

PZ
3

.H1745

T

FT MEADE
GenColl





TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

A Story of the Ozarks

By WILLIAM H. HAMBY

Drawings by SEARS GALLAGHER



Philadelphia
THE WESTMINSTER PRESS
1911

PZ3
H 1745T

Copyright, 1911
By The Trustees of the Presbyterian Board of Publication and
Sabbath-School Work.

\$.60

Headquarters: Philadelphia
New York Chicago St. Louis San Francisco
Nashville Pittsburgh Cincinnati

To that inspiring critic who
is never satisfied with in-
ferior work, this little book
is gratefully dedicated ∴ ∴

INTRODUCTION

There are many splendid young fellows in this country who hammer their way to success without ever stopping to inquire whether or not they have a chance. Of these, none I have ever known, are more manly and lovable than the "hill boys" of the Ozark Mountains. Many of them who started in life with nothing—not even an opportunity—have by courage and patience and faith and everlasting grit, won useful and honorable places for themselves in the world. "Tom Henry" was one of these; and if the reader gets a fraction of the pleasure from his acquaintance that the author has, all concerned will be happy.

W. H. H.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

CHAPTER I

THOMAS HENDERSON BLACK stretched his legs in front of him and leaned his back against the warm straw. Protected from the north wind by the straw stack, he lazily enjoyed the comfort of the March sunshine.

Thomas Henderson, called by everyone except himself, Tom Henry, was tall for his age, and slender for any age. He had a high, peaked head and hair the color of dead broom grass. His eyes were pale blue, the color of skim milk, the eyes that indicate extreme dullness or a touch of genius. In his case it was genius, for he

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

had both a vivid imagination and strong power of reasoning.

It was his task this afternoon to reason, to think, to plan. There was a great matter to be settled. He was fifteen and had not yet chosen a career; he believed it was time, and went at it in earnest. His profession, he felt, was a mere matter of choice. He was confident he could succeed in any of them, and it would not be much of a job either.

He might be a doctor. It would take some time, of course, and a little study—oh, considerable, perhaps. And when he came back he would be so young people would be afraid to trust him. But one day as he rode along a mother would rush out of a house beside the road weeping and wringing her hands, implore him to come in and save her little girl—four of the best doctors in the county had given her up to die. He would go in, leisurely lay his hat on the table, glance at the child, order a glass of water and prepare a dose of a

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

medicine which he had discovered himself. In ten minutes the child would be sleeping, the next day out at play. His name would be on every tongue; patients would flock to him; his fame would spread and he would be called to New York—and——

Then again he might be a railroad president. It would be necessary to begin as agent—perhaps at Sarvis Point. Thinking he was a green hand, they would get their fastest operator to have some fun with him. The fellow would send a five-hundred-word message just as fast as he possibly could. When he finished, Thomas would ask: “What makes you so slow? Have you the cramp this morning?” Then he would fire the answer back at them so fast that none of them could touch it. The superintendent would hear of it, and make him dispatcher. The next year he would be superintendent; and two years later the papers would say, “The youngest railroad president in the world is Thomas Henderson Black of the P. & I.”

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

He might be a soldier, or sailor, or merchant, or editor. In each of these callings he followed himself to swift and certain renown. It was so easy to succeed in any of them—in the imagination.

But after all he came back to the one thing his mind had dwelt on most persistently, and definitely decided on that. He would be an orator.

He got up, brushed the straw from his clothes and swung off across the field toward the house. The chill of winter was still in the sharp wind, but the sun promised spring. The robins had come, and the trees looked reddish brown. Thomas was scarcely conscious that his feet touched earth. It was such a relief to have it all settled, and already his mind was soaring on the wings of his future greatness.

A half hour later his mother found him in the library with all sorts of books piled around him, rapidly running over the titles.

“Why, Tom Henry, what are you doing?”

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

“Just looking,” he answered evasively.

He was hunting a book on oratory. Directly he found what he wanted, an ancient copy of Bronson’s “Elocution,” seven hundred pages of fine print. He hugged it under his arm and slipped upstairs to his room.

Immediately he began to practice the twenty-four different ways to say “O” which the author had laid down. Directly his “O’s” and “O—O’s” and “OO—OO’s” oozed out and downstairs. His mother came running up and called:

“Tom, Tom Henry, what is the matter? Are you ill?”

“N-o-oooh,” he answered disgustedly.

The next day he thought it time to begin a speech. The district school was out, and the farm work had not begun actively yet, so he had considerable leisure.

He got pretty blue over that speech before it was finished. It was hard work. It brought the sweat more than once, and at

that time Thomas was not overfond of sweat.

Saturday morning he started to the woods pasture. It was warm now, the wind from the south and the sun exhilarating. A butterfly flew in front of him, and a lizard scurried in the leaves beside the road, both signs of spring. But Tom Henry was not happy. He did not know how that speech would sound. He had never so much as recited a piece in school, and it embarrassed him even to think of making a speech to the woods.

He got on one stump, but it did not suit him; he tried another, but it was too close to the road; he perched upon a third, and cleared his throat to begin. At the first word his voice scared him and he stopped. "Oh, shucks," he said impatiently. "Thomas Henderson, what makes you such a fool?" Then he struck out bravely, accompanying his words with energetic, but wild gestures.

Suddenly he stopped and listened. Some

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

one was passing along the road, singing. It was Allie Trosper—no other girl had such a clear voice.

Tom Henry jumped off the stump and cut diagonally across the woods to intercept her. He would tell her about it; he wanted his plan kept secret, for he intended to burst suddenly upon the community a renowned orator, but she would not tell.

He was sitting on the fence as though by accident when she came by with a basket in one hand, her bonnet in the other. Allie was a girl who wore her bonnet mostly in her hand, for she was afraid of neither freckles nor tan, and loved the feel of the wind and sun on her face. Perhaps that was why her hair was so ruddy and her eyes so bright and brown.

“Good morning, Allie,” said the boy.

“Good morning, Tom.” She looked up.

He got off the fence and walked with her toward the store.

“You know what I am going to be?” he asked.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

“A great, tall, gawky man, I guess,” she answered, with a mischievous twinkle.

He was vexed. It was that about Allie he did not like; she was smart and friendly, but was always saying things like that.

“What are you going to be, Tom?” she asked, seeing he was vexed.

“An orator,” he answered roundly. Then he told her all about his plans, and ended with, “I am going to sway people,”—he swung his arms broadly—“move them as the wind does the wheat.”

She dodged. “You will mow them down like the wheat if you are not careful with your arms,” she laughed.

He was vexed again. It was not a laughing matter. She did not seem nearly so earnest and enthusiastic as she ought. Yet she coaxed him to say his speech to her. She sat on a flat rock near where the branch crossed the road, and he stood on the bank above.

There were many halts in the speech, many flounders, many repetitions; and

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

Tom's face was red with embarrassment, but he went through with it.

"It is real good, Tom," she said when he finished, "just fine for the first time."

He bade her a quick, curt "good morning," and turned off through the woods. "The first time! The first time!" he kept repeating. His face burned with shame that he had ever tried to speak it to a girl; of course she would not understand.

He felt wretched, horribly wretched. The truth was, he knew the speech was a failure—it was no speech at all. He had worked hard on it, almost a week! He could not speak; he could never be an orator.

Tom stayed in the woods most of the morning, wrestling with the first bitter disappointment of his career. When youth, full of eagerness and faith and imagination, first discovers that things cannot be accomplished by a wave of the hand or a nod of the head, it is likely to become very despondent.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

It was so with Thomas. He crept back to the house, stole up to his room and looked through that seven-hundred-page elocution. "I can't do it," he said; "I'll have to be something else."

But there was one good thing about Tom Henry; no matter how easy a thing looked at first nor how hard it later proved to be, once begun, there was something in him that would not let him quit. That something had hold now. "Oh, you foolish Thomas Henderson," he abused himself, "you think you can do things in a day. You think you are smart, but you aren't. You've got to do it, though."

When his despondency had worn off a little, he decided to go over and talk to Uncle Billy Houck about it. Billy was his uncle only by friendship, as he was to everybody else, especially the boys around Buckeye Bridge.

The next evening he crossed the fields to Uncle Billy's. The farmer was at the barn, feeding, and when he was done they

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

sat on the wood pile by the gate, for he saw the boy had something particular to ask.

“Mr. Houck,” Tom began, “if a fellow wanted to be an orator, what ought he to do first?”

“I reckon,” said Billy thoughtfully, “the first thing would be to get the embarrassment rubbed off.” Mr. Houck was not a scholar, but he had lots of common sense.

“How would he do that?” asked the boy.

“Oh, speak pieces at school, and take part in debates, and the like. Fellow can’t say much at first—gets shaky in the legs, but if he keeps on trying, he gets better.”

“I am going to be an orator.” Tom made the announcement definitely.

“Well, it’ll take a heap of hard work,” said Uncle Billy. “But if you are a real genuine good one, there’s not a great sight of competition. Lots of fellows think they are orators. There is old Josh Bradley”—Billy chuckled—“thinks he is an orator and always takes up everybody’s time at any

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

public meeting tryin' to get other folks to think so. And that little lawyer at Sarvis Point thinks he's an orator, but he's not; he's just the mouthpiece for noise.

“My idee of an orator,” continued Billy, “is a fellow that knows somethin' to say and has some way of makin' the people listen to it and understand it.”

When Tom rose to go, Mr. Houck remarked, “I reckon if you want to make a start, we can work you in on the debate over at the schoolhouse a week from Friday night.”

“I wish you would.” Tom was delighted.

The next day he received notice that he was chosen as the first speaker on the affirmative for the debate, and the subject was:

“Resolved: That water is more destructive to life and property than fire.”

It was to be the last session of the debating society for the season and a big crowd would be present. And he, Thomas Henderson Black, was chosen the first

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

speaker! Jimmy Burns was the first on the list of speakers for the other side.

At once Tom Henry's imagination began to soar. What a victory he would win! How he would astonish them! And Allie Trosper would be there.

CHAPTER II

FRIDAY evening Tom Henry finished his chores in nervous haste. It was scarcely dark when he started to the debate. By the path across the ridge it was only a mile to the schoolhouse. He walked through the woods as though in an enchanted land.

It was a quiet, warm night for March, and the moon shone softly through a smoky haze. The air was laden with the smell of burning leaves; and the fragrance of burning leaves always stirred Tom's imagination. It called up pictures of Indian signal fires on distant hills; of camp fires around which sat swarthy Spaniards, who centuries ago explored the Ozark hills; and, too, his fancy saw in the light of later camp fires his own grim countrymen in hurried preparation for the battles of Wilson's Creek and Pea Ridge.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

But he brought himself back from romantic speculation with a jerk. "Look here, Thomas Henderson"—in addressing himself he never spoke aloud, but the words were as distinct in his mind as though uttered to some one else—"you've other business to-night than cavorting around in the past."

Therewith he began once more to go carefully over his speech. It was a wonderful speech. He began with the flood and described all the great water disasters of the world's history. The argument closed with two striking word pictures; one, a ship with all hands going down at sea; the other, the breaking of the dikes of Holland.

Tom Henry glowed with pride as he thought what a sensation that speech would make. How the enemy would be stampeded—Jimmy Burns especially would be swallowed up in defeat; the audience would cheer wildly. And Allie Trosper would be there.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

He skipped along the woods path and swung his arms in exultation.

As he approached, four streams of light poured out through the windows on each side and touched the trees and underbrush that came close around the little school-house.

The crowd was already gathering. In the yard some young folks had started a game of snap, but Tom was too serious for amusement this evening, and went on in. There were several young people inside, and three or four old men sat by the door, discussing corn-planting.

“Hello, Tommy”—it was Uncle Josh Bradley, who thought he was an orator—“I hear you been chose this time.” Tom nodded modestly. “Well, a feller’s got to begin some time. The greenness has got to be wore off if you are ever goin’ to learn to speak in public. I remember the first time I ever made a speech”——

Tom hurried on to the front. “The greenness wore off,” indeed! Did that ig-

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

norant old fellow imagine his beginning was anything like what Thomas Henderson Black's was to be? Well, he would see.

It was, indeed, a large crowd that gathered. Everybody in the district, both old and young, who ever went anywhere at night was there. Tom's heart pounded with excitement as he looked over the audience. Every seat was filled and many stood around the walls.

A thrill of pride passed over Tom when the captain of the affirmative side, George Jones, came and sat down beside him for a few minutes' consultation. Allie Trosper was looking, too.

The president of the debating society called the house to order; three judges were appointed and given front seats; and the secretary called the first captain, George Jones, to introduce the debate.

He did little more than state the question, "Resolved: That water is more destructive to life and property than fire."

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

The captain of the negative side was then called, and he, too, made, only a few "scattering remarks."

Even these Tom Henry did not hear, for the blood was pounding deafeningly in his ears. The next time would be his, his, his! He swallowed desperately; his throat was as dry as the skin of a gourd.

"The next speaker, on the affirmative," the secretary was reading, "is Tom Henry Black."

Somehow—just how he never knew—Tom got out of his seat and was before the audience; it was the stillest crowd he ever had seen, and he wondered vaguely if they had not all died and were not sitting up stiff in their seats.

"Honor — hem" — He cleared his throat and tried it again. "Honorable ladies, judges and gentlemen—honorable judges" — There he stuck until he counted thirty thumps of his heart. He braced his knees and made another desperate effort: "There was the flood" —

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

“And there she stuck,” said Jimmy Burns in a loud, mocking whisper. The girl beside him tittered, and a suppressed wave of merriment passed partly over the audience, but it was quickly checked, for the people believed in encouraging beginners; the boy must have a show.

This insult from the enemy cleared Tom's mind. He began in earnest, talking very rapidly, excitedly. Several times he forgot; several times he repeated; once or twice he got scared again, and his knees grew weak and his voice got husky. But some way he went through with it, closing with a description of the breaking of the dikes in Holland—the people happy in their homes, the mad sea rushing in—darkness, water and death.

There was very hearty, very spontaneous clapping of hands and stamping of feet when Tom sat down, but it brought only partial comfort to him, for he was already remembering that some of the best parts

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

of his speech had been left out; and his face burned at the thought of the many blunders he had made.

Jimmy Burns was the next speaker. Jimmy was about Tom's age, a round-faced, black-haired, young fellow; rather handsome and self-assured—always at his ease. He could talk along smoothly whether he had anything to say or not; in fact, the less he had to say the better it was for him, for facts bothered him.

“Honorable judges, ladies and gentlemen,” he began glibly, “I can't make a flowery speech like my opponent—but I want to give you a few facts.

“He spoke of the flood that drowned thousands of people; but he did not tell you of the Day of Judgment when the whole world is to be burned up.” There were cheers from his side; and he continued his speech in this strain for ten or fifteen minutes, then closed with this:

“Now, ladies and gentlemen, take his greatest example, the breaking of the dikes

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

in Holland. That was terrible, more terrible than my opponent pictured. Tens of thousands lost their lives.

“But did he tell you why the dikes broke?” Jimmy raised his voice to a shout. “No. Why didn’t he?” then his voice dropped to the confidential. “Because they burned in two.”

That captured the crowd. Even those who knew better joined in the laugh, and Jimmy sat down amidst tumultuous applause.

One after the other the rest of the speakers made their arguments, but Tom Henry heard none of them. At last the debate closed. The judges conferred among themselves a few minutes, then passed up a slip of paper to the chairman, who arose and announced:

“Two votes for the negative, one for the affirmative.”

The society adjourned. Tom Henry slipped hurriedly through the crowd toward the door, looking neither to the right nor the

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

left, hoping to get out unnoticed. But old Josh Bradley was right by the door.

“Done purty well for the first time, Tommy,” he said, then added, with a chuckle: “But Jimmy Burns shore got you on that Holland business. He’s right, too, them dikes did burn. Jimmy’s a mighty smart boy—wouldn’t surprise me to see him go to the legislature some day. The next time you try to make a speech, Tommy”—— But Tom Henry did not wait for the advice; he could stand no more. Out into the night he dodged, walked quickly to the cover of the woods, and ran—ran desperately until out of hearing of the noisy, dispersing crowd.

For days Tom Henry went around in the deepest gloom. He shrank from any mention of the debate; it hurt him even to think of it; and more than once he exclaimed, “Oh, you fool, Thomas Henderson!”

But defeat is a relative thing after all. When we fail to accomplish as much as we

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

hoped, we often feel we are defeated, although others look upon our accomplishment as a victory. It was true of Tom Henry's speech.

One morning as he came down the lane with the cows he met Allie Trosper. For two weeks he had dodged her, but now they must meet face to face. He tried to pass by on the other side of the road, indifferently striking the corners of the rail fence with a switch.

"Tom you just did finely," the girl said.

"Humph!" he responded dubiously, waiting to see if she were only teasing—but she looked serious.

"You made the best argument that was made, and your side ought to have been given the decision."

Tom wanted very much to believe it, but it was hard to do. Nevertheless as he went on he began to whistle, and the world looked considerably more springlike.

Two days later he met Uncle Billy Houck.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

“Well, Tom, you fooled them—did me, anyway. That was a real good speech. I was proud of you.”

“I didn’t think so,” said the boy, digging his heels into the ground; “I thought I failed.”

“Oh, no, you didn’t. Wasn’t perfect, of course—be a long time before you are—but it had sense in it, and you said it like you meant it.”

“Uncle Billy,” Tom spoke with some embarrassment, “to tell you the truth, I was pretty badly out of heart over that speech. But I am not going to give it up. I am going to be an orator; and I am going to the legislature.”

Mr. Houck squinted his left eye thoughtfully at the boy for a minute and smiled at his earnestness.

“I reckon you can do it, Tom Henry—if you work hard enough and long enough. You’re no fool, Tommy, but you got to work hard and take lots of knocks, and not get out of heart every time you bump into

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

something that don't feel like a feather bed."

"I won't," promised the boy, and added wisely, "I have learned better."

"And, Tommy," said Uncle Billy as he started on, "if you ever do go to the legislature, go honest."

"I will." The boy's voice rang with genuine conviction.

Up on the ridge on a log in the woods Tom Henry thought out his career more definitely. He saw now that it could not be done in a day or a week; he saw he would fail many times. But he could and he would do it.

He got up and dug a hole in the side of the big oak with his knife, slipped a piece of paper in, and then plugged up the hole. On the paper was written:

"I WILL be representative of Wahoo County.

"THOMAS HENDERSON BLACK."

Corn-planting began next week, and from then until the middle of June he had

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

little time for oratory, except to call out "Gee" and "Haw" to his plow team.

Anyway he needed new books. A teacher of elocution, who gave an entertainment at Buckeye Bridge, told him that Bronson's "Elocution" was entirely out of date, and suggested the names of two works that were modern. But these cost money, and Tom Henry did not have any, and would not ask his father for it.

Friday evening Mr. Black sent Tom Henry down to Buckeye Bridge for the mail. It was a little after sundown when he reached town, and as usual in the cool of the evening there was a string of loafers sitting on the edge of the platform in front of Newton's hardware store.

As Tom was passing, Jim Davis motioned to him. He turned aside and approached the group with a little misgiving, for he saw lurking grins on the faces of some of the boys and men.

"Mr. Black," began Jim very solemnly,



“ I JEST WANTED TO ASK YOU TO INTRODUCE A BILL FOR ME , ”

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

“I jest wanted to ask you to introduce a bill for me.”

“Introduce a bill?” Tom did not understand.

“Yes,” said Jim, “in the legislature, you know. I want you to pass a law to make the weeds quit growing in my corn.”

There was a loud and general laugh at this, and Tom Henry turned away quickly, his face burning, and hurried to the post office. There among the rest of the mail were seven comic post cards all addressed to “Hon. Thomas Henderson Black of Wahoo County.”

Tom started home mortified and filled with wrath. How in the world did they know? He had never mentioned his ambition to anyone except Uncle Billy and Allie, and he knew neither of them had told. Directly it occurred to him that some one in passing through the woods might have noticed the scar on the tree and dug out his resolution.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

“Well, let them laugh,” he said to himself vehemently. “I am going to do it in spite of forty rods of grins. I will be representative of Wahoo County.”



“HE . . . SELECTED ANOTHER TREE”

CHAPTER III

THE next day Tom Henry went to the big oak on the ridge. Sure enough, the boys had discovered his written declaration. Doubtless they had noticed the scar on the tree and dug out the slip of paper.

He went into the thickest part of the woods, selected another tree, dug a hole in it with his knife, and inserted another slip of paper on which was written:

“I WILL be representative of Wahoo County, even if the whole world is against me.

“THOMAS HENDERSON BLACK.”

And Tom felt for several weeks as if the whole world were against him. Of course, the story of the treed resolutions got out, and the jibes and ridicule were almost unbearable. Criticism cut him deeply, but to be laughed at was torture.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

For a long time he would go a half mile out of the way to avoid meeting anyone. When he was compelled to pass near where people stood talking he hummed loudly to himself that he might not hear their comments. Laughter came to be a horrible sound to him, and he could feel a grin a quarter of a mile.

But through all of his suffering his resolution did not break. His spirits got low, but his courage held on. Still it grew very lonesome, dodging everybody; and he felt discouraged because he was making no advance in the study of oratory.

Tuesday evening, when the chores were done, he went across the meadows to Uncle Billy Houck's. He never laughed at a fellow, or, if he did, it never hurt, for he always understood.

Uncle Billy was on the porch, for it was a warm August evening.

“Why, howdy, Tommy, howdy?” he greeted the boy cordially, took his feet off

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

a chair and pushed it toward him.

“Haven’t seen you for quite a spell.”

“No,” said Tom Henry, “I’ve been pretty close at home.”

Uncle Billy chuckled softly—understandingly; and somehow Thomas joined in, a little ruefully. But already things looked better.

“I heard about that, Tommy,” said Mr. Houck. “I’ve laughed about it a good deal. You see, a fellow’s plans, whether good or bad, are mighty likely to leak out sooner or later; you can’t bottle them up so tight but they’ll get out.

“And, Tommy, I wouldn’t let their laughing bother me a bit. The better a fellow’s plans are, the surer somebody is to try to poke fun at him about them. They don’t mean any particular harm. They just think because a fellow is a boy that big ideas in his head look funny.

“But they don’t. They are mighty encouraging, and don’t you let anything people say or think keep you from sticking to

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

a good plan. Only be sure the plan is always something good, for if it isn't right, sooner or later the thing will go to pieces, and it will cost him more money or health or reputation than it comes to."

For an hour they had a good visit, and things cleared up wonderfully for Tom Henry. As he rose to go, Mr. Houck said:

"By the way, Tommy, I have been getting some new books; if there is any of them you want to borrow, take 'em along. Come in and see."

They went in, and the very first books he saw on the shelf (and practically the only new ones, if he had noticed) were the two volumes on elocution and oratory that he had so much wanted.

"Just what I need," he said happily. "May I really take them?"

"Sure," answered Mr. Houck. "You see, Tom Henry," he said apologetically, "I'm a little interested in oratory myself; although I'm no speaker."

"Uncle Billy," said Thomas warmly,

“there isn’t anybody in Wahoo County that can half come up to you when you really get started on a speech.”

“Oh, pshaw, Tommy,” said Uncle Billy deprecatingly. “Just wait till you get through school, and we’ll hear some speaking such as you read about. I reckon you are going to the academy this fall?”

“Why — I’d”—— He really had not thought of it. “I’d like to—but I ’most know father won’t send me.”

“Maybe he will. I’d ask him, anyway. Tell him what you want to do—tell him all about it.”

Tom Henry went away with a new ambition. If he only could go to the academy! Wouldn’t it be fine! He could study anything he wanted; and he could have a teacher in oratory, too. Before he reached home he had resolved to ask his father to let him go; he would speak to him about it right away.

But it was easier to resolve than to do. Mr. Black was a man of few words, ex-

act in his dealings with all men and rigid in his rules for his son. Tom seldom offered any suggestions about the work, but followed his father's directions without comment. Mr. Black rarely discussed any affairs with the boy; and Tom had never told his father any of the things that went on in his mind—hopes, plans, ambitions.

But having once resolved to ask to go to the academy, he would ask it, though it wrung from him every grain of his courage.

They had been loading hay. The hired man was on the load, and Mr. Black and Tom Henry walked behind the wagon on the way to the barn.

“Father” — he gulped and his voice sounded shaky—“can't I go to the academy this fall?”

“The academy?” The tone was quick and sharp, and he turned curiously to his son. “What for?” Mr. Black was not an educated man, and presumably not in sympathy with education above the common schools.



“ ‘I WANT TO BE A SCHOLAR AND AN ORATOR’ ”

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

“To learn,” answered Tom, getting a little courage. “I want to go awful bad, father. I want to be a scholar and an orator. I’m going to be representative of Wahoo County.”

Mr. Black made no reply; but he did not laugh a cutting laugh as he sometimes did, for which the boy was thankful.

Not a word more was said about the matter until the first Friday in September.

“You got all the clothes you need?” asked the father at breakfast.

“What for?” asked Tom, a faint hope suddenly flickering in his mind.

“For the academy,” answered Mr. Black. “You start in the morning for Slayton.”

For a minute everything swam before Tom’s eyes. He attempted to swallow a few more bites of breakfast, pushed back his chair and went out. To Slayton! The biggest and best academy in that section of the state! At most Tom had only hoped for the little academy at Sarvis Point. Al-

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

most before he knew it, he was in the road started for Mr. Trosper's. He must tell Allie—she would be glad.

A horse came galloping down the road. The rider—it was Jimmy Burns—drew rein, flushed and exultant.

“Good-by, Tom Henry.” He spoke in a friendly but patronizing tone.

“Going somewhere?” asked Tom.

“Start in the morning for the academy at Slayton,” he answered proudly. “See you again Christmas.”

“See me before then I guess,” Thomas grinned. “I’m going too.”

“Good,” exclaimed Jimmy heartily. The boys shook hands warmly, all past rivalry forgotten in their mutual good fortune.

“I am glad for you, Tom Henry,” said Allie when she heard the news. She was on the porch shelling beans for dinner and offered Tom a chair. “I know you will succeed, for you learn so fast.” Her eyes were bright with sincerity.

“When are you going, Allie?” he asked.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

“I don’t know, Tom.” Her face clouded. “Father is not able to send me this year. I may have to teach first—but I am going.”

“Allie,” he said very soberly, “I am going to tell you something. I mean to go to the legislature as representative of Wahoo County.”

She laughed at his extreme seriousness; but it was a sympathetic laugh, for she, too, had ambitions.

“I believe you can, Tom—even go to Congress if you stick to it.”

“Stick to it? Why, I’ll stick to it so tight you couldn’t knock me loose with a persimmon pole.”

They both laughed, and Tom rose to go. There was much to do. They shook hands.

“I hope you can go to the Academy, next year,” said Tom, “and that I will be there too.”

He looked back from a rise in the road, and she waved to him.

“I am going to stick to it,” he said, and

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

skipped down the road exultantly. "Thomas Henderson, you are a lucky fellow."

The second day Tom Henry was at the academy he was walking up the gravel path toward the side entrance of the main building. Two young fellows wearing fashionably loud clothes came just behind him.

"What do you say it is?" asked one.

"I don't know," replied the other, "unless it is a young camel."

"Might be," assented the other, "only its hump is on top of its head."

"Hadn't we better run it out?" asked the first. "Might gnaw the trees, you know."

Tom Henry's teeth went together in a way that threatened to break the crowns, and his hand clinched. He never had wanted so badly to fight in his life. But he had great respect for school discipline, and a fight meant expulsion.

And that was not all—nor even the worst. Some of the girls openly tittered every time he passed through the hall or down an

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

aisle; and there was much uproarious laughter as he passed groups of students, and he knew it was meant for him.

Now, Tom Henry to the casual observer was not much to look at— or rather was a good deal. There were two ways of looking at him; if one understood and appreciated his genius, he was an exceedingly interesting fellow to observe; but if one judged, as appearances might permit, that he was a simpleton, then he was a most comical spectacle. His clothes were “back-woodsey,” and his tall, peaked head merely furnished a starting point for his dead-broom-grass hair which under no circumstances would lie down. His pale blue eyes were not reassuring; and his sensitiveness made him awkward.

Jimmy Burns, on the other hand, was a favorite from the first hour; and seeing the general fun poked at Tom, he rather avoided the society of his friend.

The third evening, horribly lonesome, smarting under repeated ridicule, home-

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

sick to the core, Tom Henry sat by the window in his room and fought it out. Every instinct said, "Go home; try some other school; don't go to any."

But that grip away down somewhere got hold. He rose up and folded his arms and paced the room. "Oh, run, will you?" he said, with scorn. "You coward! Thomas Henderson Black, stop your whimpering and get down to business. You are going to stick to it if it takes all the grit you can muster. For I am going to be an orator; and I am going to the legislature."

CHAPTER IV

BY the end of the first week most of the students had stopped grinning at the tall, lean fellow from Wahoo County; before the second had passed they were watching him with interest; and when the first monthly grades were given out, Thomas Henderson Black was considered a marvel, by the entire academy. His fierce zeal, added to his natural quickness, had accomplished wonders, and he had won the highest grade in his class.

But if the growing respect, even admiration, of his fellow-students made it pleasanter for Tom in one way, he was much disappointed in another. The department of oratory was not at all what he had expected—in fact, it was merely a class in elocution, taught by a woman. At that time Tom Henry did not have a very high estimate of a woman's speaking ability.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

Moreover, this class was a part of the regular course, and only third or fourth-year students were allowed to join it. So even if he had wished, Tom Henry could not have entered the class, for he was only a freshman.

Nevertheless, he did not allow his determination to wane, but evenings, as his roommate said, not only made Rome howl, but caused the whole Comanche tribe to blush for shame that they ever tried to yell.

Tom's idea of oratory, like that of most beginners, was the tripping, tinkling, round, roaring, soaring sort; the kind that floats on flowery beds of metaphor. He wrote several speeches of this variety, containing more and louder figures than there were in the wall paper of his room—and that was a great many. He memorized these "orations" and practiced speaking them.

Before the winter passed Tom Henry was considered, by all his teachers and most of the students, the most promising pupil in school. Besides having thoroughly

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

prepared lessons, he had such an original way of getting at things and telling them that, when it was his turn to recite, the entire class listened.

There was a literary society which met every week, and Tom, like most of the students, attended, but he had never taken part. He wanted to, but while he had a very high opinion of his own ability, he was really very modest about letting anyone know it, and shrank from even hinting for a place on the programme. The committee usually made up the entertainments from volunteers, and hence Tom Henry's name had never appeared on the list of talent.

But one week in April, when the committee was having trouble to secure enough material, Tom's roommate suggested to one of the members:

“If you want something that will take the roof off and loosen up the foundation, ask that long, keen fellow from Wahoo County.”

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

The committee did, and it was announced in chapel, along with the rest of the programme, that on next Friday evening there would be an oration by Thomas Henderson Black.

Partly because of real interest, and partly from curiosity, that announcement drew the biggest crowd the literary society had had that season. So great was the crowd that a hundred extra chairs had to be brought in to seat the people.

Tom Henry was scared at first, but so thoroughly had he drilled himself, that his tongue and vocal chords went on with the speech until his mind had time to shake itself loose from embarrassment and catch up. Then he spoke with zeal, and when he finished there was a most enthusiastic outburst of applause.

After the society closed, scores of people congratulated him—even the president of the academy shook hands with him and told him the address was good.

Thomas went out into the night tingling

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

with the glory of achievement. He walked past his boarding house, feeling too good to go in, and went on toward the edge of town. It was a fine April night; the moonlight was soft and the south wind warm. His mind was soaring in a haze of glory. He wondered what the Slayton papers would say about that speech; wondered if the city papers would not take it up, and Thomas Henderson Black become known everywhere as the marvelous young orator.

When he came to the end of the walk he went into the road—Tom always liked the feel of dirt under his feet anyway. Still building air castles, he passed out of town and to where the road turned sharply down a hill into the woods.

He stopped to listen. From the valley below came snatches of song, broken by occasional calls and hoots. There were three or four in the company, and they came up the road laughing and singing uproariously. Tom hesitated, on the point of turning back, but decided to go on.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

Halfway down the hill he met them—four academy boys. One was Jimmy Burns.

“Hello, Tommy, hello,” and Jimmy slapped him warmly on the back. They had been friendly, but not intimate, and Tom felt a little surprise. “Boys,” Jimmy waved his hand to the other three, “you know my friend here—the—the moonfixer. Say, isn’t that good, the moonfixer? Boys, shake hands with my friend the moonfixer.”

With a shock Tom realized that they were all intoxicated. It meant expulsion if it became known, for the academy rules were very strict.

Hoping to get them to go quietly home, Tom turned and went back to town with them. But as they neared town the boys grew more noisy, and the thought occurred to him, “Suppose I am caught with them?” Still he did not desert them. If he could only separate them they would quiet down.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

Putting his arm through Jimmy's he drew him back a little behind the rest.

"Say, Jimmy," Tom said in an undertone, "I have something special to tell you. Let us turn here." He turned Jimmy at the corner and called to those ahead: "Good night boys. We go this way." And before they had time to offer much protest, he was hurrying the intoxicated young man toward his boarding house.

Jimmy stayed at a private house, and when they got to the gate Tom saw the lights were bright and a number of people were in the front room. They would be sure to discover Jim's condition.

"Let us go to my room," Tom Henry said. "I can tell it better there."

They got in quietly and Tom began to breathe more easily. Jimmy could walk fairly straight, and if he would only keep quiet he could pull him through. But half-way up the stairs Jimmy paused, threw up his arms and yelled in a blood-curdling key:

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

“Whoo—ah! Whoo—ah! Wh-o-o!—
Whoopee!”

Tom went cold from shoes to hat. He boarded with a severe old Scotchman who never in the world would forgive such an outbreak. He jerked Jimmy roughly up the stairs.

“Shut up,” he ordered severely as he shoved him into a chair.

“Now whatch you want t’ tell me?” said Burns thickly.

“I want to tell you, Jimmy, that you are drunk and making a fool of yourself. If anybody discovers it, you will be expelled and sent home disgraced.”

That rather sobered the young fellow.

“I’m not drunk, Tommy,” he pleaded.
“You won’t tell, will you?”

“I won’t need to,” said Tom impatiently.
“That yell a while ago will tell the whole block.”

He was even then waiting with anxiety the arrival of his landlord. There had been steps in the hall right after Jimmy’s

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

outbreak, and he felt sure the old man would be up in a few minutes and order them both out.

But he did not come, and Jimmy Burns, thoroughly sober next morning, was very penitent and grateful. He had not meant to get drunk, he said.

“It is mighty bad stuff,” admonished Tom, and Jimmy agreed.

They thought the matter was safely passed, but the next afternoon the principal sent for the four boys—and Tom Henry. One of the boys had, on returning to town that night, gone to a restaurant and raised a disturbance. He was reported to the school authorities, and confessed, giving the names of those out with him, and including Thomas Henderson Black.

The principal, on hearing Thomas' statement of his connection with the affair, asked the other boys if it was true.

“Yes,” spoke up Jimmy Burns quickly, “it is. Anything he says is true.”

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

Tom gave him a grateful glance as the principal excused him from the room.

The four guilty ones begged so hard not to be sent home that the principal inflicted other and very severe punishment—not the least of which was to require each of the boys to stand up before all the school and beg the pardon of their fellow-students for bringing disgrace upon the academy.

When Tom went home at the close of the spring term his father had evidently heard things that pleased him for he said at supper the first evening:

“Well, Tom Henry, if you get in a good summer’s work we’ll send you back again next fall.”

Tom did get in a good summer’s work—working hard with his hands and in the clouds with his head. He put up almost as many castles in the air as he did haystacks in the field.

He spent many evenings on Billy Houck’s porch.



“HE SPENT MANY EVENINGS ON BILLY HOUCK’S PORCH”

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

“I hear you just done fine,” said Uncle Billy proudly.

“Oh, I didn’t do so badly, I guess.”

“Made a great speech, Jimmy Burns said.”

“Jimmy didn’t hear it.” Tom laughed.

“Says everybody talked about it,” persisted Mr. Houck. “You haven’t got the big head yet?”

“Not that I know of.” Tom was amused.

“Well, you will have,” warned Uncle Billy.

“Think so?”

“Of course. Every bright young fellow gets it—and some not so bright. It will strike you along about next year, and get to its worst about the time you graduate. It won’t hurt nothin’, though, unless it goes in on you when you begin to get over it.”

“I don’t think I shall have it,” said Tom positively.

“You won’t know it.” Uncle Billy chuckled. “Josh Bradley has had it all his

life and never did know it—nor nobody else knows what he has got it for.”

“Well,” confessed Tom, “when I am elected to the legislature I may have it a little bit.”

“Most likely you’ll be all over it before you are elected.” A prophecy Tom afterwards remembered.

The next year passed swiftly with Tom Henry. He held his high standing in the school, and went even higher.

The third year Allie Trospen entered. She was quite a young lady now, although a year younger than Tom. She was a girl of pleasing appearance, neat and tasteful in dress and quick in her studies. But there was a natural reserve about her which prevented her from winning the instant popularity that some girls do. She always made friends rather slowly, but her friends were very loyal. The first weeks would have been full of loneliness and homesickness had it not been for Tom, who was now the leader in everything at the academy.



“ SHE WAS QUITE A YOUNG LADY NOW ”

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

He came to see her often, introduced her to his friends and took her to entertainments. Many were the ardent discussions they had over problems that have puzzled philosophers for centuries. Altogether the year was very delightful to both of them.

Allie did not come back the next year; she had to remain home and teach.

Tom was graduated in June, valedictorian of his class. Honors and attentions had been heaped upon him during his last year, and when he stood before the vast audience at commencement to deliver the valedictory he received almost an ovation. At the close of his address flowers were carried to him until he was nearly covered with them.

Tom was nineteen the week before commencement. When all was over he prepared to return home, sad but hopeful. It had been four years of triumph—and victory is always sweet, at least at the time. He had found keen delight in study, and felt that his time had been well improved.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

Those who had laughed at his first appearance were now among his warmest friends. It was natural that thought of leaving it all made him sad.

Yet as he thought of home he was filled with hope, for he would now enter real life, and triumph as he had in school. He did not hope that his father would send him to college. He would go some day, but it must be after he had earned his own way. He would go home and in two years run for representative; and then while the legislature was not in session—it met only every other year—he would attend college, having the honor of being the youngest representative in the state.

“Hello, Tom Henry”—he turned at the gate. It was Jimmy Burns. “Going home to-morrow?”

“Yes, start at seven.”

“So do I,” said Jimmy. “Great speech, that, old boy.” He extended his hand. Jimmy had been graduated second in the class.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

“Thanks. What are you going to do now, Jimmy?”

“I? Oh, I am going home to study law and in two years from now I will run for representative.”

Tom Henry eyed him keenly an instant—he was in earnest—and turned thoughtfully into the house.

CHAPTER V

TOM HENRY was distinctly disappointed when he arrived home; not at anything in particular, but just the atmosphere in general. It was a good deal cooler than it ought to be; surely his coming might have fanned the community into some sort of enthusiasm. The folks were right glad to see him, but somehow they did not seem to be properly impressed with the greatness he had achieved, nor to appreciate the distinction he had brought them in winning the highest honors in the academy.

The attitude of most of the neighbors was pretty well expressed by old Josh Bradley.

“Well, Tommy, you got through?”

“Yes, I was valedictorian.”

“You don’t say”—the old man scratched his ear. “That was real nice. Well, Tom



“ ‘WELL, TOMMY, YOU GOT THROUGH?’ ”

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

Henry, learnin' is a real good thing if a feller makes good use of it. You don't remember Alf Minor? No, that was before your time. Alf was the smartest feller that ever I see—graduated at all them institooshuns—learned all there was to be learned and then some. But when he got home he'd forgot how to work; and not findin' any money lyin' around loose, he forged a check, and had to skip out to keep from goin' to jail."

"Guess I'll not forge any checks," said Thomas dryly.

"Oh, no, I wasn't meanin' that, Tommy. I was just tellin' you about Alf. He was the smartest feller I ever see—I"—

But Tom had engagements elsewhere and missed the rest of Alf's smartness.

Even Allie Trosper was a disappointment to Tom. True, she looked very attractive and talked entertainingly as they sat in the hammock out under the yard trees. She had taught the winter before and was full of her experience in actual life work.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

But Thomas was not at all interested in school-teaching; to him her little country school seemed very insignificant. Yet after the first few minutes of congratulation and questions, she persisted in telling stories, amusing and touching, of her winter's experience in teaching.

When Tom went away he carried with him an indefinable but unpleasant sense of having been unappreciated, misunderstood, slighted. Allie was not at all the broad-visioned, ambitious, appreciative young woman he had fancied her.

But in the general disappointment he held to one hope—when they heard him speak, things would change. Then they would see what he had accomplished, and understand his greatness. And that time would not be long, for he was advertised as the chief speaker at the Fourth-of-July celebration at Buckeye Bridge.

Tom put a great deal of time on that speech, rolling in allusions and piling on flowers of speech until the constitution, the

eagle and the flag were hopelessly smothered.

When the hour for Tom's speech came there were several thousand people on the grounds, but only four or five hundred around the speaker's stand.

For a minute Tom paused before the audience. From every part of the grounds came a babel of sound. The lemonade-venders, in shrill and competitive cries, urged the people to buy "lem-e-o, ice cold lem-e-o, five a glass"; the merry-go-round organ ground out a discordant and blatant tune; and the man with the doll rack insisted that the crowd should "knock 'em down, knock 'em down—three throws for a half-a-dime."

Tom lifted his voice to its highest pitch and began to speak. For a little while he held them, and others began to gather around the edge of the crowd to listen for a few minutes. But directly these began to drop away, and then some who were seated rose and went out to mingle with

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

the crowd. Thomas saw he was losing his grip on the audience and threw into his speech his utmost force; but in spite of it they drifted away from him, and when he closed, not three hundred listeners remained.

He slipped off the back of the platform, disgusted, sick with disappointment, and made his way out of the crowd. He took a path that led through the woods down to the creek. He wanted to escape the mocking call of the venders whose raucous oratory had outdrawn his; and the last thing he heard was the persistent cry advising the crowd that right now was the time to buy it at five a glass, to go twenty-five times around for only a nickel, or to knock 'em down, three throws for a half-a-dime.

Thomas sat on a log and dangled his feet over the water. Beneath him the little fish scurried here and there over the pebbles which gleamed in the clear, shallow stream. It was quiet and shady and still.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

“They don’t appreciate you, Thomas Henderson,” he said to himself. “They can’t—that’s the size of it. You have outgrown them. A nickel or a dime or a side of bacon is all they can understand.”

It seemed quite clear now. They were ignorant, selfish, even jealous. They had no way of understanding real ability, and would not care for it even if they had. Well, he would have to go where he would be appreciated. But what would he do when he got there?

During the next few days Mr. Black noticed Tom Henry’s restlessness, and knew he was dissatisfied with the farm. Through his influence, the bank of Buckeye Bridge, in which he held stock, offered Thomas the position of assistant cashier.

The salary was not large, for the bank was a small institution, but the place would be preferable to what now seemed to Tom the drudgery of the farm. It was either accept this offer or go out into the world and seek some community more apprecia-

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

tive of his genius. He asked the directors of the bank for a few days in which to consider the offer.

He would consult Allie Trosper. Even if she did not understand him fully, her judgment was good and she was interested in his success.

Allie was attending a teachers' institute at Buckeye Bridge. When the afternoon session adjourned Tom was waiting in the schoolhouse yard. They walked down the shaded road toward the bridge.

"I haven't seen you for quite a while, Tom; thought maybe you were angry with me."

"No," said Tom. "Allie, I want to ask your advice."

"All right," she laughed. "That is one thing people are always willing to give."

"They have offered me the position of assistant cashier in the bank at forty dollars a month. Would you take it?"

"Take it? Indeed I would."

"But, Allie," he said warmly, "I don't

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

want to be a banker. I want—well, you know what I expect to be. You can't win fame as assistant in a little old bank."

"No, but you can make forty dollars a month," she replied.

"There it goes again!" he said disappointedly. "It is money, money, make money. Everybody thinks the only success is to make money. But I wouldn't have thought it of you, Allie."

"It is not that, Tom"—she spoke sympathetically. "I know how you feel about it. Making money is not success, of course, but one has to start at something. I do not like to teach school for thirty-five dollars a month, but I must if I am to go to school and accomplish my purpose.

"You are young, Tom"—he shrugged his shoulders, for he felt quite a man—"and if you are going to college you will need to earn money to pay your way. If you are not going to college, you will have to find some sort of employment. I would take the place."

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

The advice did not suit him exactly, and yet he knew it was sensible. After consulting Billy Houck also, he notified the bank of his acceptance, and began work the following Monday.

Tom did his work faithfully and well; but during the succeeding months his spirits ran down almost to zero. Writing names in ledgers and adding long columns of figures is not exhilarating work for the imagination, and Tom felt that his genius was being wasted. Outside, the world waited anxiously for the "greatest orator since Webster," and here he was burying his talent for forty dollars a month.

Yet the world did not call for him in any specific way—at least, he did not hear it if it did. A few times he was invited to deliver addresses at picnics or reunions, but still smarting under the memory of his Fourth-of-July experience he ungraciously refused.

The following summer a local-option campaign was started. A special election was

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

called to decide whether or not saloons should be permitted in the county. The temperance people planned a thorough and systematic campaign and needed all the workers they could get.

Tom decided to enlist as one of the speakers. Although he and all his people were strictly temperate, he had no very positive convictions on the subject. Of course, he knew it would be best for the county to go "dry," yet he did not feel profoundly the evil of the saloons. But it would be good practice—the temperance side of the argument certainly offered a very attractive opportunity for oratory. Moreover, it would give him a chance to get acquainted with the people, or rather, for them to get acquainted with him. And as the "drys" were expected to win by a large majority, it would put him on the popular side—thereby almost insuring the success of his ambitions for the next year.

The committee was very glad to secure Tom Henry for the campaign and assigned

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

him to speak at five or six of the best points in the county.

With his usual thoroughness Tom prepared a very masterly, very ornate, very oratorical argument in behalf of temperance.

At each appointment he had large crowds, for the people were much interested in the fight. At each place he was listened to attentively, cheered freely by the temperance people, and usually congratulated on his "fine talk."

The second evening on which he spoke, as he passed out, a man in front of him asked his companion what he thought of the "talk."

"All wind," replied the other shortly.

True, the fellow's nose indicated a natural bias against the temperance movement; but the remark hurt Tom. A great orator, he thought, convinced even the enemies of his cause.

Tom's pride was still further wounded a few evenings later. He had addressed



George Gallagher

“ ‘ALL WIND,’ REPLIED THE OTHER SHORTLY ”

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

with great force a large crowd at Sarvis Point, the largest town in the county. As he returned to his hotel he passed two men who stood on the street corner discussing the coming election. Both were ardent temperance men.

“What did you think of the speech to-night?” he heard one of the men ask.

“Oh, it did very well,” answered the other indifferently. “Sounded purty, but that kind don’t win votes.”

And during those weeks the papers of the county had much to say in approval or disapproval of what certain speakers on both sides had said; but only once, and in a very minor way, was anything Tom Henry had said, quoted.

But the deepest hurt came at the close of the campaign. The night before election the temperance forces united in a big rally at Buckeye Bridge, the county seat—but Tom was not on the list of speakers.

The next day the county voted “wet.”

“I don’t wonder at it,” said Tom in dis-

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

cussing it with Allie. "The temperance people haven't any sense. They don't stick together—they don't know the difference between good work and tomfoolery."

Then a little later he remarked bitterly:

"Allie, isn't it funny that when a fellow does get up and get out of these backwoods and learns something the people haven't any use for him? They want everybody to be as ignorant and shiftless as they are."

"Now, Tom," protested Allie.

"Well, you know it is so. Everybody used to be real friendly with me. I had lots of friends—or what I called friends—but now since I came back from school they will hardly speak to me on the street."

"Look here, Tom, that won't do." Her eyes twinkled, but her voice was very serious. "I see I must take you through a course of sprouts. You are about to get cynical, and nothing spoils one more quickly than that.

"The trouble, my friend, is this," she

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

continued, with her remarkable directness in getting at the truth; “you expect to be a great man in the future and want the people to pay you for it in advance. Now I expect to be a university professor some day, but I ought not to abuse the Turkey Track district for not paying me two thousand dollars a year for what I am going to do.

“It is not enough to be bright, Tom, nor to intend to do great things. We must not expect either pay or credit for what we intend to do. The world judges only by what we have actually done and are doing; and even then it is often a year or two behind in paying up.

“You will succeed, Tom”—his discouraged look touched her—“but it will take time and patience. I have learned that much in trying to be a great teacher in one year.

“And—Tom, one must not work solely for self—one can’t really succeed and leave God out. You must work for him and try

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

to help the people instead of trying to get them to help you; then you may be great, really and truly, and you can always ask him for help.”

As usual, Tom went away almost angry, whether at Allie or at himself he could not tell. Her words were a blow to his vanity, but at the same time he knew they were true, and there was comfort and encouragement in them.

He took a fresh grip on his courage, and definitely decided to make the race for representative next year, even if it did mean a bitter fight.



“JIMMY WAS THE BETTER ‘MIXER’”

CHAPTER VI

EARLY in June the "Buckeye Bridge Banner" printed at the head of its announcement column the following:

We are authorized to announce James Sherman Burns as a candidate for the nomination to the office of representative of Wahoo County, subject to the will of the party convention.

* * * * *

We are authorized to announce Thomas Henderson Black as a candidate for the nomination to the office of representative of Wahoo County, subject to the will of the party convention.

There were no other candidates for this office, and both young men being from the same town and of the same party and both considered good speakers, it was expected that the contest would be interesting.

Jimmy was the better "mixer," but Tom was the more brilliant. Since graduation the young men had become intimate friends.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

Jimmy was studying law in the office of an attorney at Buckeye Bridge, and Tom was still in the bank.

Although the rivalry grew very sharp as the campaign progressed, they kept their tempers and remained friendly to the end.

Jimmy took the contest much the more light-heartedly. To Tom it was a very vital matter. Victory in the convention meant election, and that meant the beginning of his career. In the state legislature his ability would surely be recognized; his name would become a household word throughout the state, and—once more his dreams were sun-tinted.

There was no certainty of his nomination, however; and the mere thought of failure always brought out a clammy sweat.

As the convention drew near Thomas felt sure of five of the thirteen townships, pretty sure of one other and had hopes of more. Warren, the largest township in the county, was in doubt. George Hibbard, the leader, was friendly to both, but made no promises.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

Tom, however, felt secretly confident he would get this vote, for Hibbard had been one of the temperance leaders in the local-option fight.

At last the day arrived. The convention was to be held at Buckeye Bridge, and both the young candidates were out early, welcoming the delegates as they arrived.

Jimmy, round and ruddy-faced, went about greeting the men with a cordial grip and a friendly slap on the back. Tom Henry, tall, solemn, dignified, nervous, moved about among the groups gathered in the courthouse yard, consulting his friends and soliciting more votes.

In the morning the convention merely organized and appointed committees, and then adjourned until after dinner.

At one-thirty the members met again, heard the reports of the committees and proceeded to nominate a county ticket.

“Nominations for representative are now in order,” announced the chairman.

In a glowing speech Sam Bartlett, of

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

Sarvis Point, put Thomas Henderson Black in nomination. In an equally glowing speech Dick Murphy, of Boone, presented the name of James Sherman Burns.

“The roll of townships will now be called,” announced the chairman.

Each township was entitled to a certain number of delegates; these delegates were seated in a group so they might consult as to how they should vote. When they had decided and the name of the township was called a leader rose and announced the vote.

“Adair,” called the clerk.

“Ten for Burns,” announced the leader.

“Benson,” called the clerk.

“Nine for Black,” was the answer.

“Georgetown.”

“Eight for Burns, nine for Black.”

As the vote was being cast, Tom Henry sat in the back of the hall, his heart beating like the chug, chug of a gasoline engine. Against his knee was a slip of paper on which he was keeping hurried tally.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

Now Burns was four ahead, then Black six. Burns was seven ahead, then Black two. Now they were even.

“Osage,” called the clerk.

“Six for Burns, ten for Black.”

Tom’s paper swam before his eyes; that put him four ahead, and only one more town—a “dry” township at that.

“Warren,” called the clerk.

George Hibbard arose to announce the vote. The convention was very still. Tom’s heart quit beating and he bit the blood from his lip.

“Fifteen” — Hibbard paused — “for Burns, four for Black.”

A few minutes later, when Jimmy Burns had delivered his speech of thanks, there were calls for the defeated candidate, but Tom Henry could not be found.

* * * * *

The next evening Tom sat on the porch with Billy Houck. Even in the twilight Uncle Billy could see a look on the young man’s face he did not like.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

“What disgusts me most,” said Tom bitterly, “is the temperance crowd. After all I did for them, to throw me down like that! For a whisky man, too.”

“Tom,” asked Mr. Houck deliberately, “why did you go into that local-option fight?”

“Why, because”—— He paused; he had started to say because he wanted temperance to win; but Tom was honest with himself when brought face to face with the real issue. “Because——well, I guess the main reason was that I wanted to make speeches.”

“I reckon that was it,” Billy nodded. “And when a fellow makes speeches, or does anything else just for glory, that’s about all he is likely to get out of it—and not much of that.”

“You see, Tom, it is just like this: You went into that campaign without caring very much about temperance, or temperance folks, or any other kind—all you cared for was Tom Henry Black. Is it at all sur-

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

prising that they didn't get out and hustle trying to nominate you?

"Tommy, a fellow has to do something for people before he has any right to expect them to do something for him. You can't go around looking down on folks and despising them, and then expect that they will break their backs lifting you up to high places.

"It seems to you now that you are right and everybody else wrong, and that the whole world is ag'in you. It ain't so; don't you let yourself feel that way. It'll spoil you. You are young, mighty young, and if you come through this spell without getting sour and twisted in your ideas, you'll be a successful man.

"But, Tommy, you got to be plain and honest and kind; and when you go to speak, leave out all that made-up stuff and say things you really know and feel. And you have to like the people. They are good, honest folks, and have been mighty kind to you. Look at them right and you will

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

like them—and when you like the people and try to do something for them, everything else will come out all right.

Saturday afternoon, two weeks later, Tom called on Allie Trosper. She was preparing to return to the academy for her third year. She had never seen Tom Henry look so discouraged, so beaten and out of heart. Her sympathy was touched and she tactfully avoided subjects that might hurt him.

“Allie,” he said directly, “I have been a fool. I see it clearly now—a blundering, egotistical fool. I ought to have been put out of the community.”

“Softly, softly, friend!” Allie’s eyes sparkled, but her tone was sympathetic. “Don’t abuse yourself, Tom; you do not deserve it. We all make mistakes; perhaps you have made some. But I am sure you will succeed, even better than your best friends hope.”

Having abased himself to the depths, there was much comfort in Allie’s sym-

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

pathy, much encouragement in her faith in him.

He went away feeling better, but still with a very poor opinion of himself.

That fall he resigned his place in the bank, took what money he had saved and started to college, doing odd jobs of every kind in order to help out with his expenses.

Several times during the winter, while the legislature was in session, he heard from Jimmy Burns, and always in a way that hurt. For it was a very humble Tom Henry now, and he loyally hoped for his friend's success. But Jimmy seemed to have fallen into a bad set at the very beginning. Several times reports came of his being drunk; and once the city papers had an amusing story of the member from Wahoo County, who was expelled from his hotel because of disorderly conduct while on a spree.

These reports reached Wahoo County, of course, and filled the home people with shame. Nothing touched their pride more

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

quickly than to have their representative laughed at by the city papers.

Tom wrote several times to Jimmy, pleading with him to be careful, but to no effect. At last there was an ugly rumor of graft in the legislature; some members had been bribed, it was said, and Jimmy's name was connected with it. It was not positively proved, but the young man returned home completely disgraced.

When Tom returned to Buckeye Bridge he found Jimmy Burns had opened a law office, but was in a bad way. The open criticism of his enemies, the cold aloofness of his friends, had hastened his downfall. Seeing he had killed himself politically, he had begun to kill himself physically and morally by frequent trips to the saloon.

Tom tried desperately that first day they met in the young lawyer's office, and many days thereafter, to get him on his feet again, and help him to overcome his appetite and regain his self-respect. But al-

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

though Jimmy clung to him as his only friend, he drifted deeper and deeper, and grew hopeless and melancholy.

There was extra work at the bank that summer, and Tom was given his old place during the vacation. Although he was never talkative, everyone noticed a marked change in him.

“That Black boy,” he heard one patron say to another, “is coming out all right; believe he’ll make a good man yet.”

Tom, much gratified with the compliment, smiled to think how he would have scorned it a year before.

He did good work in college the second year, and when vacation came, there being no work in the bank for him, helped his father on the farm.

It was election year again, and two or three friends suggested in a perfunctory manner that Tom make the race again; but he most emphatically declined even to consider it.

Buckeye Bridge township was entitled to

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

fourteen delegates, and Tom Henry was appointed as one of them.

The convention met in the new opera house at Sarvis Point. When they reassembled after noon the house was packed, the galleries being filled principally with women anxious to witness a political convention.

The Buckeye Bridge delegation had missed Tom in the morning. He was still absent, and they wondered. But just as the committee on resolutions handed in its report Tom came in and took his seat. He was pale and visibly agitated.

The resolutions were the usual sort—sounded good, but meant nothing. It was moved they be adopted, and the chairman arose to put the question.

“Mr. Chairman”—Tom was on his feet, his hand raised—“may I offer an amendment to those resolutions?”

“Go ahead,” said the chairman.

The young man took a paper from his pocket and read:

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

“Be it further resolved, that this party is strongly opposed to the sale of intoxicating liquors; that we instruct our candidates for county judges, if elected, to refuse to license any saloons in this county; and pledge our candidate for representative, if elected, to vote and work for state-wide prohibition.

“Mr. Speaker”—Tom passed the paper to the secretary—“I move the adoption of this amendment.”

A bomb would scarcely have created greater consternation in the convention. The party had always been exceedingly careful to say nothing that would offend the temperance people, and do nothing that would offend the whisky element. Most of the county committee were opposed to prohibition; the candidate, H. C. Gardner, agreed upon for representative, was a “wet” sympathizer; and both the prospective candidates for county judge were “liberal” toward the saloons.

There was hurried consultation among

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

the wiseacres of the party; three or four gathered around Tom and begged him to withdraw the motion. "If you start a row it will beat the ticket," was their plea.

"Is there a second to the motion?" asked the speaker after a minute's wait.

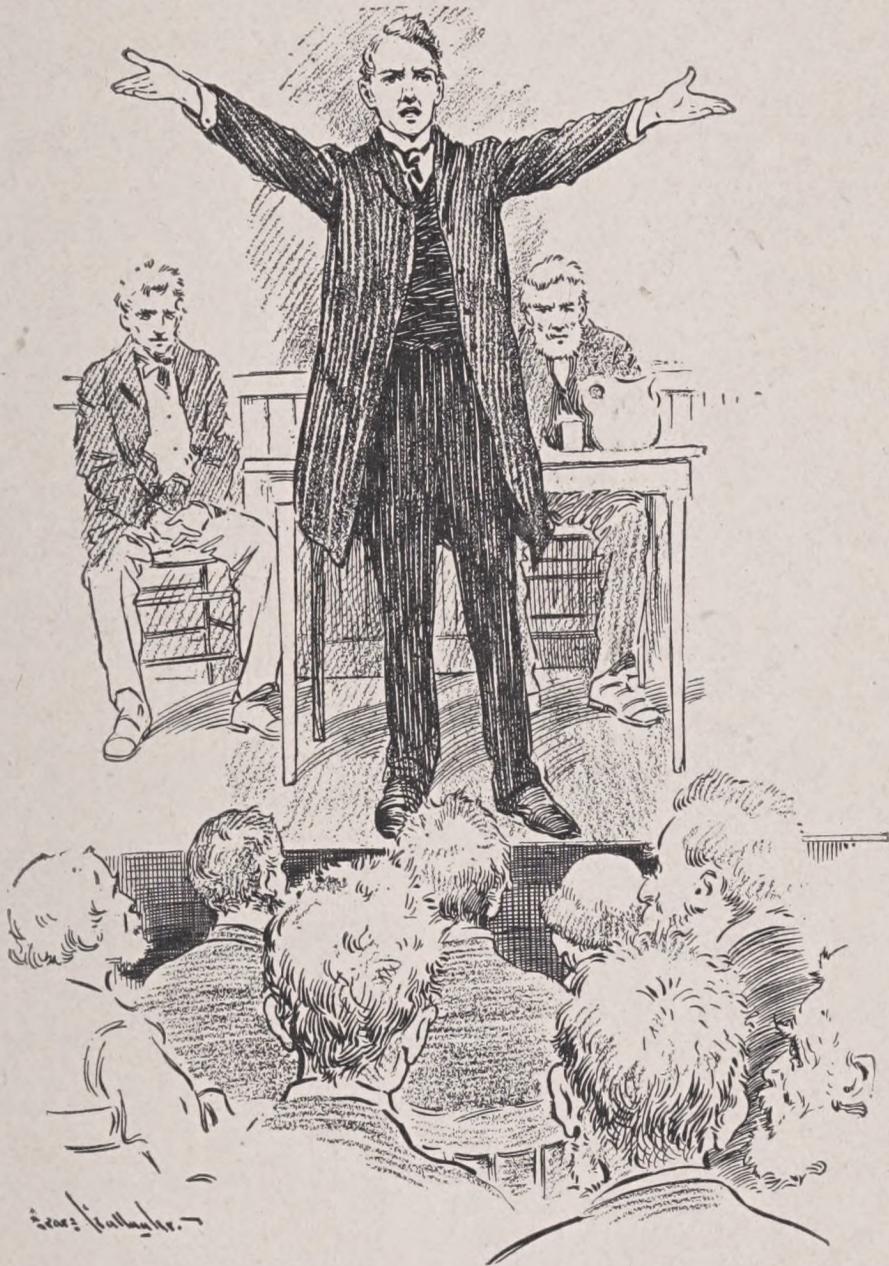
The motion was seconded.

"Mr. Chairman," Tom was on his feet in an instant, "I wish to say a few words on the motion before it is put to a vote."

"You have the floor," said the chairman.

Tom passed down to the front and for a minute faced the crowd that was largely hostile. The muscles of his face were tense, and his attitude indicated deep feeling. Stillness swept over the convention; the women in the galleries leaned forward to catch the first word; and as Tom glanced up for a second his eyes met those of Allie Trosper, curious and intent upon him.

"Three years ago I stumped this county against the saloon; I believed it was an evil. I fight it now, because I know it is. I was not much interested then. I am now.



“ ‘YOU KNOW WHY’ ”

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

“Two years ago this convention nominated James Sherman Burns for representative. I was his opponent, but Jimmy was my friend. During his dark hours since, I have learned to love him in spite of his weakness.” His voice was subdued, but charged with emotion; he faltered and paused.

“Jimmy was a bright young man; but when you met this morning his name was not mentioned in this convention. You know why.

“Three hours ago, in his office at Buckeye Bridge, James Sherman Burns, representative of this county, shot himself, and died twenty minutes later. You know why.”

The crowd stirred, shocked by the news, amazed, wonderfully moved.

For less than twenty minutes Tom spoke. There were no flowers of speech, no oratorical flights, but simple, heart-to-heart words that went keen and uncovered to the consciousness of the delegates.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

When he sat down there was not a stir—the most eloquent applause a speaker ever receives.

Two or three delegates recovered sufficiently to oppose the amendment, but they were swept off their feet, and it carried by two thirds. When the convention was ready for nominations Jim Fullerton arose to nominate H. C. Gardner, but before he was recognized, Billy Houck was on his feet:

“Mr. Chairman, I move we nominate by acclamation Tommy Black for representative.”

In an instant the entire convention—visitors and all—were on their feet yelling, “Black, Black, Black!”

It was done in a moment, and delegates climbed over their seats to shake the young man’s hand. Then he was half carried, half pushed to the back of the hall, where the ladies had come down from the gallery, waiting a chance to congratulate him.

When the rest were through Allie Tros-

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

per advanced, her face shining, and there were two happy tears in her eyes as she took his hand.

“You have found yourself, Tom.”

“I think so,” he said humbly.

“And you will work for the people now, and they will work for you, and you will find greatness in serving Him.”

Early in November one of the leading daily papers of the state contained this paragraph:

The youngest member, and one of the most brilliant orators of the coming legislature will be Thomas Henderson Black of Wahoo County.

CHAPTER VII

THOMAS HENDERSON BLACK put his hat and overcoat in the rack, settled himself comfortably in the chair and waited with tingling impatience for the train to start.

As they swept on around the curve and over the long trestle, Thomas could hardly contain himself. Time after time he ran his fingers through his sandy hair until it stood out on his tall, peaked head like a bunch of dead grass on a molehill. He looked out at the flying woods and little fields, moved restlessly in his seat and glanced around the car.

He wanted to throw up the window and give the old ecstatic yell to the passing hills: "Whoo — ah! whoo — ah! whoo!" He wanted to get out and dance in the aisle. He wanted to stand up and tell everybody in the car that he was Thomas Henderson

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

Black, the really and truly elected representative of Wahoo County, at the present moment on his way to the state legislature.

The young man quieted down by and by and fell to musing on his future greatness. They had emerged from the hills and were slipping away across the prairie toward the border of Kansas. The winter clouds had broken and the sun, near its setting, sent long, glancing shafts across the brown fields, here and there lighting to flame a distant farm window, like some huge diamond.

Thomas Henderson watched it with emotion; it was so still and bright and clean, and the world was wide, and full of promise. Then his mind began to speculate again on his future. He was an acknowledged orator. He knew of many wrongs that needed righting, many good laws that should be passed. Already he had planned four. He would introduce these, and in one of his fervent, fiery speeches would carry the opposition before him like a storm, and the

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

legislature would pass his bills almost unanimously. His name—and possibly his picture—would be in all the papers. The folks at home would see it and thrill with pride. The governor and all the leaders would recognize his great ability, his name would be known far and wide and the people would demand that he run for——

But suddenly he checked himself. This sounded very like some other dreams he had had before, and he smiled to remember how they had faded. Then he remembered Allie Trosper's words that day he was nominated, "And you will serve the people and Him."

Yes, he would try to do that; and it would be hard work to come up to Allie's expectations.

He was almost humble by the time he reached Kansas City. A few hours on the busy streets, the large buildings rising above him, the hurrying throngs of well-dressed people passing him, and he began to feel decidedly humble. The mystery,

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

the loneliness, the intricacy of the city awed him. One seemed such a small atom there. Here were hundreds of people better dressed, better appearing than he, of whom he had never heard. Doubtless they, too, had wanted to be famous. If they, with all their knowledge of life's ways, and all their accomplishments and wealth, could not, how could he, poor, unsophisticated, alone, expect to win renown?

It was a decidedly meek Tom Henry that boarded the train for the state capital. Other men, some of them finely dressed and of commanding appearance, whom he guessed were representatives, also entered the coach. He wanted very much to meet some of them, but felt entirely too bashful to make himself known.

All around him he heard talk of the coming legislature, and after an hour or so a young man about his own age came in and took a seat beside him.

“Going down to Jeff. City?” the young fellow asked easily.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

“Yes,” answered Tom. “Are you?”

The young man nodded. He was an alert, dark-eyed fellow with an air of knowing the world. Tom guessed that he was something of a joker, but liked him.

“One of the clerks?” he asked directly.

“No,” and Tom tried to speak in an off-hand tone; “representative.”

The young man turned quickly and eyed him for a moment, then broke into a laugh.

“I wouldn’t have thought it,” he said. “No, sir, I never would have guessed you were a joker like that. Honest now, are you looking for some sort of job down there? For if you are, maybe I can help you. I have considerable pull.”

Thomas Henderson smiled. “No, I am not looking for a job. The people gave me mine. I am representative of Wahoo County.”

“Oh, then you are Thomas Henderson Black, the youngest member? Shake. My name is Berry Bennett, reporter for the ‘Times.’ Glad I ran into you.”

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

They got along finely and had a good visit until the train whistled for Jefferson City. Then Thomas refused to take the 'bus to the hotel, but took his suit case and walked.

When he had climbed the steep little hill that rose above the depot, the first thing he did was to look for the capitol. It was midnight, but the moon shone through the broken winter clouds and lighted the little city. There it was—the old statehouse on the hill, white and majestic in the moonlight. The blood surged swiftly through Tom's heart. There he would champion the right, there he would triumph, there he would win fame.

He went uptown and hunted for the cheapest hotel, for he had only seven dollars, and had no idea how soon he would draw his first salary.

Soon after breakfast next morning he went down the street to the Jackson House, the leading hotel, where most of the representatives who could afford it, and some

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

that could not, would stay. The hotel lobby was already a busy scene. Nearly a hundred representatives were there, milling around, shaking hands with old acquaintances and being introduced to new ones. Everyone seemed to be discussing the House organization. There were three candidates for Speaker, and these were very busy making and getting promises of support. There were also a score of candidates for the other elective offices of the House of Representatives, all working like bees to make honey before swarming time.

But Tom Henry stood around an hour watching the scene, overhearing the talk, studying the faces, without being approached. No one suspected this tall, peak-headed, boyish fellow, dressed in store clothes, of being a representative.

Soon Berry Bennett, who was freely circulating in the crowd to get a forecast of coming events, caught sight of Tom.

“Hello, Black!” He came up and held

out his hand. "Who do you think will be elected Speaker?" the reporter asked.

"I don't know," answered Tom. Then, smiling quizzically, he added: "Just between you and me, I don't know anything. Don't even know who are running."

The reporter briefly outlined the situation: "Belden of St. Louis has the backing of most of the city representatives—he claims fifty votes from St. Louis and Kansas City; Garrett, from over in your end of the state, will get most of the country votes south of the river; and Melane of Dutton County will get the vote of the north end of the state. Belden seems to be in the lead, although Garrett will run him a close race."

"Which is the best man for the place?" Thomas asked.

Bennett looked at him queerly for a moment and laughed.

"Well, you are an infant. Don't let anyone else hear you ask that."

“What should I ask?” Tom was surprised.

The reporter slowly shut his left eye, stepped close and with mock secrecy whispered in his ear, “What will I get out of it?”

“But I don’t want anything,” said Tom simply. “Only I want the best man for the place. Who is he?”

“As to that,” said the reporter, “Melane of Dutton is decidedly the man of most ability and experience, and he is an all-right man. But he stands no show. Say, there is Belden now,” he broke off. “Let me introduce you.”

The reporter took Tom up to a well-dressed, fastidious-looking man with sharp, restless eyes and a Vandyke beard.

“Mr. Belden, allow me to introduce to you Mr. Black.”

“Glad to meet you, Mr. Black.” He gave Tom a careless glance and shook hands in a cold, formal way. He was not

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

interested in boys from the country seeking appointments.

Then, as Belden started to turn hastily away, Berry winked at Tom and added, "Mr. Black is representative of Wahoo County."

The candidate came around instantly, and gripped Tom's hand. "Why, then you have the honor of being our youngest member," he said, with a friendly smile. "But I declare I did not connect your name with his. I was just inquiring a little while ago for you."

He took Thomas aside, gave him some flattering talk and asked for his vote for Speaker. "I'll appoint one of your friends to a good clerkship if you will support me," he promised in a low tone. But Tom did not promise.

The other candidates had been watching, and as soon as they discovered Tom was really a representative, he received more attention than he could attend to. He could not help feeling flattered,

although he knew they were self-seeking attentions.

“Well, how did you like him?” asked Berry Bennett when they met an hour later.

“Who—Belden? Didn’t like him. Not my sort.”

“Say, come have something,” invited the reporter, starting toward the hotel bar.

“No, thanks. I don’t drink.”

“You’ll have to get over that if you expect to have any pull. A fellow has to be friendly with ‘the boys’ if he wants to be anybody.”

“I expect to be friendly with the boys,” replied Thomas dryly. “But I also expect to stay on good terms with my stomach and my morals.”

Again Berry stared at him for a minute, and whistled under his breath.

“Well, you are either smarter than you look, or greener than you talk, and I don’t know which,” he observed as the result of his scrutiny.

Tom tired at last of being solicited for

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

support for dozens of offices he did not know existed, got off to one corner of the lobby and took refuge behind a daily paper. While he was reading the news from the state capital, two men passed quite near, talking confidentially, and he recognized the supercilious laugh of Representative Belden.

“Did you meet that goat from the Ozarks?” he asked. “I’ve got him hitched all right—promised him a job for some of his friends down there. They couldn’t have sent us an easier one.”

They passed on and Thomas felt the blood burning in his face, and his hands clinched until they tore the paper. “Easy,” was he? They would see.

Then a plainly dressed countryman came up and sat down beside him.

“Worse than plowing,” he remarked, with a smile.

“It is tiresome,” agreed Thomas Henderson. “Are you a representative?”

“Yes,” answered the countryman, “from

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

St. John County.” He was a man of forty-five, thin hair beginning to gray, a smooth face with good nose and chin and deep-set, brown eyes. There was a quiet reserve about him that appealed at once to Tom.

“Are you?” the man asked next.

“Yes—from Wahoo County. My name is Black—Thomas Henderson Black.” He offered his hand.

“And mine is T. O. Burns. I am glad to meet you.”

“Whom are you going to vote for, for Speaker?” asked Tom.

“I do not know,” he answered thoughtfully; and then added, smiling, “I suppose it would not be very wise to tell if I did.”

“I do not know either,” said Tom. “But I know one I am not going to vote for—and that’s Belden.”

The countryman’s eyes twinkled. “Neither am I.”

“Shake,” said Thomas Henderson Black

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

warmly. “We seem to be of the same mind.”

When they parted they agreed to know more of each other—an agreement that stood them in good stead during the trouble that was to follow.

CHAPTER VIII

WEDNESDAY morning when Tom came down to breakfast he picked up a copy of the "Times." Much of the front page was devoted to the news of the coming legislature. It was predicted that Belden of St. Louis would be elected Speaker of the House of Representatives. On turning the page Tom's eyes caught a headline that made his heart thump against his ribs and his head swim so he could scarcely see the paper. There it was across the top of the first column:

"THE YOUNGEST MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATURE"

There followed a full half column about him, his race for office, his victory, his personality. It was nearly all complimentary—except the description of his looks, and he did not mind that—and closed

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

with the prediction that Thomas Henderson Black would make himself felt before the session was over.

Tom Henry took the paper in with him to breakfast, slipped it into his pocket and, after he had eaten, without tasting his food, hurried up to his room. There he read the article over several times, then clipped it and sent it with a long letter to Miss Allie Trosper, at Buckeye Bridge. He tried to write very modestly, and thought he did; but to one less heated with the fever of ambition his words would have sounded amusingly egotistical.

“You see,” he said in part, “they have begun to discover me already. I have four good bills prepared and am going to get up some more. Oh, they’ll know Wahoo County is on the map before this thing is over. I will open their eyes, and ears, too, when I get turned loose on my bills.”

Allie wrote a few days later, thanked him for the clipping and rejoiced with him over his opportunities. But she did not seem to

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

appreciate fully his sudden greatness. Her words, as usual, put him to thinking rather than tickled his vanity:

It is pleasant to see one's name in print, isn't it? And attention of that sort may be of some real use to you when it comes to doing real work. I suppose the better one is known the more influence he will have in the legislature. Of course, the fame of being the youngest member will pass away—as you get older. But before the Assembly closes I am sure you will do something for your state that will not pass away, and that is the sort of fame that lasts.

The House was to meet at two o'clock for preliminary organization. During the morning Garrett sought out Tom—met him on the street and walked with him a way. He was a tall, heavily built man with a big chest and a sonorous voice. His eyes were heavily lidded and had a compelling force in them. He was a man of prominence in one of the down-state towns, and known as an exceedingly “smooth” politician.

“Well, Mr. Black”—he put his arm

around the young man's shoulder—"of course you are with us."

"In what?"

"My election for Speaker." Garrett's tone implied surprise that there could be any other consideration.

"I haven't decided," said Tom.

"Why, you are from South Missouri, aren't you?" demanded the candidate in an aggrieved tone.

"Yes."

"Well, I am the candidate for that section; and surely you would not turn down your own man?"

"But," suggested Thomas, "I thought the legislature was for the whole state. And I do not see what difference it makes what part a man is from so long as he is the best man for the place."

"But look here," Garrett stopped and wheeled around almost fiercely, bringing his face very close to Tom's, "if we want anything in our part of the state we have to stand together."

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

“But we do not want anything that is not good for the state in general, do we?”

“Oh.” The candidate swore. “I see they have you fixed all right.” And he went off angry.

The first vote for Speaker stood: Belden, sixty-four; Garrett, fifty-one; Melane, forty. The country representatives south of the Missouri River with one exception had voted solidly for Garrett. That one exception was Thomas Henderson Black; he had voted for Melane.

The roll was called three times and the vote stood the same. Then came the tension. On the fourth vote it was expected there would be changes. The break would likely occur in Melane's vote, for he seemed to have little chance. The candidate that got his vote would be elected.

One of the workers for Garrett slipped over to Tom Henry's desk.

“See here, Black,” he whispered hurriedly, “your name comes first on the roll of those voting for Melane. Switch off



“ ‘I SEE THEY HAVE YOU FIXED ALL RIGHT’ ”

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

to Garrett and that will start a stampede for him. Do it and you can have anything you want—be on the best committees—have appointments for your friends—anything you ask.”

The clerk had begun to call the roll the fourth time.

“Black of Wahoo.”

“Melane,” Tom voted clear and strong.

But Garrett’s friends had been busy with others, and directly Melane’s strength broke and the vote went to Garrett, electing him by four majority.

After the election was finished and the House adjourned Tom ran across Berry Bennett in the lobby.

“You cooked your goose, all right,” said the reporter.

“How is that?” asked Tom innocently.

“Followed the wrong lead and got left. I told you Melane had no show. Now you will get nothing from the Speaker.”

“I don’t want anything,” said Tom

rather hotly, speaking in ignorance of the future.

“Well, you wcn’t be disappointed.” The reporter hurried away, laughing.

Berry was right so far as committee appointments were concerned. Each member was given a place on at least two committees, the importance of the committees determining his rank in the House organization. And the Speaker assigned Thomas Henderson Black to two of the most inactive and insignificant committees, “Constitutional Amendments” and “Game and Fish.” But when it came to patronage the House took that largely in its own hands, providing by resolution that each member of the majority party, to which Tom belonged, should have a right to name two clerks, and each minority member one.

Thomas was therefore allowed to name one member of the engrossing force and one member of the doorkeeper’s staff. Each place was a desirable office, paying over a

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

hundred dollars a month, and not requiring heavy work.

For the engrossing clerk he thought at once of Harve Manly at Sarvis Point. Harve was a generous, whole-souled fellow, a good penman and finely qualified for the work. Besides, he had worked generously for Tom's election without a thought or word of reward.

Tom wired him at once to come.

But for the other place it was not so easy to decide. It was simple work—nearly anyone could do it. There were several hundred in Wahoo County who would be jubilant over the appointment. Many of them had worked hard for him. He went to bed still studying about it. It came to him suddenly in the night whom he should appoint. During the campaign he had spent one night at a hill cabin in the north end of the county. The people were almost tragically poor. The family consisted of an old man, his wife, a widowed daughter and her two children. They were clean and

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

frugal, and in spite of poverty and isolation, markedly refined. The old man had been a soldier and had lost his left arm in battle. He still carried himself erect, still kept his old uniform brushed, still smiled kindly at the world while he tried bravely to till the little farm with his remaining hand.

Without waiting for morning Thomas got out of bed and went to the telegraph office and sent this message:

JOHN C. TURNER,

Heckla, Wahoo Co., Mo.

Come to Jefferson City at once. Have an appointment for you. Am wiring you a ticket, at Sarvis Point.

THOMAS HENDERSON BLACK, REP.

He returned to his room happy and smiling over the delight and excitement that message would stir up in that little hill cabin, and he went to bed and fell asleep well content with his first distribution of political "pie."

The House of Representatives soon settled down to routine work, which consisted

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

largely in introducing bills and resolutions. Tom discovered that almost every member had from one to ten bills tucked away in his pockets and these were introduced by scores. He got in all four of his; but he found introducing a bill did not offer any chance to win attention or glory.

The member merely arose at his seat and bawled, "Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker," until the Speaker recognized him by saying:

"The gentleman from Wahoo."

Then the representative announced: "I have a bill I wish to introduce."

"Read it," directed the Speaker. But that meant he was to read the title only.

"A Bill to Prohibit the Manufacture and Sale of Intoxicating Beverages in the State of Missouri," read Tom.

Then a page, one of the dozen small boys appointed to run errands for the House, came down the aisle and carried the bill to the chief clerk, where it was given a number. The Speaker then assigned it to a committee. And herein lay much of the

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

Speaker's power. If he did not like a bill, he would send it to a committee that would consider it unfavorably.

“The bill is referred to the Committee on Health and General Welfare,” announced the Speaker.

That was all. There was nothing further that Thomas could do but wait, and enjoy the pleasure of being a representative.

The seat he had drawn was well located, near the center of Representative Hall. He had a large, easy, leather chair, a desk, the Statutes and an abundance of writing material all furnished by the state. To sit there in the capitol, looking out of the tall windows or studying the historic paintings, hearing the drone and hum of state business around him, knowing often that the gallery was full of visitors, some of whom were pointing him out as the youngest representative, was the keenest pleasure he had ever known. And during times of intermission, to walk up and down the corri-

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

dors, to drop occasionally into the Senate Chamber and be introduced to senators, to visit the state offices, to feel that he was really and truly a part of the legislative body of this powerful state, kept him in a general state of pleasurable thrills.

Then one day during the third week he received an invitation to a banquet. The invitation came in the morning, and all day there was a delightful glow around his heart, which he felt even when he was not thinking about it. The affair, he learned, was to be given at the Jackson House, by some St. Louis representatives. There would be twenty or twenty-five prominent members, their wives, sisters or friends. Tom's first thought was to wish Allie Trosper could be there. How she would enjoy it! His next wish was that he had ordered his tailor-made suit a week earlier. He was still wearing his ready-made business suit, that at home had been his "Sunday suit." But clothes had never bothered

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

Tom much, and he did not worry over them now; he was too proud and pleased over the invitation.

Later in the day he had a second delightful surprise. He was notified that he would be expected to speak to the toast: "The Ozarks." This was his first chance to speak, his first opportunity to distinguish himself, and the subject suited him exactly. He loved his native mountains and delighted to sing their praise.

The banquet was Friday evening, at nine o'clock. At half-past eight Tom Henry was in the hotel lobby, his speech in his pocket. He always wrote out his speeches, but never referred to the manuscript in delivering them. Promptly at nine he approached the banquet room. The door was not yet open and a dozen men and women were grouped near it, talking and laughing. Tom stopped near two men in conversation. One, whose back was to him, he recognized as Representative Belden.

"We captured that Ozark goat," he was

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

saying, "and are going to exhibit him to-night."

"What for?" asked the other, laughing.

"Want to flatter him a little for one thing," replied Belden. "We may need him to do a little butting for us after a while. And then he'll furnish enough fun to digest our dinner."

Tom moved away quickly—quietly, so they would not know he had heard. The blood was scorching his face and his nails dug into his hands. So that was why they had invited him!

On the first impulse he turned and hurried down the stairs. He would go back to his room. Then he checked himself and thought—as much as he could think in his blinding rage. No, he would return. He would speak, and it would be a speech they had not bargained for. He would let them know he saw through them; he would roast them like cracklings. He would show that snake of a Belden and his sleek friends that

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

the goat could butt in very unexpected quarters.

With his lips shut in a straight line, his teeth ground together, he remounted the stairs and joined the group. Belden was the first to recognize him, bowed with politeness and offered his hand.

“Good evening, Mr. Black. Have you met Representative Cowley, of St. Louis?” It was the man to whom he had been speaking.

Tom frostily shook hands with him. He was a small, dark fellow with an oily skin and a treacherous eye; the sort, Tom thought, for a tricky ward heeler.

“Glad to meet you, Mr. Black,” he said and exchanged an amused glance with Belden. “We are honored to have you with us to-night.”

“Yes, I think you are,” replied Tom crisply.

Then the door opened and the company passed into the banquet room, bright with lights and fragrant with cut flowers.

CHAPTER IX

BEFORE they sat down to the table, Thomas was introduced to most of the company, and was received very courteously, even cordially by some of them. He found himself wondering if it were not Belden and his friend only who had planned to make sport of him. The rest treated him as they did the other guests, and seemed perfectly sincere.

Tom Henry had never attended a banquet, but he was a quick observer and made no embarrassing mistakes. The lights and the food and the flowers and the laughter made him forget his resentment—at least most of it. He began to see how ridiculous it would be for him to get up there and denounce Belden and his friends as he had planned. And with returning reason he saw that the only way really to get the best of them was to make such a good speech

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

that he would win honor instead of amusement.

“Mr. Black,” said a young woman opposite him, “I have been wanting to meet you ever since I learned you are from the Ozarks. Those hills and mountains must be really beautiful.” It was Miss Herron, of Jefferson City.

“Yes,” replied Thomas, “there are many beautiful scenes in the Ozarks—the springs, the clear, swift streams, the high hills and steep bluffs, covered with oak and cedar and vines.”

The young woman was listening closely and smiled encouragingly. But he caught the smile and misunderstood; she was drawing him out to have fun at his expense—this was part of the plan no doubt. He hushed immediately.

“What do they raise down there principally?” she asked, encouraging him to go on.

“Men, mostly,” he answered.

She flushed slightly at his tone. Look-



“THE YOUNG WOMAN WAS LISTENING CLOSELY”

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

ing again into her clear blue eyes and frank face, he was convinced he had been mistaken—she was sincerely interested. They continued the conversation most entertainingly, others near them joining in, until time for the speeches.

There were three speakers before Thomas Henderson Black, one of them Belden. The toasts had been a little long, not unusually bright, and the wit was rather forced.

When Tom arose, his very appearance arrested their jaded attention. Whatever he might be he was not ordinary, and they felt that what he said would not be the usual formal speech.

Just enough of his anger and resentment lingered to make him feel on his mettle, and free from self-consciousness. He began in an easy, natural way, telling an Ozark character story which brought out a spontaneous laugh. Then he spoke of the hills—his beloved Ozarks.

His toast was beautiful, poetical and backed by such genuine sentiment that it

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

captivated the listeners like a finely rendered piece of music. His words gave them the delightful impression of listening to something new and clean and unspoiled—something pure and high and sweet as the mountain air itself. At the end the spontaneous and prolonged clapping told him that he had really won them.

As the party was breaking up Miss Heron came to him and held out her hand. There was a wistful, almost pleading look in her eyes.

“I am proud to know you,” she said frankly. “And keep that sentiment, Mr. Black, those high ideals. Do not let anything—anything in the world—spoil them.”

After most of the guests had congratulated him, he saw Belden and Cowley also waiting to speak to him. But he managed to slip out. He hated to shake hands with men he did not like.

The next day the Jefferson City “News,” the afternoon paper, had a full account of the banquet and most flattering mention

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

was made of Thomas Henderson Black, “whose brilliant and beautiful toast to the Ozarks was decidedly the most delightful address of the occasion.”

This, his first social triumph, pleased Tom immensely. He sent the clipping with his next letter to Allie Trosper, and told her all about the banquet and Miss Herron.

Strange to say, her reply was not very enthusiastic. Tom could not understand it. He thought she would be delighted. She even suggested that perhaps Miss Herron was the society reporter for the “News”—which guess happened to be correct.

During the next week the House began to get down to actual work. The committees began to report some bills, and the legislature entered upon the serious work of making laws.

Tom learned that the regular order through which every bill must go was as follows:

First, introduced by a member, num-

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

bered by the clerk, referred to a committee by the Speaker.

Next, it was considered by the committee and then reported back to the House in this way: The chairman of the committee would arise at the proper time and say, "Mr. Speaker, your committee on Criminal Jurisprudence is ready to report on House Bill No. 37, and recommends that the bill do not pass." A vote would then be taken whether to accept the committee's report. If a majority of the representatives voted, "Yea," then the bill was dead.

But if the committee recommended that the bill "do pass," then it was ordered to engrossment. That is, the bill was sent to the engrossing clerks, where an exact copy of it was made in the records, and the copy sent to the official printer. Several hundred copies were printed and one copy laid on each member's desk, so he could study it at his leisure.

After that the chief clerk had it read by the reading clerk every day for three

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

days; that is, merely the title. The third day it came up for final consideration and was open to debate. If, when put to vote, it carried, it was sent to the Senate for its action. If passed by the senators it was sent to the House enrolling clerk, where a perfect copy was made in handwriting for the permanent records of the state; and then the bill was finally sent to the governor for his signature—then it became a law.

But there were many ways to get rid of a bill without voting it down, as Tom Henry learned to his sorrow. During that fourth week one of his pet bills came up for final passage. It was really a good measure—a bill to provide free text-books for school children. Tom was prepared to champion it. This was to be his first speech before the legislature and it was full of historical allusions, flowers of speech and oratorical effects. It was to be the speech which would win him fame, the one that would be printed in all the great daily pa-

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

pers; the speech that would be read by the voters at home with a thrill of pride.

Tom had a good voice and began in a strong, fervid way. The House and the visitors in the gallery listened for eight or ten minutes quite closely. But when he went on and on in the same flowing, flowery strain, the members began to lose interest. Here and there one would resume his writing, or busy himself with the things on his desk, or read the newspaper.

He saw he was losing attention and threw all his force into the set speech, trying to win them back. But more and more of his listeners began to turn to their own affairs. Some whispered across seats, others yawned, still others got up and strolled back to the lobby, while a few ruder than the rest clicked the lids of their spittoons with the toes of their shoes. When he closed, not thirty people were left listening.

As soon as he sat down Belden jumped up and moved the bill be "laid on the table."

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

Not knowing what that meant, Tom made no objection, and before he knew what was happening the motion was put and carried.

Raging within himself at the failure of his speech, he went to an obscure corner of the lobby and sat down alone to abuse himself. "You fool, Thomas Henderson Black," he said to himself angrily, "you haven't as much sense as a huckleberry bush—and never will have. There you failed, and now you are ruined—they never will listen to you now." Then for a rest he would change off and abuse the House for not listening.

Burns, the member from St. John County, came leisurely along the lobby as if by accident, and sat down beside him.

"A real good speech, Mr. Black," he said in his quiet way. Then his brown eyes twinkled a little as he added, "For the first."

"What was the matter with it?" Tom asked miserably.

"Well, said the countryman thoughtfully,

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

“I reckon it was more intended to show them you was an orator than to get your bill passed. You see, to get anything done you have to talk mighty plain, straight talk. Got to give facts and figures—show how your law has been tried other places and proved a success; give them the figures as to what it will cost and what it will save, and show just how it will really benefit the state.

“The constitution, the flag, the eagle of liberty, the blood-stained battle ground and such like fireworks are all right for the Fourth of July or a picnic; but they don’t go far in getting school books for youngsters. That’s why your bill failed.”

“My bill failed?” Tom asked in astonishment.

“Sure,” said Burns. “When a bill is laid on the table it is as good as dead; to postpone it indefinitely kills it. But if they had failed to kill it that way they would have amended it until it wasn’t any account. That is the way they kill bills

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

without having to vote against them—that and never reporting them from committee.’’

After a while Tom Henry slipped back to his seat, much sadder and humbler, and a little wiser. He began at once to study every move. He would learn their tricks, and know how to defend himself next time.

A few days later another of Tom’s bills came up with a recommendation from the committee that “it do not pass.” Tom appealed to the House to overrule the committee and put the bill on the calendar. But his motion was lost. That finished two of his bills.

A week later his third bill was defeated; and Tom began to feel that his influence as a legislator was a failure. But there was one left—the one he hoped most from. It was his Prohibition Bill. He was learning their tactics, and when it came up he would force a roll call, so the members would have to go on record for or against it. But he waited day after day without

seeing or hearing anything of that bill. The time was slipping away. Two months had already gone. He was getting uneasy.

One night after dinner he decided to go across the city to Burns's boarding place and talk to him about it.

"They have no intention of reporting it," said Burns. "The chairman of the committee is especially interested in the breweries."

They discussed the possible ways of forcing the committee to act. It was nearly midnight when Tom started to return to his hotel, his mind busy with plans, his fighting blood up. There was snow on the ground, and the biting northwest wind from over the frozen river went to one's bones. He shivered and hurried on.

Directly he saw a man walking ahead of him—walking unsteadily. He was drunk. At one of the darkest places on the street the man seemed to trip, staggered, lost his balance and plunged off the

high walk into a snow bank. He did not stir.

Tom ran to him. It was Berry Bennett.

Few classes of men are more sober than reporters—they have to be. But Berry had been subjected to severe temptation in that there was a constant offer to treat him, and being weak, anyway, he had been drinking pretty hard.

Half carrying, half leading the reporter, Tom got him to his room, turned on the lights and started to get him to bed. But Berry stirred and tried to sit up.

“Got—to—got—to get off my newsh,” he muttered thickly. “Loosh my job.”

Tom had not thought of that. The reporter’s two columns of capital news had to be in by two o’clock every night. If he failed, he certainly would lose his job.

It was already a little past midnight and something must be done quickly. Tom had never done any reporting, but he was a good writer, and he determined to try to save Bennett.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

He found some notes taken by the reporter during the day, and this, together with what he could remember of the proceedings, gave him plenty of material. He wrote hurriedly, trying as far as he could to imitate Berry's style.

At a quarter after one he had it finished and hurried down to the telegraph office. He did not want to sign the reporter's name, but was afraid the operator would refuse to send it from him.

He hurried into the office, shoved the copy over the desk and said brusquely:

“Bennett's copy for the 'Times.' Rush it—it is a little late.”

CHAPTER X

BERRY BENNETT slept late next morning, and, when he awoke, only dimly remembered the evening before; but he recalled enough to know that he had been drunk and that Thomas Henderson Black had pulled him out of a snow-drift and brought him home.

Suddenly it came to him like a blow that he had failed to send his daily news to the paper, and that meant he would lose his job. For the next two hours he was dreadfully blue and worried. He had worked hard to get this post, and now to lose it and be discharged entirely would be a fearful price to pay for his folly. But when the "Times" came at noon, to his surprise he found the usual "Capital News." And he understood it, and went out to find his friend.

"Hello," he called to Tom Henry on the

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

street, and hurried to catch up with him. "You have me all right," he said warmly, holding out his hand. "You saved me, and I want you to know from now on I am as straight as you are. It was a close call, I tell you, and not another fellow in town would have saved me as you did."

"I am glad I could help," said Tom, smiling, "and gladder that your are going to quit the drink, instead of your job."

They walked on to the capitol, talking.

"By the way," said the reporter, "I suppose you know they never intend to report that bill of yours out of committee? They are afraid to leave it to a vote. Cowley is chairman of that committee, and he is a saloon-owner. Your bill is hung up to dry."

"Thank you." And Tom went up the steps with his jaw set at a fighting angle.

He went directly to the committee room. Some of the members were already there, and he asked to speak to Cowley. The

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

smooth, dark, oily little fellow came out, twisting his black mustache.

“I want to know when you are going to report my bill,” said Tom pointedly.

“Why, Mr. Black,” he answered suavely, “just as soon as we can get to it. You know our committee has a pile of work to do, and two of our members were out all last week. But we are going to rush things now as fast as we can.”

“When do you think you will get to it?”

“Why, before long, Mr. Black. It ought not to be a great while now, if I can get these members to come. You know how hard it is to get a committee together.”

“Well,” said Tom bluntly, “if that bill is not reported to the House by the first of next week I am going to start something.”

The little man bristled. “You don’t mean to hint that we are holding back on it?” he blustered angrily.

“I don’t hint anything,” said Tom coolly,

“but that is what’s what.” And he turned away.

The bill was not reported the first of the week.

Wednesday, Thomas arose and offered a resolution calling on the committee for an explanation why this bill was not reported to the House.

The Speaker promptly ruled the motion out of order. Tom Henry appealed from the decision of the chair, but the House supported the Speaker, and Tom lost.

The next day he introduced another resolution, worded differently, instructing the committee to report his bill by a certain day. The Speaker put this to a vote, but again Tom was beaten.

Tom was filled with hopeless rage. He could do nothing more—not a thing. His bill was dead right there in the committee; the House would never get a chance to vote on it.

“Cheer up,” said Berry Bennett, meeting him in the lobby a little while after-

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

wards. "It would not have done any good to have had it reported anyway. It would have been killed just the same, and it saved you from making another speech." He grinned. "There are twenty traps for bills like that. Neither party would let it become a law when it came to vote. Don't you know it is determined even before the legislature meets what laws shall be enacted and what not? Your Prohibition Bill never had the ghost of a show."

Tom Henry realized that it was true. He had begun to see that laws were not passed merely by introducing a good bill and then persuading free men to vote for it. There were politics, bosses, private interests, wheels within wheels, all organized, which determined legislation.

Tom went to his hotel that evening thoroughly down-hearted. All his chances for glory were gone. His only speech had miserably failed. All his bills were defeated. He had done nothing and could do nothing.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

Couldn't he? Maybe he could. He began to study, and the more he thought of how things were run the madder he got.

Early next morning he got Burns into a quiet corner.

“Haven't you a temperance bill of some kind in committee?”

Burns smiled in his slow, understanding way. “Yes, and it is likely to stay there. It is the ‘County Unit Local-Option Bill.’ You know as the law now stands if there is a town of over two thousand inhabitants in the county it may vote separately on the saloon question; and although the county may go ‘dry’ three thousand, if the town goes ‘wet’ by only one vote it may keep its saloons, and thus practically make the whole county ‘wet.’ My bill provides that the town must vote with the county and the majority rule. It would put about fifty towns that now have saloons in the ‘dry’ column and would not make a single ‘dry’ county ‘wet.’ This is the only bill the

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

whisky men are afraid of, for they know it will pass if it ever comes to a vote.”

“What committee has it?” asked Tom Henry.

“Criminal Jurisprudence — Belden is chairman.”

Tom nodded thoughtfully. “I have a scheme. How many positively dry men do you know in the legislature—men that will stand to the last ditch?”

Burns studied a moment. “Perhaps fifteen.”

“And I know a few,” said Tom. “You get yours and I will get mine and we will meet here in your room to-morrow evening.”

It was so agreed. The word was passed, and the next evening they had a larger gathering than they expected; nearly thirty representatives were there. Most of them were from country districts where temperance sentiment was very strong, and all of them were pledged before election to further temperance legislation.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY.

“Boys,” said Burns, “we will ask Mr. Black of Wahoo County to explain the purpose of this meeting.”

Thomas, standing with his hand on the back of his chair, said in an earnest, conversational tone:

“Fellow-representatives: When I came to the legislature I was remarkably green. I am green yet, but I have learned a few things. One of them is that there is an organization in the House which prevents any bills from having a fair show, unless they happen to approve of them. I lost all four of my bills before I discovered what was the matter—they were good bills, too.” He smiled whimsically.

“Now there is only one temperance bill that amounts to anything left, and that is Burns’s County Unit Local-Option Bill. It is hung up in the committee, and is slated to die there, for they are afraid to let it come to a vote.

“There is only one way to get it out: form an organization of our own, and force

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

them to give us fair play. They have already run in a half dozen of their own bills ahead of this. My plan is for us to stand together and block action on every one of their bills brought up out of its rightful order, and not say a word. They will soon discover something is the matter, and at the right time we will demand a fair hearing for our bill, and get it."

Burns and several others warmly approved the plan, and urged its adoption. Twenty-six of those present pledged to stand together and force the issue. They proposed also to add as many others as they could trust.

"Now," suggested Burns, "Thomas Henderson Black's name occurs first on the roll. Suppose we appoint him to act as our leader. He will investigate and decide which measures we want to block, and we will all follow his lead."

This was also approved.

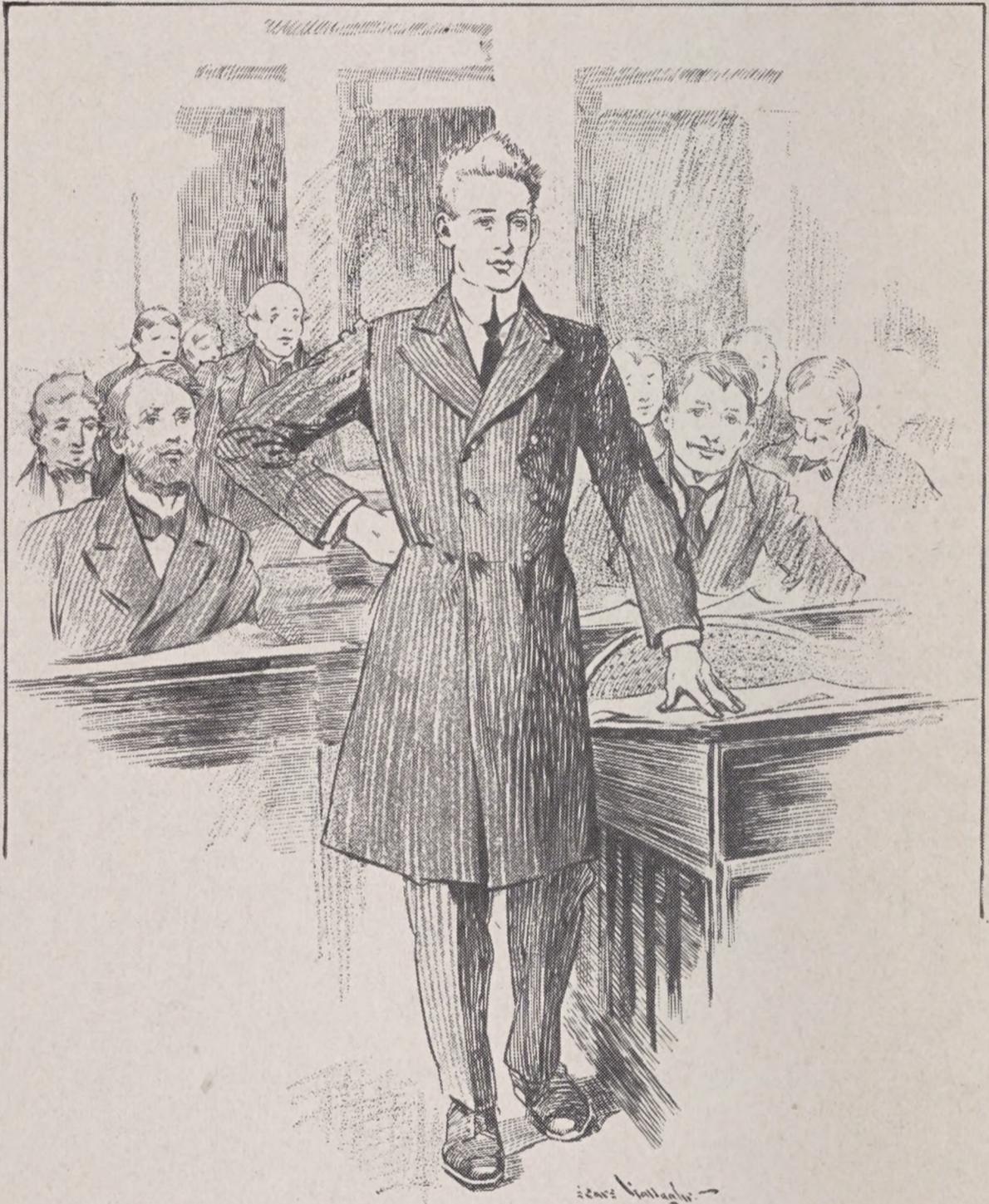
Tom had already discovered who were the real bosses of the House. There was

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

a cabal of five, with a few others occasionally let in, which consisted of Belden, Speaker Garrett and three other representatives prominent in party affairs. This party, to which Tom Henry also belonged, had only fourteen majority in the House, and it required a united vote to put measures through. But so far everything had gone smoothly. The members had meekly followed their floor leader, who took his orders from the "big five."

Tom also learned what measures they were particularly anxious to put through. First and above all was the Appropriation Bill, which they had written to suit themselves. The next was Belden's Home-Rule Bill, which applied only to St. Louis. Belden wanted to run for mayor of his city the following year, and this measure, if he could get it through, would make him very popular. He had worked smoothly and had his plans all laid so the bill would go through without a hitch.

The next morning when Tom looked up



“ ‘MR. SPEAKER’ ”

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

the House calendar he discovered that Belden's Home-Rule Bill was to come up for third reading that very afternoon.

At three o'clock Belden and Cowley, his right-hand man, and several other helpers were very busy. Nearly every member was in his seat, and Belden was alert, but smiling. He had gathered in all the friends of his bill, and according to his count would have twelve majority.

It had been agreed that only two speeches would be made; one in favor of it, by Belden; one opposed to it, by a member of the opposition party.

The speeches were made, the bill was up for final passage, the clerk was just ready to begin the roll call.

Thomas Henderson Black arose. "Mr. Speaker."

"The gentleman from Wahoo," said the Speaker. The representatives turned in their seats curiously to see what this peaked-headed young fellow wanted to say.

"I move this bill be laid on the table."

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

The motion was quickly made and as quickly seconded.

A wave of surprise swept the House. The opposition party grinned. But Tom's own party looked concerned. The young fellow had made a blunder, an ignorant blunder—no doubt he did not understand what he was doing. One of the older representatives slipped quickly over to him and whispered hurriedly:

“Withdraw that motion. This is a party measure, and slated to pass.”

Tom merely shook his head.

Belden smiled. He thought Tom was just trying a childish move to get even because he had tabled the school-book bill. Even without Black's vote he was sure of eleven majority. They would vote down the motion, and then pass the bill.

Some one demanded a roll call on the motion. That meant the clerk must call each member's name and record how he voted.

When the clerk called “Black, of Wahoo,” and Tom voted to table the bill,

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

Belden was still smiling. But when one, two, five, ten, of his own party followed, he grew pale and began to hurry around excitedly, consulting the leaders.

The motion was carried by twenty, and the bill tabled.

There was a great stir in the House and excitement in the galleries. Something was happening and none of them seemed to know what or why. The party had voted almost solidly as instructed during the whole session. This was the first break.

Belden and a few others hurriedly called Tom to the lobby.

“Say, Mr. Black,” said Belden excitedly, “you made a mistake on that motion. You don’t understand. To table a bill is pretty nearly as bad as to kill it. And this is strictly a party measure. We are pledged to it in the platform. We want you to move to reconsider that vote.”

Tom replied quite soberly, although a smile lurked in his eyes: “I guess it won’t hurt a party measure any worse to lie on

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

the table than it does any other. I have had a bill lying there for several weeks, and haven't heard it groan yet." With that he turned and went back to his seat.

But some of the others who had voted for the motion were prevailed on to move to reconsider. Another roll was called, the result just the same.

The thing looked serious now. It was not merely a mistake. Somebody moved to adjourn, and the House quickly adjourned.

Immediately representatives gathered in groups to discuss the break. One group of regulars was around Belden and Garrett. Burns edged in.

"What is back of it?" asked one of the party leaders. "And who is doing it?"

"I don't know," replied another, "but I would not be surprised if that peaked-headed son-of-the-Ozarks is at the bottom of it."

"H'm!" Belden sniffed scornfully. "Why, that goat hasn't sense enough to get

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

up that sort of thing in a hundred years. Somebody is merely making a cat's-paw of him."

"I don't know about that," said Garrett, shaking his head. "I am of the opinion that Thomas Henderson Black is not so much of a fool as he looks."

CHAPTER XI

THE next day all the city papers devoted much space to the apparent defeat of the "Home-Rule Bill." It was a general surprise, as the bill had been thought sure of a safe passage. All of the papers had theories as to the cause; but only the "Times" came near it, when it hinted at a secret understanding among certain members to down the "big five." It also predicted that interesting events would ensue before the session was over.

Tom went about quietly strengthening his organization. He began to enjoy the situation. He was fast emerging from the vast vat of blues into which his former failures had plunged him. He was forgetting himself. It was no longer a matter of making a name—it was a law, a righteous law sorely needed for the protection of the moral people of the state, for which he was

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

now fighting. He even effaced himself as much as possible, and allowed the bosses and leaders to think it was others back of the opposition.

In the afternoon, merely as a "feeler," Cowley moved that the Appropriation Bill be taken up for final consideration the following Tuesday.

The motion was lost.

Two other party measures were brought up. Both failed.

It began to look serious. Speaker Garrett was visibly worried. Belden and the others were nervous and anxious.

An adjournment was secured and an investigation started. A half dozen of the inside wheels of the machine got together in a committee room and sent out one at a time for those suspected of being at the bottom of this new opposition. Burns, Thompson, Sellers, Daniels, were all called; but they gave only evasive answers.

Two days passed. The usual business went through in the usual way. But the

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

moment any bill or resolution championed by Belden, Speaker Garrett or one of the other members of the "big five" came up, Thomas Henderson Black voted "No." The rest followed and the measure was defeated.

The anxiety in the House increased. Time was slipping away, and certain legislation laid out by the leaders must be got through some way.

Tom's happiness grew. As soon as the enemy was firmly convinced of the power of his band, he would demand the temperance bill.

For the first time in three weeks he wrote to Allie Trosper, but it was a very humble letter this time. He told her much of his failures, and said nothing of this new move, merely adding: "My friend Burns, who is a most excellent fellow, has a good temperance bill that we have some hopes of. I am going to do what I can to help him get it through."

But Allie had been reading the papers;

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

in fact, she had subscribed for the daily "Times" solely to get the legislative news. She was always watching for Thomas Henderson Black's name. She wrote a hopeful, encouraging letter in reply.

"Now you are getting ready for genuine work," she said, "and I am positive that the mysterious opposition talked so much about in the papers is some of your doing."

It was not long before the leaders were of the same opinion. When they became convinced that Tom was at the bottom of the whole thing, they sent for him.

It was Friday evening. There were a dozen stanch party men in the room when he entered, well-known representatives and noted state politicians.

"Mr. Black"—Belden acted as spokesman—"we are convinced you are back of this move to defeat legislation, but can't for the life of us make out what your object is. What do you want?"

Thomas smiled rather scornfully.

"You see, Mr. Black," spoke up Garrett

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

in a more conciliatory tone, "we have been watching you, and believe you are a young man of great promise; and we are anxious that you should not spoil your future by opposing the wishes of your party. There are certain bills we are pledged to put through, and, of course, the members of the party must stand together. What is your objection to these bills?"

"I have no objection to some of them," answered Tom quietly.

"Then why have you organized this bolt to defeat them?" asked Belden testily.

"I have been voting against them," answered Tom coolly, "because they were not brought up in their regular order. Other bills that were weeks ahead of them have been sidetracked or held back, and these pushed forward. I believe in giving every bill and every representative a fair, honest chance."

They exchanged quick side glances. And that was it!

They explained to him that some bills

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

were much more important and must be advanced on the calendar; and that some must be smothered in the committee, for the good of the party. They flattered, cajoled, wheedled him, and asked him to withdraw his opposition. They told him they wanted him to make the chief speech in favor of the Appropriation Bill.

He took it all in with a quiet, inscrutable gravity, and asked no favors nor made any promises. Still, when he left, they were sure they had him "right."

But the next day when an attempt was made to bring up the Appropriation Bill, the motion went down with the same vote.

Then the leaders got mad. Belden was on his feet in an instant, and in his bitter, sarcastic way denounced the opposition as traitors to their party pledges and enemies of the state.

"And we are going to let the people of this state know who they are," he declared. "We are going to lay the responsibility for the failure of this legislation on their

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

shoulders, and so brand them as blundering incompetents, traitors, renegades, that in no county in this state can they ever be elected to any office within the gift of the people.”

Several times during this speech he turned toward Thomas Henderson Black and shook his fist threateningly at him.

It was time to speak. Tom arose deliberately:

“Mr. Speaker. Fellow-representatives: I seem to be particularly pointed out by the gentleman from St. Louis as one to be branded.

“I, for one, have been voting to delay action on these bills not because I am opposed to the bills themselves, necessarily, but because they have been juggled out of their regular order.

“More than four weeks ago Burns’s County Unit Local-Option Bill was sent to the committee of which the gentleman from St. Louis is chairman. Although fully a score of bills introduced later have been re-

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

ported to this House by that committee, the County Unit Local-Option Bill still sleeps.

“I am perfectly willing to let the majority rule, but I want the majority to have a chance to rule. If that bill or any other bill is a bad bill, let this House decide the matter. Don’t assassinate the bill in the dark corners of the committee room.

“I give the gentleman from St. Louis warning”—Tom brought down his hand emphatically upon the desk—“that neither his Home-Rule Bill, the Appropriation Bill, nor any other bill brought up here juggled out of its regular order will ever get through this House of Representatives until Burns’s County Unit Local-Option Bill is reported and given a fair hearing.”

It was a short speech, but it stirred up the House as nothing had since the beginning. The temperance members—and they really were in the majority—cheered tremendously. The others looked uneasy and worried.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

Tom was busy the rest of the day consulting members and rounding out his organization. He knew tremendous pressure would be brought to bear on some of the weaker ones. But, on the other hand, now that the fight was in the open and their demands known, many others joined them.

The next day Thomas was absolutely amazed, when he picked up a daily paper, to see his picture in it. That three-minute speech had given him a whole column. He was described as the leader of the temperance forces, and a very skillful one, and mentioned as the only member who had fought the organization successfully. He found that the other papers had also devoted much space to him, and in all of them, except the rankest party paper, he was mentioned in a favorable way.

But Thomas was not puffed up. He was fighting for a law now, and not personal notoriety. "Pshaw!" he said modestly when Berry Bennett congratulated him on his leap into the limelight, "I haven't done

anything. That wasn't anything at all. I just got up there and told them what we were going to do."

The public attention drawn to the bill by this clash in the House would have forced the committee to report it, even if Tom's ultimatum had not. The very next afternoon Belden arose and said in a highly injured tone:

"Mr. Speaker: Since some of the members of this body have questioned our motives in delaying this bill we wish to explain why it has not been reported. From the first, we felt this measure was of such peculiar importance that it required the fullest consideration. We have sent from time to time for all the information we can get on similar laws, and have invited speakers who have studied the question to appear before us. We expected to report the bill in due course, but since the gentlemen seem in such a hurry, we report it back to the House without recommendation."

Burns quickly moved that the bill be sent

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

to engrossment. Tom at once rose and seconded the motion and it quickly carried.

But Tom knew the fight had only begun.

That very evening one of the prominent state officers took him out to dinner, and during the evening undertook to show him how fatal it would be to the party interests to push that bill. That failing, he urged Tom's own future, and implied that if he dropped the measure he would be pretty sure of advancement.

The state chairman of his party, two or three senators, most of the House leaders also interviewed him, all intimating that he would be ruined if he continued to fight for the bill, but if he merely let it rest there would be something good for him.

The bill had run its course on the calendar. The next day, Saturday, it would come up for final passage. Tom knew that on that day a great many members would be out of town. He unexpectedly moved that Tuesday afternoon be set for its final consideration, and he carried his motion.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

That afternoon as he left the House Berry Bennett overtook him on the capitol steps, and in passing said in an undertone:

“Black, better keep your eyes open. They are fixing something for you. I don’t know what their game is, but I’d be mighty careful.”

About seven o’clock he received a message from Cowley, chairman of the committee on Constitutional Amendments of which Tom was a member, asking him to attend a special meeting. Unexpectedly a very important measure had been referred to them. It was a proposed amendment to the constitution which would permit cities and towns to tax franchises.

Tom was anxious to be at the hearing, and started at once for the committee meeting. He was so busy thinking of the measure itself that he forgot entirely Berry Bennett’s warning.

CHAPTER XII

WHEN Tom reached the committee room, Cowley, the chairman, was the only one there.

“Black, the rest seem to be late,” he said. “Suppose you and I go over this amendment and see what we think of it. You read.” He handed the bill to him.

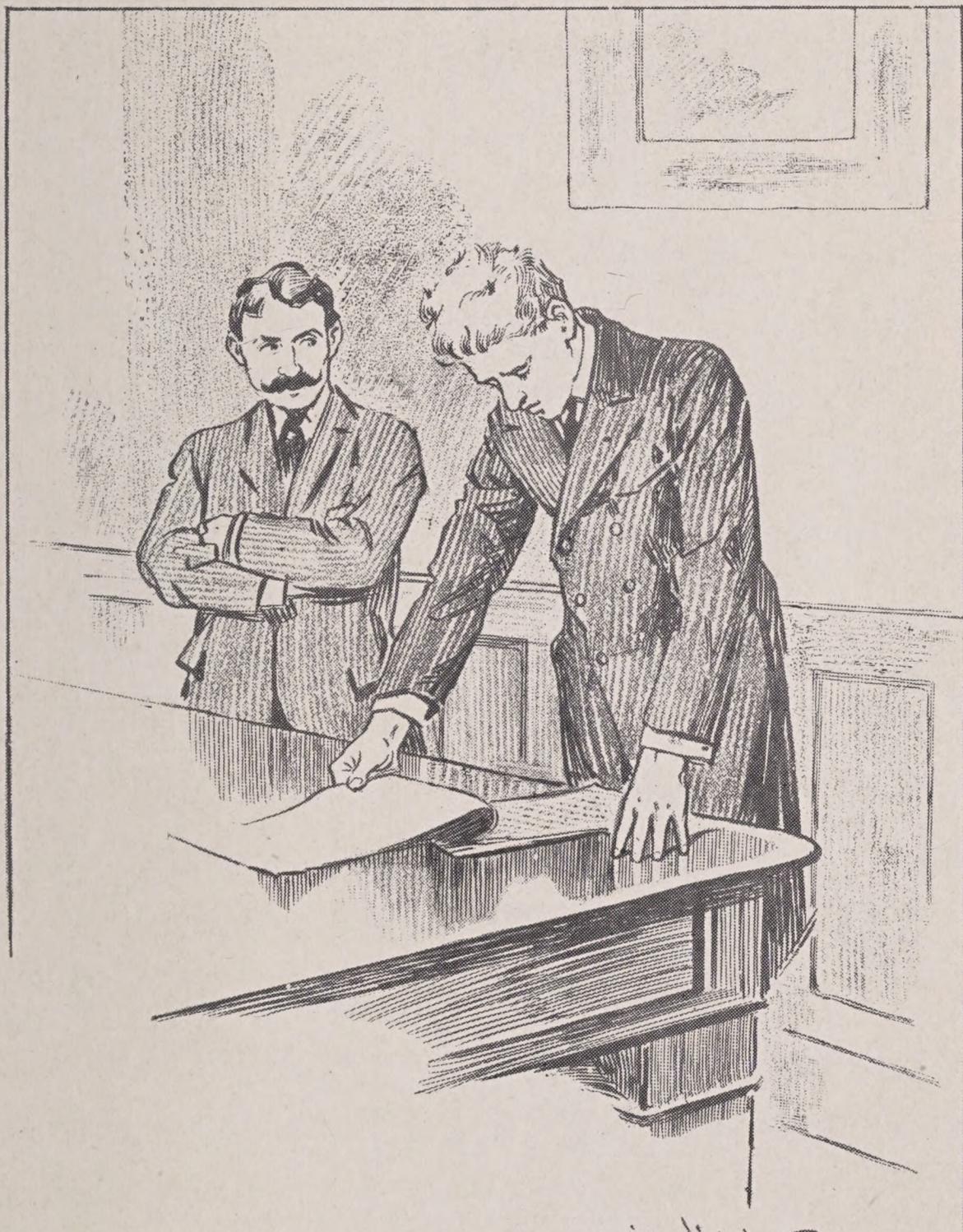
Tom spread it out on the table and began to read slowly. They discussed it, paragraph by paragraph, as he read.

Directly, Cowley was called from the room, and Tom continued to read to himself. He was interested. It seemed to him an excellent amendment.

“Is your name Black?”—a janitor had opened the door.

“Yes.” Tom looked up.

“You are wanted at the ’phone down the hall, right quick.”



Leaves Halliday

“TOM . . . BEGAN TO READ SLOWLY”

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

Tom hurried to the telephone. The message was not important and he was gone only a few minutes. When he returned, the bill was gone. He had left it on the table.

In a few moments Cowley came back. "Well, how are you getting along with the amendment?" he asked.

Tom was pale, for he knew the seriousness of what had happened. "Didn't you get the bill?" he inquired.

"No, certainly not," replied Cowley in surprise. "Haven't you got it?"

Tom told what had happened.

Cowley looked at him suspiciously and remarked: "Well, I hope you can find it before to-morrow. I have to report it, and it is mighty ticklish work for a fellow to get away with—to lose a bill."

Not until he was halfway to his hotel did Berry Bennett's warning occur to Tom. He stopped short and clinched his fists. He had been tricked!

Thomas slept little that night. He was certainly in a most awkward position. At best, he would have to explain to the House that he had been careless in leaving the bill on the table. And if they chose not to believe him, it would surely make trouble.

The very next day inquiry was made in the House as to when the Constitutional Amendment would be reported.

Chairman Cowley said he would have some sort of report to make the next day. Then he called Tom to the lobby and asked him if he had found the bill.

“No,” said Tom. “Have you?”

Cowley ignored the insinuation in this question. “I suppose you know that the corporations are very anxious for this amendment not to go before the people, and they would be willing to pay a good deal of money to have it lost?” There was a nasty, accusing note in his tone; and Tom had to turn away quickly to keep from striking him.

But Cowley’s words increased his trouble.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

He knew they were true, and that however innocent one might be, any suspicion where money and corporations were concerned would ruin a legislator's reputation.

The next day Cowley arose in the House, and with apparent reluctance reported that the proposed Constitutional Amendment was lost, and asked for a committee to investigate.

The announcement created a great stir. A committee was appointed, with Belden as chairman.

The investigating committee met that evening and summoned Thomas Henderson Black. He told his story. They listened gravely and asked a number of questions, then excused him.

The next day there was a great hue and cry in the daily papers of the state about the loss of the proposed Constitutional Amendment. The measure was very popular with the people and they were anxious for a chance to vote on it.

The dailies, both in the news columns and

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

the editorials, commented on the disappearance of the bill, and added that its defeat would be worth many thousands of dollars to the corporations, as it was now too late in the session to introduce another. It was also mentioned that the bill was last in the possession of Thomas Henderson Black, who had been such an ardent temperance advocate.

While none of the articles openly accused him, the inference was plain, and it burned into Tom's very soul. It was being hinted broadcast about the capital that he had sold himself to the corporations, and that his moral fight for temperance was all a bluff.

The committee met again Monday morning, and once more Tom was summoned.

"Have you found the bill?" Belden asked.

"No," replied Tom.

"Have you any evidence to offer that you did not purposely make way with it?" His tone was accusing.

"No," answered Tom hotly.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

“I think we are ready to report, then.” Belden turned to the committee. But one or two members advised a little delay to give the young man another chance to clear it up. It was too bad to ruin his reputation if it could be helped.

“Very well,” Belden assented. “Mr. Black, you have one more chance.”

Tom went out without a word. He faced the destruction of all his hopes—ruin. And then to-morrow the County Unit Local-Option Bill would come up, and he was to deliver the chief speech in its favor. Could he face the legislature while under this cloud? And if he did, would not his words do more harm than good? He knew that while Burns and a few others still believed in him and would stand together, many of their fellows felt he was discredited, and would break away from his leadership. It was very doubtful if the bill passed.

When the House convened at ten o'clock for routine business, Tom did not take his

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

seat, but stayed in the lobby. He was sitting quite alone wrestling with his difficulties, trying to think of some way out.

A young fellow—a rather disreputable young fellow—who had some sort of clerkship around the capitol, came up and sat down by him and said in an undertone:

“Black, I reckon you know they are going to jug you?”

“What’s that?” asked Tom.

“The committee is going to report that you are guilty and recommend that you be expelled from the House; they will do it, too. And they have big reports all ready for the daily papers: ‘Thomas Henderson Black, the Great Temperance Champion, Expelled for Selling Out to the Corporations.’

“And say,” the young fellow leaned a little closer and laid a hand on Tom’s knee, “I believe the whole thing is to choke you off that temperance bill. I’ll bet you a hundred dollars if you would prom-

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

se to let that bill go by the board tomorrow they would clear you as quick as wink.”

Tom knew instinctively that this was an offer—an offer from Belden and Garrett and the rest. If he would just drop the fight for the bill he would be saved. If he did not, disgrace and ruin were ahead of him.

He turned on the young fellow with a look that made him move farther away. “Tell them, whoever sent you, that Thomas Henderson Black stands for that bill tomorrow, and it goes through.”

It was a bold declaration of war, and he did not know how he could make it good—at least, the last part of it. But he would fight to the last minute, and trust for unseen help.

He got up and walked the corridors of the capitol, his heart pounding and his brain seething. Wrath and disappointment and dread fought together in him. To have all his hopes crushed, the one bill left de-

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

feated, and his good name ruined, and that when success seemed so near! To save himself he had only to keep still to-morrow, and let the bill be defeated.

Many another has faced such a temptation. And he remembered that the Great Legislator, the Giver of all laws, had once stood on the mountain, and looking ahead had seen political power and position on one hand, and the cross on the other. He had chosen his cross.

Tom turned back toward the Representative Hall. He was calmer; his mind cleared. He would do his duty. He would fight the battle and let name and fame take care of themselves.

He slipped into his seat and began quietly to study the order of business for the day. A page brought a telegram and laid it on his desk.

As Tom read it the warm blood suffused his face, and a great light and strength came to him. The message was from Allie Trosper:

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

“We all know you are innocent. You are fighting for the people and Him. All will be well.”

As he left the building at the noon adjournment a messenger boy thrust a note into his hand. It said:

“Come to room 47, the Jackson House, at once. B. B.”

He started immediately, wondering what Berry wanted.

The reporter was waiting for him, and locking the door, turned with quick, eager tone:

“Black, I have been doing a little work on this case myself, and so has Miss Heron of the ‘News.’ She firmly believes you are innocent, and, of course, I know you are. We have learned exactly how it occurred, but haven’t enough proof to make a case in court. You will simply have to take what I give you and use it to scare them. Bullies are generally cowards, you know.”

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

He briefly outlined the whole plot and gave what evidence they had collected—evidence that, while circumstantial, made the truth of the story certain, at least to one who knew the characters and motives of the men involved.

Tom's hopes rose. His fighting blood surged anew through his veins as the plan grew clear in his mind.

“It will give me a chance, Berry—a chance to fight. It offers hope at least. I can't—I don't know how to thank you”——He swallowed hard and tried to steady his voice.

“Well, then, don't try, old man.” Berry smiled seriously. “You don't owe me anything,” and he gripped Tom's outstretched hand. “I owe you more than any man in the world, more than you can guess. You have made me believe in clean, honest men once more.”

Tom hurried away to his hotel to rest, and think out a plan of action.

As he returned to the capitol at half-

past one, Belden joined him at the corner and walked along with him.

“Mr. Black,” he began in assumed sympathy, “you don’t know how sorry we older members are that this thing has come up. You are a young man of ability, and there was fine promise of a future for you. We would shield you if we possibly could; but you see the position we are in. We are responsible to the whole state for the integrity of the legislature.

“Of course, the session will close soon, and it won’t be much loss of salary to be expelled now, but the name of it! It’s the sort of thing a man seldom lives down. And I am afraid, too, it will hurt the cause you have been so successfully championing.”

They had reached the capitol steps. Tom had not said a word. He stopped on the first step and faced Belden, and looking him straight in the eye said with meaning:

“Mr. Belden, I want to see you and Speaker Garrett and Cowley and Bunheim

and Winely, privately, right after adjournment this afternoon.”

“It will hardly be possible,” said Belden. “We will all be busy at that time.”

“Very well,” said Tom indifferently, but narrowed his eyes and looked intently at Belden. “I have some very important information for you five; but if you prefer that I give it to the whole House, all right.”

He saw a flicker of uneasiness flit across the representative’s face. As they reached the landing in the upper corridor Belden remarked:

“I would like to accommodate you, Black, in that matter if it can be done. I’ll see Garrett, and if he can get off we will see you in my committee room right after adjournment.”

“Very well,” said Tom. He went in to his seat and began to put things in order for the supreme clash which he knew was to come.

CHAPTER XIII

IT was almost time for the House to be called to order and the members were coming in rapidly. As Burns passed down the aisle Tom motioned him to his seat.

“I want to see you this evening,” he said in an undertone.

Immediately after adjournment Tom saw Belden start for his committee room. Bunheim followed shortly, then, Garrett. Tom lingered in the hall a few minutes. He wanted all of them to be there when he entered. It would be a hostile crowd he had to face, a crowd of strong, trained, artful politicians, and he did not want to waste any nerve force waiting among them for the rest to come.

Cowley was the last to go. Then Tom went to the appointed room.

Speaker Garrett, heavy, important, sat

on the edge of the table in an attitude which suggested he had but a moment to stay. Cowley and Bunheim leaned against the window ledge. Belden, perfectly groomed, cool and smooth, sat by the table. Winely, with a bored air, drew patterns on a blotter.

Tom closed the door behind him and faced the men. With his hand on the back of a chair he began in a quiet, tense voice, speaking directly at Belden:

“Gentlemen: I will try to be brief as possible, and trust you will hear me through without interruption.

“When I came here, very green indeed, I thought legislation was a matter of majorities. But after I had introduced four good bills and they met such easy and untimely death, I began to learn something. Since then I have made it my business to learn. Among other things, I have discovered that you gentlemen, with a few others, decide what legislation shall pass and what be defeated. I have discovered some of the ways in which this is done, a few of



W. H. W. W.

“HE BEGAN IN A QUIET, TENSE VOICE”



TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

which you would not be proud to have the public know.

“Some time ago I discovered that you never meant any temperance bills to pass. While I talked for them, you only smiled and laughed in your sleeve. But when I organized the ‘dry’ voters and blocked your own bills, it was a different matter.

“Then you decided I must be got out of the way. When you could not persuade me nor bulldoze me, you fell on a plan to discredit me. If I could be disgraced, that would break up my organization and discredit the cause. The details of the dirty plan were left to Cowley, but Belden knew what they were.

“And here is how it worked:

“Cowley called a fake meeting of his committee—only I and his special friends, who stayed away, were notified. Cowley and I were alone with the Constitutional Amendment. He made an excuse to leave the room. By a prearranged plan, I was called to the telephone. While I was gone

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

he slipped back into the room and got the bill.

“He then returned and pretended surprise; later reported the matter to the House; and you, Mr. Speaker, appointed a committee headed by Belden to investigate me.

“This committee decided to find me guilty and recommended that I be expelled from the House. Then a message was sent me offering to drop the charges if I would drop the County Unit Local-Option Bill. This bill is particularly offensive to Cowley and Belden, who are much interested in breweries and saloons.

“You know what my answer was.

“Now, gentlemen”—Tom narrowed his eyes and hammered his forefinger at Belden and Cowley—“that is my story, and I have the evidence to back it up.

“Mind you”—his tone grew warningly emphatic—“if that lost bill is not found, and if that investigating committee does not hand in a report exonerating me be-

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

fore twelve o'clock to-morrow, I am going to lay the whole proof before the House of Representatives.

“And I warn you that I have enough men ready to back me to give you fellows individually and collectively an airing that will make your names a stench to this state for twenty years.

“Further, I want you to know that the County Unit Local-Option Bill will not be dropped. I will not withdraw my fight. Our combination of voters will stand. And if that bill does not go through the House, not one of your measures shall; and if it does not go through the Senate not a Senate bill shall pass the House.”

Tom turned and left the room.

Burns was waiting for him in the lower corridor.

“How do things look?” he asked sympathetically.

“I do not know,” replied Tom. Already his doubts were rising. It was a tremendous force he had challenged, single-handed.

If his plan failed to work, he was ruined, and it hardly seemed possible that all those astute leaders could be scared into doing his bidding.

“But, Burns,” he said, “do not bother about me. Get out and work hard to-night and to-morrow to hold our organization together.

“And about the principal speech”—Tom’s voice was a little shaky—“you’d better be prepared for that. As things now stand, for me to speak would hurt the bill, and unless things clear up I will keep silent. But if they do, then I will speak as we planned.”

“All right, Tom,” and Burns held out his hand and gripped the young man’s. “Remember, I’ll stand by you to the end.”

“Thank you.” And Tom hurried away to his hotel.

He did not leave his room that evening, and scarcely slept during the night. It was twelve hours of the most terrible anxiety he had ever known.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

He had flung his bolt of defiance. All he could do was to wait and hope. As Berry had pointed out, the evidence, while convincing to one who understood the men and motives, was not such as would be accepted before a court or a committee of inquiry. He felt that he had faced the politicians effectively, and that he had acted wisely in leaving them in the dark as to the evidence in his possession.

But if his threat failed to work, then they would show him no mercy. They would crush him relentlessly, expel him and blacken his name in every way possible. He would go back to his own county disgraced, branded as a traitor to his state, a hired tool of the corporations.

Several times during the night, when the gloom hung heaviest over him, when failure and ruin seemed certain, he got up and re-read Allie's telegram:

"We all know you are innocent. You are fighting for the people and Him. All will be well."

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

And he prayed most devoutly that her words might come true.

The next morning Tom shaved and dressed himself with unusual care, and went to the Representative Hall a half hour early. The committee of investigation was to meet again that morning and he wanted to be in call should they send for him. But he was not sent for.

As the members began to come in, Tom felt, rather than noticed, an unusual interest in him, but whether for or against him he could not tell.

The fact was, the evening before, news had telepathically spread that Thomas Henderson Black, "that peaked-headed son-of-the-Ozarks," had had a clash with the powers that be. And everyone was curious to know what it was about and who came out victor.

All during the morning—the morning that it seemed to Tom would never end—there was a current of interest around him. Members watched him, spoke to each other

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

of him, and waited watchfully for the first sign which would indicate how the fight had gone.

Ten o'clock, ten-thirty, eleven, passed and not a word or sign that Tom's threat had taken effect. His anxiety grew. He could scarcely hold himself still in his chair. He watched his hands constantly to see that they did not tremble.

Item after item of the business on the calendar was taken up. It was eleven-thirty, eleven-forty-five, and still the business moved on. Tom's heart beat harder and harder, his throat was dry. They would adjourn in a minute. His threat had failed to work; he was ruined.

Then, as the clock ticked nearer and nearer to twelve, Belden arose nonchalantly and addressed the Speaker.

Tom's teeth clinched, the nails ground into his hands, he scarcely breathed—was he going to move to adjourn?

“Mr. Speaker, your committee appointed to investigate the disappearance of Consti-

tutional Amendment No. 5 is ready to report.”

Tom sat cold and motionless as marble, staring at his desk, breathing tensely.

“We are happy to report,” went on Belden, “that no member of this body was to blame, farther than for a little carelessness. The bill was discovered this morning in a drawer of the table in the committee room. One of the janitors happened to pass the open door while Mr. Cowley was in the secretary of state’s room and Mr. Black was at the telephone, and seeing the bill, supposed it had been left and put it into the drawer.”

The room swam before Tom’s eyes. He could scarcely see the tall windows through which the sun was shining. His heart sang until the blood roared in his head like the sound of many waters.

There was a slight, almost imperceptible stir in the House as a common thought swept from mind to mind: “Black has won. He has fought them single-handed and

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

come out victor. He is a coming man.”

But Tom did not feel this strong, sudden wave of public favor—not then. His sense of relief was too great. His good name was saved, and he had a clear field for his fight for the bill that afternoon.

At two o'clock the County Unit Local-Option Bill came up for final consideration. Burns moved it pass. The motion was seconded. It was then open for discussion.

Thomas Henderson Black arose and received the recognition of the Speaker.

He began clearly and forcibly, but had himself well under control. From the first he had the closest attention both of the members and the large crowd that packed the gallery.

He had the truth on his side, and he proved it was the truth by definite examples, by figures and facts that could not be denied. He was speaking for a cause, not for himself. He forgot himself, forgot his enemies, forgot everything but the bill,

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

which was a righteous measure sorely needed for the protection of the homes of the people.

A profound conviction gave force to his words, sincere emotion gave them fervor. There was no whispering, no reading of papers, no slipping away to the lobby this time. The attention was intense to his very last word.

When he sat down the applause that burst from House and galleries was the most enthusiastic during that Assembly.

The bill put to a vote passed, ninety-seven to thirty-four.

Tom started to slip out, but hands were extended in congratulation from both sides of the aisle. And Berry Bennett, who had left his reporter's desk and dodged around to the lobby, met him just outside the door and grabbed him by the shoulders.

“Good old boy! Good old boy! You floored them that time. Say, the reporters all want to see you this afternoon, sure.

TOM HENRY OF WAHOO COUNTY

Your picture will be in a dozen papers tomorrow.”

Tom thanked him, but got away as soon as he could. He was hurrying to a telegraph office, where he sent this message:

“MISS ALLIE TROSPER,

“Buckeye Bridge, Mo.

“Victory for the right. Will be home Friday to stay over Sunday. Hope to see you.

“T. H. B.”

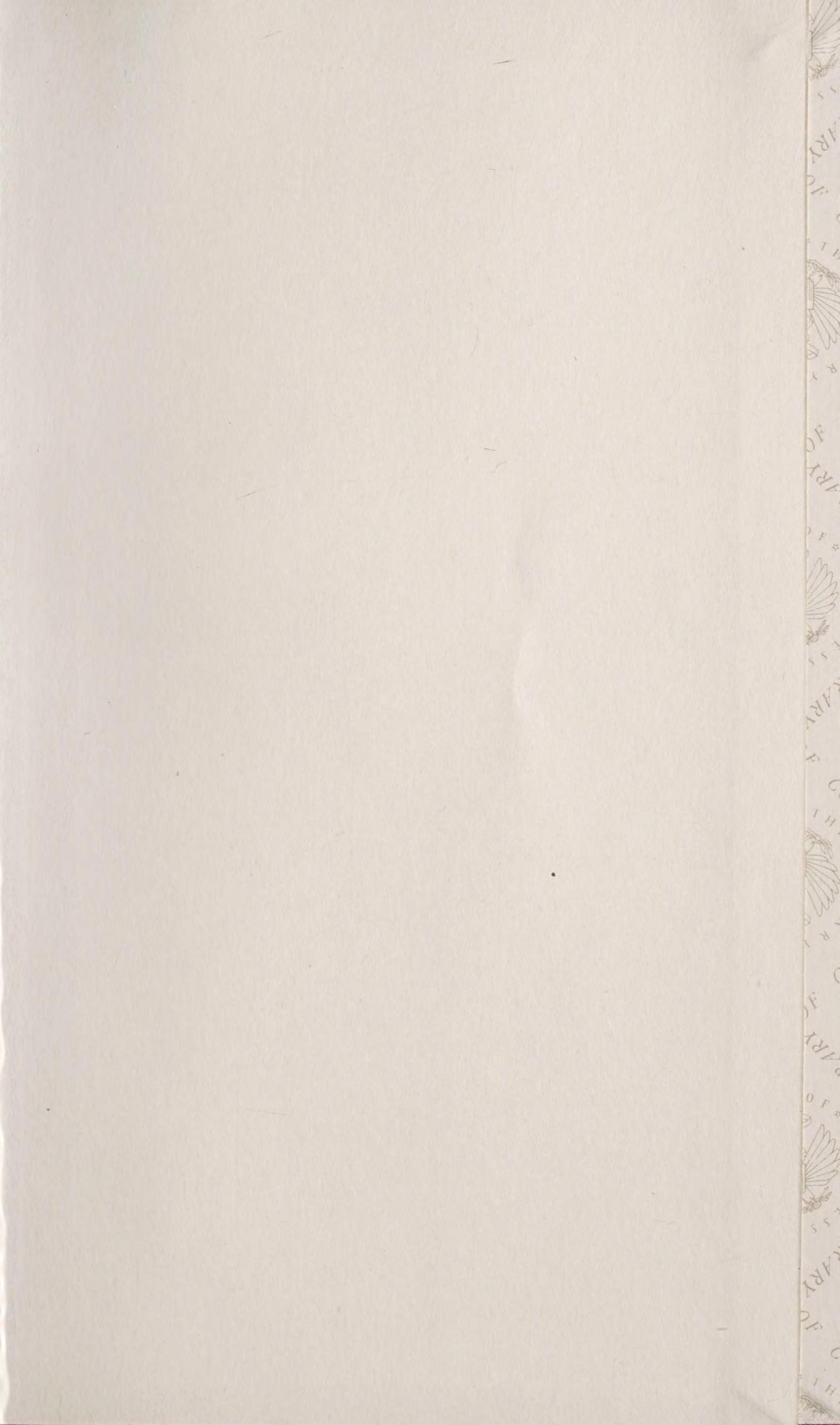
“I wonder,” he mused happily as he walked away, “if she will guess what I am going to say to her.”

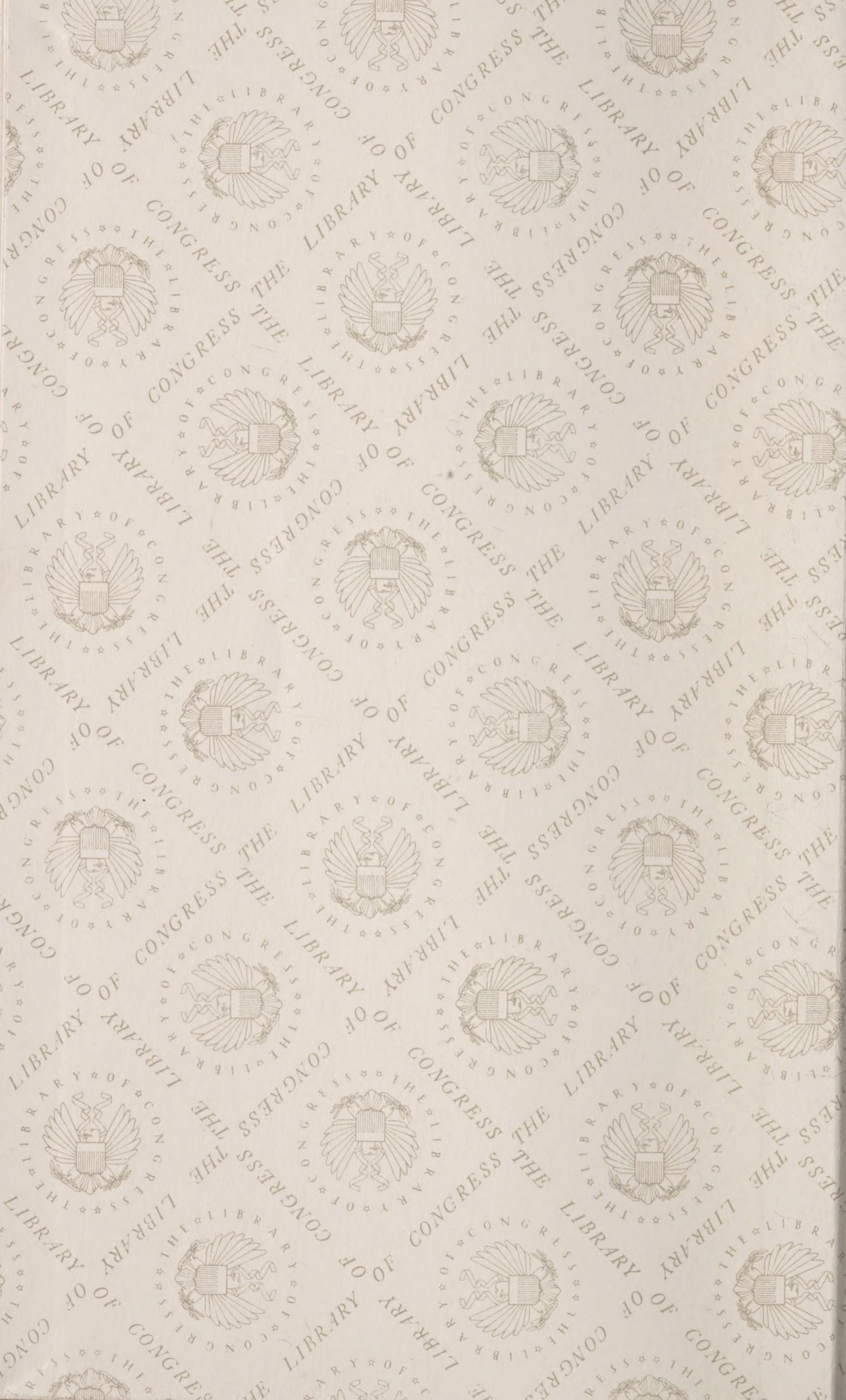
[THE END]

728

1









LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0001267658A