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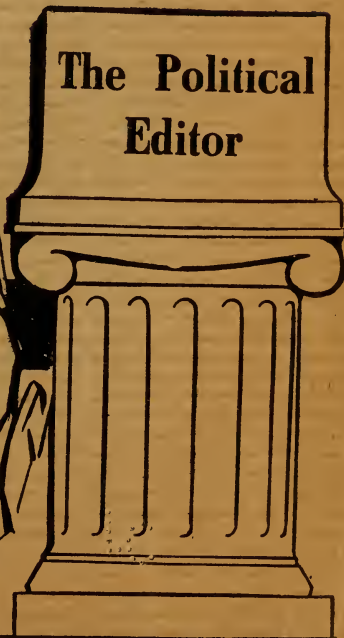
25 CENTS

NO PLAYS EXCHANGED

# HALF HOUR DRAMAS



The Political  
Editor



Johnson 1910  
T.S. DENISON & COMPANY  
PUBLISHERS CHICAGO

# DENISON'S ACTING PLAYS.

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Baby Show at Pineville, 20 min. ....	19
Bad Job, 30 min. ....	3 2
Betsy Baker, 45 min. ....	2 2
Billy's Chorus Girl, 25 min. ....	2 3
Billy's Mishap, 20 min. ....	2 3
Borrowed Luncheon, 20 min. ....	5
Borrowing Trouble, 20 min. ....	3 5
Box and Cox, 35 min. ....	2 1
Cabman No. 93, 40 min. ....	2 2
Case Against Casey, 40 min. ....	23
Convention of Papas, 25 min. ....	7
Country Justice, 15 min. ....	8
Cow that Kicked Chicago, 20 m. ....	3 2

**T. S. DENISON & COMPANY, 154 W. Randolph St., Chicago**

# THE POLITICAL EDITOR

A COMEDY OF NEWSPAPER AND  
POLITICAL LIFE

BY

CHARLES ULRICH

AUTHOR OF

*"The Altar of Riches," "A Daughter of the Desert," "The Desert  
er," "The Editor-in-Chief," "The High School Freshman,"  
"The Honor of a Cowboy," "The Hebrew," "In Plum  
Valley," "The Man from Nevada," "On the Little  
Big Horn," "The Road Agent," "The  
Town Marshal," and "The  
Tramp and the Actress."*



CHICAGO  
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY  
PUBLISHERS

# THE POLITICAL EDITOR

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## CHARACTERS.

BOB HASTINGS.....*A News Reporter*  
CLIFF LEE.....*A Legislative Correspondent*  
JERRY SAMPSON.....*A Legislator from Jacksontown*  
NELLIE MORTIMER.....*A Newspaper Woman in Politics*

The action of the play takes place in a legislative committee room at the State capitol during a senatorial deadlock.

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PLACE—*New York.*

TIME—*Present.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*Thirty Minutes.*

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NOTICE.—Production of this play is free to amateurs, but the sole professional rights are reserved by the Publishers.

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## STORY.

Previous to the opening of play, Nellie Mortimer and Bob Hastings had loved each other in a small town in Iowa. Hastings was a lawyer and Nellie a young society woman who became a society reporter. Hastings objected to this pursuit and Nellie, proud and high-spirited, broke their engagement and went to New York to engage in journalism. Hastings gave up his law practice later and engaged in journalism, later going to New York, where he in pique married and became the father of two boys, his "kiddies," as he affectionately called them.

Sent to the State capitol to report the proceedings in connection with a senatorial deadlock, Hastings is doing his utmost to score a journalistic beat by first getting the result of the caucus of legislators. Meanwhile Nellie, employed as a political editor, goes to the capitol on the same mission and succeeds in first obtaining the exclusive news of a compact of the Asemblymen by which the Senator is named. She is about to wire her scoop to her newspaper when she meets Hastings in the committee chamber. Her hope of winning back Hastings' love vanishes when she answers the telephone and learns that Hastings is married and the father of two "kiddies."

In the interview that follows it develops that Hastings' future depends upon his success in scoring a scoop on his fellow journalists, and to further that end, and for the sake of the kiddies, Nellie gives Hastings her notes, thus providing him with the exclusive account of the breaking of the deadlock. Cliff Lee, a reporter who had fallen in love with Nellie, and to whom she promised that when she was ready to marry him she would dine with him, arrives at this juncture, and she announces her readiness to dine with him. He then realizes that she will become his wife and the curtain falls with Hastings examining his exclusive story and Nellie and Lee starting off for their dinner and the marriage license office.



## CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES.

NELLIE—A young, handsome woman, slangy at times, but good-hearted and winsome. Must be capable of showing strong emotion and mix it with comedy of the refined kind. She wears a street dress throughout action.

HASTINGS—A young man of twenty-eight, strong and natty. He wears ordinary street suit during action.

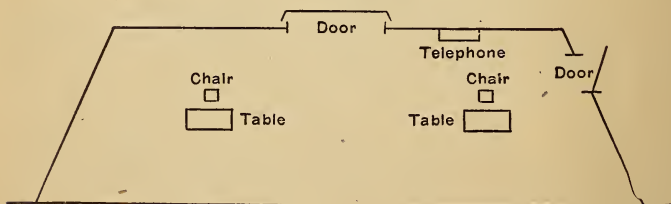
LEE—A man of twenty-three, dashing and breezy. He wears a street suit, dressy but subdued.

JERRY—A middle-aged man, gray, and addicted to liquor. Should be played quietly to be effective. Wears rather loud suit to distinguish him from others and shows flashy jewelry.

## PROPERTIES.

Two tables. Two chairs. Practical telephone. Lot of books and newspapers together with copy paper, writing pads, etc., for tables. Traveling bag for Nellie. Cigarettes for Lee. Sheets of paper covered with notes for Nellie. Lead pencils for Hastings.

## STAGE SETTING.



## STAGE DIRECTIONS.

*R.* means right of stage; *C.*, center; *R. C.*, right center; *L.*, left; *R. D.*, right door; *L. D.*, left door, etc.; 1 *E.*, first entrance; *U. E.*, upper entrance, etc.; *D. F.*, door in flat, or scene running across the back of the stage; 1 *G.*, first groove, etc. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

## THE POLITICAL EDITOR

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SCENE: *Committee room at the State capitol, in 3, boxed. Small flat-top tables covered with writing material, books, newspapers, etc., R. C. and at L. C. A chair at each table facing audience. Practical doors C. in F. and at L. U. E. A practical telephone hangs to L. of C. in F. Floor carpeted and pieces of paper are scattered about. Pictures on wall here and there. See Scene Plot for stage setting.*

*At rise enter LEE and HASTINGS, C. in F. A boy is heard off R. U. E., shouting "Extra!" He continues the cry at intervals until after LEE and HASTINGS begin their dialogue.*

LEE (*to HASTINGS as they come down C.*). This senatorial deadlock is getting on my nerves, Hastings. (*Sits at table, L. C.*) I wish they would get down to business and elect somebody, so my managing editor would quit yawping at me by wire or telephone every fifteen minutes demanding to know the result. (*Works rapidly at table.*)

HASTINGS (*sitting at table, R. C.*). It is very annoying, Lee. I wonder how much longer the fight is going to last. Something decisive ought to come off tonight. (*Works.*)

LEE (*as he lights a cigarette*). I hope so. The Norman forces are pretty well lined up, and as he is backed by the President, the Republican bunch stands firm as Gibraltar.

HASTINGS. They always do until the break comes.

LEE. The Democrats, managed by trust agents, oppose Norman bitterly because he nipped the tallow trust last summer, and they want to elect Chesterson to even up scores with Norman. It's a bully fight, all the same. (*Smokes rapidly.*)

HASTINGS (*sighingly*). It would be a feather in any reporter's cap to get a beat on the result. I'd give a year of my life to score a scoop tonight. What a fine thing it would be for my wife and the two kiddies, bless their little hearts!

LEE (*laughingly*). I suppose so, Hastings. Some of us would cut each other's throats to pull off a beat on the sena-

torial election. (*Rises, goes to HASTINGS at table, R. C., and slaps him on the back jovially.*) For the sake of those kiddies, old chap, I could almost wish you might beat all of us, even me.

HASTINGS (*as he works*). Thanks, Lee.

LEE. It would mean a substantial increase in your salary, eh?

HASTINGS. Yes, of course. The Lord knows my salary is quite insufficient for our needs just now. I often think of giving up the newspaper game in disgust, but I'm a moral coward and stick like glue.

LEE (*laughingly*). The habit is hard to shake off, my boy. (*After a pause.*) By the way, you're from Iowa, aren't you?

HASTINGS (*surprised*). Yes. Why do you ask?

LEE (*abashed*). Oh, it's nothing particular, I assure you. I merely heard the boys say there was—was a love affair—

HASTINGS (*interrupts indignantly, as he rises*). I wish the boys wouldn't discuss my private affairs. Well, it was a love affair, but it was my own and concerned nobody.

LEE. True, Hastings; but we're friends, and you may trust me as far as you like. Tell me of this little affair of yours. Confession is good for the soul, you know.

HASTINGS (*dreamily as he resumes his seat at table*). It was nothing out of the common. I merely loved a girl—the most charming woman I ever knew—

LEE (*interrupting laughingly*). Barring Mrs. Hastings.

HASTINGS. Of course, Lee. But when I first knew the other one, I deemed her to be one in a million.

LEE. Sure thing. They always are, until one wakes up.

HASTINGS. She was all right, this girl. But one day she got to writing society items for our town paper and then she changed completely. I sought, begged, pleaded with her to quit the work, and the upshot of it was that we quarreled. I don't approve of women engaging in the newspaper game, and I objected strenuously when my fiancée insisted upon being a reporter.

LEE. It's a bad habit for engaged girls to acquire, that's a cinch.



HASTINGS. I was doing well in my law practice and deemed myself fully able to support my wife without her help. But my sweetheart was a spirited creature and she resented bitterly what she called my usurpation of her privileges.

LEE. Good heaven! She must have been a suffragette!

HASTINGS. Not just that, Lee. Well, we quarreled, our engagement was broken and soon thereafter she went to the East.

LEE. And you, Hastings?

HASTINGS (*sighingly*). I married a sweet wisp of a girl a year or so later, and then came east with my bride. My law practice did not pan out very well, so I drifted back into the newspaper game, and here I am.

LEE. What became of No. 1—the girl with a mind of her own?

HASTINGS. I'm sure I don't know. I once heard she was working on a big New York newspaper, but I made no inquiries, for I was married, and—and—our old love was dead.

LEE. I wouldn't be so sure of that, old man.

HASTINGS. I wonder if she remembers the old days which I, somehow, cannot efface from my memory. Will she ever forgive the foolish prejudice that separated us? (*After a pause, then in a livelier mood.*) By the way, Lee, I'm told the Record has sent its political editor, a woman, up here to beat us at our own game.

LEE. And she'll do it, too, if we don't watch out sharp. She's the goods, all right.

HASTINGS (*surprised*). Do you know her?

LEE (*lighting cigarette*). Sure thing, Hastings. She's as fine a woman reporter as you will meet anywhere. She's sharp as a razor, and she has a tongue that—well, mind you don't run foul of it, unless you care to reap a whirlwind.

HASTINGS. She must be very interesting.

LEE (*enthusiastically*). She's divine! So different from most women, you know. A little plain spoken, perhaps, but she has a heart of gold, eighteen karat fine!

HASTINGS (*smilingly*). I see she has a warm admirer in you, my boy.

LEE (*despondently*). I wish she would recognize it as you do, Hastings. I've tried to convince her fifty times that our paths run in parallel grooves, but she wants them to run at right angles. I have asked her time and again to dine with me, but she puts me off every time with the statement that she will dine in public only with the man she intends to marry.

HASTINGS (*rising laughingly and assorting papers on his desk*). That's too bad, my boy. Persevere and you may win. Women are created to be won by man. It depends upon the man himself if he is to win the prize she withholds from him.

LEE (*sighs*). Some day she'll say to me, "Jimmy Lee, we'll dine together." When she does I'll be the happiest man in the world.

NELLIE (*offstage*). Fade away, you with the tin star!

LEE (*excitedly, turning up C.*). There she comes now!

HASTINGS (*turning to L. U. E.*). I'm off to the caucus, Lee.

LEE (*going to C. D. in F.*). Hope you'll get that beat you're looking for, Hastings.

HASTINGS (*crossing to C. and taking LEE'S arm*). I want you to help me. Come along. (*He drags LEE to R. U. E.*)

LEE (*protesting*). But I've got other business on hand just now. I want to get up my bulldog telegram—

HASTINGS (*as he drags LEE R.*). That will wait awhile, my boy.

NELLIE (*offstage, C.*). No, I'm not a suffragette, you monkey!

HASTINGS (*dragging LEE to L. U. E.*). Come, we'll talk it over together outside. (*Exeunt with LEE, L. U. E.*)

*Enter NELLIE, C. D. in F. She carries a traveling bag and stands at entrance looking off for an instant, then comes down C., looking about.*

NELLIE (*at C.*). I should have told that fellow out there to back up and hang a red lantern in front of his face. The idea that one of these up-state yaps should do a dog

barking act to scare an honest working girlie like me with a New York police card, off the job. Nothing doing. (*She walks up to table, R. C.*) So this is a press and committee room combined, eh. (*Picks up book and looks at it.*) Looks more like a library. Huh! Not a good novel in the bunch—all acts of this and that legislature. It might be the record of a theatrical exchange, the acts are so numerous. Well, me to the work and the busy little ant stunt to get my Monday washing out on the line. (*Opens her traveling bag and explores its contents.*) If it wasn't for that physical culture course I took by mail last fall, I should feel rather weak here among this bunch of politicians, trying to wring a lot of near-to-the-heart-throb stuff out of their systems. (*She pauses in deep thought.*) Let me see. I think I'd better connect with Cliff Lee, one of the breeziest reporters I know, and get him to lend me a helping hand. (*Rises, goes to telephone and looks through a telephone directory, L. C.*) Guess Cliff won't be surprised when he learns the city editor got a bug that I could do some cute stunts up here. (*Laughingly, as she strikes a heroic attitude.*) How are these for headlines: "Political Sidelights at the Capitol by Polly West, the Clever Girl Reporter." Huh! That ought to loom up like a house afire at the top of the page over a lot of society drivel and divorce gossip. And I, poor little I, will have to endure that love gush of the original Cupid—Cliff Lee—to get him to unbuckle and come across with the goods. (*Starts to take off the receiver, then pauses.*) Sometimes I feel like I'm taking money by false pretences for the bunk I put over on my unsuspecting city editor. Well, what's the use preaching your own funeral. As long as I get away with it, there's no use calling in someone to audit my mental books. (*Takes off receiver.*) Hello! Is this a house 'phone? Can you get me a wire into the den where the newspaper bunch hang out? Yes, the newspaper guys.

*Enter LEE, R. U. E., noisily. He comes C. and seeing NELLIE at telephone, stands and watches her.*

NELLIE (*looking at LEE sideways*). Yes, a newspaper

rummie who comes in upon you like a cyclone after a league pennant. (*Hangs up receiver.*)

LEE (*advancing toward NELLIE*). I'm glad you're here, Nellie. (*Taking her hand.*) You're sure you're here?

NELLIE (*laughingly*). No, I'm in Kokomo, Indiana, brushing dust off the dumbbells in a deaf and dumb asylum.

LEE. But you are not up here for keeps, are you?

NELLIE. Sure. I'm here for the Record, and being the political editor, I'm going to be up to my neck in politics from now on.

LEE (*delighted*). Well, that's the best noise I've heard since the deadlock started. I'm simply tickled to death, girlie.

NELLIE (*sitting at table, L. C.*). Ditto, Cliff Lee. But I warn you fellows that you've got to step lively to keep up with the pace I intend to set around here.

LEE (*sitting on end of table to L. of NELLIE*). You can't go it too strong for me, Nellie.

NELLIE. I'm here to work and not to sit smoking cigarettes, drinking booze from the tin flasks of these State senators from the prohibition counties, and telling lies of how I put over this, that and the other story on the bunch when Prince Henry was in New York. Do you get me, Cliff?

LEE (*laughingly, as he lights a cigarette*). Fine! Sounds just like the stuff Kelly used to ooze out to the city editor at the last annual banquet of the staff when he was soused to the eyeballs.

NELLIE (*slow and significantly*). But this is edited copy I am slipping you, Cliff; cold facts ready to go to the forms.

LEE (*impatiently*). Nix on that junk, Nellie! (*Jumps from table and leans over her.*) Come in and meet the bunch where we tell each other our real names and split the day's harvest.

NELLIE. Well, that sounds good. I might as well acknowledge the corn—I'm as ignorant of what I am to do as a porker in a Yiddish meat shop.

LEE (*earnestly*). Let me help you, Nellie. You know you've got me hooked for fair. I—I, well, you know I always did like you—

NELLIE (*rising and slapping him on the back*). Come, boy, don't drop your pennies in that slot. Why do you persist in buying me those candy hearts with doggerel printed in red letters.

LEE (*pouting*). That's right, Nellie. Trip me up and scold me for falling down. But, Nell—

NELLIE (*interrupting*). Now go, boy. Beat it for the playground. Tell the bunch that a wise dame is here on the job to cop the human interest and gay Romeo stuff of politics; and if they promise to help me pluck a few peaches for the first shipment, I'll promise to keep their stockings darned during the deadlock.

LEE (*starting for L. U. E.*). You're on, Nell. But see here—if I'm to stand sponser for you, you've got to promise to dine with me just once. Is it a go?

NELLIE. I tore up my social calendar coming up on the limited, Cliff. Sorry, but—

LEE (*pleadingly*). Just once, Nell.

NELLIE (*dramatically*). No, Cliff; I will work with you, talk with you, walk and fake with you, but I shall not eat with you—yet. My boy, whenever I break bread with you, it will be at our engagement dinner. So beat it now to blow the blasts for the entrance of the little queen of politics. (*She points to L. U. E.*)

LEE (*going to L. U. E., sighingly*). All right, Nell. I'm off in a bunch. Sorry about the dinner, for I happen to know where I could manage to borrow the money today. So long, and stay on this side of the wall paper until you hear from me. (*Exit, L. U. E.*)

NELLIE (*sighingly, as she sorts over papers on table, L. C.*). Not a bad fellow at all; but I must not take off my gloves and let him see my hand. Keep them guessing until the showdown; that's one of the rules of Hoyle one shouldn't forget, either in the game of love or politics. I'll have to steer clear of the newspaper bunch during the recesses or they'll have me eating cheese sandwiches with them off the crescent counters in the basement. I guess it's me to the Young Women's Christian Association, where they have grace instead of cocktails before meals. Only four



months on the Gay Easiest Way and I've got the lingo down as fine as a sailor's parrot. Guess I'll start along now. (*Picks up traveling bag and starts for C. D. in F.*)

*Enter* JERRY, *C. D. in F.* He is slightly intoxicated and staggers against NELLIE as he comes down C. He sputters out an apology and stands hat in hand, R. C., NELLIE standing R. C., looking at him calmly as she adjusts her clothing.

JERRY (*bowing*). Beg your pardon, but you ought to have blown your horn going around this curve.

NELLIE (*coldly*). If I was lit up like you are, you probably would have seen me.

JERRY. That's pretty good, even if you are a stenographer.

NELLIE (*surprised and indignant*). Well, I like your nerve! I a stenographer!

JERRY (*tipsily*). That's just what I said—sten—stenographer. Just the person I want to see. Will you take some dictation from me?

NELLIE. No, I don't take dictation from anyone. I'm an orphan and I've got money to burn. (*Starts for C. D. in F.*)

JERRY. You ain't goin' to leave, are you? You're a mighty clever girl, you are. If you're lobbying for any bill short of absolute prohibition, just write it down on my cuff, and I'll see it goes through if I have to stick my fist through the panel of a door—

NELLIE (*pauses an instant, then comes down C. to JERRY, inspired by a new thought*). Say, are you a politician—a regular dyed-in-the-wool politician of the Tammany brand?

JERRY (*laughingly*). Nope, only a sort of irregular one, but the best of the brand you ever saw. Excuse me if I look a little off color tonight.

NELLIE (*laughingly*). Been cutting into the grape a little, I see. Well, even politicians have their faults.

JERRY. Well, I'm with you on that. Say, what's your name?

NELLIE. I'll give you that later. What's doing in the matter of the deadlock?

JERRY (*suspiciously*). You ain't one of them newspaper women, are you?

NELLIE (*looking him squarely in the eye*). And if I were?

JERRY (*after a pause*). I'd put you wise to something real big.

NELLIE (*looking about*). Do you mean it, Billy?

JERRY. You've got the name wrong. I'm Jerry Sampson from Jacksontown.

NELLIE. Well, Jerry Sampson from Jacksontown, I want you to tell me about the deadlock.

JERRY. What sheet are you with?

NELLIE (*in a whisper*). The Record.

JERRY. Good! The Record saved my bacon once. Now listen to me. I'll put you wise to one of the biggest things that has been pulled off around here this session.

NELLIE (*excitedly*). You mean it, Jerry Sampson? Do you?

JERRY. Sure I do. I can see you're above the average girl, and as I owe the Record something for a good turn they did me once, I'll even up scores by telling you something.

NELLIE (*eagerly*). What can it be?

JERRY (*in a whisper*). The name of the next United States Senator just agreed upon in the caucus.

NELLIE (*staggers in excitement*). Good Lord! Who is it?

JERRY. I'll make you a proposition. If I give you the details of the deal, will you let me do the honors at a big feed?

NELLIE (*aside, turning R. C.*). I must humor this man, for it's part of the game. (*Turns to JERRY laughingly.*) Will I? Take right hold of my flipper, so you won't loose me in the crowd. Your bet is covered, Jerry.

JERRY (*taking her hand warmly*). And the book is closed.

NELLIE (*withdrawing her hand*). Now for the story, Jerry.

JERRY. But won't you sit down? (*He points to seat at table, R. C.*)

NELLIE. I don't mind. (*Sits at table, R. C.*)

JERRY (*sitting on edge of table, R., facing NELLIE*). I

haint got much education, so I'll tell you plainly what happened and leave the polishing off to you.

NELLIE (*sharpening her pencil*). Leave that to me. I've polished most everything in my time except shoes.

JERRY. That's good. Well, now you see, Jim Carper, he's the boss of the Sixtieth Congressional District.

NELLIE (*writing notes on paper pad*). Yes; Jim bosses even his wife, they tell me.

JERRY (*surprised*). Hully gee! I didn't know he had a wife. But that don't matter. You see, Jim came to the Blakemore men and wanted to throw the district to us provided we let him name the next United States Attorney. We figured out that he was trying to hog us, and that we didn't need his support, so we threw him down.

NELLIE (*horrified*). You mean you knocked him down?

JERRY (*laughingly*). Not just that, but the effect was the same for the time being. The Norman bunch turned him down, too, but he flopped over to them just the same. (*Pauses as he watches her.*)

NELLIE (*looking up*). Don't mind me. I'm not missing a word.

JERRY. Excuse me. This afternoon we decided to give Carper the District Attorney, provided he would swing the thirteen votes he carries in his match case to us, and he just notified our chairman that he agreed, and—and—

NELLIE (*feverishly, as she looks about*). Yes, yes—

JERRY. Blakemore will be the next United States Senator.

NELLIE (*gaspingly*). You mean it?

JERRY. It's sure as death and taxes.

NELLIE (*as she writes*). And your promise to Carper to give him the District Attorney?

JERRY (*laughingly*). That's bunk— only a promise which doesn't amount to that. (*Snaps his finger.*)

NELLIE. Gee! But this game of politics is interesting. Everybody gives his solemn promise and then everybody shakes everybody down just for the fun of the thing. Now when is this vote for Blakemore to be pulled off?

JERRY (*looking at watch*). They're gathering in Maho-

ney's saloon now. Sorry, but I must go now. Don't let those other newspaper guys in on your story.

NELLIE (*rising*). Leave that to me, Jerry.

JERRY (*enthusiastically*). And when it's all over you and me will be eating the fat of the land, while those paper collar boys in the press gallery are doing the death watch and get in just in time to be too late. You've got 'em beat to a custard. Bye, bye. Meet you here in half an hour. (*Exit, C. D. in F.*)

NELLIE (*placing notes in her traveling bag*). Perhaps so, Jerry, but I wouldn't be so sure about it if I were you. I'll get this stuff onto the wire as soon as possible. It's the biggest beat of the year, and it will force the bunch to take off their hats to me. If I'm not a scream here from now on, I'll marry Cliff Lee and quit the game forever. (*Exit, C. D. in F.*)

*Enter* LEE *hurriedly, L. U. E., followed a moment later by* HASTINGS. LEE *looks around, then turns to* HASTINGS *with an apologetic air.*

LEE (*at R. C., looking around*). Hello! She's not here!

HASTINGS (*sitting at table, R. C.*). She? What she?

LEE. The political editor of the Record.

HASTINGS (*working*). She is the least of my troubles, Lee. What I want to know is, who is going to be the next United States Senator. I saw Jerry Sampson in the corridor awhile ago. Get after him, Lee, and see if he can throw any light on the situation.

LEE (*annoyed*). What's the use? The whole bunch is sworn to secrecy. Besides, Carper won't give up unless he gets the District Attorney.

HASTINGS. I quite agree with you, Lee. But we musn't take any chances with this woman reporter on the job. I've known them to do remarkable reportorial stunts before now. So hurry, my boy, and have it out with Jerry.

LEE (*going to L. U. E.*). I'm wasting my time, but I'll do my best. (*Exit, L. U. E.*)

HASTINGS (*writing at table*). I'll get out my dispatch with lead to come. (*Sighs.*) Ah, if I could score a beat

tonight, how happy the little kiddies would be. (*Works rapidly.*)

*Enter NELLIE, C. D. in F. She starts down C. briskly, but on seeing HASTINGS at desk, R. C., she pauses as if undecided.*

NELLIE (*aside, as she looks at HASTINGS*). Hello! Who's this? (*She coughs, but HASTINGS, whose face is averted from NELLIE, does not apparently hear her. She approaches table and coughs again.*)

HASTINGS (*looking up*). Pardon me, did you address me?

NELLIE (*starting back in surprise*). Bob Hastings!

HASTINGS (*rising in amazement*). You, Nellie!

NELLIE (*backing to C., her eyes fastened upon him*). Well, you're the last person in the world I expected to meet in this place.

HASTINGS (*going to her and taking both her hands*). It does me good to see you after all these years, Nellie.

NELLIE (*sighingly*). Same here, Bob. What are you doing here?

HASTINGS. Politics. And you?

NELLIE (*laughingly*). Politicians.

HASTINGS. Working, Nellie?

NELLIE. No, it's mere child's play. I'm in the newspaper game for good now.

HASTINGS (*after a pause*). Oh, I see. You're the political editor of the Record the boys, and particularly Cliff Lee, are talking about.

NELLIE. You can't stop some people's tongues, you know, Bob.

HASTINGS (*leading NELLIE to chair, R. C.*). It does me a world of good to see you, Nellie. Sit down and tell me all about yourself.

NELLIE (*sitting at table, R. C.*). Oh, Bob, I have so much to tell you. There were days when the clouds darkened my life to the point of madness, but now the sun is shining so strongly in my eyes that I can't see anything but rainbows. (*She weeps softly, her hands covering her face.*)

HASTINGS (*standing beside her, his right hand resting upon her shoulder caressingly*). Poor girl!



NELLIE (*looking up, lively*). Now tell me all about yourself, Bob. What are you doing up here?

HASTINGS. I'm here for the News and trying to score a beat on this senatorial fight. Just think of it, Nellie; we're trying to cut each other's throats, professionally, of course.

NELLIE. Let us speak of other things, Bob. Have you forgotten the old days in Iowa? Ah, how my mind lingers upon those days five years ago when—when—(*she pauses in confusion, then changes the subject*). But you haven't changed much in five years, Bob.

HASTINGS. No, not a great deal; but the lines of care are creeping into my face. You can't stay the inexorable advance of age, Nellie.

NELLIE (*sadly*). No, no! Age be hanged! When the heart is youthful and the soul filled with the ambitions and longings of youth, there is no such thing as old age!

HASTINGS (*sighingly*). Yes, those were happy days when we looked forward to—to our marriage. But I was foolish, while you—(*hesitates*).

NELLIE (*after a pause*). While I was foolishly ambitious, you mean, Bob? True, I cut off my nose to spite my face, and here I am, just a plain newspaper woman, destined, perhaps, to die of the infirmities of ancient maidenhood.

HASTINGS (*laughingly*). Let us hope it won't come to that, Nellie. You are still as youthful and charming as ever. (*Goes to table, L. C., sits and writes.*)

NELLIE (*gratified*). Do you really think so, Bob?

HASTINGS. Yes.

NELLIE (*aside, as she rises and slowly crosses to L. C.*). I wonder if there's any hope for me? Will he ask me to be his wife?

HASTINGS (*as he works*). Have you any dope on the senatorial fight, Nellie?

NELLIE (*at C.*). And if I had you and the rest scooped to a fare you well, what then, Bob?

HASTINGS (*laughingly*). If you were to beat me on the result of the deadlock, Nellie, my resignation would be demanded.

NELLIE (*agitated*). And then—?

HASTINGS. I'd be barred out of every editorial room in New York.

NELLIE (*starts*). Wouldn't that be dreadful, Bob? (*She takes up traveling bag and takes out some sheets of copy—aside.*) If I give him my exclusive story I'll be ruined myself. What shall I do? (*Goes to HASTINGS, L. C., and whispers, holding notes in her hand behind her.*) Perhaps I may be able to help you. Who knows?

HASTINGS (*looking up and taking her hand*). Do you think so, Nellie? (*Telephone bell rings sharply.*)

NELLIE (*earnestly*). Every throne that ever tottered and fell was dragged down by a woman. (*Telephone bell rings again.*) Forget it, you, at the other end of the wire. (*To HASTINGS.*) I'm on the bill for something spectacular, I suppose. Beating a bet with a tip-off. Gee! But that's romantic! (*Telephone rings continuously. NELLIE goes up stage in a temper.*) Wouldn't that bell jar you?

HASTINGS (*laughingly*). Some politician anxious to get publicity.

NELLIE (*at phone, L. of C. D. in F.*). Hello! You must be a professional bell ringer. What's that? A woman's voice! You want to talk to Bob Hastings, you say?

HASTINGS (*as he works*). Ask who it is, Nellie?

NELLIE (*at phone*). Yes, Mr. Hastings is here. Who shall I say wants to talk to him. (*She listens intently for a moment, then drops the receiver with a bang and starts back.*) Mrs. Hastings! (*To HASTINGS, tremulously.*) Who is this woman, Bob? Speak!

HASTINGS (*rising and standing C.*). My wife!

NELLIE (*staggering down R. C., leaning upon end of table*). Your wife! You say your wife!

HASTINGS (*pleadingly*). You did not, could not know, Nellie—

NELLIE (*interrupting, in agony*). You married! And I had hoped—hoped! Ah, my heart will break! (*She falls over on table sobbing.*)

HASTINGS (*leaning over her*). Ah, Nellie, if you but knew her and our two kids, boys, bright, chubby little chaps. They are all the world to me, Nellie. It is for them I am

working—do you understand, for my wife and kiddies, for whom I would sell my soul!

NELLIE (*recovering herself with an effort*). And you wouldn't believe in me, Bob. All I needed five years ago was a restraining hand. How different things would be now had you called me back the day I said farewell. (*Sighs.*) Ah, you men don't know any more about a woman's heart than a Bowery tramp does about Hebrew. (*Collects her belongings with a businesslike air.*) It's all over now and I'm off.

HASTINGS (*anxiously*). What do you intend to do, Nellie?

NELLIE (*going to him at C., holding her notes behind her*). Do, Bob? Your wife and kiddies force me to do the sacrifice stunt myself. (*Gives him her notes.*) There you are, Bob.

HASTINGS (*surprised, as he takes notes*). What is this?

NELLIE. The beat you're looking for—the exclusive story of the selection of Blakemore for Senator.

HASTINGS (*amazed*). And you do this for me, Nellie, after what has happened?

NELLIE (*laughingly*). No, I do it for your wife and kiddies.

HASTINGS (*taking her hand*). You're a jewel, Nellie.

NELLIE. May be so, Bob, but one side of the gem is frosted now.

*Enter LEE, C. D. in F., hurriedly.*

LEE (*as he comes down C., to HASTINGS*). Jerry won't cough up anything, Bob. (*Sees NELLIE—to NELLIE, L. C.*). Hello, Nell! Going to do the caucus tonight?

NELLIE. No. (*She takes his arm.*) I'm going to dine with you.

LEE (*joyously, to HASTINGS*). I knew she would say it sometime, Bob.

HASTINGS (*sighingly*). You're lucky, Lee.

NELLIE (*sighingly*). Remember me to the kiddies, Bob. Goodby. (*Exeunt with LEE, C. D. in F. HASTINGS stands C., looking at the notes in his hand until—*)

CURTAIN.



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