had accepted.

“Of course,” said Constance, airily, picking up her muff, and putting her bare hands in it, “it’s very improper for you and me to dine together without others, but we have reached that comforta-

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ble age when we can commit all sorts of improprieties in perfect safety. It is a fine thing to grow old."

"That thought almost reconciles me to the loss of my hair," replied Thorndyke. "You will have to excuse my afternoon clothes, of course, since you have asked me to stay."

"Certainly. And out of consideration for your feelings, I shall make only a demi-toilette."

Presently they were seated at a small round table, and Scipio was serving a dainty little dinner. How young they felt! There was no *débutante* or fledgling youth present to remind them that Time had meddled with their hair and complexions, no elderly persons to claim them as pertaining to middle age. Thorndyke had rarely been more exhilarated in his life. There might be a morrow; nothing was changed by these stray hours of happiness, but still they were hours of happiness. As for Constance, she was radiant with pleasure, and was at no pains to conceal it. Thorndyke, it is true, always found misery and disappointment waiting for him at his lodgings whenever he re-

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turned from Constance's house; but they could not frighten off those occasional sweet hours which bloomed like snowdrops in a barren and frosted field.

One of the first visits that Constance paid was to Annette Crane. As Thorndyke had seen anxiety written all over Crane's personality, so Constance saw that Annette was not wholly at ease. But she was unaffectedly glad to see Constance, and soon returned the visit. Crane did not accompany her. He was beginning to feel a species of resentment toward Constance. Why, although he had told her of the comforting and sustaining power she had for him, had she chosen to treat him exactly as she treated all other men, except the few whom she chose to favour outrageously? Why, when she showed him any consideration, was Annette the obvious cause? Self-love was beginning to do for Crane what conscience had failed to do—emancipate him from his admiration for a woman other than his wife.

A day or two after reaching Washington, Crane had left a card for Senator Bicknell. When Senator Bicknell returned the visit, Crane, luckily, was

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not at home, and the Senator paid his call on Annette and enjoyed it very much. He had said to her at leaving:

“Remember, Mrs. Crane, you promised to dine with me many times in Washington, so that I may repeat, as far as possible, that pleasant day at Circleville.”

“I am prepared to fulfil my promise,” replied Annette, smiling, “but I hope you will give me a better dinner than I gave you.”

“More kickshaws, perhaps, but nothing better. My dear lady, you must remember the difference between a *gourmand* and a *gourmet*. One, the *gourmand*, is a crude product, and would prefer *my* cook. The *gourmet*, who is a critic by profession, would certainly prefer yours.”

It was arranged that Annette and Crane should dine with the Senator to meet a large party the next week. If Crane should be found to have an engagement, Annette was to notify the Senator.

But he had made none. When he returned from the House that evening, at six o'clock, Annette told him of the Senator's visit and invitation, and, as ever since the summer, as soon as Senator Bick-

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nell's name was mentioned, a look of guilt and shame came upon Crane's expressive and mobile face. There was, however, no ground for declining, and, besides, had he not agreed to keep on the best possible terms with Senator Bicknell until—until the time came to betray him? And as he would be obliged to meet Senator Bicknell socially many times in the two years he would be plotting against him, Crane had no object in avoiding him now; but in meeting him, Crane had the grace to suffer pain.

On the night of the dinner, Annette, arrayed in her white *crêpe*, was among the prettiest women present. It was a very large dinner, extremely magnificent, and made up of important persons, but Annette Crane was by no means unobserved or unadmired. Crane was forced to see that. She was placed near to Senator Bicknell, and he paid her a degree of kind attention which would have been flattering to any woman.

When the dinner was over, and the gentlemen were about joining the ladies in the superb Louis Seize drawing-room, Senator Bicknell whispered to Crane as they passed from the Louis Quatorze

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dining-room, "Remain half an hour after the others leave."

Crane started—had the Senator heard anything? He reassured himself by remembering that the Senator would not attack him, an invited guest, and in the presence of his wife. But the thought of a private interview with Senator Bicknell on any subject was disquieting to Crane.

When the last carriage had driven off, and only Crane and Annette remained, Senator Bicknell said:

"Come into my den; and, as I propose to take Mrs. Crane into my confidence, on account of the extraordinary political capacity she manifested at my visit to Circleville, I shall ask her to let us smoke while I unfold a scheme to you."

The den was a small, luxurious room, in the Louis Quinze style, and fit to harbour Madame Pompadour herself. It was shaded by opalescent lamps, Turkish rugs covered the parquet floor, and pictures and bric-a-brac worthy of a palace were to be found there. Some people thought that the Senator's den was one of the causes of the weakening of his political power. Many rural legislators

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reckoned his "fixin's" as wicked, and were only reconciled by hearing of the prices paid by the Senator for Percheron horses and Jersey heifers. The Senator did not care a rap for either Percherons or Jerseys, and scarcely knew a Percheron horse from a Jersey cow, but it was a concession to the rural statesmen, and he wisely reckoned these bucolic luxuries in his political expenses. Seated before a fire of aromatic wood, Senator Bicknell, offering a choice cigar to Crane, and taking one himself, began to unfold his scheme. Annette, her white gown brought into high relief by a ruby lamp swinging overhead, sat silent and listened. She did not, apparently, watch her husband's face, but she knew every expression which passed over it, and could have interpreted it, as well as every tone of his voice.

"To come to the point," said the Senator, blandly, "I am one of a number of gentlemen interested in a deal of about two million acres of land in Texas. We have had an offer to sell our holdings and we have determined to accept. Part of the purchase-money is to be paid in cash, and there is also a transfer of property contemplated for about a



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million of dollars. Our attorneys are in Chicago, but meanwhile we want a man to go down to Texas once in a while and see how things are coming on, and attend to some matters of detail which I will state later on. The whole matter will hardly be settled under a year. We propose to pay a fee of ten thousand dollars and a small commission. I should say there was something like twenty thousand dollars in it for the right man. Several, of course, have been suggested, but you know, Mr. Crane, I am like John Adams was about New England men—there never was an office existing or created during John Adams's time that he hadn't a constituent ready for it. So, when the necessity for a man for this work became evident, I suggested I had a constituent, likewise a colleague, in the lower House, who could manage the job if he would, and mentioned your name."

Twenty thousand dollars! It seemed to Crane an enormous sum. Then he heard Senator Bicknell's voice continuing:

"It would oblige you to take a trip to Texas during the Christmas recess, and you would have to spend two or three months down there next sum-

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mer, but I am persuaded we shall reach an early adjournment, so it would not necessarily interfere with you in any way. Besides, it might be useful to you in other ways, and it would be decidedly useful to me. It would show the people in the State that you and I are working well together in harness, and God knows I need some assurances of the sort to be given! That scoundrel, Governor Sanders, has been knifing me right and left all over the State, and I look for trouble both at the convention next summer and when I am up for re-election a year and a half from now."

Crane remained silent a minute or two and grew pale. Senator Bicknell thought he was a little overcome at what was really a very magnificent offer to a man in his situation in life.

Annette, who had taken in, with perfect intelligence, all Senator Bicknell was saying, kept her eyes away from her husband. If he were in league with Governor Sanders——

Crane was not only overcome, he was overwhelmed. The thought came crashing through his brain, "This is the man I am secretly trying to destroy." Every word the Senator uttered seemed

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to have the force of a thousand voices. "That scoundrel, Sanders." Yes, Sanders was a scoundrel, but he had never pretended to be a friend of Senator Bicknell's, nor was he indebted to the Senator for anything. Their warfare had been open and above-board, while his—oh, God! Crane could have cried aloud in his torture when he recalled the league with hell into which he had entered. His head was reeling, he heard the Senator's voice afar off; the ruby light falling upon Annette, in her shining white gown, seemed to be a hundred miles away. Yet, with a calm voice, and with only a slight tremor of his hands, Crane answered:

"I thank you from the bottom of my heart. You have made me a very splendid proposition; twenty thousand dollars to a rural Congressman is a great deal of money, and as for the confidence you show in me, I feel it more than I can express."

He was conscious that he was displaying wonderful nerve; when he began to speak he scarcely knew whether he could get through with a single sentence, but he had spoken with tolerable ease and composure. Of course, he must appear as if he would accept; he could not on the spur of the mo-

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ment devise any plausible refusal; he must have time to think; but it was utterly impossible that he should consider the matter for a moment. He was not yet bad enough for that. If only he had remained honest! For nothing brings home a man's evil-doing to him more than when he sees the result in a concrete form. His wrong-doing comes out of the regions of mind and morals, and becomes a tangible and visible thing, like an incarnate devil. He realises his sin when he receives the wages of sin.

Annette listened to every note in Crane's voice, and heard there falseness. He was not happy, not grateful for the offer. But she, at least, thanked Senator Bicknell from the bottom of her heart for his kind wish to benefit them. When he finished speaking she leaned toward him and laid her hand on his, while her eyes glowed with a lambent light.

"I thank you—I thank you, not only for my husband and myself, but for our little children. It means an education for them—many things their father and I have longed that we might give them when they are older, but feared we could not."

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Senator Bicknell raised her hand to his lips and kissed it gallantly.

“My dear lady,” he said, “I am glad to oblige your husband, and I believe he will render a full equivalent for whatever he makes out of this transaction. And I have frankly told him that I think our co-operation in business will be a good thing for me politically. But the day I spent at your house, the kind hospitality to your husband’s friend, the sweetness of your home, the excellent behaviour of your children, quickened very much the interest I felt in Mr. Crane, and it was a factor in my effort to serve him. Come now, Crane,” said the Senator, tapping him on the shoulder, “all I ask is that when I am up for re-election, if you choose to contest the election with me, you will please leave Mrs. Crane at home. If ever she enters into the campaign, I am lost.”

“She will enter the campaign, but it will be for you,” replied Annette.

Crane then pulled himself together, and again expressed his appreciation of Senator Bicknell’s kindness, and asked when they could meet to go into

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details of the affair—a meeting at which Crane was determined to decline the benefits offered him.

“Oh, some day next week. I’ll let you know when I hear from Chicago,” replied the Senator, and after a little more desultory talk the Cranes rose to go.

“I took the liberty of sending your carriage away, and my chauffeur will take you home,” said the Senator, mindful of attentions to a pretty and pleasing woman.

In a little while Annette and Crane were seated in the Senator’s automobile, and rushing through the frosty December night toward home.

## *Chapter Thirteen*

### WAR AND PEACE

Crane remained perfectly silent. He did not speak a word from the time they left Senator Bicknell's house until they reached home. Annette said nothing to him. The conviction was deepening in her mind that her husband had secretly behaved ill to Senator Bicknell. Crane had revealed unconsciously that night many things which Senator Bicknell had not understood, but which Annette understood only too well. The slight agitation and discomposure which Crane had shown was not the mere shock of a grateful surprise. Annette detected that every word Crane had uttered to Senator Bicknell was false; that his apparent acceptance of the offer was false. The money was much—much to her; the loss of it, after it had been held up to her gaze, would be much; but the loss of Crane's integ-

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rity—ah, could that but be preserved, she would go out and dig for him and for her children! She would slave, she would starve, she would do anything that any woman ever did, that she might feel her children were the children of an honest man. She remembered there was such a thing as heredity, and she trembled at the thought that, if Crane were really a scoundrel, as Senator Bicknell had said Governor Sanders was, her little black-eyed Roger might be a scoundrel, too, before he died. These thoughts, surging through her mind, kept her silent.

Crane felt her silence to be ominous as she felt his to be. As he sat dumb, by her side, his agitation increased instead of diminishing. On what possible ground could he excuse to Annette, as well as Senator Bicknell, his declination of such an offer? But he could not accept it—he was not yet a thorough villain. Had he been a free agent, he would have preferred the splendid vista of power and preferment opened to him by his deal with Sanders to more money even than what was offered him; but he was not a free agent. He had promised Sanders, and if his nerve failed him he would



be ruined by Sanders politically, and perhaps personally as well. True, Sanders did not have a line of his writing—such agreements as theirs are not put on paper—nor had he, so far, borrowed a dollar from Sanders, although he expected to do so the first of the year when his notes fell due.

While he was thinking these thoughts, he found himself before the door of the great caravanserai where they lived, and presently he was sitting in their little drawing-room alone at last, and face to face with the strange circumstances which had befallen him. He sat in a great arm-chair drawn up to the embers of the fire. On the table at his elbow a light was burning. He heard Annette go into the children's room and remain five minutes—she always said a little prayer above their cribs every night before she slept—then she went into her own room.

She turned on the light by her dressing-table, and sat down to take off her few simple ornaments and the ribbon-bow in her hair. The face that met her gaze in the mirror looked so strange that it frightened her. Yes, like Crane himself, she had been surprised at her own self-control. But she

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knew as well as she knew she was alive that Crane, in some way, had betrayed Senator Bicknell, the man who, after honestly admitting that Crane could serve him, was yet animated by a sincere wish to benefit Crane; who had given Crane his first political start in life, and had treated him with unvarying kindness ever since.

The more she thought over what had happened that evening, the more acute became her fear and her pain. She stopped in her employment, and, leaning upon her arms, sat motionless for a long time. Suddenly, the distant chiming of a clock told her it was midnight. She roused herself, and then, following an influence stronger than herself, went into the next room, where Crane had been going through his agony alone. As she approached him, he raised a pale and conscience-stricken face to hers, but it was quite calm. He had fought the battle out, and there was no longer a conflict within him.

“Yes,” he said, as if continuing out aloud a consecutive train of thought, “I should be very grateful to you—I *am* grateful to you. No doubt, Sen-

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ator Bicknell was influenced very much in what he did by the admiration and respect he has for you. But it only makes it the harder for me."

"There should be no question of gratitude between you and me," replied Annette, coming closer to him.

"There is much—much. I have not realised until within the last few months how much I really owe you—but why do I say months? I might say the last few hours—the last few minutes—and I have also realised how much more I might have owed you, for I am beginning to think that few women are as well adapted as you are for the wife of a man like me. Not all women would have borne with poverty and seclusion as you have done."

A deep blush suffused Annette's face. The poverty and seclusion had been in a way forced upon her by him, but, being a woman of invincible discretion, she did not put her resentment into sarcastic words, or words at all. She stood by him silently, and, seeing that Crane was striving to speak, awaited his words gently, laying her free hand on his shoulder.

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At last it came—a full confession—made in broken words and phrases, but of which Annette understood every word.

“I could have stood anything but his kindness,” said Crane, with a pale face of woe. “That unnerved me completely. I made up my mind I could not accept the money, and then it occurred to me that you had a right to be consulted, and immediately I felt a conviction as loud as a clap of thunder, as penetrating as lightning, that you would never in the world let me accept that money. Ah, Annette, what a thing it is to have an upright wife! To feel that however weak and wavering a man may be, that half of his soul, of his heart, of his possessions, the half owner of his children, stands like a rock for truth and honesty! Thorndyke was saying something to me the other day about a man being upright instead of being made to be upright. I tell you, there are many men who can be made good or bad—and I am one of them—by their wives. Many a poor wretch to-day is a rascal who might have led an honest and respected life if but he had had a high-minded wife like you. It is you who have saved me, and what a miserable

return have I made you for all you have done for me!"

"What you have just said repays me for all, because, you know, I have always loved you—better than you cared to know, or than I cared to show during the last few years," Annette answered, in a calm voice.

Crane rose and opened his arms to her. It was the sweetest moment of their lives. Shameful and dishonourable as Crane's course had been, here was one person who loved him, believed in him, and, oh, wonder of love and faith, still honoured and trusted him!

After their first rapture of love and forgiveness, action occurred to Annette's practical mind.

"Well, then," she said, as if a course of conduct had at once been revealed to her, "you must at once withdraw from your agreement with Governor Sanders. Of course, he will do everything he can to defeat you——"

"And he will."

"And we shall have to go back to Circleville and begin life over again. But I am sure you can do well at your profession, and, remember, there is as

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much chance for an ambitious man in law as in politics.”

“Yes, but you can’t imagine how the life gets hold of one. It seems like death to me to leave Congress—and when I was steadily rising, too—and to be driven out ignominiously by a creature like Sanders! But I must do it; you would not let me do otherwise.”

“Yes; I would not let you do otherwise. Then you must go to Senator Bicknell and tell him all.”

“Do you think I should? Do you think I *could?*”

“Oh, yes. He must know it some time. He must know why you decline this scheme he has arranged to benefit you. You must go to him early to-morrow morning.”

Crane looked at his watch.

“It is half-past twelve—he always sits up until two or three o’clock in the morning.”

“Then go now.”

“He will think my repentance a mere emotion—he will believe that my character was shown in my agreement with Sanders.”

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“No matter.”

“Yes, no matter.”

Annette gave him his coat and hat and gloves. He turned to kiss her, and instinctively he removed his hat with a respect that approached reverence. This pretty pebble which he had so lightly regarded had proved to be a jewel of great price.

Two hours later Crane re-entered the house and went softly to his own rooms. As he noiselessly opened the door of the drawing-room he saw that Annette had fallen asleep in the great chair in which she had found him. She had thrown a fur cape around her bare neck and arms, but it had slipped partly away, leaving her white throat exposed. There were traces of tears upon her cheeks, but her face, though mournful, was placid—and how young she looked! It seemed impossible that she should be the mother of two children as old as Roger and Elizabeth.

As Crane approached her quietly, she stirred, opened her eyes, and sat up, in full possession of her wits. Crane drew a chair up and took both her hands in his.

“I haven’t felt so at ease in my mind since the

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day last summer that I first met Governor Sanders. I have repented and confessed."

"That is good," said Annette, in a clear voice.

"I found Senator Bicknell just where I had left him, in his den; I told him the whole story—how I had yielded, because I was poor and ambitious, where a better man would have resisted. I told him there was no fear of my falling away this time; that you would not let me; and if I had kept you with me, and had taken you more into my confidence, I believe I should never have entered into this damnable bargain with Sanders. The Senator was staggered at first. I don't believe the slightest idea of my being disloyal to him had entered his head, but as soon as he recovered from the first shock he behaved nobly. I told him that I had not written a line to Sanders, he had not loaned me a penny, although I had expected to call upon him the first of January. Then Senator Bicknell said:

"'So, you have not committed any overt act against me?'

"'No,' I said, 'but chiefly because the time was not ripe.'

"'You have, so far, only agreed to betray me?'



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"I said yes, but that was crime enough. He reflected a while, and then he held out his hand and said:

"'Let bygones be bygones. Sanders will make you pay for this, and that will be punishment enough. But I am ready and willing to believe that, no matter how much you might have agreed to knife me, when the time came you wouldn't have done it. At the first moment we meet in private, at the first hint of kindness on my part, your resolution to do me wrong melts away. That must count.'

"'And something else,' I said. 'Of course, I can't accept the benefit you thought to confer on me. That would invalidate all.'

"'What does your wife say to this?' he said. 'You remember the offer was made in her presence. Or does she know that you wish to refuse it?'

"'My wife would not let me take it if I wished to,' I replied. 'She is a much more high-minded person than I am or ever can be.'

"'She must indeed be high-minded,' he said, 'and you are right in saying that to accept it would invalidate everything. I am of the opinion

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that your wife has seen clearly in this instance. But'—here he took a turn or two up and down the floor—'I don't think it would invalidate my promoting your candidacy before the Legislature in January. It seems to me now to be the best thing for both of us. The fight with Sanders has got to come, and the sooner the better, so that the field can be cleared for my own fight a year and a half from now. Yes, it is decidedly best. You may recall I indicated last spring that I would support your senatorial aspirations in certain contingencies. These contingencies have come to pass. I doubt if we can save the State to the party without joining forces now.'

"Then I told him that I owed money, and could hardly support the position of a Senator here with the salary, less what I was obliged to pay in interest."

"'Nonsense,' he said; 'turn your salary over to your wife; she is a woman of uncommonly sound sense, a good manager—that I saw in her house. Of course you can't go into society on less than your salary, but you can live comfortably and respectably. And let me tell you, this town is full

of big houses which caused the Senators who built them to lose their elections. It doesn't hurt a man with his constituents in the least to live simply. Some of the gentlemen from the rural districts have complained bitterly of this little place——'

"And then, after more talk, everything was settled. I wasn't to write to Sanders, of course, but to go and see him. Sanders wouldn't dare to proclaim what we agreed to do, but he will fight me with every weapon at his command. I shouldn't much care how things went—that is, so I feel now—except for Senator Bicknell, but every blow at Sanders helps the Senator, and I shall fight for him as long as breath warms my body. When we parted I was much overcome, and I think Senator Bicknell was, too. Coming home, it occurred to me how well you had managed on the pittance I allowed you at Circleville."

"It was not much, but it could hardly be called a pittance," replied Annette, smiling through her tears, for the stress of emotion under which she had suffered had found its natural vent at last, and she was weeping a little. But they were happy tears. Crane had reached the turn in life when it was to

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be determined whether God or the devil should be his master, and he had turned his back on Satan. He took his wife in his arms and kissed her tenderly and reverently. No one knew better than he the moral beauty, the power to charm, to sustain, to lead forward, of the woman he had not thought worthy to stand by him in Washington.

. . . . .

The next morning early, Crane started West. He had his fateful interview with Sanders and returned to Washington within a week. Sanders's words had been few, but full of meaning.

"All right," he said. "I don't take any stock in this awakening of conscience business. You think Bicknell can serve you better than I can. Very well. We will see."

Suddenly, and apparently without volition, Crane's right arm shot out and his open palm struck Sanders's cheek. The Governor, as quick as thought, hit back. He was a brute, but not a coward. Then both men came to their senses, and, hating each other worse than ever, each was ashamed of his violence.

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The Governor, taking out his handkerchief, coolly wiped the blood from his nose, and said:

“I don’t care to engage in a fist fight with you. We can settle all our quarrels when the Legislature meets. You will need all your courage then.”

When Crane returned to Washington, he went straight to Senator Bicknell and told him all.

“All right,” replied the Senator, as Governor Sanders had said. “This is my fight now,” and straightway the Senator took the midnight train for the State capital to pull off his coat and do yeoman’s work for Crane, and incidentally for himself.

The month of December was bright and beautiful all the way through, and the sunshine lasted into January. Thorndyke thought he had not been so nearly happy for a long time. He saw Constance often, and she was beautifully kind to him. He scarcely went into society at all, and had the hardihood to decline an invitation to one of the Secretary of State’s small dinners on the comprehensive excuse of “a previous engagement,” which Mrs. Hill-Smith, who had invited him, did not believe in the least; and when she had plaintively men-

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tioned the names of various English, French, Russian, Austrian, and German diplomats who were to be present, Thorndyke had replied in a manner which mightily discomposed Mrs. Hill-Smith:

“Oh, then, you won’t miss a stray American or two!”

If Mrs. Hill-Smith had had her way, she would have missed every American invited.

Thorndyke saw much of the Cranes and of the children, who showered their favour upon him. He could not but be struck by the new note in Crane—something subdued, yet full of hope—and he had quite lost that look of harassment and dejection which, on first meeting him, had struck Thorndyke. Crane was normally a lover of fighting, and, although Senator Bicknell, for strategic reasons, chose to keep him in Washington while the preliminaries to the senatorial fight were raging, yet he delivered some good shots at long range, and it began to look as if he might be elected for the short term in spite of Governor Sanders. The National Committee was not indifferent to this fight, and Senator Bicknell went into it with all his old-time vigour. He worked, ate and drank, waked and

slept, with members of the Legislature for three weeks before the election came off. It was a stupendous battle, and neither side got any odds in the betting.

During the latter part of the Christmas recess, Thorndyke went north to pay his sister, Elizabeth, a visit. Her first words to him were:

“Why, Geoffrey, how young you look!”

And everybody who met him told him he looked young, or looked well, or looked prosperous, and one horny-handed old constituent hazarded the opinion that Mr. Thorndyke was “thinkin’ o’ git-tin’ spliced.” It was all because Constance Maitland had been kind to him.

On his way back to Washington he found himself in the same car with James Brentwood Baldwin, Junior, who was coming home to be nursed and taken to Palm Beach after an attack of the chicken-pox. This fifteen-year-old youth was in charge of a valet who attended to him assiduously, and even went into the dining-car with him to see that he exercised due prudence with regard to his diet. This, however, was superfluous, as the scion of the house of Baldwin was the very epitome of prudence, and

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turned away from entrées, sweets, and ices with a degree of virtue which, to Thorndyke, dining at the same table with him, seemed superhuman in a boy of any age. Thorndyke watched the Baldwin boy curiously; it was one of the most deadly and fascinating phases of the whole newly-rich question to him, how the children of the newly rich were brought up. He observed in the Baldwin boy a total lack of the normal faults and virtues of the normal boy. Young Baldwin eyed Thorndyke at first with suspicion, but Thorndyke, wishing to examine and classify the specimen of a boy before him, intimated that he was acquainted with the James Brentwood Baldwins in Washington. Then James, Junior, abandoned something of his hauteur. He acknowledged being the pupil of a school at which Thorndyke happened to know the fees were made purposely so high as to exclude any but the sons of the very rich. They had an Anglican nomenclature, a resident chaplain, and the spiritual direction of the masters as well as the pupils was attended to by the Bishop of the diocese—the brother of the Secretary of State. All this James, Junior, communicated while toying with his rice-pudding, and



turning an eye of stern disapproval at the tutti-frutti ice.

“And what do you expect to be when you grow up, my lad?” asked Thorndyke.

“I shall be a philanthropist,” replied James, Junior, with dignity. “I shall try to use my wealth as a means of benefiting others. I am president of our association for giving Christmas gifts to poor boys, and I like it very much. We, who have superior advantages, should try and extend a helping hand to others less fortunately placed.”

Less fortunately placed! Thorndyke looked at the boy with the deepest commiseration, and pitied the poor children of the rich.

“You can learn a great deal from a poor boy,” said he, presently, watching the boy’s solemn, handsome face. He might have been a hearty, wholesome youngster, this grandson of Danny Hogan’s, had he but been given a chance. “The poor boy is the normal boy; a boy should be generally dirty and noisy; he should occasionally get a lecture from his mother and a licking from his father, and a black eye from some other boy. He must be a fighter. No less a man than Paul Jones has said

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that he never saw a liar who would fight, or a fighter who would lie; and he must not only tell the truth himself, but be ready to lick any other boy who tells him a lie, for boys are, to themselves, a law-making body, and must enforce their own laws."

"That is not the way of the boys at our school," icily replied James Brentwood Baldwin, Junior, rising with dignity and receiving his hat from the hand of his valet.

The day of Thorndyke's arrival in Washington he was walking along the street in the bright, sunny, early afternoon of winter. He stopped to buy an afternoon newspaper, that he might see how the balloting for Senator was going in Crane's State, when a shout aroused him, and Letty Standiford, in a gorgeous crimson automobile, with Senator Mince Pie Mulligan by her side, dashed up to the sidewalk.

"Mr. Thorndyke," shrieked Letty, playfully pretending she meant to run Thorndyke down. "I have a piece of news for you. Look out, this is my new red devil—I don't mean Senator Mulligan, but my auto."

"I certainly shall look out when you are around

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in that death-dealing machine," replied Thorn-  
dyke, dodging barely in time to save his legs.  
"What is your news?"

"Just this. Dad gave me his word this morn-  
ing that he would not be a candidate for re-election  
next year. I went after the doctors myself, and  
made them tell me the truth about Dad—he's the  
only father I've got, you know. And they all told  
me the same thing—that if he could slack up work,  
and retire at the end of his term, he was good for  
twenty years more, but that if he kept at the grind,  
his life wasn't worth a pin's purchase. Dad wasn't  
scared by that, but when I told him that I should  
die of fright and distress if he went away and left  
me, the poor old thing weakened, and said he'd de-  
cline a re-election, and—oh, good gracious! He  
told me not to breathe it to a soul! He actually  
shook his finger at me when he said it. Oh, heav-  
ens! If you or Senator Mulligan give me  
away——"

"Dad will shake his finger at you again," replied  
Thorndyke, laughing. Nevertheless, his pulses  
had started off at a great rate.

"It's not that—it's not that I'm afraid of him

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—but it would break his dear old heart to think I had disobeyed him.”

Letty Standiford, as she said this, was an object for angels to love, in spite of her wild air, her mannish hat and coat, her flying and dishevelled locks.

“It is safe with me,” said Thorndyke, gravely, and Senator Mulligan spoke up:

“Divil a word will I say about it. I’m too much afraid of th’ ould chap—and of you, too, Miss Letty.”

“Glad to hear it, Sinitor,” replied madcap Letty, viciously mimicking the Senator’s unfortunate accent, “and, oh, Mr. Thorndyke, have you heard that Miss Maitland is engaged to Mr. Cathcart, the navy man, who is always hanging around her? It was announced this morning. Good-bye.”

Letty flashed off, with a bicycle policeman after her full tilt.

Thorndyke was near his lodgings. He did not know how he got there, but presently he found himself sitting in his arm-chair before the fire. Two hours later, when the maid-servant brought him a letter, he was sitting in the same position.

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The dusk was closing in, but he saw that the address was in Constance Maitland's handwriting. Of course she had written to tell him of her engagement—it was kind of her so to break his calamity to him.

The letter lay unopened for half an hour. Then, with a desperate courage, Thorndyke tore open the envelope. It was an invitation to dinner two weeks hence. It was unfeeling of her to do this. It was ignoble to forget that dear, lost past of which she had often spoken to him, and had allowed him freely to speak to her. It was impossible that he should accept; it was impossible that he should voluntarily meet Constance again, except for one last interview—that final leave-taking which is like the last farewell to the dying. And the sooner it was over the better. Thorndyke pulled himself together, and made up his mind to go to Constance at once.

As he walked along the streets in the sharp air of the January twilight, everything looked unfamiliar to him. His interior world was destroyed—engulfed. Never more could he know hope or happiness; for him was only that stolid endurance

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of life which is like a prisoner's endurance of his cell and his shackles.

When he reached Constance Maitland's door, she was at home, and he walked into the familiar drawing-room. She was sitting on the great, deep sofa, with no light but that of the blazing wood fire, although it was quite six o'clock. She rose as Thorn- dyke entered and greeted him gaily. Her medita- tions seemed to have been singularly happy.

Thorndyke sat down on the sofa by her, and, as all men do under stress of feeling, put his pain into the fewest words possible.

"I heard this afternoon," he said, in a strange, cold voice, "of your engagement to Cathcart."

"Did you?" replied Constance, smiling brightly. "From whom, pray?"

"From Miss Standiford."

"So that crazy Letty Standiford goes about an- nouncing my engagement!" There was a pause, and then Thorndyke said, in the same strange, cold voice:

"Cathcart is an admirable man."

"So everybody says," brightly responded Con- stance. "Many persons have assured me of that."

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A longer pause followed. It might be ungenerous to interject a note of pain into her first happiness, but it is human to cry out, to justify one's self, to call attention to the gift, when one has given a heart and a soul.

"If Cathcart can give you even a part of the fortune you will lose by marrying him, he is right to ask you. I could give you nothing. And so, although I have loved you for nineteen years, I could not ask you to descend from wealth to poverty with me."

"I shall not lose, perhaps, as much as you think by marrying an American," replied Constance to this, adjusting her draperies in the light of the fire, which played over her face. How bright, how smiling she was! Her dark eyes shone, and the faint dimple in her cheek kept coming and going. "I did not, of course, relish the thought of spending all my life alone," she continued, laughing shamelessly. "I was very young, you may remember. So I determined to save up all I could of my income. It was easy enough, living, as I did, with a person who was most of the time a helpless invalid. Then, my uncle, von Hesselt, realising the injustice done

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me by my aunt, left in his will a considerable sum of money, which was to be paid me if I lost my aunt's fortune through marrying an American. This was no more than fair, as my aunt left the money to the von Hesselts in case I should marry an American. My lawyers here have assured me that it is an open question whether I could not, after all, marry whom I will, and retain the money, because the terms of the reversion to the von Hesselts are very obscure, and it might come at last to my aunt's heirs-at-law, of which I am the chief. But I hate publicity and lawsuits and all such things, and as I am still reasonably well off, I concluded to spare myself such agonies, and to be satisfied with much less than I have now. But it will be enough to give me all I want in any event. I can keep this house, my carriage and servants, and dress well. What more does any one want?"

As she continued speaking, Thorndyke's agony increased with every word. If only he had known before! Possibly—ah, how vain now was it! How hopeless, how full of everlasting pain!

"But," Constance kept on, "Mr. Cathcart is not the man for whom I should sacrifice even so



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much. He has never hinted that I should marry him. I am sure he does not want me. I cannot imagine how such an absurd report got out."

Thorndyke felt stunned. He said, after a moment:

"So you are not engaged to Cathcart?"

"Certainly not. Have I not just said that he has never asked me to marry him? And that *he* is not the man for whom I would sacrifice any part of my fortune?"

She emphasised the "he," and her words were full of meaning.

Poor Thorndyke was so dazed, so overwhelmed, that he could do nothing but stare stupidly into Constance's face. The man who really loves and suffers is generally stupid at the supreme moment. And as she looked into his eyes, so full of longing and yet half-despairing, she turned her head aside and held out her hand a little way, and he caught it in his.

. . . . .

Ten minutes afterward Scipio Africanus poked his head in the door and saw that which made his

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eyeballs bulge an inch from his head. At the same moment the bell rang sharply.

Scipio opened the front door, and, announcing that Miss Maitland was at home, showed Julian Crane and Annette into the drawing-room. As they walked briskly to the fireplace, they saw the two persons on the sofa start apart. Thorndyke rose to his feet. Having been accepted, he was once more master of himself and of the situation. Constance cowered in the corner of the sofa.

“Pray excuse us,” cried Annette, laughing, blushing, and hesitating.

“There is nothing to excuse,” replied Thorn-dyke, smiling coolly. “Miss Maitland has just promised to marry me. I am sure I don’t know why, but I am very much obliged to her all the same.”

Annette reached out and took Thorndyke’s hand in hers.

“I know why,” she said, “any woman would know why.”

Crane shook Thorndyke’s hand warmly.

Constance, too, rose, and without a word, but with rapture in her eyes and smile, received

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Annette's kiss and Crane's cordial grasp of the hand.

"I suppose," said Annette, "you are too blissfully happy to be interested in anything now, but when you come to your senses, I am sure both of you will rejoice with us. We have just had a despatch from Senator Bicknell, saying my husband was elected Senator at four o'clock to-day on the fifth ballot."

And then Crane spoke, with sincerity in his eye and his smile:

"We came straight to you for sympathy in our good fortune, for which we are wholly indebted to Senator Bicknell. And we find you enjoying the good fortune that befell us ten years ago. Ah, there is no such good fortune on this earth, Thorndyke, as a good wife!"

THE END





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